



SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER AMERICAN PROVINCE

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CORE TEAM MEETING IN JULY

The Core Team of the SHCJ Associates of the American Province met July 9-11, 2004 at Gracemere in Rosemont, PA. The Gracemere community has extended their hospitality to us before and we are very grateful to them for allowing us to share their home for a few days. Gathering on Friday evening, we began our time together with prayer and reflection on our mission and the past year's work. Eileen Moughan, the Province Leadership's liaison to the Core Team, joined us for this time and we welcomed her presence with us. We also welcomed the letter we each had received from Marcia Sichel regarding the 2004 General Chapter Enactments, which clearly show the Society's joy in recognizing how "Cornelia's story continues to inspire a wide range of people today." The Society is asking us to reflect on our own expression of Cornelian spirituality and to develop our own leadership and structures. (See article below, Report on Chap-

ter Enactments, for the PLT's specific recommendations to the Core Team.)

Our weekend's work centered on communication, development of a formation process (including a simple ritual for commitment) for Associates, and the creation of a charter document for the SHCJ Associates of the American Province. We had very productive discussions on communication with Associates, with SHCJ, and with the PLT. We feel our newsletter continues to be an excellent vehicle for acquiring knowledge, connecting with Cornelia and her Charism, exchanging ideas, and giving out important information. We hope to work with SHCJ in different areas to invite Associates for SHCJ feast celebrations, where it is possible. An informative brochure to be given to prospective Associates is in the draft stage and we hope to have that by year's end. We began

(Continued on page 6)

Inside this issue:

Core Team Meeting July 2004	1
Report on General Chapter Enactments from Rome	1
Chilean Associates in the Dominican Republic	2
Connecting with Cornelia and Charism: To Rejoice in God's Presence	3
Reflection	4
Retreat Schedule	6
Jubilee Project	6

REPORT ON CHAPTER ENACTMENTS

This spring the SHCJ Associates were empowered to move into the future through two very significant "happenings." The first, of course, was the 2004 General Chapter of the Society. Associates, individually and in groups, added their reflections concerning Cornelia's family to those membership groups composed of Sisters. After discussion and prayer the Chapter Enactments include the following:

"Promoting our Cornelian gift for the People of God":
We rejoice that Cornelia's story continues to inspire a wide range of people today. We encourage those currently in association with us to develop an increasing sense of their own identity through -

- reflection on their own expressions of Cornelian spirituality

- development of their own leadership and structures
- exploration of a new name for themselves, where appropriate

The Society will support and encourage these developments by -

- assistance in deepening their understanding of Cornelian charism and spirituality
- assistance in development of international connections
- appointing SHCJ to liase with them. (to be initiated by SLT and PLTs)

Then, in accord with the title given to the Enactments "Actions Not Words" the Core Team received a mandate to move the words into action. In June Marcia Si-

(Continued on page 6)

CHILEAN ASSOCIATES IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Marta Carrión, a Chilean Associate who attended the “Gathering of Associates” in Rosemont (2002) stopped in the Dominican Republic on her return trip. After meeting the Response-Ability volunteers who teach in the SHCJ mission, Marta asked why she and her husband, along with others, couldn’t volunteer. At the Chapter (2003) another Chilean, Margarita, asked what had happened with the proposal. While the SHCJ Leadership endorsed the idea, the Society wasn’t able to fund this effort during the General Chapter year.

Private funding was sought and found and as a result, four couples from Chile traveled to the Dominican Republic in July: two couples were from the parish “María, Nuestra Señora del Molino” and two couples were from “Santo Tomás,” both parishes where the SHCJ sisters had previously worked. They came as missionaries willing and able to help, to embrace the hardship, and open to new cultural experiences.

The Chileans befriended many of the Dominican Associates who help in the summer camp. They also made a significant difference in the “batey” (rural ghetto for Haitians), working with small groups of parents and of teenagers; visiting homes and organizing the first Catholic liturgy ever in the batey.

