

# Associates' International News Exchange

Society of the Holy Child Jesus

May 2010



## AMERICA

By Cathi Duffy

For 2009 – 2010, the theme *Living the Mission: A Love Full of Action* captured not only the title of our regional gatherings but also the life of the Associates. Instead of a national gathering, 3 regional gatherings are being held this spring in Pasadena (CA), Rye (NY), and Charlotte (NC). The theme “Living the Mission” links the gatherings as Associates reflect with different SHCJ Sisters serving as keynote speakers on the SHCJ mission in their everyday lives.

One visible way that Associates are living the mission this year is through their support of Batey



Beads. This business was created by Associates, Cindy Platko and Barbara DeConcini, with women of Batey Lecheria in the Dominican Republic where the SHCJ sisters are working. The women create jewelry pieces that are being sold by Associates in the United States through parish or group events, at small home parties, and in other innovative ways. All the proceeds of the sales are returned to the Batey, both to the women who make the jewelry and to a new fund for community development projects. Definitely this is one of the signs that Associates are ‘meeting the wants of the age’!



2010 is also an exciting time as many Associates are coming forward in a formal way to affirm their commitment to live the mission of the Society. At Epiphany (Jan. 6) in Rye, 5 Associates from New Jersey made an initial commitment as did 4 Associates from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Massachusetts on April 18. During the regional gathering this May, many Charlotte Associates will affirm their commitment to live the Society’s mission as a visible expression of their own faith journey. What a blessing to experience this expression of the Holy Child charism blossoming in the United States!

### International Day of Prayer

Associates throughout the United States gathered in groups or prayed alone for this first International Day of Prayer. The responses were similar for Associates no matter the format. Sharing in prayer with Associates throughout the Society was experienced as a powerful way of being one! Even when the Associate was not gathered with others, there was the realization that their prayers were joined with many others. To raise prayers to our loving God for all the petitions requested by the SHCJ Associates Society-wide was voiced as a significant expression of our solidarity and of bringing us closer to one another.



Associate commitment at Rye: back row who made initial commitment (l-r) Ursula Duffy, Kim Nguyen, Tricia Fell, Eileen Dorman, and Kathy Tatlow Front row, Gail Ferraiolo and Sr. Rosemary McSorley



Sr Carol Ann Knight giving the Associate pin to (l-r) Judy Talvacchia, Juliet Njoku, Stephanie and Bob Griffin

*“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 God's presence.”*



Living the Mission gathering in Pasadena Associates and Sisters during a time of prayer



Talcahuano

### *Holy Week mission with four Associates to the earthquake zone in Chile*

After the earthquake and tsunami of February 27, I went down to Talcahuano near the epicentre where some members of my family live. Seeing that they were unharmed and that their basic needs were met, I felt an urgent desire to reach beyond the family circle to people in more critical circumstances. I knew of parishes whose church and chapels were destroyed and where the priest, like the people, was homeless. Yet the priest was ordained to be for his community the consoling and strengthening presence of the Lord. I wanted to go to such a place and do the same, but at the moment it wasn't possible.

But the Lord paid attention to my desire. When I returned to Santiago, I was invited to join a group from different religious communities formed to help parishes live the Holy Week liturgies in the setting of their ruined communities. Four associates wanted to go with me so we became a team, María Baeza, Irene Figueroa, Nilda Lopez, Isabel Mella and I.

We arrived at our assigned barrio, El Sauce, Villa Alegre, 7<sup>th</sup> Región, to discover that, contrary to our expectations, the chapel and houses were still standing. But all were damaged and some were marked for demolition. Another discovery: the parish priest would not be with us. The Holy Week liturgies were left in our hands, along with the Lord present in the consecrated hosts confided to our care.



Washing of the feet -  
Associate Nilda López

Our first task was to visit the people, house to house, to invite their participation in the Holy Week liturgies. On Holy Thursday, we gave out bread and grapes and, as far as we could, followed the order of the Holy Thursday Liturgy including the washing of the feet. The people were shy but enthusiastic and very willing to participate. On Good Friday we did the Way of the Cross with different people reading at each station. The day before, we had asked them to make their own crosses and to write on them some sorrow or pain they were enduring. At the adoration of the cross each one joined his or her cross to the Lord's cross while the choir sang "As clay in the hands of the potter". This was the part that moved me most. It was a solemn moment of deep recollection. Tears overflowed, our own included.

