



SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER

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Actions Not Words

Associates National Gathering, Rosemont, PA
June 22 - 24, 2012



*Saturday, June 23 at New Sharon: SHCJ Associates and Sisters at the National Gathering
For more photos, see pages 5 and 6. Enjoy!*

A Letter from the Director

Inside this issue

Letter from Director	1
Cornelia and Charism: Meeting the Wants of the Age	2
Actions not Words: So, Let Us Begin to Discern!	3
Photos	5,6
Muchas Gracias	7

*Poetry Off the Shelf and Meet
the Associates will return in the
Autumn issue*

Our June weekend was filled with time for prayer, reflection, and relationship building. Everyone had a wonderful time. We were blessed with Associates from Great Britain and Nigeria as well as Associates from Portland to Melrose, Pasadena to Charlotte. For all who came, thanks! Videos of the presenters are available. Let me know if you'd like the password for viewing the weekend events and/or would like a printed copy of the keynote.

Our focus now turns to the celebrations for the 150th Anniversary of the Society in the Americas.

Abundant blessings,

Cathi Duffly

Connecting with Cornelia and Charism: Meeting the Wants of the Age by Judy Talvacchia

One of the core values of the Holy Child Spirit is “meeting the wants of the age”, to use Cornelia’s words. Through the lens of the Incarnation, she understood that God entered human history not just for our personal salvation, but for the salvation of the world. Cornelia used the word “wants” in the sense of “needs”. What were the needs that were wanting, in fact begging to be met during her lifetime? After prayer and reflection, she focused on a particular need of her age – the education of girls in England and later in America. The challenge for us, as her followers, is to identify and meet the wants of our own age, using the lens of Incarnational Spirituality. Given the expanded worldview of the 21st century and almost instantaneous communication, this can be an overwhelming task! We are bombarded by a host of needs on the news, via the internet, even in the mail solicitations we receive.

During the recent Associate Gathering, Tobie Tondi, SHCJ gave a talk on Incarnation as Worldview. Her insights can help us address the needs of our modern world from the perspective of the Incarnation. She suggested that our understanding of the Incarnation must go beyond the life of the historical Jesus. She defined the Incarnation as “the continuous nurturing of creation” which consists of three “moments” – Creation, Jesus, The Kingdom of God. God created the world and everything in it, as we read in Genesis.



But, she said, “God left the task unfinished at the end of the story.” God’s creative action continues until the world is perfectly conformed to what God intended it to be. In what Tobie described as an “admirable exchange”, God made human beings in the divine image and charged them

“by design and invitation...to share in God’s creative and nurturing activity.” At a particular moment in time and history, the Second Person of the Trinity came among us as Jesus Christ. “He revealed who God is and who we, as human beings, are meant to become.” He extended God’s invitation to us to co-operate with the project of creation until the reign of God is fulfilled at the end of time as we know it.

Such an understanding of the Incarnation implies both responsibility and freedom. It invites us to look beyond daily life to the needs of the wider world. It challenges us to take responsible action to advance the reign of God in ways that may be beyond our comfort level. There are consequences to a passive approach. God has chosen to complete the work of creation in and through us. When we resist inner conversion and active response to God’s invitation, the process slows down. The more actively we join in the ongoing project of creation, the faster the Kingdom of God will be realized. Responsibility indeed!

However, there is great freedom in God’s invitation – we are not responsible for making the reign of God happen! Creation is still God’s project. God the Father still initiates creative action. Jesus Christ is still alive and offering his salvation. The Holy Spirit continues to animate the process of bring about the Kingdom of God. Our task is to recognize and respond to the needs we are called to address, whether our efforts have visible success or not. As Mother Teresa said, “We are called to be faithful, not successful.” And the prophet Isaiah reminds us that God is still in charge – “So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me, achieving the end for which I sent it.” (Is 55:11)

It sounds good in theory, but it still leaves us wondering where to even begin... The key is to allow ourselves to be led by God. The God who calls us to be co-creators will show us our part in the process, if we are open hearted. Cornelia had no master plan, no business plan, when she undertook the creation of a new religious society and the education of English girls. She relied utterly on God’s direction. She nurtured an open heart through her deep spirituality. Listen to her words:

“They only who listen hear the voice of God... is mine a listening soul?” (CC54:36)

“It is precisely because you are called to live busy lives, that you must lead a life of prayer.” (Spiritual Instructions)

“Nourished from the well-springs of this heavenly fountain, and fed in the pasture of His Divine Love, we are to run with ardor in the way that He has pointed out...” (SHCJ Rule)