Following is an introduction whose main author is José Luis Montero (Santo Tomás), and subsequent comments made by various participants in this experience:

In sharing the missionary experience of four Catholic couples from Chile in the Batey Lechería made possible by the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, it is well to remember those first moments when the Chilean Associates were informed of and invited to the monthly meeting of April, 2004. From this moment the mission started with the necessary preparations: obtain passports, arrange for their work situation with their employers, organize care for their children and their households, educate themselves about the Dominican Republic, read books recommended by the SHCJ ([The Feast of the Goat](#) and [In the Time of the Butterflies](#)), communicate with the SHCJ in the Dominican Republic—and even visit the Dominican Embassy in Santiago. After these preparations, the missioning ceremony took place in our respective churches on Sunday, July 4. God had prepared a surprise for us: it happened that the Gospel reading for that day was Luke 10: 1-12, 17-20, Jesus sending the seventy-two disciples, two by two, where He was going to go. Then came the

day of our departure: Rosita and José, Winter and Olguita from “El Molino”, and Irene and Jaime, José Luis and Pamela from “Santo Tomás,” all gathered in the Santiago airport at 1:30 AM, July 8, 2004. What a lovely surprise to have Sister Elizabeth Strub also arrive to see us off and to invite us to share a moment of prayer before our trip. For six of us it was the first airplane voyage ever.

In Santo Domingo, Sister Ann-Joyce and some Associates were waiting for us with a “guagua” – which for the Dominicans is a bus, but for the Chileans is a baby! From that moment on we began to learn many words that have different meanings in our two countries.

The first days in the Sisters’ house were to help us get settled and accustomed to the hot climate, sparse electricity and little running water – and to continue to learn about the Dominican and Haitian cultures. We visited the Museum of the Mirabal sisters (who had been killed by the dictator Rafael Trujillo) as well as the Centro Cultural León. More books were recommended: [Memoirs of a Courtesan in the Era of Trujillo](#); [The Psychology of the Dominican People](#); [The Batey](#). Brother León Devanoy, CIMM, shared with us his knowledge of the Haitian-Dominican history and reality. The actual mission in the Batey Lechería was organized in various meetings with the Dominicans who would be running the summer camp. (Several of these were Associates and others were “Cornelians”; these latter do not have the same obligations as the Associates but usually attend a monthly meeting run by the Associates and help out as they can.) We visited the batey for the first time, walked its dirt roads, saw the library, the new medical Clinic and the “Escuelita” (little school) where we would do most of our work. Our second visit to the batey was devoted to going to the families of the specific children who were to participate in the summer experience and invite them and their parents to begin attending on the following Monday; they were given an identification tag which they became very proud of. We used our mornings to prepare our work for the afternoon, or to fill water buckets when the water came on, to shop, cook or clean (in turn!) or to visit the Clinic. In the afternoon we crowded in the same “guagua” that had picked us up at the airport and were off to our different areas of responsibility in the batey: in the “Escuelita” (which measures 8 x 6 yards): one group had [Practice with Writing and Math](#), another had [Values and Religion](#), another had [Stories](#) and the fourth area was for preparing the juice given at the end of each afternoon.

(Continued on page 5)

CONNECTING WITH CORNELIA AND CHARISM: TO REJOICE IN GOD'S PRESENCE

And to rejoice in God's Presence are the closing words of the SHCJ mission statement. The Associates' mission statement echoes the same impulse. All too often this last phrase of the mission statements seems to dangle. It becomes a sort of fragment. It seems a bit more nebulous than helping others believe. We have strategies for that part of the statement. We hope that our efforts will bear good fruit, be it thirtyfold, sixtyfold or one hundredfold. There seems something measurable in the first part of the mission statement.

But those last words do give one pause. *Rejoice in God's presence.*

The nations are in crisis, the peoples are in danger everywhere, the poor are ever poorer and the integrity of creation has probably never been more fragile.

Rejoice in God's presence?! What are we saying? What do we mean?

