



SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN PROVINCE

SPRING 2012
VOLUME X ISSUE II



During 2012, Judy Talvacchia and Bryna Bozart are teaming up to bring us a series of articles based on suggestions from the 2011 Associates survey. Judy is the featured author for "Cornelia and Her Charism" and reflects on "Living the Holy Child Spirit in Daily Life". Bryna Bozart follows in "Actions Not Words" with a description of the Daily Examen as a possible prayer method for many of us.

Barbara DeConcini introduces us to Associate Michelle Slaven, a new mother, in Meet the Associates. In Poetry Off the Shelf, she helps us explore the works of three contemporary poets.

Enjoy!

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A Letter from the Director

Dear Associates,

There are lots of activities happening that I want to share with you...

National Gathering turns International!

Do join us this June! It is exciting to know that there are Associates coming from different parts of the country. We also will welcome three Associates from England and perhaps one from Nigeria. I hope to see many of you at our June weekend. It will be a great time to deepen relationships with Associates and Sisters as well as to deepen our insights into Holy Child mission and spirit. May all move more deeply, with a love full of action, into who God calls us to be!

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation

Help a Society-wide planning effort by completing a survey this month on your involvement or concerns for critical issues of our time.

Ten Years & Growing

Holy Child Associates have been present in the United States since the mid seventies but it was not until April 2002 that a national organization was created. Let's celebrate these 10 years together. Send photos, videos, and stories of Associate activities in your local area or nationally so we can capture our collective story. If you have photos from the initial meeting do send them to me. You can send them to associates-usa@shcj.org or to the address on the last page. More at the National Gathering and Summer Issue.

Annual Appeal and more!

Each April, the Associates have an appeal with the desire to self-fund more of our expenses each year. As this issue goes to press, we have received over \$6,300 in donations which gets us closer to covering our administrative/office expenses. Any donation, small or large, is appreciated. Not only does it help with the funding but it also is a sign of how important the Associate relationship is.

Providence Center, a SHCJ ministry in Philadelphia, in conjunction with the Associates have been awarded a grant from the Koch Foundation Inc., <http://www.thekochfoundation.org/>. We will be jointly developing a "Come and See" retreat about the Holy Child spirit and the Associates. The retreat will be presented in Spanish. We are excited at this opportunity to work with a ministry to introduce the Associate relationship to our extended family.

Abundant blessings,

Cathi Duffy

Connecting with Cornelia and Charism: Living Holy Child Spirit in Daily Life

by Judy Talvacchia

In the last article, I talked about Holy Child Spirit as being a particular way of living out Incarnational Spirituality. But how do we do that, given the very busy lives we lead? The answer, I believe, can be found right in the midst of our everyday experience. First - some background that might help in recognizing the Incarnation in our daily lives.

Cornelia invited us to follow Jesus from the crib to the cross. By coming among us as a child, Jesus revealed God's presence in the humble and the hidden. In his public life, Jesus proclaimed the reign of God breaking into human history. His very public teaching and miracles manifested God's presence and action in dramatic ways that captured people's attention. But they also led to conflict with religious and civil authorities and inevitably to his death. Reflection on the life of Jesus from the crib to the cross reveals that God is found in both the hidden and the manifest – in all aspects of life.

The Incarnation did not just happen at a point in time, two thousand years ago. Christ is still alive and present among us - continuing the creative, redeeming and sanctifying work of God. In order to bring the reign of God to completion, however, Christ needs our cooperation. Our generous response to God's invitation to engage in concrete action helps to advance the reign of God. "Yes, Lord, always yes!" expresses Cornelia's understanding of this reality.

Our own lives are often a mixture of the hidden and the manifest. We labor quietly for our families, our employers and our community without any public recognition. At times, our actions are more public - leading to recognition, appreciation and praise or to conflict, rejection and suffering. Through the lens of Incarnational Spirituality, we can recognize God in each and every circumstance of our lives. Living our lives as best we can and intentionally uniting our actions with Christ's can be part of the raw material that Jesus needs to advance the reign of God. When we live in the spirit of simplicity, humility, charity, joy and other Holy Child values which we hold dear, then we are living the Holy Child Spirit in daily life. The Holy Child Spirit is our expression (one of many) of living out Incarnational Spirituality in our lives.

