



SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN PROVINCE

SUMMER 2010
VOLUME VIII, ISSUE III

For those Associates without emails, let me share with you some recent news:

Over 20 Associates have affirmed a formal commitment as Associates for the first time in 2010. We are grateful that so many are ready to commit to intentionally live the Holy Child spirit and mission in their everyday lives.

We are finishing up a very successful Annual Appeal with over \$6,000 donated to date. Due to this generosity of Associates, we were able to print copies of Incarnational Spirituality for all Associates and Sisters in the American Province. Thanks to all who participated!

Anita Martineau completed 3 years as chair of the Core Team. We are grateful for her generous service to the Associates. The new Executive Committee of the Core Team includes:

Chair	Linda Mennis
Vice Chair	Marilyn Nigro
Secretary	Judy Talvacchia
Treasurer	Kathy Gibbons

If you do have an email and would like to receive our monthly eUpdates and Prayer Requests, please send an email to cduffy@shcj.org.

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SHARING OUR STORIES

This year we will be SHARING OUR STORIES as a way to grow deeper in our relationships with one another and with our Loving God. When the Core Team was asked for theme ideas for the upcoming year, SHARING OUR STORIES evolved as the clear choice.

It is something that we can spend a lot of time doing in the normal course of our life. We hope this year we'll delved under the surface of our stories to retrieve the insights and countless blessings that are embedded in each.

Some of us are born storytellers while others of us are not as comfortable, needing to be coaxed to share the numerous stories that are our lives, the stories that shaped us into who we are today. We'll explore the dimensions in which the Holy Child spirit and mission are integral to the story and/or our understanding of the story.

One of the first opportunities to Share our Stories will be an Associates weekend at Stone Harbor in late October. See page 5 for details.

After three successful regional gatherings in 2010, the Core Team decided that we will again plan for regional gatherings in 2011. We'll look to 2012 for planning any national gathering. SHARING OUR STORIES will be the theme. If you have gifts that would helpful with planning and/or organizing a local event, Cathi Duffy hopes that you will offer your assistance. Many hands make light work (or at least we hope it does!) Cathi is grateful for the many Associates who were involved in planning and organizing our Living the Mission regional gatherings this year. They could not have happened without your help.

Cathi would also like to hear from you about when is a good time to hold the regional gathering in your area.

To reach Cathi Duffy, you can send an email (cduffy@shcj.org) or her phone info is included in the Associates Directory.

Give us, O Lord, a love full of action

Poetry Off the Shelf will return in our Autumn issue. We are grateful for Barbara's dedication to this newsletter and look forward to her fall articles.

Actions not Words: Sharing our Stories - Cindy Platko

Editor: Cindy and Greg Platko returned for another visit to the Dominican Republic in late June/early July. Here is an update from Cindy on the projects she helped to create and nurture. What a difference each of these endeavors is creating for the women and children - for the families of the Lecheria!

What's New in Batey Lecheria, Dominican Republic?

Nutrition Program

The nutrition program continues to run in 2 phases. The "Growth Monitoring" program monitors all children from birth to age 5 yrs old, at regularly scheduled intervals, for signs of malnutrition. The second phase is the "Nutrition Program" which provides nutritional supplements and closer monitoring to the identified malnourished children. Many of the malnourished children from last year are now in a healthy weight range and have "graduated" from the program.

The overseer of this program, Dr. John McClennan of Canada came to Lecheria with 3 students in July, 2010. The projects they are working on this summer are:

- to add a component that monitors for and treats anemia,
- to study barriers to attendance of the Growth Monitoring Program and
- to complete a census of all the children under age 5 years old in Lecheria.

While we were down there with John and his team,

we also worked out a system to have the sickest children assessed by a Pediatrician if they are not growing even with the supplements.

The Nutrition Program is identifying malnourished and at risk children early on and, I believe, is getting many fragile children "over the hump". Our future goals are to include an educational component for the mothers about many early childhood topics.

Jewelry Project

About 20 women continue to meet weekly. I brought a suitcase full of jewelry back. The women were paid for the jewelry that was sold from January until June of this year. The quality of the jewelry continues to improve!

Sock Doll/Sewing Project

Six (6) women have continued on their own to meet weekly and improve their skills in making sock dolls/animals. I was impressed with the improvements they have made. We will be working with them again on our next trip in January or February.

Thank you all for your ongoing support and prayers of the SHCJ mission in Lecheria, RD

For more info and photos of Greg and Cindy's visit, see their blog <http://domrepadventure.blogspot.com/>. You can also find an update from Greg on the feasibility of roof repairs and other happenings in Lecheria! Do check it out...



