



SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN PROVINCE

WINTER 2012
VOLUME X ISSUE I



You will notice a change in this issue. We have switched the order of the articles "Cornelia and Her Charism" and "Actions Not Words". During 2012, Judy Talvacchia and Bryna Bozart are teaming up to bring us a series of articles that reflect suggestions from the 2011 Associates survey. Judy will be the featured author for "Cornelia and Her Charism" and then Bryna Bozart will follow with a possible method for reflection and prayer in "Actions Not Words". I hope that you will find the articles enlightening and beneficial for your own spiritual journey. They would love to have you share reflections so please do contact them either at associates-usa@shcj.org or by writing to the address on the last page.

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A Letter from the Director

Dear Associates,

This past month has been a time of highs and lows for us.

On January 14th, six Associates made formal commitments in Melrose (MA). Shirley Samson, Jessie Suozzo, Marie Ryan, Barbara Bernardi, Ann Donovan, and Anne Hackett made their commitments in the chapel at St. Mary's Parish. Srs. Mary Samson, Elizabeth Clarke, and Virginia Gaine were present for the celebration as were some close friends of the Associates. I was glad for the mild winter that allowed this commitment to happen in the middle of a New England winter!

You should have received information about our National Gathering "Actions Not Words" for late June in Rosemont. I hope that many of you will be able to attend. Gathering Associates from throughout the country is indeed special. It strengthens our connections as well as creating new bonds that carry us forward. We hope that many Sisters will also join us. Do invite family and friends who also have that Holy Child spirit and may enjoy this special weekend. Early registration ends on February 28th so send your registration now to get the reduced rate.

We again will celebrate a SHCJ Associates' International Day of Prayer on March 25, the feast of the Annunciation. This year, we'll receive a prayer service from the Associates in the European Province. Make plans now to share in this day with other Associates if possible. I'll get the prayer to you as the date approaches.

On a sad note, Connie Bush died on January 30th after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Connie exuded the Holy Child spirit until the end. She was a key member of the team that began to organize the Associates nationally 10 years ago and would often be at Associate events in both Rye and Rosemont. Let us continue to pray for her family and for the students and faculty of Cornelia Connelly Center in New York City where Connie had worked since its founding in 1993.

I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this:
Blessed are those who die in the Lord."
"Yes," said the Spirit, "let them find rest from their labors,
for their deeds accompany them." (Revelations 14:13)

Connie had many deeds to accompany her! May she rest in peace.

Cathi Duffy

Connecting with Cornelia and Charism: Holy Child Spirit by Judy Talvacchia

What exactly is the Holy Child spirit? It is something that has proven hard to define in words. But anyone who has experienced Holy Child Spirit, recognizes it when they come upon it again. Many Associates who responded to the questionnaire asked for more information on this topic. As a graduate of St. Leonard's Academy and an Associate, I will offer my understanding and experience of Holy Child Spirit. My hope is that you will use this as a springboard for your own reflection.

What makes Holy Child Spirit unique yet elusive? The roots of the Holy Child Spirit go back to Cornelia Connelly's original insights into the mystery of the Incarnation. In an early draft of the preamble to the constitution, Cornelia says: "And what more sublime teaching can we find among these mysteries than that of the Incarnation?" The mystery of the Incarnation is vast, but Cornelia believed that in the Holy Child she could find the way to enter into the mystery. She was struck that the Creator of all things had such compassion and love for creation that God's response was to enter the world as a child. In a later version of the preamble, Cornelia expressed her insight in these words:

"In the humble and hidden life of the Holy Child Jesus, we find mysteries of the most sublime teaching. Here it is that God manifests to us in the most wonderful manner the treasures of His mercy and of His boundless love."

Cornelia's response to this gracious gesture of God was to extend God's compassion and love to those whose lives she and the Society would touch. It is in the specific ways that she chose to live out the spirituality of the Incarnation that I believe the Holy Child Spirit was born. I cannot understand Holy Child spirit apart from Incarnational Spirituality and I find that Incarnational Spirituality helps me to put my experience of the Holy Child Spirit into words.

When I think of Holy Child Spirit, the first words that come to my mind are "home" and "family". I experienced St. Leonard's Academy as being like home and I felt like I was part of the family. Certainly Cornelia's experience as a wife and mother influenced the way SHCJ schools were run. Cornelia explicitly told her sisters to be like mothers to the children and I did experience a nurturing environment in which I could grow in every way.



