



# SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER AMERICAN PROVINCE

VOLUME V, ISSUE I

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## COLLABORATIVE ASSOCIATE JOURNEY CONTINUES

It was a little less than a year ago, during the June Gathering for the American Province, that a few sisters received the first copies of the Collaborative Associate Companion/Mentor Guides. Over the summer, Collaborative Associates received their own guides; Associates and the sisters who would be their companions began to connect. By late summer, a number of the Collaborative Associates began the period of prayer, study, and discernment toward a formal commitment as a SHCJ Associate. In our last newsletter, you read how many of these SHCJ vowed members and Associates were experiencing this journey. Their journey has continued and other have joined too.

Over the next few months, this first group of Collaborative Associates will be affirming their commitment formally to live the SHCJ mission and charism. Associates from Massachusetts to Virginia will gather at New Sharon on April 15th for the first of the ceremonies. In May, Oak Knoll will be the setting for Azella O'Dwyer's commitment. In early June, Bryna Bozart from North Carolina and Sarah Brabant from Louisiana will meet at Grand Coteau for their formal commitments. Could there be more meaningful settings for affirming the Associates relationship! Collaborative Associates from the West Coast are also planning for commitments later this summer.

It is an exciting time for the SHCJ Associates! We hope to share these important ceremonies with you both on the web and in our next newsletter.

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<b>Movie Brief</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>5</b></span>	Philadelphia	March 18	Ordinary Moments, Sacred Encounter
<b>Core Team Highlights</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>6</b></span>	Pasadena	Lenten Mondays	Prayer and Faith-sharing New Sharon - Holy Child Center
<b>SHCJ Website</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>6</b></span>	Portland	First Fridays	Taize and Dinner
	Rye, NY	March 30 - April 1	Collaborative Associate Retreat
	San Diego	Third Thursday	Faith-sharing Gatherings
	Santo Domingo	Monthly	Ignatian Exercises with Moment by Moment
	Washington, DC	Fridays Tuesdays	Prayer and Faith-sharing, Newton St. Prayer - Annunciation School

## ACTIONS NOT WORDS: COLLABORATIVE ASSOCIATES RESPOND TO: HOW IS THE SHCJ CHARISM ALIVE AND RELEVANT IN YOU?

Collaborative Associates, as part of their period of prayer, study, and discernment, spend time reflecting on the SHCJ Mission and Charism. One of the questions that they ponder is: How is the SHCJ charism alive and relevant in me? A few Collaborative Associates share a brief response with you.

*I want to (or at least want to want to) live the life God wants me to live. As such I try to hear the "cry" of those I encounter and to respond to that cry.*

Sarah Brabant



*The SHCJ charism is alive and relevant in me whenever I own who I am as a woman and let my voice be heard.*

Ellen Colangelo



*Because my years in the Society were both generative and life-giving, I have found myself drawn back to them time and again, continuing to plumb that experience as I moved on with my life, now out of the Society. Paradoxically perhaps, my life in the Society has been a kind of touchstone for me, as I sought my own authentic way to "live out of the future and understand out of the past" (Anne Murphy, citing Kierkegaard). I found that Cornelia's charism, once offered to me, was the gift I badly needed to continue to grow once I left the Society. Cornelia's charism*

*has remained alive and relevant in me, as what my life aspires to, and the fundamental orientations nurtured in me in the Society have perdured. I have found in my own life that I need always to be on the lookout for anger and resentment (which spring from seeing myself as the center of things), and to try gently and consistently to replace them with acceptance and gratitude (which demand consistent efforts at a radical re-orientation).*

Barbara DeConcini



*I am blessed (as a result of my work with the African Province) to have the opportunity to tell the SHCJ story every day. Whether I'm chatting with a group of students at a Holy Child School or describing what's happening on our organic farm in Nigeria to a perspective funder, I am motivated by the Holy Child spirit of love and reverence.*