Book Recommendation



Fr. Mike Manning in *Fifteen Faces of God* takes us on "A quest to know God through the parables of Jesus". In his easy conversational tone, Fr. Mike explores in an unusual way the common parables that we have heard so many times. This book is meant for those of all faiths, or no faith, as a way of knowing

God the Father in a deeper way.

Read this on your own or as part of a faith-sharing group. Reflection questions are included in each chapter to enhance and facilitate sharing.

Fr. Mike Manning, SVD, is President of Wordnet Productions where Sr. Pat Phillips serves as Executive Director. He hosts a weekly program on TBN, is a popular speaker at various meetings and conventions, and now appears on a Vatican Observatory iPhone app entitled *Sermonettes*. To learn more about Fr. Mike Manning and Wordnet Productions, check out their website, www.wordnet.tv

Connecting with Cornelia and Charism: Sharing our Stories - Vero Openibo, SHCJ

True humility consists to a great extent in being ready for what the Lord desires to do with you and happy that He should do it.

St. Teresa of Avila

Kathy Gibbons caught up with Veronica while she was on holiday in the United States after the 26th General Chapter. Kathy first met Vero in Jos, Nigeria on Thanksgiving in 2003.

K: Vero, let me begin by congratulating you and stating the obvious: You have been elected Society Leader, the first African to hold that position. One might observe your life in the Society has been punctuated by numerous pioneering efforts: You were one of the first young sisters in Jos, the second African Province Treasurer, appointed to the Vice Provincial Council in 1983, first African Province Leader in 1986, first African on the Society Leadership Team from 1992 to 1998, and most recently first African Society Leader.

V: I thank God for choosing me and using me as an instrument in the ministry of leadership in the Society. For me it is nothing special, it just happened.

K: Tell me about your family.

V: I am the second child and oldest girl in a family of 11 children (2 boys and 9 girls).

I grew up in Lagos, Nigeria. My mom was in the first class of Holy Child College that was started in Lagos in 1945. I attended St. Mary's Primary School run by the Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) Sisters, then Lagos City College for secondary school. I graduated from the University of Jos in 1979 with a Bachelors degree in Education, having majored in English and Religious Studies. I subsequently was awarded a MA/MSW in Pastoral Ministry and Social Work (Clinical) from Boston College in 2001.

At 13, I was first conscious of feeling called to religious life because of my maternal grandmother's prayer for religious vocations and her additional prayer that she would never discourage any of her grandchildren from answering God's call. At the time, the Archbishop of Lagos was telling his own story encouraging young people to listen and ask questions if they feel they may be called to the priesthood or religious life. Later through our parish, I met the Daughters of St. Paul. I was attracted by their work in communication, especially their outreach to the youth. The desire grew in me over time. After secondary school, the Daughters of

St. Paul were unable to get formation personnel into Nigeria so they encouraged aspirants to seek out other communities. Three of us: Clementina Ashibuogwu, Josephine Olagunju and myself, sought out Holy Child and were welcomed with open arms by the Sisters.

K: How did you come to know the Holy Child Sisters?

V: While with the Daughters of St. Paul, we took classes with the Holy Child Sisters at Project Time. Sometimes, on the weekend, we would go to the beach with Catherine Hallahan and other SHCJ. What I remember is a pervasive spirit of joy of life and passion for the education of young girls and women! When I finally joined the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, my mum said she was very happy because "The Holy Child Sisters were like mothers to us in school." When I think about what appealed to me, it was:

- The way the Holy Child Sisters showed their love of people;
- The simple and humble way they shared love and joy; and
- The SHCJ spirit best captured in the words simplicity, humility, charity and joy.

My family supported me in my decision. My grandmother always prayed for vocations. I recall my mom's response when I told her I wanted to be a Holy Child Sister: "Go, but if you don't like it, my garri (which is a well-liked staple in a Nigerian diet) is here waiting for you."

K: What does the Chapter theme of something "new" mean to you?

V: For me, it means the Lord is inviting us, in this 21st century, to something that is new to us and to the world as a group. The composition of the team is new, new faces; after Cornelia died in 1879, it was 79 years before another American was elected Superior General (Mother Laurentia in 1958). Fifty-two years later in 2010, the first African is elected Society Leader.