Connecting with Cornelia and Charism (continued)

"The invitation comes from God, and to him you must give your answer..." (D73:209)

"Remember, of yourselves you can do nothing, but in God and for God and with God you can do all things." (D 74:362)

"Pray and have great confidence in God who will take care of his own work and guide and govern it by his Holy Spirit." (CC 7:6)

As Holy Child Associates, meeting the wants of the age is part of who we are – challenging as that may be. Each of us must discern our own call and response which can be as varied as each one of us. It can involve action as an individual or in community. Finding our place requires us to reflect specifically on what, when, where, why and how God is calling us. The Ignatian practice of spiritual discernment was very helpful to Cornelia in her journey. It can be of great practical benefit to us also, as a way of discerning which of all the concrete needs of the 21st century invite our response and how to go about taking action. In a companion article, Bryna Bozart will describe the practice and offer details on how to use it.

To sum up in Tobie Tondi's words, "We are charged with the building of the kingdom here and now. We are partners with God in its building...remember: we are made in the image of God, each and every one of us, and we are invited to participate in the continuation of creative, nurturing activity." May we Associates be committed to joining the Society in meeting the needs of our world through the lens of the Incarnation.

Questions for reflection:

1. How has your understanding of the "wants/needs of the age" changed since you first heard the phrase?
2. What actions taken by others have helped to advance the reign of God? How do their actions inspire you?
3. What actions have you taken in your life to meet the needs of the age? What might you be called to do now or in the future?
4. What spiritual practices help you to develop "a listening soul"?
5. What obstacles, either internal or external, hinder you from recognizing your call to meet the needs of the 21st century? To respond with concrete action?

Action Not Words: So, Let Us Begin to Discern! by Bryna Bozart

In the preceding article, Judy Talvacchia noted our communal desire to discern our own call within our commitment to SHCJ Association. This is both an invitation to a deeper relationship with God as well as a challenge to us to be open to the graces available in our response.



We know already that the way of St. Ignatius was an instrumental and primary source of reflection and prayer for Cornelia.

So, let us begin there. What better place to start our understanding of the process of discernment, than here, in the footsteps of Cornelia. And what better person to begin our exploration than... with a

Sister of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus: Carol Ann Smith, SHCJ. In her book, *Finding God in Each Moment*, which she co-authored with Eugene F. Merz, SJ, Sister Carol Ann writes of the steps involved in the process of discerning in this way:

- "Naming of the question, option, problem, issue about which one wants to discern..."
- Developing the necessary interior freedom and detachment from one's biases....
- Gathering and attending to the hard data of the facts...
- Framing a statement of the decision, action, issue to be discerned in such a way that one can view the option from the vantage point of its pros and its cons.
- Attending to the interior movement of God.

Action Not Words: So, Let Us Begin to Discern! (continued)

Let us sit for a moment and reflect upon these words...The question may now arise within us: How do I do this prayerful and quiet discerning in light of my desire to reflect and discern my calling, my response as a SHCJ Associate? Let us now turn to a Jesuit, as we can imagine that Cornelia did once and perhaps would today. In his book, *God's Voice Within*, Mark E. Thibodeaux, SJ highlights five significant points pertaining to the discernment process and the decisions we consequently will make:

1. "the degree of thoroughness within a discernment process depends upon the gravity of the decision and upon the time allotted to make the decision.
2. As I set out to live my commitment, it would be completely natural for me to have buyer's remorse.
3. Waiting for confirmation does not mean that I have certainty before I act.
4. I must have faith that God really will make a good come from any sincere choice of mine.
5. What is crucial, however, is that at any given moment, choose that which I believe to be the Magis [i.e., greater good]."

So, now we may be asking, what is all this saying? What does this say to me about my desire and my discernment process as I, as an individual reflect upon my calling to be a SHCJ Associate? And, the second question: how do I do this?

In her article, Judy has given some questions for us to ponder. As an example of the discernment process I have been naming, let us take the last question for our discerning:

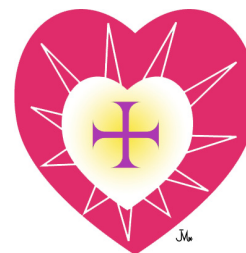
"What obstacles, either internal or external, hinder you from recognizing your call to meet the needs of the 21st century? To respond with concrete action?"

1. We start with the question, as Carol Ann Smith, SHJC suggests. What are the obstacles which hinder me from recognizing my call to meet the needs, as an Associate, of the 21st century?
2. I think about the possibility that there may be some biases I may be bringing to this discernment? I ask myself what is it? Am I free enough to accept the consequences of my decision? What are my fears?