What aspects of our charism do we need to "drill down into" at this time? What experience do we have that shows us we can rejoice in God's presence in the very midst of war, poverty and environmental disaster?

The middle of the nineteenth century, Cornelia's physical time, cannot be described as an idyllic period in human history. There was poverty everywhere. Her own dear country was torn by Civil War. The Industrial Revolution had made cities in Europe and America overcrowded and scarcely fit for human dwelling. Transportation and communication over distances were burdensome.

We are all too familiar with the tragedies that afflicted Cornelia personally. We are aware of some of the failures and setbacks that mark the early history of the SHCJ. Yet, somehow Cornelia and her friends and companions, had an understanding of joy in the midst of trouble, suffering and hardship. In the "school of suffering" they experienced a "kingdom of peace within" and "abundant jubilee of heart which had not been bargained for in this life of accepted suffering". They did rejoice in God's presence. Others noticed and took heart. We can do no less in the 21st century.

Two events in Cornelia's life are tightly bound in time.

- In December 1839, Cornelia made an Ignatian retreat in preparation for the celebration of Christmas.
- In February 1840 her beloved John Henry died in her arms.

In our attempt to probe the source of joy let us look at Cornelia in these moments. What can we infer about joy in God's presence? First off, prayer, time devoted to prayer, was an ordinary part of Cornelia's life. Against the backdrop of prayer she held her experience. These two moments profoundly impacted the heart of this young mother. Cornelia focused her heart on the sufferings of John Henry and united her own pain with that of our Mother of Sorrows. In her child, blameless human suffering caught her and became a reality to be pondered, treasured and loved, so that in union with Mary, the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed.

We look at the paradigm set up in Cornelia's life in 1839-1840. Prayer flowing from Scripture and an event challenged her. She allowed both to cut her to the quick. There was little Cornelia could *do* for John Henry. She embraced him, she murmured to him, she shuddered with his pain. And she let him go. She accepted the reality of the event and she continued to respond to the calls of her human routine. During the days after that day she drew strength from faith and sought not relief, but God's presence in her battered being. She attended to the other children and to Pierce and to the tasks of daily living. Perhaps there were moments when she was surprised by the stirring of a butterfly or the scent of the magnolias.

In later years Cornelia preached accepted suffering, but certainly not for the sake of suffering. Rather she had learned, step by step and line by line, in matters great and small that accepted suffering opened the way to God and to joy. Cornelia was realistic in her spirituality. After the loss of Mary Magdalen and John Henry, one might expect Cornelia to be overprotective of her surviving children. Not so, for Cornelia's motherhood was very practical. A few years later, she chided Mercer for being too dreamy and for not being straightforward and truthful. She also joyfully pounded out tunes on the pi-

(Continued on page 4)

CONNECTING WITH CORNELIA AND CHARISM

(Continued from page 3)

ano at Grand Coteau for games at night with the children. Her search for peace and joy took her back to the ordinary events of daily life where through quiet prayer and pondering she found God's presence in simple human exchanges and every day beauty.

During the 1850's Cornelia wrote the first paragraphs of the Rule. In this spiritual treasure trove she articulated her insights garnered from life experience and prayer. In the Child Jesus mysteries of sublime teaching are revealed. Eternal wisdom is made manifest in the lowliness of humanity. In the living wells of Jesus' humility, charity and obedience we find the Spirit of the Holy Child. We find a spirit of simplicity, humility, charity and joy. Here too is a place to "drill down" in search of rejoicing.

Cornelia preached accepted suffering. She also counseled fidelity. Fidelity, fidelity, fidelity. Over the long haul, Cornelia learned that God is the One who is good. God is the Faithful One. Her call to fidelity is about our littleness, our humanity. We can not do much in the face of certain events, but we certainly can be there, murmuring, hoping and trusting. We can incorporate prayer, time for prayer, into our daily round. We can count, not on ourselves, but on God's goodness to see us through, to help us find the joy and even humor in our situation. In our time, especially here in the States, we use September 11th as a reference point in many ways, perhaps too

many. We need to remember September 12th. That morning hundreds of women and men got up and started to connect with others in new ways. There was not much that they could do on the world stage, but they did what they could in the affairs of daily living. They talked with one another, they comforted one another. Very practically, they started a clean-up; they offered water and food to one another. They buried the dead.