Sometimes I think we don't realize the many ways in which we already live the Holy Child Spirit in daily life. I think of Associates I know who quietly and courageously care for elderly or infirm family members or bear illness with patience and fortitude. I also think of Associates who participate in Society

ministries, who are active in food pantries in their communities, who offer service in their parishes, schools, etc. I think of Associates who belong to advocacy groups which support the poor or seek to respond to the needs of the natural world or participate in efforts to bring peace to war torn parts of the world. I could go on and on. All of these actions, both manifest and hidden, help advance the reign of God. Our goal as Associates is to recognize the redeeming potential of our actions and unite them to the ongoing mission of Jesus Christ – "to hand over [all things] to God..." (See 1Cor 15:24).

When we live Incarnational Spirituality in the spirit of the Holy Child, we also become sensitized to needs around us that are not being addressed. Cornelia spoke of "meeting the wants of the age". The more deeply we plumb the mystery of the Incarnation, the more we recognize unmet needs in our day. These needs may be in our own families, communities, in the wider human world, in creation. We may be challenged to act in ways that take us out of our comfort zone, that impel us to reach out in ways we haven't before. Personal prayer and reflection as well as the support of others are essential for guiding us through these times of discernment and growth.

I invite you to reflect, in prayer and dialogue with others, on your own call to live Incarnational Spirituality in the spirit of the Holy Child in your life.

- How do you currently live Incarnational Spirituality/Holy Child Spirit in your daily life?
- Are there ways you live it that you haven't recognized before?
- Do you intentionally unite your actions to the mission of Jesus Christ to bring all of creation to fullness of life in God?
- Are there unmet needs that you see which invite a response to action?
- Is God calling you to action that is new, different, uncomfortable, challenging?
- What resources do you have to support you in discerning action or in carrying out action to meet the needs of the age?

As Associates of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, let us support each other in living Incarnational Spirituality in the Spirit of the Holy Child in all the circumstances of our daily lives.



Action Not Words: Praying the Daily Examen by Bryna Bozart

*The invitation comes from God, and
to him you must give your answer.
Don't talk about what you are going to do for God,
but reflect on what God is doing for you.*
Cornelia Connelly D73:209

We, as SHCJ Associates, seek daily in our prayers and in our actions to live in the charism of Cornelia as Judy Talvacchia has noted in the preceding article. I would like to follow her enlightening message with an introduction to a method of prayer I have used for several years, one that has enhanced my walking in the footsteps of Cornelia! This is called ***The Daily Examen***.

Timothy M. Gallagher, OMV, in his book, *The Examen Prayer*, writes of it in this way: "Examen is first, a review of God's sustaining and endearing love touching our hearts in the immediacy of everyday"

George Aschenbrenner, SJ, in the source noted above, defines the Examen as "a daily intensive exercise of discernment in a person's life....The examen is about love, a love that all our hearts yearn for, a love beautifully manifested in many human examples, but, finally, a love beyond anything we can fully experience before death. However, this ultimately satisfying love registers now in delicate, subtle movements of the heart. ...this spontaneity of the Holy Spirit in our hearts..."

For myself, this prayer each morning has helped me to take serious note of my feelings, thoughts, understandings and stirrings of my heart. As I become more deeply aware of my desire to live incarnational spirituality that leads to a closer consciousness of the Divine operative within me, my life, in each of us, and reaching into the whole universe!

Let us now look at the Daily Examen:

First, we become aware of the presence of God as being with us. We sit for awhile in this awareness.

Second, we ask God for the grace to follow Him in our daily living.

Third, we review the past day, noting what we are grateful for, what we are sorry for. We give thanks. We ask for forgiveness.

Fourth, we ask God to give us the desire to live the coming day within God's desire for my life.

Fifth, we close the prayer with an Our Father or a Glory Be or with my own conversation with Jesus.