*I had the good fortune of attending the "Incarnation as Worldview" panel in New York in February. I found Tobie Tondi's presentation referencing "moments of Incarnation" energizing. Tobie cited moments when God embraced all that is human: Creation (all human persons made in God's image), Jesus' birth, and Building the kingdom of God (a kingdom of right relationships, where everyone has food, peace and shelter). I believe each of us is called to find our place in helping to heal our broken world.*

Kathy Gibbons Schuck

*Let us try day by day  
to do what He would do,  
to speak as He would speak,  
to think as He would think,  
to desire what He desires,  
to love what He loves,  
and thus make our life one with His,  
being in one continued act of love  
from night 'til night and from year to year. Cornelia, April, 1854*

The next newsletter is planned for June, 2007. Do you have any news or regional announcements? Please forward to [associates-usa@shcj.org](mailto:associates-usa@shcj.org) or SHCJ Associates Newsletter, 460 Shadeland Avenue Drexel Hill, PA 19026 by May 10th. Please mark e-mail subject line "Associates Newsletter".

**Visit us on the web at [www.shcj.org](http://www.shcj.org). Under the American Province, select Sharing our Mission, Associates.**

## CONNECTING WITH CORNELIA AND CHARISM: CORNELIA AND ST. FRANCIS - BY AQUILA PETERSON, SHCJ

The idea for writing this paper sprang from an early fall Novitiate class where we were discussing the influences St. Ignatius and St. Francis De Sales had on Cornelia and the Society. I commented to Bernadette Longtin, SHCJ, that while the documentation and influence of St. Ignatius on the interior life of the Society was very apparent, I found it to be less so for St. Francis De Sales. Previously, I had heard it said that it was through St. Francis De Sales that the Society received its "gentleness." I wanted to know from Bernadette where this fact was spelled out in the literature. As a result, it became an assignment for me to find out!

During the search for information on De Sales, a curious piece of information began to unfold about the influence of Francis of Assisi on Cornelia and how the Franciscan spirituality was imbibed through her devotion to the "little poor man" and through the use of the Fioretti (Little Flowers) for community reading. One of the sisters (Mary Ann Buckley, SHCJ) asked me, "What was it about this connection of Francis of Assisi and Cornelia that speaks to you?" I found that in order to answer the question it would be necessary to reflect on the winding maze that my own life has been and to where it has taken me.

First, I believe that both Cornelia and Francis carved out their spirituality from their own life experiences rather than it being something that was bestowed upon them. For Francis, this amounted to a lifetime confrontation with poverty and for Cornelia, intense suffering and conflict deeply embedded in her relationships. Second, I believe that I too lived through my own "dark nights" of discouragement and hopelessness in which I had to lose myself in order to be led to a new life of grace and truth. Finally, it is only from learning about these two great Saints that it all began to make sense to me, especially as I struggled to recognize the curves and turns my own life has taken. From both St. Francis of Assisi and Cornelia Connelly, I feel my faith has been renewed in the idea that the human adventure is more about spiritual recovery than it is a state of permanent despair.

Cornelia Connelly was strongly influenced by St. Ignatius, St. Francis De Sales, and St. Francis of Assisi. But it was perhaps St. Francis of Assisi, with his restless spirituality and self-denial, who was most akin to Cornelia's own disposition. "To Saint Francis of Assisi she had, from the first, been strongly drawn. Of him she writes: 'He shows in his contempt for the

things of this world the highest elevation of mind; in his profound abasement a heroic courage, in his extreme simplicity, the most noble sentiment; in his weakness and apparent folly, the strength and wisdom of God.' She repeats with him: 'There is nothing on this earth that I am not ready to abandon willingly and with my whole heart, nothing however painful that I am not willing to endure with joy, nothing that I am not willing to undertake with all the strength of body and soul for the glory of my Lord Jesus Christ...'"<sup>1</sup>

