



SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER AMERICAN PROVINCE

VOLUME IV, ISSUE 3

JUNE, 2006

A LETTER TO THE ASSOCIATES

Dear Associates,

Almost anyone who learns of Cornelia's story is fascinated by her—not only by the twists and turns that her life took—but perhaps more importantly, by how she responded to those twists and turns. Even today, it is likely that some of the choices Cornelia made would be controversial. But picture a woman making those choices during the 1800s, when she did not even have the right to vote.

It was with this kind of ironclad spirit, resolve, and boundless trust in God, that Cornelia founded the Society. Every woman who has entered the Society has, without a doubt, been touched deeply by Cornelia's spirituality and called to the order in a profound way.

As Associates, you also have been called by Cornelia in a profound way. Over the last several years, you have responded to that call by forming the Associates program. After the development of the program's Charter, you recently reached another milestone—bringing Cathi Duffy on board as the program's director. Under Cathi's competent leadership, we are sure the program will continue to evolve.

As Holy Child Sisters, it is thrilling for us to see that even today, 127 years after Cornelia's death, people are still inspired by the difficult choices she made and her unwavering faith. She sacrificed much, but has and continues to inspire many.

You are a part of the Holy Child family. And we are both honored and grateful to have you with us on this journey.

With my love and prayers,

Helen T. McDonald, SHCJ
American Province Leader

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ASSOCIATE SUMMER EVENTS

National		
June 20	Associates Discussion at SHCJ Gathering 2006	
August 5	Core Team Meeting at Rosemont	
Boston		
June 27	A Summer Gathering	
North Carolina		
August 12	Sister Ann-Joyce Peters at St. Luke Parish	
August 19	Day of Retreat	
Portland		
August 20	Summer Gathering	

ACTIONS NOT WORDS: JOURNEY TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

BY WILLA IZZO AND BARBARA-SCOTT CANNON

One of the highlights of a SHCJ Associates gathering in Philadelphia a few years ago, was a spirited presentation by Sr. Ann-Joyce (*Anita*) Peters about her mission site in the Dominican Republic, begun in 1995, and an open invitation to come and see for ourselves.

This recent February, fourteen SHCJ Associates from Charlotte, NC and Lewisburg, WV joined Fr. Fred Conoscenti and members from a parish in Pompton Plains, NJ, for a week of mission service with Sr. Ann-Joyce Peters, Sr. Mary Alice Minoque and Sr. Kathleen King.

Our anticipated tasks would connect us with families in the Batey Lacheria, a collection of one-room housing units, originally built by the Dominican government for Hatian sugar cane cutters. Today they are occupied by Hatian and Dominican-Hatians living on the country's lowest socioeconomic edge.

We knew our assignments included building latrines for families, working in the medical clinic and interacting with residents in the Batey. In addition to our personal belongings, we each brought suitcases to leave behind, filled with clothing, medical supplies, yarn, Spanish language books and school and office supplies.

Our driver, Ramon, soon to become our friend and guide, met us at the airport for the hour ride to the hostel where we stayed. After squeezing fourteen people and luggage into his modest van, extra suitcases were tied on the roof of the van. Lots of traffic in Santo Domingo...and lots of sharp curves! So, it wasn't a surprise after one quick turn when all the suitcases on top of the van shifted and careened across the ground. Then the sliding door of the van fell off! A cheerful voice from inside the van called, "Think of all of this as the start of a wonderful adventure!" We could only laugh in agreement.

Our first morning began with a dedication of the land at the site of the proposed Visitor's Center for the Batey. In the distance we could see the lovely mountains of Haiti. Following a tour of the Batey our initial somber impression of the poverty soon changed

to wonder, when realizing the hopeful spirit of the people, seeing the children's smiling faces and feeling the touch of their hands.

Eight latrines, approximately four feet by eight feet, were completed with hard-working assistance from recipient families. Several of us worked in the medical clinic which opened in 2004 and is now serving 2,800 patients a year. Soon anticipated is a vaccination clinic. Many of the children are being educated in the Montessori School and benefit from a nutrition program.