Now let us look at how one of our own, Carol Ann Smith, SHCJ defines the Daily Examen in her book, *Finding God in Each Moment*:

The Examen prayer, one of the 'spiritual exercises' that Ignatius presents in the Spiritual Exercises, becomes for us a time of daily discernment. The Examen is truly meant to be a prayer experience. Beginning with a prayer to the Holy Spirit begging for light and guidance, we reflect on the events of the day as part of our relationship with God. With the help of the Spirit we give a daily prayerful consideration to our day's experience, noting the many gifts of the day. Once conscious of God's gifts to us, we are able to remember our responses and reactions to the gifts, and thus, to examine with more care and wisdom for what a given day really held for us. This prayer of Examen offers us a way of noting patterns of grace as well as our acceptance or resistance to God's action. The prayer concludes with our asking for God's forgiveness for any poor response and for God's help in the day ahead.

I pray this morning, with an awareness of all the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus along with the Associates, as being as One in Christ Risen, one Society, one community of those who seek always to pray and live within Cornelia's gifts and vision.

Sources:

The Daily Examen, Timothy M. Gallagher, OMV, pp 9, 11, 13, 30

Finding God in Each Moment, Carol Ann Smith, SHCJ, p 40

Meet the Associates by Barbara DeConcini

BD: *Tell us a little bit about yourself, Michelle. Where are you from?*

MS: I was born in Chicago in November 1979. I grew up in a northwest suburb called Mt. Prospect. I moved to Philadelphia after I graduated from Loyola University Chicago in 2001, where I earned the BS in elementary education.

I'm a teacher by profession, currently working in the William Penn School District. I teach 5th and 6th grade special education, but I have taught K through 6 during my career. I've also taught at the Gesu School in North Philadelphia and at the Belmont Charter School in West Philadelphia. As a ResponseAbility (RA) volunteer, I attended St. Joseph's University here in Philadelphia, earning the MS in Elementary Education, with special education and reading specialist certifications.

BD: *So, is ResponseAbility what brought you originally from the Midwest to Philadelphia? Do you think of yourself as a Philadelphian now? Any comparisons you can offer on your experience of Chicago, then Philadelphia?*

MS: I knew nothing about Philadelphia before I moved here, other than the Liberty Bell! RA gave me a choice between LA and Philadelphia, and I picked Philadelphia just because it was a little closer to home. Honestly, I wasn't too fond of Philadelphia when I first moved here, but it has definitely grown on me. It's much more like a small town than Chicago. You sometimes run into people you know when out and about in the city, and you can find a parking place on the street. That NEVER happens in Chicago! Philadelphia is much more manageable. When I go back to Chicago, I feel pretty overwhelmed--it is so big. And I love that Philly is close to so many other good places, like New York, DC, and the beach. I guess I'll always be a Chicagoan at heart, but I'm pretty sure I'll be calling Philly home for a while.

BD: *What about your family—birth family and your own family?*

MS: I'm the oldest of three children. My mother and sister live in Florida, while my father and brother remain in Chicago. I met my husband, Bill on eharmony. We married in 2010 and currently live in Wallingford, PA. We welcomed our first baby, Clark

James, on February 9, 2012. We feel very blessed and couldn't be happier!

Bill grew up in Voorhees, NJ, but he spent his early years in New Hampshire. He graduated with a BS in communication from Rowan University and worked in radio for a short time. Now he is Director of Event Technology at the Bellevue Hotel here. Bill is an excellent dad and was able to stay home for Clark's first two weeks, but unfortunately, he had to go back to work. We miss him a lot!



BD: *With a brand new baby at home and teaching full-time, you can't possibly have room for much else in your*

schedule. Granted that, what sorts of things do you enjoy doing?

MS: Most of all I enjoy spending time with the people I love—and laughing a lot. I'm also one who likes contributing to my community. Recently I've been involved with Habitat for Humanity and at local homeless shelters. I also spend some of my free time writing. If I hadn't majored in education, I would've been in journalism or creative writing. In summers when I'm free, I love to swim and to jump on the trampoline in my backyard. Even though I'm not that good at it, I also love to dance. I recently discovered the show Dancing with the Stars. I wish I was a "star" so I could be on it!