At this point in my life, however, I also see the atmosphere I experienced as also rooted in Incarnational Spirituality. St. John's gospel says "the Word was made flesh and lived among us" (literally "pitched his tent among us"). Jesus did not just make a glorious appearance in our world and then disappear. He lived among us within a human family, experiencing all of the joys of human living as well as all of its limitations. The love of Mary, Joseph and his extended family nurtured and supported him so that he could grow in "wisdom, age and grace before God and people".

Cornelia knew the joys and sorrows of family life. She thought of her home as a "little Bethlehem". When suffering intruded, she found solace and strength in the nurturing love of God whose son Jesus Christ had known suffering in his human life. She brought to the Society both her family life and her insights into the Incarnation. She integrated her life experience with her experience of God's compassionate love made flesh in the Holy Child. She saw particular traits in the Holy Child that merited imitation by her sisters and by the students in their schools:



- Simplicity – a personal integrity which is free of pretention and focuses on the important things in life, i.e. the things of God.
- Humility – imitating the "hidden and humbled God" who willingly took on every aspect of human life– no matter how lowly, unappreciated or overlooked – and made it holy.
- Joy – the "jubilee of heart" that suffuses life when seen through of the eyes of the Holy Child and which persists even in the midst of suffering.
 - Charity – our response to the compassionate love of God which we express in action on behalf of those beloved of God who are in need.
 - Growth of the individual – modeled on the process of growth and development that allowed the Holy Child to become the person God intended him to be.

Do any of these

Continued on page 4

Action Not Words: Exercise in Prayerful Reflection by Bryna Bozart

*It is precisely because you are
called to live busy lives, that you must
lead a life of prayer.*

Cornelia Connelly

Sometimes in our busy lives we are challenged to find a quiet place to settle our minds and to open our hearts to a fuller consciousness of God's presence and action in our lives in order to be mindful of the SHCJ mission statement that we embrace.



We seek now to listen to Cornelia's voice as a way to help us grow closer to God. In the following reflective exercise, we are invited to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ incarnated, the Son of God who became human, and for a long time, hidden, in order to be one with us.

1. We begin by dwelling for a few minutes on the incarnational spirituality which was one of the prevailing themes of Cornelia's life. Let us, now, invite the Holy Spirit to be with us in our prayer as we listen to the words of Cornelia:

"In the humble and hidden life of the Holy Child Jesus, we find mysteries of the most sublime teaching. Here it is that God manifests to us in the most wonderful manner the treasure of His mercy and boundless love."

As you consider these words, think about what Cornelia may be wanting to say to you today as you consider your life as an Associate? In your commitment to the charism of Cornelia, where have you seen this mercy and boundless love?

Take a few minutes to think and reflect about this. You may wish to write some thoughts now, so you can look at them again at a later time.

2. In the preceeding article on the Holy Child Spirit, we find the mention of particular traits which Cornelia saw as lived in the Holy Child; traits of simplicity, humility, joy, charity and growth. We readily see these same traits in the life of Cornelia, traits she lived as she drew closer to God. In this Spirit of Cornelia, do you recognize one of the traits which strikes you as being given to you, perhaps as a means of following Cornelia's model for coming closer to God as Associates?

Is it simplicity, for example? If so, pray now in gratitude for this gift. Think about how you have lived with simplicity and ask God for continuing grace, to be like Cornelia in her desire to grow in simplicity closer to God.

Is it humility? Joy? Charity? the desire to grow closer to God?

How is God speaking to you in this treasure of boundless love and mercy as you live in simplicity, humility, joy, charity or growth?

3. In conclusion of this time of reflection and prayer, let us read the scripture from John 1:14:

And the Word was made flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a Father's only Son, full of grace and truth

Offer now your own prayer, in your own words, perhaps in gratitude, perhaps in seeking fidelity, perhaps in deep communion with Cornelia...of simplicity, humility, joy, charity, growth as you ask for the grace to fully embrace your trait, suggested by Cornelia as a way of being drawn closer to God.



Note:

The above exercise in prayer offers a model of reflection which seeks to aid us in first becoming aware that we are in God's presence as we pray.

Second, believing as Cornelia did, that we are given gifts, or charisms, just as the Holy Child Jesus was given, in order to draw closer to God, this method of prayer helps us to focus on just one such gift that we prayerfully seek to name as ours, and invites us to ask for a grace to live out that gift.