The Batey has been recognized by the Clinton Foundation with plans to build a lab, counseling, transportation and food programs and training to provide an additional Doctor, counselor and Aids R.N. Additional programs include college groups coming on work projects and the Smile program from Canada providing dental visits for \$5.00 a child.

An afternoon that touched us all:

As we unpacked the suitcases in the storeroom of the school, we stacked skeins of yarn in baskets. Soon they were overflowing and Sr. Anita decided we needed to have a knitting bee. Only two of us know how to knit or crochet, so the rest of us went through the village drumming up potential learners for the afternoon lesson. As the hour approached, we had no idea if we would host two or twenty ladies at our upcoming bee. By 2 o'clock, the waiting room of the clinic was filled to capacity with moms, grandmas, children and yarn! The lesson began and we walked among the women helping with problems. Since survival is utmost in the village, sharing is not a value embraced by the people. Yet, after a little coaxing, several younger women actually helped others with their stitches.

What a sight to behold! Women of all ages knitting while babies suckled, toddlers played at their feet, and a gentle murmur of contentment trickled through the group. We snapped many pictures of the scene to preserve it for posterity. We few folks with a yen to help, had made this happen for the least of His people...what a feeling.

CONNECTING WITH CORNELIA AND CHARISM: THE INCARNATION AS LIVED BY CORNELIA

BY JOANNE SULLIVAN, SHCJ

In the Foundation texts of the first Rule and Constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, Cornelia Connelly expressed her insight into the mystery of the Incarnation.

“In the humble and hidden life of the Holy Child Jesus we find mysteries of the most sublime teaching. Here it is that God manifests to us in a most wonderful manner the treasures of His mercy and of His boundless love... Nourished from this heavenly fountain and fed in the pastures of his divine love we are to run with ardour in the way that he has pointed out and to bring others to taste and embrace the sweet yoke which he offers them.”

Cornelia's insight into the mystery of the Incarnation would have begun in 1836-7 when in Rome. The mysteries of Christ's life were presented to her in simplicity and concreteness through the liturgy and popular devotions. She absorbed the beauty and richness which the art and history of Rome offered. During Christmas time, what a delight it was for her two young children to see the nativity representations at the various presepi as the family visited the many churches of Rome. It was during the Epiphany octave at the church of San Carlo al Corso, that Cornelia drank in the Incarnational theology of the Church Fathers.

The family settled in Grand Coteau by Christmas time, 1839. Cornelia joined the Sacred Heart Sisters for their three day retreat. The retreat, ending on Christmas Eve, brought Cornelia to the Incarnation as the natural climax to her prayer. The following

February, the tragic death of John Henry led her to a moment of profound identification with Our Lady of Sorrows. Cornelia focused on the suffering of her child and through him the sufferings of Jesus. Three other retreats at Grand Coteau confirmed the emphasis on Christ's humanity as she prayed through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

Cornelia Connelly found God present in every aspect of her life. She began with the Child Jesus, following him into adult life, his ministry and finally his suffering, death and resurrection. How does her charism of Incarnation impinge on our lives as Christian women and men, as disciples of Jesus?

We are called to make present the reality of the Incarnation in our daily lives. We do this by paying attention to God who dwells within us. Our fidelity to prayer and spiritual growth leads to a greater awareness of God's presence. In daily activities we bring God to those with whom we live and work simply by the way we speak, act, and listen. This is living the mystery of the Incarnation.

The mission of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus follows from the Incarnational charism of Cornelia Connelly. “For this is our mission: to help others to believe that God lives and acts in them and in our world, and to rejoice in his presence.”

We are called also to this belief. Let the joy of knowing and believing that God truly acts and lives in us and in our world be a hallmark of our Christian life.

MUCHAS, MUCHAS GRACIAS!

Victor De la Cruz, an Associate from the Dominican Republic, led the construction teams building the latrines. Victor said that even though he does not speak English and the helpers did not speak much Spanish, he felt such a great support from them being there and helping him with this huge project. When asked what words would sum up what he would like to have published, he said “muchas, MUCHAS gracias!”