The "new" is the way I hear people talk about "one Society in mission," it's a new vision of the whole. We, as a Society, have come a long way, we are learning to speak of the Society's new and aging members and not focus only on our individual provinces. We are talking about Strategic Planning

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Cornelia and Charism (continued)

for the whole Society and calling ourselves to a more directive leadership to accomplish General Chapter directives. I acknowledge that I stand on the shoulders of dedicated, faith-filled, well-focused women who inspired and continue to inspire me with the great things they have done for God and for humanity. The sankofa bird is an image that represents who we are and how we will go forward. The bird's head is turned backward, yet feet facing forward, the egg (precious and delicate) symbolizing how we will carry the wisdom of the past into the future.

K: Vero, you strike me as deeply grounded and confident in your self-identity, being truly SHCJ and authentically African.

V: Kathy, just as who you are today is a result of your experience as an American woman, a wife, mother, Associate, sibling, friend, and past student, so it is with me. I am a Nigerian woman, a Holy Child Sister, a friend, a colleague, a sibling. Just like you, I must continue to open myself to the creativity and energy of the Spirit.

K: What is your vision for the SHCJ Associates?

V: Collaborating and continuing to partner with our Associates in Mission throughout the world is critical. We enrich each other's lives as together we explore the incarnate mystery of the Mother and Child. When I met briefly with the Associates in Rye, what I heard them saying was the focus is on mission, that together we are creating the reign of God.

K: What "one" insight or phrase captures the "Holy Child family" for you?

V: Actions not Words! We are all called to, in Cornelia's words, "Be yourself, but make that self what God wants you to be." Be compassionate!

The Sankofa bird teaches us that we must go back to our roots in order to move forward. We should reach back and gather the best of what our past has to teach us, so that we can achieve our full potential as we move forward. Visually and symbolically "Sankofa" is expressed as a mythic bird that flies forward while looking backward with an egg (symbolizing the future) in its mouth.

A few SHCJ Sisters were asked for thoughts about Sr. Vero for this newsletter. The following three (3) short reflections give you a sense of how Sr. Veronica is known and loved in the American Province. Sr. Bernadette Longtin was Provincial Leader of the American Province when Sr. Veronica was Provincial Leader of the African Province.



Vero is definitely a "people" person. She enjoys meeting new people and getting to know them, she is a very "warm" and welcoming person and is extremely perceptive. Vero is a person who will stand up for what she believes despite the cost to herself. She has a wonderful sense of humor, loves to "bargain" whether it be for a new pair of shoes or the best piece of fish at the lowest price possible.

She is a woman of integrity and has had lived experiences with many different races, ethnic groups, cultures, ages and is able to adapt to these differences. She has a deep faith in God, a love of the Roman Catholic tradition and a profound spirituality with a strong commitment to the SHCJ mission "to help others to believe that God lives and acts in them and in our world, and to rejoice in God's presence."

Her past experiences in leadership roles, her training in clinical social work and in pastoral ministry will enable her to use her many personal gifts in meeting the current challenges in our world and in our Church and in implementing the direction of the 2010 SHCJ Chapter "One Society for Mission."

As Sr. Vero mentioned, she lived in the Boston area after her term on the Society Leadership Team in the 90s. Sr. Elizabeth Fitzmaurice who lives outside Boston shared the following:

I came to know Veronica well during her three years in the Boston area where she was an active participant in all things SHCJ. She spent one year of theological enrichment at Weston Jesuit School of Theology, and two years later she was awarded a Master's Degree in Social Work from Boston College.

I think of Vero as being of a very even disposition, an outgoing personality, thoughtful and sensitive, empathic, at home in her own skin, highly

relational person with a terrific capacity for remembering names of those whom she has met, as well as details of situations ...

a strong and independent thinker...a great sense of humor... contagious laugh...

open and forward looking ...

Her strong leadership qualities were recognized by the other

Nigerian provincials who elected her to head their Major Superiors Conference in Nigeria...

As I listened to her address to the delegates at the General Chapter, shortly after she had been elected Society Leader, it struck me that she really



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has been a trailblazer. Her varied experiences in the Society as the first African Treasurer, Provincial and General Councillor fully qualify her to be the first African Society Leader...

Vero's personal qualities, coupled with her varied experiences in the ministerial life of the Society, and with other congregations, will serve her well in her role as Society Leader.

Sr. Mary Ann Buckley has known Sr. Vero since 1986. They lived and worked together when Sr. Mary

Ann was the Society Leader and Sr. Vero was on the Society Leadership Team in Rome (1992-1998). Sr. Mary Ann shares:

Lots of words rush into my mind as I think about Vero -- she's great-hearted and gracious, with unfailing dignity and warmth; a loving tease able to poke fun gently at a personal foible or idiosyncrasy. And over time I discovered how strong and true her intuitions are; I learned to trust them. Vero's a valiant woman in the biblical sense!