In many ways, Francis' life can be called a crucifixion of spirit. He understood what it was to be denied, to be scourged, and to be cast down into absolute rejection. This then was Francis of Assisi, the Saint conceivably loved most by Cornelia. Like Francis, Cornelia too discovered a personal vocation that called her to share in the redemptive sufferings of Christ, to be able to say in the words of St. Paul, "In my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body which is the church." (Col. 1:24)<sup>2</sup>

Cornelia had a profound experience of the belief held by St. Francis that "the greatest gift we can receive from God is to know how to overcome ourselves and to be willing and able to do so by the denial of our own will." Hers was a life marked by repeated surrendering of will and suffering: deaths, loss of husband and children, legal proceedings and ecclesiastical injustices became, for her, encounters with the person of Christ who calls us to new life by way of the cross. However, when Cornelia spoke of joy in suffering, it was more about acceptance and harmony with God's will than elation. All that happened in her life, sorrow heaped upon sorrow, she offered to God. Her own deep awareness of Christ and his Mother brought comfort and strength to her in every trial and affliction she experienced throughout her



life. She grew to have a singleness of purpose, that is of being in service to the One she accepted in place of children and husband.

"In her love for St. Francis, Cornelia for a long time entertained the idea of having the Society affiliated to the Franciscan Order. She even distributed the cord of St. Francis to the Nuns in most of (see page 5)

## CORNELIA AND ST. FRANCIS (CONTINUED)

the convents in 1876 and was able to obtain for the Society, the privilege of the Porziuncula Indulgence [Franciscan tradition of indulgence of pardon] for seven years.”<sup>3</sup> At Derby in 1848, Cornelia used the Fioretti (Little Flowers) of St. Francis for community reading. The Sisters took turns reading stories from it and it was through these “Little Flowers” that the Franciscan spirit was imbued in the Society. “Cornelia, like Francis, was drawn to the stable of Bethlehem where God was strong in weakness and where having nothing, he possessed all hearts.”<sup>4</sup>

In Francis of Assisi, Cornelia found the spirit of simplicity and detachment very close to her own. Both Francis and Cornelia’s love of poverty were not so much a desire to live poorly but rather a stripping away of all attachments, wealth, family and prestige, that had confined them in relationships, that throughout their lives made it difficult for them to emerge as full human beings in the image of Christ. “The spirit of poverty she placed under the patronage of St. Francis. This practice could not for obvious reasons, be carried out quite on the Franciscan lines but she wished her Nuns to vie with the followers of the Saint in poverty of spirit, and to bear cheerfully any privations that fell to their lot.”<sup>5</sup>

The more we sift through the evidence of Cornelia’s own writing, the more we are able to appreciate the significant influence of St. Francis on Cornelia and hence the Society as a whole. The following notes from Grand Coteau in 1842 attest to the great devotion Cornelia had for the advocate of poverty and love: “Happy is the Religious who has not desired the exalted place in which he finds himself; I offer myself to thee to suffer in my body by all my senses, by cold, thirst or hunger for thy Glory and the good of souls.” She writes further regarding failure to pray, “My heart has dried up because I have forgotten to eat my bread.” It seems providential that on Sept. 17, 1841 while on retreat, Cornelia took the third degree of humility and wrote “vocation examined and decided.” So it was, that her vocation was decided on the retreat commencing on the Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi. “We can only imagine Francis looking down on his friend of the Holy Child Jesus

for her heart was indeed stigmatized.”<sup>6</sup>

According to Buckle and Bellasis\* the influence of St. Francis of Assisi on Cornelia and the SHCJ was significant, e.g. ‘We now have a good idea of the Franciscan and Jesuit element in Mother Connelly’s soul — that the devotion to the Holy Child and the poverty of the crib was inspired or borrowed from St. Francis and the interior life from the teaching of St. Ignatius.’<sup>7</sup> It is therefore not surprising that in 1854 while in Rome, Cornelia began painting a triptych with St. Ignatius on one side, the Holy Child in the center, and St. Francis on the other side. What was finished of it now resides in Mayfield. This would indicate that she had come to regard these two very different founders as copatrons of the spirit and rule of the Society.