Some from North Carolina are returning this summer to continue working on the latrines, and the parishioners from NJ raised \$7,200 for a “Vehicle for Victor”!

The next newsletter is planned for August - September, 2006. Do you have any news or regional announcements? Please forward to associates-usa@shcj.org or SHCJ Associates Newsletter, 460 Shadeland Avenue Drexel Hill, PA 19026 by July 31. Please mark e-mail subject line “Associates Newsletter”.

NEWS FROM THE DIRECTOR

ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER – GOING ELECTRONIC – PHASED APPROACH

The Society delivers the majority of its communication to SHCJ via emails. The Associates have also been asked to look to this form of communication to reduce printing and postage costs. The obvious first step is to send the Associates Newsletter via email. It is understood that, unlike the SHCJ members, some of our Associates will not have access to emails. We will continue to keep you updated through the regular mail.

With this June Associates Newsletter, the SHCJ will all receive their copy electronically. There is already a system established so it is easy to ensure that all Sisters receive a copy.

For this issue, Associates will all receive the newsletter via regular mail. If we have an email for you, we will also attempt to send it electronically. Our goal is to substantially reduce the number of Newsletter that will be printed and mailed. This may take a few issues to implement. We are grateful to the Society for their generous contribution to the Associates. Please help us with this request where possible.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

I am grateful to the Associates who have replied to the May mailing about the form of Associate membership desired and for the many SHCJ who have volunteered to be companions/mentors of the Collaborative Associates. For those who have not responded yet, it is not too late to let Cathi Duffy know (associates-usa@shcj.org). There was some concern voiced that the Associate membership categories are really levels of Association. Nothing could be further from the minds of the Core Team. These are not about levels of Association but rather a way of being sensitive to the needs and personal circumstances of Associates. A Supportive Associate who is praying for the Society and Associates and who are dear friends of SHCJ are as important as individuals with time to commit to regional and national meetings.

As the reflection guides for mentors and Collaborative Associates comes close to completion, it is hoped that the period of prayer, discernment, and reflection will begin shortly for all who have stated their desire to be Collaborative Associates.

SHCJ WEBSITE – NEW LOOK AND UPDATE

The SHCJ website is being updated with a new look! The Associates pages are also being updated in the process. Prior Associates Newsletters will be available. These will be especially valuable for articles on Cornelia's spirituality or for some Associates history if you are new.

Some Associates have written testimonials about being Associates. These will be changed periodically. If you wish to appear on the website, send your thoughts on "what being an SHCJ Associate means in your life" to Cathi Duffy.

Many thanks to Kim Cavallero, Director of Communications for all her expertise in designing the website for us. Over time, more exciting options will be available through the website. Stay tuned!

REFLECTION

How does Cornelia's charism of Incarnation impinge on your life as a Christian woman/ man, as Jesus' disciple?

Is the Incarnation a natural climax to your prayer as it was for Cornelia?

In what concrete events of the past week have you experienced your daily living in the mystery of the Incarnation?

NACAR ANNUAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER FLOW FROM WITHIN

BY CATHI DUFFY

The North American Conference of Associates and Religious held their biennial conference at Xavier University in Cincinnati the first weekend of June. With 500 attendees, Associates and Religious representing numerous religious congregations, it was a spirit-filled weekend. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn how different religious congregations have embraced Associate relationships. It was clear that Associate relationship is twofold: bringing the congregation's charism and mission into an Associate's lay life and a mutuality in relationships between vowed Religious and Associates.

Ron Rolheiser, the keynote speaker, challenged attendees on spirituality and discipleship. Although it is difficult to capture his insights in a few brief paragraphs, let me give a few of the highlights that touched me. He spoke of reading the signs of the times as an exercise of prayer. Three of his eight signs of the times follow.