SHARING OUR STORIES: GIFTS OF THE SEA FRIDAY OCT 29 - SUNDAY OCT 31, 2010 STONE HARBOR, NEW JERSEY \$95

This year we will be SHARING OUR STORIES as a way to grow deeper in our relationships with one another and with our Loving God.

One opportunity to come together is an October weekend in Stone Harbor at the SHCJ vacation house a time of companionship and quiet a time of prayer and reflection

FRIDAY - Plan to arrive late afternoon or early evening. We'll share dinner together and a simple evening prayer.

SATURDAY - After breakfast, we'll have prayer and faith-sharing and time for quiet until lunch. After lunch, we'll gather for prayer and sharing.

We'll attend Mass late Saturday afternoon and our evening will be a time for socializing.

SUNDAY morning will be a casual time as we prepare to leave after lunch. We'll gather for a closing prayer prior to lunch.

For questions, contact Cathi Duffy at CDUFFY@SHCJ.ORG or at the address below.

*REGISTER TODAY by sending a check payable to SHCJ ASSOCIATES to:
Cathi Duffy
SHCJ Associates, USA
1341 Montgomery Avenue
Rosemont, PA 19010*



LIMITED SPACE AVAILABLE SO REGISTER EARLY.

Meet the Associates by Barbara DeConcini

Editor's Note: SHCJ Associates Bob and Chris McHugh are one of several married couples that are SHCJ Associates.

BD: Tell us a little bit about yourself. (Where are you from? What is your work? Tell us something about your family and family life. What do you enjoy doing for fun and relaxation?)

Chris: I grew up in a quintessential Wisconsin conservative Lutheran family (think Prairie Home Companion). The lake district of south central Wisconsin was an ideal location for growing up safely and happily. I attended Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, Iowa, graduating in 1980 with a Bachelor's degree in politics and Spanish with a concentration in economics. I met Bob at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago, where I was working in the admissions office. After my day job, I spent my evenings teaching riding at a stable in the western suburbs.

Chicago was a wonderful location for fabulous restaurants and watching indoor and outdoor polo. After several years of dating we were married at St. James Catholic Church on the south side of Chicago. I suppose this was a seed which sparked a small interest in Catholicism (although it remained dormant for almost 20 years). Our marriage was absolutely beautiful, with friends from all religious traditions welcomed. Right after we married we moved to central Massachusetts (Leicester) where we lived for 11 years. Our children (Dan age 21, and Eileen age 17) were born in Worcester, MA. Shortly after Eileen's birth in 1993, we moved to North Carolina.

Bob: I studied metallurgical and materials engineering at IIT and have worked in the titanium and specialty metals industry my whole career. The metals we make are used in the most demanding environments such as high temperatures and high stresses or where corrosion might be a problem. I have been most fortunate in my job--steady employment in the technical, operations and commercial sides. When time permits I enjoy delving into a good book!

I grew up Catholic on the South Shore of Boston, when the renewal promised by Vatican II was confronting the comforting certainties of the status quo. My earliest memories of the Church are of this

tension between those who welcomed the changes as the Holy Spirit's breathing new life into the Church and those who pined for the Tridentine Latin Mass. One week my family would attend Mass in a brand new Church designed in the spirit of renewal, and the next week we were in Boston at a Latin Mass.

Chris: I work for myself at home doing medical transcription, which allowed the freedom to work while the kids needed me, or when they were sick.



Bob and Chris McHugh

It also allowed me to take care of our horse farm where we bred and trained European horses. Those days have passed, and we now have just a couple of old geldings enjoying their retirement years. I still enjoy the horses, gardening, and reading. We now have three dogs, thanks to Sr. Jay McCann, SHCJ, who gifted us with Jubilee (her little rescue dog) when she returned to Philadelphia. Jubilee has been a delight and has become invaluable company for our Chihuahua cross and our Great Dane!

Bob: My life has been dedicated to keeping the marriage alive and making sure the kids had a safe upbringing and good education. In hindsight, I probably have dwelled way too much on making sure there was food on the table, clothes on the backs and the promise of a decent education for the kids. I was raised to believe that this is what men do. From my perception, and what I had witnessed growing up, I could never quite reach the point in my faith journey to "give up it all and come follow me" or as the Gospel teaches us:

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin.

I saw too much despair from too many good people to believe that things would just work out for the best.

So I ran and worked as hard as I could so that my kids would never have to ever witness this despair. Since my wife, who was not Roman Catholic, was the best example of Christian faith I had witnessed



to date, I could never bring myself to believe that Church could only be found in any narrow definition that limited her involvement.