BD: *Wow! I feel exhausted just hearing about the trampoline. . . . I'm wondering whether you knew the Society in the Midwest before you became an RA volunteer.*

MS: No, I didn't meet the Society until I joined RA. I taught in the program from 2001 through 2003; then I served as an RA community leader for two more years. As a community leader, I lived with the volunteers and acted as their support. In other words, I was their go-to-girl whenever they had a problem or question about teaching, community living, or just life in general.

BD: *Tell us a more about your experience in RA.*

MS: I would say that serving as an RA community leader was one of the best experiences I've had thus far in my life. It allowed me to be engaged in RA and with the Society on a deeper level. It truly helped

Meet the Associates (continued)

me grow as a person and serve God and others in a unique way.

From the time I was a little girl I wanted to be a teacher. Soon after I arrived at Loyola, I knew I wanted to volunteer for a year of service after I graduated. Up until April of my senior year, I was certain it was going to be in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. I had already interviewed with them and just needed to pick my placement. Then something happened that changed all of that. Some may call it divine intervention. Some may call it fate. I call it just plain wonderful!

I was out with some friends at a local restaurant when I ran into Jeanne Winters (Morris). She was a year ahead of me at Loyola, and we had volunteered in various campus ministry activities together. She began telling me how she was living in Washington DC, teaching second grade, and volunteering with a program called ResponseAbility. I had never heard of it, but I was fascinated by her stories. By the time our conversation ended, I wanted to be a part of it. Jeanne encouraged me to contact Liz Eager, who was the Assistant Director at the time. I did, and the rest is history!

Like Jeanne, I too had a fabulous RA experience. To me, RA was much more than a teaching volunteer program--it was a family. The best part about it is that it still is. I keep in touch with so many of my housemates and RA colleagues. Although we've all moved on to other jobs and some of us to other states, we all still share that Cornelia bond. I'm not sure where I'd be had I not chosen to volunteer with

RA. But I do know that I certainly would not be the person I am today.

BD: *What attracted you to join the SHCJ Associates?*

MS: Because I'd felt such a strong connection to the SHCJ during my time as a volunteer, I wanted to keep that going once I left RA. I thought the SHCJ Associates would be a way to strengthen that bond and to continue growing in my faith.

BD: *Has being an SHCJ Associate affected your everyday life?*

MS: I think it has. Cornelia's teachings are always in the back of my mind, especially when I'm in the classroom. I also find myself praying to her in times of distress-- and for us teachers, there are many!

I also prayed to her when I was pregnant with Clark. Shortly after I got married, I was diagnosed with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS). While the disorder is fairly common and somewhat treatable, it makes it difficult for women to become pregnant. I knew that Cornelia was a holy woman and a mother, and I felt close to her. I began to pray to her to aid in my fertility, and I'm sure she had something to do with Clark being in the world!

BD: *Now my favorite question: What are your "dearest hopes" for the SHCJ Associate relationship?*

MS: I would love to get to know more of the sisters and to see them more often. I have tremendous respect for them. I view them as teachers, mentors, and spiritual counselors--but most of all as friends.

*For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and
wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well
Psalm 139:13-14*



Poetry Off the Shelf by Barbara DeConcini

"Poetry holds the knowledge that we are alive and that we know we're going to die. The most mysterious aspect of being alive might be that--and poetry knows that."

I am quoting Marie Howe, who is one of this issue's poets, but our other two poets might well have said the same thing. These poems need little commentary, their simple direct language pretty much speaking for itself. They do lend themselves to reading out loud and make for good conversation, both among themselves and among readers. Each concerns itself with life-and-death in a visceral way, prodding us to live our lives aware of our "being towards death" (M. Heidegger), our knowledge that we will die.

Born in 1950, Marie Howe is the youngest of our poets, the oldest girl among her Catholic parents' nine children. The AIDS-related death of her closest brother, John, in 1989 affected her life and work deeply. Her poem, *What the Living Do*, takes the form of a letter to him after his death. "When he died, it was a terrible loss to all of us," she has commented. "As you know, as everybody knows, you think, 'My life is changed so utterly I don't know how to live it anymore.' And then you find a way."