In her own way, Cornelia knew joy is gift always given. Very practically, she came to expect the gift hidden in daily-ness. It is given in our physical time too. We simply need to mine for it in God's loving presence in our daily living.

Chapter eleven of Hebrews is a dramatic recall of those who took courage from faith and responded to invitations from God. Cornelia certainly belongs in that great crowd of joyful witnesses. We belong there too.

In the recent Chapter Enactments, the SHCJ have taken a small human project, the Holy Child Integrated Agricultural Centre in Abeokuta, Nigeria as a practical expression of our passionate commitment to our mission. Let us all join together in prayer and pondering and in joy that in one corner of our world, the people of Owowo Lala Village will be empowered for self-sustainability. We can be there in spirit, we can murmur and hope. We can drill down into joy, for God is there as God is here.

REFLECTION

Do you allow the wisdom of Scripture to throw light on the events of your own life?

Do you carry the fragile state of creation to God in prayerful reflection?

Can you let go of your preoccupations because you know God is here in our physical time?

When have you caught yourself unexpectedly in that kingdom of peace which you did not imagine or bargain for?

Please send your comments to:

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Or e-mail to cquinn@shcj.org

CHILEAN ASSOCIATES IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

(Continued from page 2)

About two hundred yards across the road in the batey itself (in a covered, open-air discotheque!) there was music in the early part of the afternoon, and sports in the latter part. One of the Chilean couples spent their afternoons visiting the homes, getting to know the families and inviting them to a liturgy at the end of the week. After the dismissal of the children, we always had an evaluation of the day, led by one of the Associates, Josefa, who was Director of the Summer Camp program.

Comments from various participants:

I am a Chilean missionary, invited to offer all that God had stored up in me. I got to know the batey and the Dominican Republic, and I discovered two realities where my faith was tested. We have had an intense work with successes. I give thanks to God for choosing me. (Rosita, Chilean Missioner, El Molino)

I am Chilean and my name is Winter, and I give thanks to God for giving me the opportunity of getting to know the Associates of the Holy Child Jesus in the Dominican Republic, and I ask God to give them many blessings for being so hospitable and generous. Happiness always! (Winter Rocha, El Molino)

Sharing with others of another country is something that I never imagined would be so beautiful and surprising. The cultural and social exchange made me feel as if I knew them, and also to know that we share the same idea of service: serve without expecting anything in return. (Antonio Garó, Associate, Dominican Republic)

To be able to share with the Associates of Chile is marvelous. To see and become acquainted with their way of serving and helping in the batey was the best that could have happened in this little Caribbean country. May God and Cornelia's spirit bless them and keep them forever. (Guillermo; Mari Daisi and Marilyn, Associates, Dominican Republic)

I am a Chilean missionary and I was invited to the Dominican Republic. I saw the batey, it was something that I will never forget for the rest of my life. For me, it was like stepping on holy ground, thanks to God's mercy. I give thanks to God for giving me the opportunity of living these moments and learning about the life of Cornelia. (José Moya, Associate, El Molino)

To travel to the Dominican Republic is something that I will never forget; an unforgettable experience. I thank God for this opportunity. Visiting the Batey Lechería brought many emotions; to share with the children, with the mothers, listen to phrases like "I have eight children – there's no food, there's no work"; "Teach me how to write my name." It's very sad; I felt very much affected and powerless to see human beings so abandoned. Thank God that with the help of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, they have a ray of hope. (Olga Salvo, Associate, El Molino)

