



SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN PROVINCE

SPRING 2013
VOLUME XI ISSUE II

And the winners are...

Thanks to all who participated in the drawing for the SHCJ quilt and Christmas quilt wall hanging. The winners were drawn on April 18th at the American Province offices in Rosemont. Sr. Margaret Mary Bell (Core Team member) and Sr. Pat Devlin drew the names with Cathi Duffy and Associate Peg Healy present.

Rosemarie Colantuono, Sharon alum '71, won the SHCJ quilt. She is thrilled!

Sharon Jarrett, SHCJ Associate in Charlotte, won the Christmas quilt wall hanging. Sharon is honored to be the recipient!

The proceeds will be sent to the Sisters in the Dominican Republic for the International Gathering of SHCJ Associates in February-March 2014. Thanks to all who contributed to this fundraiser! Your help will cover some general costs (e.g., local transportation) as well as the fees for some Dominican Associates to attend.

A Special Thank You to Anita Martineau and Sue Kapusta – creators of the quilts – for their generous donations that allowed this endeavor to occur!



SHCJ quilt and Christmas quilt wall hanging.



Sr. Pat Devlin draws the winning ticket on April 18th at the province offices with Peg Healy, SHCJ Associate, Cathi Duffy, and Sr. Margaret Mary Bell watching and waiting.



Inside this issue


And the winners are...	1
Cornelia and Charism: Universal Call to Holiness	2
Prayerful Reflections	5
Poetry Off the Shelf	6
Meet the Associates	7
Associates Sharing their Gifts	8

Connecting with Cornelia and Charism: Universal Call to Holiness

by Judy Talvacchia

Prior to Vatican Council II

Those of us of a certain age remember when the attitude of the Church toward the laity was expressed in the popular expression “*pray, pay and obey*”. Over time, the Church had strayed from its original insight that becoming a Christian was a call to an entirely new way of life in Christ— for everyone. When individuals and communities failed to live up to their call, the Church was forced to grapple with reconciling Christian ideals and the realities of human nature. The more that the sinful side of human nature expressed itself (among the leaders as well as the followers), the more the Church expressed itself in hierarchical language and rigid rules and regulations. In her article “The Universal Call to Holiness: Empowering the Laity”¹, Kathy Coffee expressed the atmosphere prior to Vatican II this way:



The typical vocabulary for Church members until then was *subjects*. If the term suggested a feudal system, that was exactly the top-down message intended. It was further reinforced with words of punishment and threat, like a drill sergeant addressing new recruits. At the pinnacle of the human heap was the pope, then the bishops, then priests and religious and *then* the laity.

Vatican Council II - A Different Approach

In the Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)², the council fathers took an entirely different approach. The language became invitational – more pastoral. Kathy Coffee described the impact of the unexpected transition:

When Chapter Two named us “the people of God”, affirming the common identity and equal dignity of *everyone* in the Church, it was better than an upgrade to first class on an international flight!

Furthermore, Chapter Five of the Constitution on the Church upended the prevailing understanding of holiness. Before Vatican II, the assumption was that holiness was only attainable by clerics and those in religious life. The best lay people could hope for was to avoid serious sin by following the rules. The Constitution went back to the early Christian instinct that everyone is called to holiness by virtue of baptism. In fact, holiness is part of God’s plan of creation for all human beings – to be the people God

Be yourself but make that self exactly what Our Lord wants it to be.

intends us to be. Baptism brings us into relationship with Christ who offers the example of his life and guides us on our journey to holiness. The good news is that all of us have the capacity for holiness. Our challenge is to respond to God’s grace in whatever state of life and whatever circumstances we find ourselves. Staying out of trouble is not enough!

Cornelia’s Approach to Holiness

In thinking about this article, I sensed that I could best learn how Cornelia applied her approach to holiness by looking at her educational methods and her methods of religious formation. British Holy Child Sister Patricia McDonald gave me exactly what I was looking for in a lecture she gave in Oxford, England in 1992³. What follows is based on three points in her lecture that highlight how Cornelia applied her insights about holiness in the early days of the Society. Hopefully, you will recognize these same influences in your interaction with the Society and recognize their value in your ongoing journey of faith.

Cornelia Connelly’s approach to holiness was surprisingly in tune with Vatican II, even though she lived out her journey within the context of 19th century Catholicism. The expression we are so familiar with summarizes her core insight, “Be yourself but make that self exactly what Our Lord wants it to be.” Following a rigid, overly pious model was not her way. She saw each person as a unique expression of God’s creation, with a unique relationship to God and a unique vocation to use his/her gifts for the good of God’s creation.