Third, in desiring to join our hearts with the gifts of Cornelia and with the charism of the SHCJ, this method of prayerful contemplation of the mystery of the incarnation, as understood by Cornelia and revealed in scripture can be a source of discovering new insights and a means of receiving consolation as we strive to live the boundless love and mercy that is the mission of Cornelia.

Hopefully, the above exercise did take you into a thoughtful way of praying and listening to the Spirit's voice, to Cornelia's voice and even to your own desire to be close to God in a designated time of quiet.

Continued on page 4

Connecting with Cornelia and Charism

traits sound familiar? Knowing the nurturing environment that a child needs in order to grow in wisdom, age and grace, Cornelia translated her life experience and spiritual insights into practices that set her schools apart.

This represents my own take on the Holy Child Spirit. It is by no means exhaustive. Others have described Holy Child Spirit in terms like “arms wide open”, “we were greatly trusted and trained to a high sense of honor”, “a strong love that invited virtue”. Are not these attributes also grounded in the Incarnation?

What words come to your mind when you think of Holy Child Spirit?

How is your experience of the Holy Child Spirit related to Incarnational Spirituality?

We would love to hear the fruit of your reflection. Please send your thoughts to Judy Talvacchia or Cathi Duffy at associates-usa@shcj.org.

References

Quotes taken from *Informatio*, pp. 170 – 195.

For more information on Incarnational Spirituality see: *Incarnational Spirituality: An Introduction for SHCJ Associates* by Judith A. Talvacchia.

Action Not Words: Prayerful Reflection

There are many methods of deepening spirituality, and the above is just one of them. Along with this method, however, one can use other spiritual resources to deepen the experience in reflection and prayerful responding. We'll explore other methods in future issues.

150th Anniversary Quilt

A quilt is being made to portray the history of the SHCJ in the American Province. Some of the squares have already been started by different ministries and schools of the Province. Anita Martineau will be working on the square representing the Associates.

All schools - opened or closed - are to be represented. Do you know anyone who might be able to help with the following:

Assumption, Pasadena; Assumption, Spring Garden St., Phila.; Annunciation, DC; Illinois schools (Chicago, Waukegan, OLH); Portland, OR

schools (Alameda, St. Charles, St. Rose); New York schools (OLL, St. Elizabeth's, Ss Peter & Paul, Fleetwood), St. Edward's, Phila.; St. Leonard's Boys School, Towanda, Waseca

If you are interested in helping but are not from the above mentioned locations, Sr. Rosemarie Tedesco could use your assistance with squares for momentous events in the 150 years history. She also will need experienced quilters who could help with the assembling of the quilt during the summer.

Contact Sr. Rosemarie at rtedesco@shcj.org to volunteer to help.



Sit in silence before Our Lord, and be more ready to listen than to talk.

*Derby, 1847 or 1848,
Spiritual Instructions*

It is because you are ceaselessly in the mountains and valleys, in the streets and in the classroom, that you must know how to remain loving and silent, close to God, in the cell of your soul.

Spiritual Instructions

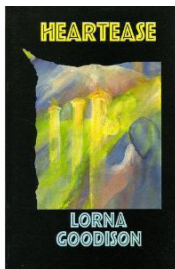
They only who listen hear the voice of God... is mine a listening soul?
CC 54:36

Take care not to lose the interior spirit by the pressure of activity.
CC7:1

Poetry off the Shelf by Barbara DeConcini

Born into a large middle-class West Indian family in the late 1940s, Lorna Goodison was educated in Anglican schools before heading to New York to study painting at the Art Students League. The poems she had been writing since she was a child were meant to be her own secret as she pursued a career in art and design. But she soon discovered, she says, that poetry is “a dominating, intrusive tyrant, a wicked force.” “It’s something I have to do.”

Something of that insistent demand, that moral force, comes through in the poems she has written for over half a century, collected now into a dozen books. Goodison divides her time between her native Kingston, Jamaica and Ann Arbor, Michigan (where she teaches at the University). That seems apt for a poet whose work, in the words of one critic, “inscribes the Jamaican sensibility and culture on the text of the world.”



And nowhere more so than in *Heartease II*. The poem showcases her fluent blending of different dialects and language codes (standard English, Jamaican Creole, and Rastafari dread talk), and of a wide

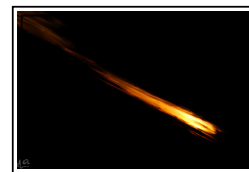
range of spiritual resources, from Afro-Caribbean ancestor traditions to both Biblical and sacramental Christianities, to the religious syncretisms of the region. As another critic notes, “Goodison blends prayer, musing, meditation, narrative, chant, and prophetic questioning in order to evoke spiritual odysseys.”