How did you come to know the Society?

Chris: After 20 years of marriage to Bob, I decided to join the Catholic Church. The decision was made after many years of interaction with the church, but particularly St. Luke Church in Mint Hill, NC. My children have been raised Catholic, and about 8 years ago I was attending a parent's session while my daughter attended faith formation classes. The group was led by Sr. Veronica Grover, SHCJ, who welcomed everyone to participate. Sr. Veronica was a woman concerned more with social justice and our similarities to other faith traditions than with differences. My interaction with Sr. Veronica, as well as the generous example set by my husband, Bob, started my faith journey toward the Catholic Church. I had finally found a spiritual home which felt like a perfect fit!

What attracted you to join the SHCJ Associates?

Chris: I was attracted to the Associates group primarily through Bob's interest. We had discussed the need for us, as laity, to acknowledge our baptismal responsibility and to be active members of the church. I can no longer simply follow but feel called to actively participate in the workings of our faith. I think that the Associates offer an opportunity for strength in numbers--a power-filled

way to share the gospel and to become the hands and feet and eyes of Christ for others.

How has being an SHCJ Associate affected your everyday life?

Chris: Bob and I have enjoyed 7 years participating in the RCIA team at St. Luke Church, learning more and more about our faith while walking a spiritual journey with each year's candidates and catechumens. This has probably been the single most rewarding endeavor in my spiritual life. I have received 10 times more than I could ever hope to give! I also enjoy working at the Charlotte Men's Shelter, preparing, cooking and serving upwards of 300 men on a bi-monthly basis. As our church has grown enormously, Bob and I have joined various small faith groups, designed to nourish us spiritually. All of our endeavors carry the flavor of generosity bestowed by the examples of Sr. Veronica and Sr. Jay McCann.

Bob: My connection to the Society revolves around one person, Sr. Veronica Grover, SHCJ. Her explanation of the faith and her example of how to live it is difficult to describe in words. All my misgivings and perceived conflicts with what I thought I knew and what the teachings of the Church are, melted away as she explained things so that reason and faith made sense and were not in conflict. What a relief this was of a heavy burden.

The Society is based in education and living through actions not words. Since coming in contact with the Society and the associates who live the mission, I have become overwhelmed with the concept that there is nothing more important than helping others "to believe that God lives and acts in us and in this world and that we should rejoice in God's presence." I am humbled by the witness of all I have met who are associated with this mission.

Reflecting...Sharing our Stories



We've read three different stories - Sr. Vero, Cindy & Greg Platko, Bob & Chris McHugh. Each in their own way tells part of their story in relationship to the Society.

- What about your own connection to the Society? What is that dimension of your story?

- How does the Associate relationship enhance your story?
- Where is God found today in your telling of the story?
- What is God revealing to you today in the telling of the story?

When you are ready, share your story and your insights with someone.

International News of Associates

Dominican Republic

During July the Associate outing combined recreation and an evaluation of the past year and suggestions for 2010-2011. The fine-tuning of the suggestions and election of a new coordinating group will take place in August.

Chile

Earthquake relief continues in Chile, and Sr. Nancy Bello and SHCJ Associates continue to make monthly pastoral visits to several communities in the earthquake zone. They share their reflections in a video entitled *La Reconstruccion de Corazones/ Rebuilding Hearts*. To view the video in Spanish goto <http://www.santoninojesus.org/conocenos.html#asociados>

For an English transcript, <http://www.shcj.org/documents/RebuildingHearts.pdf>

England

Jenny Banks Bryer wrote that "At our recent Core Group meeting, the SHCJ Associates of the European province, encouraged by the spirit of last year's International gathering at Mayfield, resolved to do all we can to work toward a future

International event - details as yet unspecified." If you have suggestions as to the "what, where and when such an event could take place" share your ideas with Cathi (associates-usa@shcj.org) and Jenny (jenny.banksbryer@gmail.com). Any suggestions or ideas are welcome.

The European Associates have decided to run a "100" Club to raise funds to support two students for a GAP year in Africa in conjunction with CAFOD. (CAFOD is the Catholic Agency For Overseas Development based in the United Kingdom. <http://www.cafod.org.uk/>)

Nigeria

The African Associates did not make it to Kenya in June as planned. They now plan to hold their next Regional meeting in Ghana or Chad. The new Conference Center in Jos is nearing completion. Jenny Banks Bryer (see England) wrote recently asking for ideas on the proposed International Gathering of Associates. Maria Nwosu, African Province Associates Director, wrote supporting the idea and suggested that it should be on the African continent.