Sister Patricia begins with an observation that it is sometimes hard to tell whether a particular principle of Cornelia’s applied to teaching, formation or both. This is because her practices “were deeply rooted in her life as a whole. There is, furthermore, a continuity in the way she views God, the world, and humanity that results from her appreciation of



Connecting with Cornelia and Charism (continued)

Creation and the Incarnation.” Cornelia began her approach to holiness with herself. She listened to God’s promptings and responded with all her heart. She passed on to students and her sisters what she herself had learned in her relationship with God.

Reality as Foundation

Cornelia’s first guiding principle was “reality as foundational”. Her perspective was concrete, tied to everyday life and the realities of the world. Holiness was not ethereal, focused only on the life to come. It was achieved in full engagement with the here and now. Sr. Patricia believes that this is why humility was a foundational virtue for Cornelia. Humility sees things the way they are – the persons we are, the circumstances of our lives, the reality of the world we live in. The journey to holiness begins with the truth about ourselves and our world.

The World as God’s World

Sr. Patricia describes Cornelia’s second guiding principle as seeing “the world as God’s world: Creation and Incarnation”. By this she means that Cornelia could see the both/and of life. We are creatures of God, bound by the limitations of the human condition.

Cornelia’s words, “We are what God sees us and knows us to be nothing more”. But she also recognized the ideal that we are called to, expressed in the quote “be yourself...”. Cornelia understood that holiness is a lifetime journey from the real to the ideal, with many fits and starts along the way.

Only God’s grace can reveal what expression of the ideal each one is called to, how the person is to get there and how one’s life is to be used for the good of God’s creation. Rules give a framework, a starting point, but only attentive listening to God’s voice within can lead us to our own individual paths. Cornelia asked herself and us, “Is mine a listening heart?”

Cornelia knew that God helps us on the journey to holiness through all the people, places and things with which we interact. She encouraged students and sisters in the Ignatian way of finding God in all things. But her privileged model

*We are what God
sees us and knows us to be
nothing more*

Cornelia Connelly

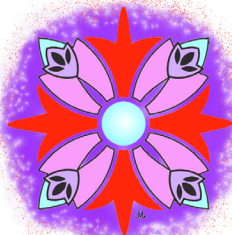
and guide was Jesus, the Holy Child “our Divine Master, our Model, and our Spouse”. In the humble and hidden life of the Holy Child, she saw the model of attentive listening to the will of God and the generous response that formed the man Jesus became. Cornelia believed that following Jesus “from the crib to the cross” would help students and sisters find their own paths to holiness – firmly rooted in their world but with eyes on the fullness of life that God wants for them and for creation.

Freedom

The third principle Sr. Patricia presents is freedom. Cornelia understood that people will only learn to trust God’s grace if they freely accept it. “Believe it or else” has never brought about genuine conversion of heart and mind! Cornelia absorbed the gospel stories that show Jesus modeling an invitation to grace over and over again. He freely, if sadly, allowed people to walk away from his offer of a path to eternal life. She knew that God’s grace is a gift to be freely given and freely received.

Cornelia understood that in order for us to trust God’s grace, we must see examples of trust in us from those charged with our education and spiritual formation. “Trust the children and never let your confidence in them be easily shaken. Confidence begets confidence”, she counseled her teachers. Students should be led “by love rather than fear”. If people are trusted “they will show themselves in their true colors, and then we shall see the highlights and what needs toning down”. To the Novice Mistress she advised, “not to expect that the novices

will form their spirit on her own, but she is rather to bend hers to theirs, making herself all in all to them to assist them to advance in their way. All ought to form themselves according to their vocation and thence to the spirit of the Society”. This is quite forward thinking from the prevailing methods of her day.



May the sign of your love transform us.

Continued on page 4

Cornelia and Charism (continued)

Call to Action

Reading Chapter Five of the Vatican II Constitution on the Church will sound familiar to us who have been formed, educated or influenced by the Society. For example, “All the laity as a community and each one according to his [or her] ability must nourish the world with spiritual fruits... In a word, Christians must be to the world what the soul is to the body”. It would be a worthwhile exercise to read the Council document, or at least Chapter 5, and to read Sr. Patricia’s entire paper. It can be found on the new Cornelia Connelly Digital Library, a wonderful source of information about Cornelia and the Society. Both documents would make excellent reflection material for individuals and for groups.

As Associates, one of our tasks is to be intentional about practices or beliefs that we take for granted or have never been aware of. Holiness is part of our human destiny. I hope that you will take advantage of the rich resources of Vatican II and of the Society as you progress along your own path to holiness. “Be yourself but make that self exactly what Our Lord wants it to be.”