Finally, at her death in a sparsely furnished cell, was found a crucifix, a picture of the Sacred Heart, a picture of the Blessed Mother with the Holy Child and an engraving of St. Francis of Assisi leading a lamb. She seemed more linked with the self-denial and poverty of St. Francis than with any other Saint. Thus we have as our heritage to identify with the marginal. May we continue now as then the challenge to meet the needs of the day. As Cornelia wrote in the Rule of 1854, “Let us run with arduour in the way that He has pointed out, and to employ every effort to bring others to taste and embrace the sweet yoke which he offers them.”

### References

1. Catherine Gompertz, *Life of Cornelia Connelly*; 1st edition, p.85 (London, 1922)
2. Radegunde Flaxman, SHCJ, *A Woman Styled Bold*, p.200 (London, 1991)
3. Catherine Gompertz, *Life of Cornelia Connelly*, p.195 (London, 1922)
4. *Informatio*, 197
5. Catherine Gompertz, *Life of Cornelia Connelly*, p.195 (London, 1922)
6. DOCUMENT #64-70, 52
7. Caritas McCarthy, SHCJ, *Spirituality of Cornelia Connelly*, p.167 (New York, 1986)

\* Buckle and Bellasis are early biographers of Cornelia Connelly and Society members

## RETREAT OPPORTUNITY

If you are interested in delving into Cornelia’s predilection for St. Francis and the Franciscan spirit, join with others this summer in a six-day retreat, “Reconnecting SHCJ with Franciscan Ways”. This retreat is sponsored by the SHCJ EcoSpirituality Group and begins the afternoon of July 31st and ends with lunch on Aug. 6th. Lucy Slinger, FSPA, will direct the retreat, which will be held at St. Raphaela Center in Haverford, PA. Cost is \$350. If interested, please contact Terri MacKenzie SHCJ now at [tmackenzie@shcj.org](mailto:tmackenzie@shcj.org) to indicate your interest. There is limited space availability.

## NEWS FROM THE DIRECTOR BY CATHI DUFFY

### MONTHLY NEWS UPDATE VIA EMAIL

To provide more timely news to Associates, a monthly update began in late January and is sent electronically to all who receive the newsletter electronically and to all who have requested this new Monthly Update. The SHCJ sisters also receive this latest communication via email. If you wish to receive this monthly update, you can contact me at [associates-usa@shcj.org](mailto:associates-usa@shcj.org)

### MEETING SHCJ AND ASSOCIATES

This winter I traveled to Washington, DC, New York City, and New Jersey to meet SHCJ vowed members and Associates as well as to visit some of the ministries in which the Society or its members are involved. In New York City, I attended the Incarnation as Worldview panel presentation.. A wonderful and enriching evening for all!

This spring I will be travelling to the regional commitment ceremonies in Rosemont (PA), Summit (NJ) and Grand Coteau (LA).

### RESPONSE-ABILITY INVITATIONS

Liz Eager, SHCJ Associate and Executive Director of Response-Ability, is arranging invitations for SHCJ Associates to visit Response-Ability volunteers in Los Angeles, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia. The SHCJ Associate relationship is a natural extension of their Response-Ability experience. Hopefully, many will join with RA volunteers in prayer and fellowship.

### SHCJ ASSOCIATES 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN

All should have received a copy of the 2007 Strategic Plan for SHCJ Associates. Copies were mailed to all Associates in early February. An electronic version was sent to all SHCJ vowed members. Initial

responses have been positive. Feedback and ideas are always welcome. The work is ongoing as we strive to reach the vision and to accomplish the goals set forth by the Core Team. If you did not receive your copy, please be in touch with me at [shcj-associates@shcj.org](mailto:shcj-associates@shcj.org).