What I have lived during this month in the Dominican Republic is something that has profoundly moved my spirit, my soul and my heart, and has filled it with love and perseverance to follow the Word of the Lord. My time in the batey opened my eyes to a new human necessity, that of giving love, patience and understanding. Participating with the fathers, mothers and children, giving what I had to offer turned out to be reciprocal, because they taught me so much. It is so moving to me to realize that we all have the same God; the devotion that they have encouraged me greatly in my work for my God. I carry with me a great treasure which will shine for the rest of my life. (Pamela, Associate, Santo Tomás)

I greet you all, an Associate from the heart. I want to tell you all about my experience here in the Dominican Republic. It has been very beautiful and also very bitter to see the poverty in which the people live, it leaves you with your heart in your hand. The powerlessness of not being able to do anything for them has left me very depressed, but at the same time happy because the goal of the mission we have achieved.... Thank you for giving me the opportunity of expressing what I experienced and felt in this mission. I have a broken heart for what happens in this country, especially with the people from the bateys. (Jaime, Santo Tomás)

I, Irene, have breathed in deeply the Presence of God. As an Associate, it has been a privilege to have received this beautiful gift, to be in a place so far, feeling the presence of God in each child, youth, and adult. It was so enriching, an experience that I will carry with me forever. To find God in a place so far from my family has been something so great, the love and affection of these people.... I hope that this experience can be repeated with other couples.... I, in particular, give thanks to the persons and benefactors who made this experience possible. May God shower them with His immense love always. (Irene, Santo Tomás)

Retreat Schedule 2004

Location	Dates * tentative	Contact
Charlotte, NC	October 15 - 17	Pat & Willa Izzo (304.497.2001; wilpat@frontiernet.net)
Midwest	October 15 - 17*	Kathleen Popit, SHCJ (847.625.1573)
Pilgrimage Retreat in 2005		
Grand Coteau, LA	January 14 - 16	A flyer was enclosed in the last newsletter. If you need information, please email cquinn@shcj.org

CORE TEAM MEETING

(Continued from page 1)

work on a formation process, using the RCIA model of the Church as a rough blueprint and we are excited about our initial work on this. Responding to the PLT's mandate to us, we created a draft of a charter and will continue to revise and refine this document. Our next meeting will be October 22-24, 2004 in Rosemont, PA.

We all are looking forward to the pilgrimage to Grand Coteau, January 14-16, 2005. The focus for this weekend will be on Cornelia's time in Grand Coteau and its impact on her life. This will be the third time that Associates will come together as a national group, after our April 2002 and June 2003 meetings.

We hope to see many people respond to this invitation and join us in New Orleans!

REPORT ON CHAPTER ENACTMENTS

(Continued from page 1)

chol, SHCJ Province Leader wrote to each member of the Team. In her letter Marcia quoted the Enactments then went on to request that the Core Team:

1. Develop a Charter
2. Design a minimal government structure
3. Develop a formation program which would formalize the method of accepting members into Association and include ways in which they are accountable to the Associates Group and Society
4. Review and revise the job description and methods of selecting an executive director

These tasks formed the agenda of the Team's meeting in July and much was accomplished. The October meeting will continue to move us all forward as we live out "Actions Not Words."

JUBILEE PROJECT

At the Society's 25th General Chapter in Rome this past April, held 125 years after Cornelia's death, the Society leadership called upon all members to support a Jubilee Project. The chosen project is the Holy Child Integrated Agricultural Centre, located in Abeokuta, Nigeria. The centre has been established in an effort promote a means of self-sustenance for the people of Owowo Lala Village.

As the Society leadership has called on all three provinces - African, American and European - to support this Jubilee Project as an expression of unity, we ask that all Associates will likewise join in union with all members of the Society in supporting this Jubilee Project through your prayer. We hope to have updates on the progress of the Jubilee Project throughout the year. For more information and pictures of the Agricultural Centre, please visit the SHCJ website (www.shcj.org). Click on the link on the main page.

The next newsletter is scheduled for November. Do you have any news or regional announcements for 2005?
Please forward to SHCJ Associates Newsletter, 460 Shadeland Ave, Drexel Hill, PA 19026 or e-mail: cquinn@shcj.org.
Please mark e-mail subject line "Associates Newsletter."