Questions for reflection:

1. Do you see holiness as a goal of your life? Why or why not?
2. What connections do you see between the Vatican II call to holiness and Cornelia Connelly’s approach to holiness?
3. How has your connection with the SHCJ influenced your spiritual development?
4. How can the influence of Vatican II and the SHCJ help you in your ongoing journey of faith?
5. How can you share your gifts with others in ways that will help them develop spiritually?

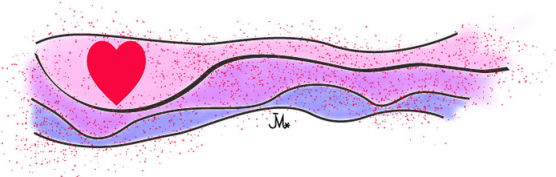
*All ought to form themselves
according to their vocation and
thence to the spirit of the Society.*

Cornelia Connelly

¹“The Universal Call to Holiness: Empowering the Laity”, Kathy Coffee. Both quotes and the entire article can be found on <https://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/preview.aspx?id=272>.

² “The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” (Lumen Gentium), quotes and references can be found in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Austin Flannery, O.P., New Revised Edition, 1992 or online at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

³ “Theological Reflections on the Educational Philosophy of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus”, Patricia M. McDonald, SHCJ. All quotes and references and the entire lecture can be found on the Cornelia Connelly Digital Library Resource: Educational Philosophy, Schools and Ministries, <https://corneliaconnellylibrary.org/search-results-details.php?id=2044>.



A Prayer

GOD
of love and mercy, you call us to be your people,
you gift us with your abundant grace.
Make us a holy people, radiating the fullness of
your love.
Form us into a community,
a people who care,
expressing your compassion.
Remind us day after day of our baptismal call
to serve,
with joy and courage.
Teach us how to grow in
wisdom and grace and joy
in your presence.
Through Jesus and in your Spirit,
we make this prayer.



From *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*
Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops on the Thirtieth Anniversary of
the Decree on the *Apostolate of the Laity* and the Fifteenth Anniversary of
Called and Gifted



*"As you sent me into the world,
I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).*

We seldom realize fully that we are sent to fulfill God-given tasks. We act as if we have to choose how, where, and with whom to live. We act as if we were simply plopped down in creation and have to decide how to entertain ourselves until we die. But we were sent into the world by God, just as Jesus was. Once we start living our lives with that conviction, we will soon know what we were sent to do. *Henri Nouwen*

From a Daily Meditation from Henri Nouwen Society.

Poetry Off the Shelf by Michelle Dugan

In her final “Poetry Off the Shelf” column for our Spring 2013 Associates Newsletter, Barbara DeConcini offered the following insight: “This having it both ways is characteristic of poetry, and one of the ways in which it contrasts with discursive prose. Metaphorical language allows the poet to say more than one thing at a time. Even apparently contradictory things can be held together. It is one of the ways in which poetry perhaps comes closer to how our minds and hearts actually work.” The unity of opposites can be captured in poetry. As we ponder the mystery of the Incarnation, we stop fighting the war of spirit against flesh; we discover the Divine Presence in the created world.

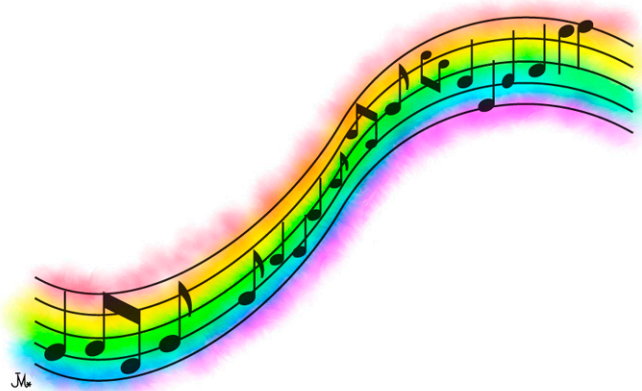
I received a copy of *The Soul of Rumi*, translated by Coleman Barks and subtitled *A New Collection of Ecstatic Poems*, as a Christmas gift from my husband in 2011. At the time I was moving toward my formal commitment as an Associate, struggling with the Jesuit concepts of consolation and desolation. Here was a voice from 13th century Persia, carried through the centuries and rebirthed in beautiful English, that spoke of the same joy in God’s presence that animated Cornelia.