### CORNELIA'S 200TH BIRTHDAY IN 2009

As the Society begins to plan ways to celebrate Cornelia's 200th birthday, do you have ideas of how we as Associates might mark this special occasion. It is not too early to start planning. Please share your ideas.

### CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Mayfield Jr. and Mayfield Sr. Schools as they celebrate the 75th anniversary of Holy Child education in Pasadena.

Congratulations to Carroll Juliano, SHCJ, on the publication of her book – "Facing Forgiveness – A Catholic's Guide to Letting Go of Anger and Welcoming Reconciliation", co-authored with Loughlan Sofield, S.T. and Bishop Gregory M. Aymond. The book is "An exploration of the process of forgiveness that blends personal narratives, spiritual guidance, and practical suggestions." You can purchase the book by contacting Ave Maria Press at 1- 800-282-1865 or via the Internet at [www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com).

Congratulations to Roseanne McDougall, SHCJ, and Jeffrey LaMonica of LaSalle University who have recently co-authored "Interdisciplinary Education and Critical Thinking in Religion and History: The Delivery of Two "Content- Based" Linked Courses" in The Journal of Effective Teaching; the article may be accessed online at [http://www.uncw.edu/cte/et/articles/Vol7\\_1/index.htm](http://www.uncw.edu/cte/et/articles/Vol7_1/index.htm)

Congratulations to Rosemary McSorley, SHCJ who was honored and received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Seton Hall Law School.

## MOVIE BRIEF: THE LIVES OF OTHERS - BY JEANNE REGISTER, SHCJ ASSOCIATE

THE LIVES OF OTHERS was awarded the Oscar for the best foreign film, and, as far as I am concerned, it was the best film of 2006-period. This serious film explores the reach of the Stasi (secret police) in East Germany before the Wall came tumbling down. The main characters are a playwright and the Stasi agent assigned to listen in to his life. It's a story of an artist who believes he is somewhat free, of careerists, of corrupt men in power, and, finally, of a good man who decides to act. The two main actors are magnificent.

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CORE TEAM MEETING - JANUARY 2007		SHCJ WEBSITE
<p>The winter meeting was held via conference call. The focus was the Associate relationship. Some of the questions that were part of the discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What expectations do Associates have of Association in general and specifically, for SHCJ Associates?</li> <li>• Are there basic requirements for being a SHCJ Associate? What can be required or expected of an Associate?</li> <li>• How are expectations and requirements communicated to all Associates?"</li> <li>• As the national organization</li> </ul>	<p>of SHCJ Associates strengthens, are there aspects of Association for which we need to take a closer look?</p> <p>The Core Team reaffirmed that the SHCJ Associates welcome individuals from all Christian denominations. Because Associates are part of a movement within the Roman Catholic Church, Associates are respectful of the Church’s teachings. As the Associate relationship continues to be refined, updates to the SHCJ Associates handbook are expected.</p> <p>Next meeting: April 14th.</p>	<p>Always something new:</p> <p>A new reflection by one of the sisters each month at <a href="http://shcj.org/praywithus_reflection.html">http://shcj.org/praywithus_reflection.html</a></p> <p>“Words of Cornelia Connelly” includes a “quote-a-day” calendar from Cornelia: <a href="http://shcj.org/praywithus_wordsof.html">http://shcj.org/praywithus_wordsof.html</a></p> <p>Archives exhibit: <a href="http://shcj.org/american/history_archives_currentexhibit.html">http://shcj.org/american/history_archives_currentexhibit.html</a></p> <p>New Artifact of Interest: <a href="http://shcj.org/american/history_archives_artifacts.html">http://shcj.org/american/history_archives_artifacts.html</a> . Special thanks to Helena Mayer, SHCJ for continually providing new exhibits and artifacts at the Archives and on the web.</p>