On the morning of Holy Saturday we gave a retreat, and at the evening Vigil of the Resurrection, we made a bonfire from which candles were lit in the darkened chapel. We held them through a series of readings which took on a powerful relevance in the actual setting. Resurrection hope carried over to Sunday when the parish priest joined us for the Easter Mass.



It was wonderful, the whole experience. Something we will never forget as long as we live.



Front Row: Associates Maria Baeza and  
Nilda López  
(Nancy Bello is in 2nd row right)

The aftershocks continue and threaten even more damage, but there are also aftershocks of the spirit. The people carry emotional wounds – fear, impotence, desperation. The best service we could offer was to listen with the Lord's compassion and care as adults and teenagers poured out their stories.

When we set out from Santiago we prayed: Lord, our hands are yours to bring comfort, our feet are yours to walk with your brothers and sisters who are suffering. We thought we would find material devastation – rubble and makeshift tents – but what we discovered were broken hearts and broken lives. We feel a commitment to this community. We pray for them and hope to return.

# Dominican Republic

By Ann-Joyce Peters, SHCJ

Our community is comprised of 14 associates and 4 "Cornelians" (those who are interested in developing their spiritual life and in getting to know the Society). Most of us either collaborate or work in *Batey Lechería* in different areas (the clinic, the school, catechism) and in the retreats. (A *batey* is a kind of rural ghetto where many Haitians live.) The associates as such meet monthly for Sunday dinner during which we share what our month has been like and how our spiritual life has been; after the meal we welcome the Cornelians who come to this session to deepen their spiritual life and to get to know the Society of the Holy Child Jesus and Cornelia Connelly. In our March 28th meeting we used the readings and reflections from the **International Day of Prayer of the SHCJ Associates for March 25, 2010** which we appreciated very much and found most helpful. In July we will have an outing combining recreation and an evaluation of the year 2009-2010, with suggestions for 2010-2011.



## Response-Ability by Lauren O'Gara

Haiti is famously known for being the poorest country in the western hemisphere. And right next door, Haitians are considered the poorest people in the Dominican Republic. The Society, with the help of volunteers from Response-Ability (RA), the Society's lay volunteer program, has had the privilege of opening and operating a school and clinic in a small Haitian community, *Batey Lecheria*, outside of the capital of Santo Domingo. The sisters, alongside RA volunteers and local Dominicans, work to provide the community with basic literacy, health care, and assistance with documentation and other services to give the people a better sense of dignity and quality of life.



As a volunteer, I have had a unique opportunity to experience Christian community, the simple life, and service of the poor. We live with the sisters and share with them their work and prayer. We also try to live simply by sharing in our neighbors' experience of limited running water and electricity. Volunteers serve as teachers in the school, but are also given the opportunity to pursue our own projects and serve the community in other ways. This year, among the four volunteers, we have started a young girls group, a youth group, taught women basic literacy and math skills, and helped the clinic's nutrition program.

Accompanying the poor has proved challenging. As a volunteer, I have witnessed child beatings and felt frozen and helpless to stop it. I have seen children die from malnutrition and children's parents die from AIDS. I have felt frustrated as an untrained teacher faced with children with severe behavioural problems and learning disabilities. But I have also experienced beauty and joy here. I have watched a child smile as he read his first book. I have accompanied a woman to a sonogram appointment to hear that her child is healthy. I have hugged, encouraged, and played with children every day to show them that someone loves them and believes that they can take control of their own lives. *Batey Lecheria* has taught me that poverty is a complex and painful thing, but it has also helped me to see God and to love His people.



Katie DiSalvo & Lauren O'Gara hold a batey baby

# EUROPE

Jenny Banks-Bryer

In 2010 the European Associates have taken forward with enthusiasm the impetus of last year's memorable International meeting in Mayfield. In September we celebrated the last event of Cornelia's anniversary year by "A Picnic with Cornelia" at Edgbaston and at the Mass which concluded our day we were delighted to inaugurate Sophie Rudge as our new co-ordinator, with Shaunah Murrell taking over as treasurer. In February Sophie and the Core team met with the PLT in London and at the end of the month a group of Associates travelled through the snow to Yorkshire for a Lenten retreat at, the Benedictine monastery of Ampleforth. On March 25<sup>th</sup> groups of Associates throughout England met for our first International Associates' day of prayer. This idea, which had been suggested at Mayfield in 2009, seems an excellent way of keeping in touch with our friends in other provinces and we are most grateful to Cathi Duffy, USA co-ordinator, for the liturgy which she provided for us to share. Our most recent meeting was the "wedding feast" week-end in April where we returned to Hawkstone Hall. Our theme for reflection, highly relevant in this pre-election period, was "The Ethics of Wealth Creation",



