

Associates' International News Exchange

May 2011

Society of the Holy Child Jesus



Africa *Maria Nwosu*

Our deepened sense of unity is a source of new energy to hear and respond to God's continuing call with renewed passion and zeal, and so we begin again...

SHCJ 26th General Chapter Enactments 2010



Casa Cornelia
Via della Maglianella 379
00166 Rome, Italy

Editorial team: Carmel Murtagh, SHCJ, Louisa Huni-Dadzje, SHCJ and Sharon Risoldi

In a small but heart warming ceremony at SHCJ Oghara Community, Delta State, Nigeria, two new Associates, Lilian Agofure and Mary Queen Ekong, made their commitment as Associates to the Society of the Holy Child Jesus on March 26, 2011. Rev. Fr. Gregory E. Mukoro, who is the Assistant Parish Priest officiated at the Mass. It was also the feast of St Joseph and the SHCJ Sisters present as well as the Directoress of Associates, Maria Nwosu, heartily cheered and danced with the new Associates.

The number of Associates in the African Province has increased to about thirty. The largest group is to be found in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. Our future programme of events will include an outreach activity in Chad, where one of our Associates is residing.

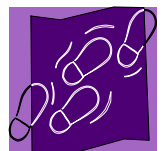
This year, the *International Day of Prayer for SHCJ Associates*, March 25, 2011, for all SHCJ Associates was observed by all the African Province Associates in their different communities. SHCJ Sisters shared some quiet moment with the Associates at the Centre for Renewal and the Novitiate, Jos, (Nigeria). We also exchanged messages of goodwill with one another.



SHCJ Oghara community with new Associates and Maria Nwosu



Lilian Agofure (r) Maria Nwosu (center) Mary Queen Ekong (l)



America *Cathi Duffy*



Sharing our Stories, Rosemont

This year, the highlight was the printing of the Associates publication, *Incarnational Spirituality*, by Judy Talvacchia. Starting with Cornelia's own words from the foundation text, we had a chance to reflect on these words and their meaning in our own lives today. Aspects of Cornelia's life are also weaved into any sharing on this book. We see her life experience as wife and mother, the joy and the sorrow, coming through these texts. This book is another reminder that Cornelia's life and her writings seem especially relevant and inspirational for our lives in the 21st century! Copies have been distributed in both English and Spanish to SHCJ Sisters and Associates throughout the American Province and elsewhere in the Society. The feedback has been extremely positive; we hope to publish additional resources in the future.



Judy Talvacchia



Regional Gathering in Rye—Sharing our Stories

Sharing Our Stories was the theme for our regional gatherings and newsletters this year. Regional gatherings are being held from March through August. The chapter resources on the Incarnation have been the basis for reflection and sharing.

Many Associates gathered locally for our second International Day of Prayer for SHCJ Associates. All were grateful to Maria Nwosu, Director of SHCJ Associates for the African Province, for providing the prayer.

Cornelia is so relevant for these times. She was a mother and wife before becoming a foundress so she knows our lives and tribulations all too well.

Planning is beginning for a national gathering in late spring 2012.

Dominican Republic *Ann-Joyce Peters, SHCJ*

This year our Associates had two important visitors: the first was Cathi Duffy who came in December, and believe me, they felt so honored having the Coordinator of the Associates in the United States visit and attend their meeting! Cathi wrote a lovely report about her visit here which was very encouraging!

Our second visitor was Nancy Bello, SHCJ, who came in February and who dedicated a whole day to the Associates, leading them in a one-day retreat, the theme of which was "God loves, God calls, and God sends forth." Included in the retreat was the renewal of the Associates' commitment on the part of three persons who were not able to be with us in January. One of those persons is a



Nancy Bello giving one-day retreat

new Associate this year, *Yoselin Suriel*. The participants of this one-day retreat were the 14 associates and 4 "Cornelians" who attend the monthly meetings to learn about the SHCJ in preparation for becoming Associates, if they so decide.

Response-Ability Volunteer Sarah Hutchinson



Sarah Hutchinson teaching

I arrived in Batey Lecheria in August 2010 to work as a teacher in a Haitian migrant worker community, not knowing that I would end up learning much more than I would teach. We are four American volunteers living in community and working with a team of Dominican teachers. Our school, Escuela de Santo Nino Jesus, is home to some 200 students. In the morning we serve



as a public school with pre-school and kindergarten aged children and in the afternoon we switch modes to an after-school "Sala de Tarea" (homework help) program. We see a wide age-range of students throughout the day, from four to eighteen years old. They are the most beautiful children I have ever had the pleasure of working with. Despite all of the hardships they face everyday (many come to school without having eaten, others walk over an hour to reach the school) they still come eager to learn and are always willing to give you a smile and a hug. This year is the first year where youth from Lecheria are working in the school as teachers assistants. They are so helpful and really give you a glimpse of the bright future of Lecheria!

Besides the day-to-day school activities, we were fortunate to be visited this year by an organization called *Water is Life*. Not only did they come to inform the community of healthy water practices, they also began a project to install a new water pipe system in the community to deliver water into more homes and to keep the water cleaner. It was a miracle to see the community come together from beginning to end as the project included ripping a trench into all of the main streets of the community.



In January I was asked to work one-on-one with a 4-year-old boy in our pre-school class.



His name is *Antony* and he was diagnosed as severely deaf. In November, through donations from a local hospital and the work of Sr. Kathleen King he received hearing aids. Since receiving the hearing aids his understanding and communication have improved exponentially. Before he would not even respond to his name being called. Now he can speak in a normal tone and respond to simple questions and commands. Together we are working mostly in math, but other days we do vowel sounds and animal noises (he makes a pretty good sheep's baaa!). In math we have been counting to 6; he can repeat 1-6 and can identify 1-4. Slowly but surely!