Rolheiser spoke of the great freedoms that we experience in our western culture today. Great freedom requires an equivalent maturity. For most people, the necessary maturity is lacking. There are fundamentalist movements in our world that work to reduce these freedoms. Without a maturity, in times of uncertainty, there is a push for clarity, security, and stability over the search for truth. Without a moral and spiritual maturity, there is a push to rollback freedoms.

There is also a moral loneliness today. The moral center, far beyond right and wrong, is the most sacred, intimate center of our being. Although we need help to make us whole, we live in a moral diaspora.

Without a moral and spiritual maturity, joylessness is present in our world. There are too many angry people in our world, in our Church. We need to be joyful to suffer for Christ. One example of suffering for many in our Church today: attempting dialogue about ecclesiological differences. Do we experience the rejections to dialogue joyfully, as part of suffering for Christ? Where is Gospel joy in the Church, in the world today? Despite the obstacles and sufferings in life, we are called to keep a mellow heart in a bitter time!

In the second presentation, Ron Rolheiser described different levels of invitation that Jesus offered in the

Gospel. In Jesus' encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman, he is first addressed as the Jewish Messiah but after Jesus' rebuttal, the woman uses the universal title for God, Adonai. The prescribed rules and boundaries of faith are held in tension with the universal call of compassion. For each of us, we live with the tension of the rules and boundaries that define one aspect of our identity against the universal compassion that calls us to act freely for the other. When do we live out of each identity? How do we live with the tension?

The parable of the rich young man is the story of each of us. The rich young man already had a high spiritual life. Jesus, as Rolheiser explained, was inviting the man to move from being good to being great. Jesus asks that we give up our last material and physical consolations - those things that help us compensate for our unfulfilled needs. It is the story of the things that we do not give to God that keeps us from sainthood. The invitation is one of giving one's life for others.

Lastly, he spoke of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Gardens are always places for lovers in literature and so it is Jesus as Lover that sweats blood. Jesus, alone before God, lived our moral loneliness. Jesus lived the tension that we carry. Jesus was able to give not just his life but his death for others. At what level can each of us carry that tension? The moral loneliness?

The weekend led me to a deeper appreciation of Cornelia's grace-filled life in the context of these Gospel values. I was challenged in many ways about aspects of my own spiritual journey. Much food for thought and action!

A few questions to ponder:

What signs of the times speaks to me especially in light of being called to 'meet the wants of the age'?

What leads to my own joyfulness? Lack of joy?

Do the tensions in identity help me to have a mellow heart? A bitter, angry heart?

What keeps me from accepting Jesus' invitation to greatness?

The presentations are available on DVDs for group viewing and discussion. If interested in borrowing the set, contact me at associates-usa@shcj.org.

CORE TEAM MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

BY ANITA MARTINEAU, SECRETARY, SHCJ ASSOCIATES USA CORE TEAM

For the last several years the Core Team has been developing a vision for the SHCJ Associates program. On April 22nd, the Core Team gathered once again under the leadership of Kitty Sheridan, Chair, for their quarterly meeting at Rosemont. There the program morphed from a shared vision to an operational entity or, as Mother Cornelia Connelly might say, into a phase of “Actions, not words.”

The Core Team welcomed the new Director for the U.S. Associates, Cathi Duffy, who reported on her activities since starting in late February: getting oriented to the SHCJ organization and other Associates programs, establishing some technical resources and a preliminary budget for the next fiscal year (with Liz Eager, Core Team Treasurer), and beginning to connect with Associates in the USA and the Associate

coordinators in the European Province.

The Core Team approved the budget which was to be submitted to the Society, discussed the mailing to Associates and SHCJ about the three types of association offered through the SHCJ Associates program, and collaborated on developing procedures for admission, orientation of members, and the mentoring process for Collaborative Associates. The group also supported the implementation and development of regional Associates groups with visits by the Director to all regions within a year.

As the SHCJ Associates program moves into a period of anticipated generativity, the Core Team continues to seek Cornelia’s guidance and your prayers in “meeting the wants of the age.”

Next meeting: August 5th

Visit us on the web at www.shcj.org. Under the American Province, select Associates.