At the time of her death this March, Adrienne Rich (1929-2012) was lauded as "one of the most influential poets of the second half of the 20th century" (LA Times). While some noted her courage in bringing "the oppression of women and lesbians to the forefront of poetic discourse" (The Guardian), others lamented the tendency among too many critics to identify her solely with her anti-war, civil rights, and feminist activism. Her poem also takes a sort of epistolary form. She calls herself on the phone, speaking with "bracing immediacy" about what one commentator calls "the urgency not to fritter away one's tiny allotment [of time] on fear and uncertainty." Throughout her large body of work, Rich stood not only for empowerment, but also for its responsibilities. Here is how she concludes *Final Notations*, one of her strangest and most evocative later poems, "it will be short, it will take all your breath/it will not be simple, it will become your will."

Mary Oliver (1935-) has the distinction of being a popular poet, enjoying more fame and affection than most living poets. She writes simply and directly--largely about the life of nature and the lives of

women, finding close associations between them. Some critics fault her for this populist, romanticist stance: her "poems flirt dangerously with romantic assumptions about the close association of women with nature." Others disagree: "Mary Oliver will never be a balladeer of contemporary lesbian life. . . or an important political thinker like Adrienne Rich; but the fact that she chooses not to write from a similar political or narrative stance makes her all the more valuable to our collective culture."

What the Living Do

Johnny, the kitchen sink has been clogged for days, some utensil probably fell down there.

And the Drano won't work but smells dangerous, and the crusty dishes have piled up

waiting for the plumber I still haven't called. This is the everyday we spoke of.

It's winter again: the sky's a deep, headstrong blue, and the sunlight pours through the open living-room windows because the heat's on too high in here and I can't turn it off.

For weeks now, driving, or dropping a bag of groceries in the street, the bag breaking, I've been thinking: This is what the living do. And yesterday, hurrying along those wobbly bricks in the Cambridge sidewalk, spilling my coffee down my wrist and sleeve, I thought it again, and again later, when buying a hairbrush: This is it.

Parking. Slamming the car door shut in the cold. What you called that yearning.

What you finally gave up. We want the spring to come and the winter to pass. We want whoever to call or not call, a letter, a kiss — we want more and more and then more of it.

But there are moments, walking, when I catch a glimpse of myself in the window glass,

say, the window of the corner video store, and I'm gripped by a cherishing so deep for my own blowing hair, chapped face, and unbuttoned coat that I'm speechless:

I am living. I remember you.

Marie Howe

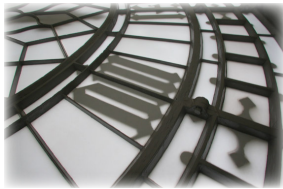


Poetry Off the Shelf (continued)

Dear Adrienne

I'm calling you up tonight
as I might call up a friend as I might call up a ghost
to ask what you intend to do
with the rest of your life. Sometimes you act
as if you have all the time there is.
I worry about you when I see this.
The prime of life, old age
aren't what they used to be;
making a good death isn't either,
now you can walk around the corner of a wall
and see a light
that already has blown your past away.
Somewhere in Boston beautiful literature
is being read around the clock
by writers to signify
their dislike of this.
I hope you've got something
in mind.
I hope you have some idea
about the rest of your life.
In sisterhood,
Adrienne

Adrienne Rich



courtesy of freebigpictures.com

When Death Comes

When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from
his purse

to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;
when death comes
like the measles-pox;

when death comes
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity,
wondering:
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,
and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common
as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,
tending, as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something
precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and
real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this
world.

Mary Oliver

Nineteenth Century Romantic poet John Keats wrote
that a poem needs to be "proved upon our pulses," if
it is to achieve its power in/for us. Do these poems
prove themselves upon your pulses?

June 22 - 24, 2012

Actions Not Words

Associates National Gathering
Rosemont, PA

*This conference is open to all who wish to deepen their
understanding and lived experience of the Holy Child spirit*

Register now for this important event!

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 \$175

This registration fee also covers meals.

Courtyard Marriott Group Rate

To get the group rate for the Courtyard Marriott, you must make your reservation by May 30th .

For registration form contact:

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For questions about the conference, email us.
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610 626 1400 x310.