It is truly amazing how much he has grown academically and socially in such a short amount of time.

Working here in Lecheria is truly an inspiring experience and is something that I will carry with me forever. I am grateful to the community for accepting me so warmly into their lives.



Chile María Baeza, Irene Figueroa, Isabel Mella

translated by Elizabeth Mary Strub SHCJ

A year has passed since the great earthquake of March 2010 and the Holy Week mission of that year to the disaster area. Since then several Associates with Nancy Bello, SHCJ, have returned each month to maintain contact with the people and bring material and spiritual help. Here is their testimony.

"A year after the experience of having accompanied those who suffered the consequences of the earthquake, we can say we've received as much as we've given. Without doubt, for some of us, it was difficult in the beginning to leave the comforts of our



The missionaries look for good spots along the roads of Sauce for stops on the Way of the Cross. (Jaime, Adrián, Cecilia, Isabel, Gabriela, Delfina, associates and people from the parish of Santo Tomás)

homes, but in the earthquake zone we felt alive and joyful. We were with God's people, walking among them and sharing their pain. This experience is what has given us strength to go on mission, month after month, forgetting for the time being what we have left behind – homes, children and families.

This year, the Holy Week mission was very fruitful. There are now eleven of us – Delfina, Gabriela, Loreto, Ascensión, María, Nilda, Isabel and Adrián, Irene and Jaime and Sr. Nancy. New people from Santo Tomás, our home parish, came with us for the first time. A real achievement was the inclusion of two husbands as missionaries. A group of young people from Sauce, where we missioned this year, joined us as Holy Week missionaries and came with us to Puntagán. We were able to rally the people



Good Friday Way of the Cross in procession

to the Holy Week services, several of which we conducted ourselves. It was thrilling to see how the Lord does his work because of and in spite of us.

For us Associates, it was a rich experience, a really wonderful one. We were conscious of an always faithful God living and acting in each one of us. This is what made it possible for us to show belief in the people and give them encouragement and strength. We tried to make God's love for them a felt reality.

Within our group we gave priority to daily prayer together. Acting as one and sharing our experiences with one another helped us in difficult moments, moments of fear, discouragement, frustration or simple exhaustion. Each one's difficulty was different, but listening together to God's word in scripture would revive us.

We thanked Cornelia for her courageous spirit. She was in our thoughts each day, helping us to overcome our fears. With her we would begin each day in a peace which allowed us to recognize the Risen Christ in the hearts of the people. And Cornelia's example strengthened our faith and gave us the desire to continue in her footsteps.

As SHCJ missionaries, we fully believe in a God who is love and who came for those with the greatest need for God's love. We hope in this God who shows us so clearly that his son Jesus is our way, our truth and our life.



In the center is a woman of Peñazco who will prepare one of the Stations of the Cross in her house. (L to R: Delfina, Isabel, Jaime, la Señora Iris, Nilda, Gabriela, Loreto)

Europe *Jenny Banks-Bryer*



Associates in the Winter Garden at Hawkstone Hall beginning Palm Sunday liturgy

This has been an interesting year for all SHCJ Associates in Europe and beyond. We welcomed a new Society Leadership Team last summer and now, in 2011, a new Provincial Leadership Team in UK. We thank the outgoing team and feel sure that we shall enjoy similarly happy and productive work with their successors, led by Sister Monica Matthews. We have followed with interest all the developments outlined in the literature provided by the Society concerning the 26th General Chapter and its outcome. The theme "So ought all to begin again" was taken up at both our major meetings: in September 2010 at Oxford, Sister Judith

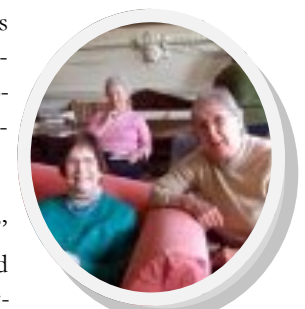


Carolyn Green, SHCJ and Pauline Crook

Lancaster outlined the ways in which the SHCJ and through them the Associates can develop the incarnational charism which is the hallmark of the Society. The global outreach and the commitment to human values in the context of creation all strike deep chords with our Associates. We

developed this understanding further during our Hawkstone Hall weekend in April 2011 looking in particular at the the challenge of the Lay Vocation in the Church of today. We were greatly helped in our reflection by the resource pack produced by the SHCJ committee and fortunate that Anne Stewart, one of the team, was on hand to guide us through it. We were also delighted that Sister Carolyn Green was able to attend and look forward to her joining our Core group as one of the Society's links to the Associates. Several of the Birmingham-based Associates were able to take part in one way or another in the excitement of the Papal visit to Britain last September, as described in our last newsletter.

Future events for 2011 include a retreat at Douai abbey and a meeting in Salford. The "Step into the Gap" scheme initiated by Sister Anne and the Associates in partnership with CAFOD is continuing to flourish and we are committed to fund-raising both for that and for the homeless centre in Salford. The various prayer-groups around the country continue to meet regularly and took part in the *International Day of Prayer for SHCJ Associates* last March 25th, using a liturgy prepared by the African Associates. Our turn in 2012! We keep in mind our friends and sister-Associates particularly those in Nigeria and Chile who have experienced great trials in recent times and look forward to continuing contacts in as many ways as modern technology and time-honoured prayer make possible.



Celia Capstick, Moira Redfern and Freda Ogunade