The poem’s dramatic situation is an urban blackout with an accompanying meteorite burst. The poem’s speaker ‘reads’ for us the celestial calligraphy, a prophetic cry from on high that comes in two separate tones or modes--the one merciful; the other, vexed and grieving. (Readers of the Hebrew prophets will be familiar with this juxtaposition!)

But let me stop there, for *Heartease II* is a poem that wants to be read aloud, that wants us to see with the deep eyes, to turn our faces to the light, to catch the mercy rain. And it wants just as badly for us to hear the second message—a message of judgment against us for taking “this most favored place,” our earth, and “less counting it.” But the poem doesn’t end with judgment, for finally, the mercy rain not only cleanses but can nourish the seeds and water some newly planted ever-living healing trees.

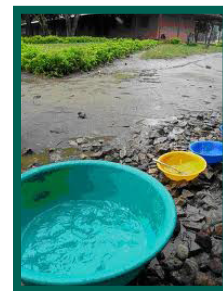
Heartease II

In what looked like the blackout last week
a meteorite burst from the breast of the sky
smoking like a censer, it spelled out in
incandescent calligraphy
a message for all who had deep eyes.



If you did not see it I’ll tell you
what it said:
Cultivate the search-mi-heart and
acres of sincerity grass and turn
your face towards *Heartease*.

Set out a wash pan and catch mercy rain
forget bout drought, catch the mercy rain,
bathe and catch a light from this meteoric flame
and sit down cleansed, to tell a rosary of your
ancestor’s names.



A singing chain of ancient names to bind them tight
all who work evil downward through the night.
And toward morning the sun come and tell you
“sleep, I’ll mark your place with this azure/rose ribbon
taken from the hidden locks of the dawn.

Poetry Off the Shelf by Barbara DeConcini

Sleep in the day and you will dream when you sleep
the second surah of this message.”



And who hear, do all that and sleep in the darkened day and
dream as them sleep, how the one whose hand draw the veil,
(for it was not a blackout) the one who fling the meteor
was in a celestial vexation
saying, Imagine, how I put you here so in this most favored place
and look how you take it and less count it.
Look how you root up my rarest blooms,
look how you take my flower bed dem turn tombs,
look how you eye red from looking over a next one yard
from envying everything him have.
Like him concrete-stressed-cast-iron-lawn
and him man-made-robot-made-by-man-to-replace-man,
you want to know how far this thing gone?
Some calling Siberia a nice open land.

At this point it look like him was too grieved to go on
him had to drink some dew water from the throat
of a glass-petaled flower.
And when his wrath was dampened he spoke again:
I have many names and one is merciful ...
So in that name I have decided that the veil I draw
will be lifted when you look to the condition of
your part of this yard.

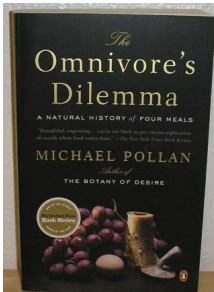


When you stop draw blood cross the promise line
in the young people's palms.
When the scribes cleanse their hands and rise
to write new psalms.
When you sight up why outta the whole human race
is you of all people I choose to dwell in this place.
So who hear send me here to tell you say
we do not know bout the intentions of a next one
but we catch mercy rain in zinc and tub pan
and in addition
to the search-mi-heart
the sincerity seeds
and the pilgrimage to Heartease
we planting some one-love
undivided ever-living healing trees
and next week if you want to come, welcome
for we going to set up again
to extend the singing rosary of our ancestors' names
till the veil is rent from
the eye of the sky
of everyone
forever and ever
illumination.



Lorna Goodison

Book Recommendation: The Omnivore's Dilemma -- A Natural History of Four Meals



Michelle Dugan, SHCJ Associate, recommends The Omnivore's Dilemma -- A Natural History of Four Meals, Michael Pollan, Penguin Books, 2006, 415 pp. plus index and sources.

As an Italian-American mother and grandmother, I can obviously say that preparing healthy, tasty food and serving it with love has always been a focus of my life. As a Catholic Christian, I rely on the sacred meal at the heart of our faith to nourish my spirit just as family dinners sustain the continuity of the generations. In my favorite gospel passage, the disciples returning to Emmaus recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread. I love the image of heaven as a marvelous banquet to which all are invited. So it is not surprising that I recommend a book about food. What will perhaps surprise those of you who encounter Michael Pollan's revelatory ideas here for the first time is the crucial importance of challenging the industrial food system, not only in order to eat well, but to preserve the health of the Earth and her creatures.