Julie Courtney, Barbara Parkhurst, Sophie Rudge at Barbara's Commitment at Hawkstone Hall

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ably and amusingly led by Helen Costigane SHCJ. Celia Capstick has taken on specific responsibility for Social Justice issues on the Core team and she and Anne Stewart SHCJ offered a group discussion period, while Betsy Keating held a workshop on reflexology. At our planning meeting on Sunday morning, it was resolved that a sub-committee led by Julie Courtney should take forward ideas and planning towards a further international meeting in the future.

**CONGRATULATIONS to the newly elected Society Leadership Team:**

**Veronica Openibo, Society Leader  
Monica Adigwe, Carmen Torres, Carmel Murtagh  
Team Members**

**THANKYOU to all the Associates  
from Geraldine, Carolyn, Monica and Barbara  
for your prayers and support during their six years  
of leadership in the Society 2004-2010.**

Chris and Louise are our two "pilots" for the Cornelian Exchange scheme (*Step into the Gap*) which is being sponsored by the Society and Associates in conjunction with CAFOD's young leadership programme. They came to Hawkstone Hall to share with us their experiences in Nigeria where they had spent some time with SHCJ communities in Lagos and Jos.



Louise Cross & Chris White

Their first few weeks were spent in the south in the humid heat of Lagos. They stayed with the SHCJ in Keffi Street and went each day to Ajegunle. There they visited primary and secondary schools and a Women's Centre all run by SHCJ. They taught the children about Blackpool (where they come from) and played endless games of 'head, shoulders, knees and toes'! In Jos, in the cooler north, again staying with the Holy Child Sisters, they spent more time with the CAFOD projects one of them being water catchment. There they saw whole communities pulling together regardless of race, tribe, and religion to build better futures because now they have hope, they have water. (*The situation in Jos is now somewhat different and needs prayer.*)



**Africa**

By Maria Nwosu



Bishop of Maiduguri, a new associate

These pictures were taken during our last National Meeting at the Society of the Holy Child Jesus Centre for Renewal, Jos. Associates decided to embark on a number of outreach activities, such as visiting some of the HIV/AIDS patients especially the children in Jos and the environs. We also decided to levy ourselves and then purchase some foodstuffs, such as cereals and protein items e.g.



powdered milk etc. to be donated to these children. Also the Associates in Jos inaugurated the Friends of the Society of Holy Child Jesus to create awareness to the people around in Plateau State. Secondly, some envelopes were distributed to each member to help raise funds for the completion of the new Holy Child Jesus Conference Centre in Jos. Besides this project, I had made some contact, while I was in Germany for a Conference, with a funding body in Aachen, Germany, to procure some financial assistance towards the construction of another Centre for Youths and a Secondary School in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, to be run by the Society. Application for this was sent by the SHCJ Provincialate in Lagos. We are still expecting the outcome of the application.



The picture with the newly inaugurated Bishop of Maiduguri was taken in Jos during the silver jubilee of one of the indigenous priests which we (the Associates who participated at the National Meeting in Jos) attended because it took place around the same time viz: Sr. Irene, Sr. Justina, Sr. Emmanuela SHCJ, Lilian, Queen, Eddy and I. The third photo includes a couple, Dr. Oguiche and his wife who have indicated interest to join the Association. Associates all joined in prayer on the feast of the Annunciation of our Lord March 25, which was observed as our International Day of Prayer. We in Nigeria, prayed in a special way for Peace in Jos, where there has been a lot of political disturbances.



Our future plans include outreach programmes to the less privileged such as HIV patients who are usually stigmatised by the community where they live, both young girls and boys who fall prey to Human traffickers etc. We plan to go to Kenya to visit one of our Associates, Betty Wanyoike for an International Associates' Gathering. We are also happy to announce that we have a new Associate from Chad.