3. What are my thoughts and feelings as I reflect? How am I praying about this? What is it about the call to recognize my obstacles in meeting the needs of the 21st century that bothers me? Do I fully recognize the needs? What else must I do to help me in this questioning. Should I seek someone to talk to about this?
4. Can I now state simply the cons and pros of the decision or action I should make? What do I feel when I think about the cons and the pros...When do I feel peace and when do I feel troubled as I imagine the results of my decision? How am I now understanding "the wants/needs of the age" in my prayer and discernment as they apply to me?
5. Can I take my decision to Cornelia? Is it in harmony with my identity and community as an Associate of the SHCJ? Do I need to sit down with other Associates and Sisters at this point in my processing? Am I at peace?

Now, let us wrap this up with some thoughts that I have taken from Mark E. Thibodeaux, SJ, as previously noted:

1. Have I spent sufficient attention to this question? Do I need to take more time? We know discerning is a process and we can always take more time.
2. Am I experiencing uncertainty about my choice? Am I in what Ignatius would call "desolation"...if so, this is not the right day or time to make a decision after all.
3. On the other hand, I can decide to go ahead with what I have believed to be the result of my discernment and trust God with it.
4. It comes down to having faith and believing in the Holy Spirit's movements within my prayer and in myself.
5. What really matters is that I give to God this choice as I have all the other choices in my life, and that I trust that God will do what God does to make it the praise I desire to give to God. Imagine then what it will be like when I have made the decision and taken the action to meet the needs of the 21st century in my community of Associates with the SHCJ!



Actions Not Words

Associates National Gathering

Rosemont, PA

June 22 - 24, 2012



Sr. Tobie Tondi
Keynote



Panelists: Sr. Anita Quigley, Peg Healy,
Sr. Veronica Grover, Juliet Njoku



Prayer table



Maria Nwosu (center) with a few SHCJ Sisters
and Associates



British Associates: Christina Leigh-Baker,
Veronica Chisholm, Victoria Ekubai



Participants in New Sharon Solarium



Sr. Mary George and Christina
Leigh-Baker - new friends



*Judy Talvacchia (new Core Team chair) addressing
participants*



Srs. Rosemarie Tedesco & Tobie
Tondi(back), with Stephanie Terril



*Michelle Dugan with Sr. Tese Curie (l) and Sr. Mary Hamilton (r) during her commitment (part of the Closing
Liturgy of our gathering).*



*Some Associates at the 2012 SHCJ Jubilee celebration (l-r): Kitty
Sheridan, Barbara DeConcini, Ed Silva, Kevin Smith, Kathy Gibbons,
Ursula Duffy, and Debbie Margulis*

Muchas Gracias from the Dominican Republic! by Cindy Platko

On behalf of the women of Lecheria, Republica Dominicana, I want to thank all of you for your support of the Jewelry and Sewing Projects. Thank you to Bob McHugh and the Charlotte Associates for their hard work in selling the handicrafts. Thank you sooo much to Barbara DeConcini for her commitment and tireless work with the women and the jewelry project. Thank you to Cathi Duffy for visiting the community and giving us opportunities to highlight the work of the women. And finally thank you to all the other Associates who continue to purchase, wear and give as gifts, the handiwork of the women of the Batey.

After 10 years in Lecheria, I can definitely see the fingertips of God all over the community, much in the shapes of your own hands. I am blest to be able to see the smiles on their faces as I hand them the money they have made from the sales of their

jewelry and dolls. I see women working together, talking and laughing together, where once there was only mistrust and competition. With your support to the community, the work of the SHCJ sisters, Srs. Anita, Kathleen and MaryAlice, can grow and thrive.

One of the greatest gifts for me, is seeing the young women of the Batey begin to learn to make jewelry and sew. For them, there is hope and healthier opportunities to provide a better life for their own children one day.

The women are now setting up shop for the groups that come down from the US. They have made nearly \$1000 by selling their artwork in the community center right there!

Thank you again!



The women selling their dolls and jewelry to a group from Texas who was working in the community



an aspiring doll maker

*Generosity, generosity, generosity
must be the beginning and ending of life.*

Cornelia 54:13

SHCJ Associates, U.S.A.

A ministry of the American Province of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus

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***Don't spend your life as a
museum-keeper. Instead
strive to be God's gardener,
tending the ever-growing,
ever-changing gift of
Creation and Church.***

John XXIII