“The Music We Are”

Did you hear that winter’s over? The basil and the carnations cannot control their laughter. The nightingale, back from his wandering, has been made singing master over the birds. The trees reach out their congratulations. The soul goes dancing through the king’s doorway. Anemones blush because they have seen the rose naked. Spring, the only fair judge, walks in the courtroom, and several December thieves steal away. Last year’s miracles will soon be forgotten. New creatures whirl in from non-existence, galaxies scattered around their feet. Have you met them? Do you hear the bud of Jesus crooning in the cradle? A single narcissus flower has been appointed Inspector of Kingdoms. A feast is set. Listen: the wind is pouring wine! Love used to hide inside images: no more! The orchard hangs out its lanterns. The dead come stumbling by in shrouds. Nothing can stay bound or be imprisoned. You say, “End this poem here, and wait for what’s next.” I will. Poems are rough notations for the music we are.

Rumi would turn in his grave were I to attempt any sort of “analysis” of his poetry. Instead, I invite you to enter into the images as a meditation, as one might use a mandala or an icon to lead from outer to inner vision: Jesus the crooning bud, the wind pouring wine, blossoms as lanterns in the orchard, whirling galaxies giving birth. As we pray with Rumi, our souls go dancing. The dead are resurrected. “Nothing can stay bound or imprisoned.” No, T. S. Eliot, I beg to differ: April is not the cruelest month, but the most joyful.



Meet the Associates by Barbara Bernardi

Barbara Bernardi takes over the "Meet the Associates" article with this issue and begins by introducing us to her sister, Marie Ryan. They are both Associates and according to Barbara, Marie is one of the SHCJ's biggest supporters.

Early Years

Marie Ryan lives in Melrose, MA, the city where she grew up. Marie's love of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus began early on through her parents, Anna and Joseph Merino. They were very involved with their Church and this involvement included the nuns who taught in the school. Marie's love of service began at a very early age. Marie went to St. Mary's school for all 12 years, in the time when only nuns taught there. She was a very active participant in all school activities, including the Sodality. As president of the Sodality in her senior year it was her privilege to crown the statue of Our Lady of Fatima in the annual May Procession.

Family...Connections Endure

Upon graduation Marie began her lifelong business career working for a large insurance company. Marie married her husband, Paul, also a St. Mary's graduate, in 1956 at St. Mary's Church. The loving couple had five beautiful children, one girl and four boys. (All of whom also went to St. Mary's school). Marie now has nine grandchildren, two of whom lived locally and went to St. Mary's school, and two great-grandchildren.

Serving Others

Throughout the years, even though busy bringing up a large family and working, Marie always managed to continue her service to her parish. She has served several terms on the parish council, is a Lector



Marie Ryan in June 2008 at Spirit Alive, the Associates' National Gathering

and Eucharistic Minister and can always be counted on to help in any way needed. This service also extends to her community. Marie is an avid member of the local Emblem Club, a community-based club dedicated to providing service to the local community. She is an active member of the local Veterans



"a glad and generous heart"

Board, is on the Parade Committee for the Memorial Day parade, supports one of the local food pantry's and on and on.

SHCJ Associates

As you can see, Marie is a very active lady. Still she was one of the first people to get involved with the SHCJ Associates. Her love of the SHCJ and Cornelia Connelly has never wavered. If anything it has just become stronger. When first hearing about the Associates it was pretty much a given that Marie would join. Her dearest hope about this affiliation is that she will be able to continue to be involved with whatever the order is doing and to help in whatever way that she can. This association is so much a part of her life-style, it fits in so well with her love of her faith and her family, that it was a natural progression of where her life was going.



Cathi Duffy and Marie Ryan in November 2010.

Fondest Hope

Marie's fondest hope for this association is that she will be able to serve her family, her church, her community, and the SHCJ Associates, with a "glad and generous heart".

Associates Sharing Their Gifts

A Special Thanks to Barbara DeConcini who has been a wonderful contributor to this newsletter for for the past 5 years. She conceived of and wrote *Poetry Off The Shelf* and *Meet the Associates*. We are most grateful for all that she has done to enhance the Associate Newsletter!

We welcome new contributors, Michelle Dugan and Barbara Bernardi, who are writing these feature articles. We thank them for offering their talents for our Newsletter.

Judy Talvacchia continues to contribute to *Connecting with Cornelia and her Charism*.

If you have an idea for a feature to add to the Newsletter or would like to contribute on an occasional basis, just be in touch with Cathi (cduffy@shcj.org).

Let me take this opportunity to also thank the many who are sharing their gifts by helping at the local level and / or on the Core Team. Your participation helps us grow stronger.

Hopefully you have received the Annual Appeal request for 2013. I thank the Associates who have already contributed and invite others to donate, as you are able, to help us fund all our administrative costs. Your generosity does make a difference! Thanks!

Enjoy Spring!



Look for the *SHCJ Associates' International NewsExchange* to arrive later this month!