Pollan, a respected journalist, sets out to inform his readers by tracing the food chain from source to table. In the process, Pollan uncovers the abysmal state of the American fast-food diet, the deplorable conditions on factory farms, and the hidden costs to health and happiness of cheap industrial food. He leads us through the maze of government subsidies, food science, and "nutritionism" – all the ways that our relationship to food and the environment has been corrupted. Yet far from being pessimistic, Pollan simultaneously presents alternatives to this unhealthy way of eating.

Perhaps most relevant to Eco-Spirituality Group members and other persons in the ecospirituality movement are the chapters on Joel Salatin and his Polyface Farm in Virginia. A libertarian Christian

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Michelle

and "third-generation alternative farmer," Salatin embodies the concept of stewardship in every aspect of his life. He explains to Pollan that his farming methods are based on God's model: nature itself. The idea is to create a system that is based on the integrity of all of the species involved. For example, rather than force-feeding corn to cattle, he pastures them on grass as God intended. Salatin introduces to Pollan the word "holon," from the Greek "holos," meaning whole, "a word to express the complex

relationship of parts and wholes in a biological or social system" (page 215). I was reminded of the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, who speaks of "interbeing" as the essence of life. [Ed. note: cf. also Judy Cannato's Field of Compassion, pp. 32 - 40.]

Pollan concludes with the story of the final incredible meal involving hunting and foraging for his ingredients. Those of you who cook, as well as those who think recipes and menus make exciting reading, will savor vicariously the pleasures of the table that he describes. Yet it is the sacramental aspect of this last supper – Pollan, who is Jewish, calls it a "secular seder" and "the Omnivore's Thanksgiving" – that strikes me as most powerful and significant.

In dialogue with secular humanists like Michael Pollan, those of us who approach our ecological crises from a religious perspective can find common ground. As all of us begin to understand better the sacred connections among humans, animals, plants, and the Earth herself, we may finally discover a redemptive path of stewardship. Reading The Omnivore's Dilemma will provide valuable knowledge to help illuminate the way.

This article was reprinted from the SHCJ American Province Eco-Spirituality Resource webpage, <http://www.shcj.org/amer/EcoSpiritualityResources.htm>

For more information on the Eco-Spirituality Group, check out <http://www.shcj.org/amer/ecospirituality.html> or contact Michelle Dugan or Sr. Terri MacKenzie.

June 22 - 24, 2012

Actions Not Words

Associates National Gathering
Rosemont, PA

*This conference is open to all SHCJ Associates and Sisters,
Holy Child alums, staffs, and all those who wish to deepen their
understanding and lived experience of the Holy Child spirit
and mission in their lives today!*

Conference Schedule

Friday

- 4 pm **At the Archives*** - We begin to gather for our weekend together.
As you arrive, view the exhibit, **SHCJ – 150 years in America**,
have some light refreshments, and visit with old and new friends.
- 6 pm Dinner – We'll move to Main Building, New Sharon for dinner.
- 7:30 **Welcome and Opening Prayer**
Welcome Reflection – Sr. Mary Ann Buckley, Province Leader

Saturday

- 8:30 Continental Breakfast (optional)
- 9:30 Opening Prayer
Keynote Presentation – Incarnation as Worldview by Sr. Tobie Tondi
Panel Discussion – In the Everyday: Actions Not Words
- 1 pm Lunch
Afternoon Presentation – Action: Call and Gifts
Associates Sharing: Our Journey
- 5 pm Social followed by Dinner

Sunday

- 10 am **Core Team meets with Conference Attendees**
- 11:30 **Sunday Liturgy** with local Sisters at New Sharon Chapel
Dinner following

All events will take place at New Sharon, Main Building unless noted otherwise.

1341 Montgomery Avenue/ Rosemont, PA 19010

* SHCJ American Province Archives is located at 1308 Wendover Road, Rosemont.

This schedule may be revised but indicates general flow of weekend.

Conference Fees

\$150 if you register before February 28th.

\$175 if you register after February 28th.

This registration fee also covers meals.

For registration form contact:

Cathi Duffy

SHCJ Associates, USA

1341 Montgomery Avenue

Rosemont, PA 19010

associates-usa@shcj.org

Register now for this important event!