



# SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER AMERICAN PROVINCE

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May-August, 2005

## NEW SOCIETY LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Society of the Holy Child Jesus announces the appointment of the American Province Leadership Team (effective June 1, 2005):

### PROVINCE LEADER

Helen McDonald, SHCJ

### PROVINCE LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBERS

Carroll Juliano, SHCJ  
Carol Ann Knight, SHCJ  
Anita Quigley, SHCJ  
Jeanne Ronzani, SHCJ

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## AN INVITATION: DISCERNING THE CALL TO ASSOCIATION

Over the past two years the Core Team worked on plans for regional retreats and days of prayer. These events were conducted in various locations and invitations to attend were extended via the newsletter and separate letters sent to local areas in which events took place. The retreats were spiritually fulfilling occasions, as evidenced from the comments from those who attended.

In light of these events, the Core Team wishes to encourage everyone, particularly those who have experienced the retreats, to consider formalizing your commitment to Association. We are hopeful that we have designed a program that offers participation to all who wish to join in the spiritual benefits of Association. We realize that as a group scattered, in some cases remote from others who share the interest in SHCJ Association, that regular meetings may not be possible. We have proposed a program that provides for various modes of involvement in order to allow for these regional and geographic realities. Where possible, regional participation by folks who share a commitment to prayer will be possible. And ultimately, as an organization looking forward, we hope to be able to conduct national meetings, allowing all an opportunity at various times to meet with Associates from all over the country for shared prayer and spiritual enrichment.

We recognize that not everyone can make the same commitment. However, sharing in a commitment to regular prayer is something that can be achieved within your own domain.

A brochure for the SHCJ Associates' program is being prepared which will describe the various modes of participation and provide a way for you to communicate your choice. We hope to have the brochure finished and mailed in the near future.

## NEW CORE TEAM MEMBERS

In July, the Core Team experienced a transition as some members departed: Connie Bush, Catherine Quinn, SHCJ and Mary Samson, SHCJ resigned their positions. Connie Bush and Catherine Quinn had worked on the Associates Task Force prior to forming the Core Team. Mary Samson had been with the Core Team for several years. We thank Connie, Catherine and Mary for the work they have done in building the foundations for the Associates program.

As Connie, Catherine and Mary depart, we have several folks joining the Core Team. New members Mary Ann Buckley, SHCJ, John Connolly, Liz Eager and Anita Martineau joined Jim Ewing, Gail Ferraiolo, Kathleen Popit, SHCJ, Kitty Sheridan and Stephanie Terril on the Core Team, as we continue the work to develop the Associates program.

## ACTIONS, NOT WORDS: MISSION IN CHILE THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION CORPORATION, "HOLY CHILD JESUS" - *Edwina Menten, SHCJ*

This organization began in 1989 when three Holy Child pioneers moved into the large housing project known as "Santo Tomás." In those days, primary education was only half-day. The mothers worried about their children "on the streets" for the other half-day. A small building was put at the disposal of the fledging Catholic community and the CEC was born. A Chilean Sociedad de Beneficencia "Hogar de Cristo" promised foodstuffs monthly and a benefactor sent a monthly quota for other materials. The mothers took turns caring for the children and preparing lunches, one group in the morning, another in the afternoon. I offered coordination and counsel, especially in handling groups of spirited children and in teaching how to keep clear accounts. The numbers increased. I persuaded a professional group to give child-care training to the mothers. Gradually, the level of attention rose and the department of education awarded a monthly subsidy. At last the mothers got recognition for their training and received a small stipend.

In ensuing years, the state educational policy evolved into full-day education. The half-day service petered away and a new service grew, the nursery school named for Sr. Elizabeth Barber, SHCJ, one of the SHCJ pioneers. Last year, thanks to a grant from the SHCJ Ministry Fund, the nursery school doubled its capacity. It now serves 65 tots and their fortunate mothers and families, making it possible for the mothers to work with a free mind, knowing that their children are in capable, loving hands. The group receives a monthly subsidy from the government body INTEGRA that supervises nursery schools.

I have been fortunate to be a part of the evolution of this organization since 1989. With the expansion of the nursery school this year, a new opportunity has opened out. The staff of 6 has grown to 15. Cornelia Connelly's educational philosophy works wonders among these service-oriented, idealistic young women. We meet regularly for in-service training. We give attention to our attitudes toward the work, to our self-image as quasi mothers, to our interaction as a group in service to vulnerable little ones and the demands of their pressing needs. We share anecdotes and reflect on a specific situation in each session. We enjoy some fun together and refreshments or a meal. Thus an esprit de corps is building. I have separate sessions with the young mother who runs the operation because she needs support and encouragement. The poor can be very demanding and one needs a sounding board for concerns and aspirations. I often recall my many years in Holy Child elementary schools in the US—St. James, Philadelphia, St. Elizabeth, NYC, St. Ignatius, Chicago—and my 5 years at Santa Rosa in Lo Barnechea here in Santiago. I thank God for the solid foundation of Cornelia's educational ideals which have seen me through the varieties of service I've been able to offer in these varieties of settings.

The director of the nursery school has a dream – to involve the mothers in some kind of workshop to share our methods with them. That is an on-going project. I'm sure that Cornelia will be with us as we work out a procedure to encourage and support them and share attitudes and values. Look for further news in later issues of your newsletter.

### REFLECTION

*Where do you find joy and happiness in your life? Is it with people? Situations? Places?*

*Have you ever experienced a situation that prevented you from finding any joy or happiness in your life at that time? How did you cope?*

*How do you value the happiness of this life in light of the eternal happiness that God offers us?*

## CONNECTING WITH CORNELIA AND CHARISM: FINDING JOY – *Gail Ferraiolo*

I hope you will take a minute to read the following quote and reflect on your own feelings before reading the rest of this article.

“Oh, where has all your joy gone, my darling? Surely the thought of paradise is enough to give joy under the pains and sorrows of this life. This is only a little dream of sorrow and we must never forget the happiness that is in store for all those who walk on with faith and courage in the pilgrimage of life. We are on our way home, my darling, and the trials and thorns must just be gently brushed aside so as not to interrupt us on our way.” – *Cornelia Connelly*

The main appeal this quotation holds for me is the poetic way in which it is written, “the trials and thorns must just be gently brushed aside...”. In regard to interpretation I related to the beginning question, “Oh, where has all your joy gone...?” It is so easy to get caught up in the busy day to day life and as we focus on the task at hand and worry about things undone, there is little time to experience the joy to be found in the events of daily life. And when life overwhelms us, as it does at times, we can regain joy if we learn to “gently brush aside” the trials that present themselves. Cornelia’s words for me are a reminder that when we

face life with “faith and courage” it makes a great difference in what we experience.

When this quote was read during the sharing time at our Core Team meeting the reaction to it varied greatly. One person thought it was a very negative quote since it focused on an older theology that believed the suffering in this life was our path to joy in the next. This type of thinking certainly is evident in this quotation and the point was made that for today’s therapist this would be poor pastoral counseling and counter productive to good mental health. Someone else made the point that things can’t be brushed aside, we have to deal with them. Jim Ewing added the thought “...no experience in life can claim your whole soul because our souls belong to God.” The spark of the divine within us will keep us from losing hope in the face of life’s sorrows.

These are just some of the thoughts we discussed regarding this excerpt taken from a letter sent by Cornelia to her niece, Bella Bowen. Please, take a few minutes to share your thoughts with us. I will read each response and share some in the next newsletter. Or if you prefer, send another quote of Cornelia’s with your thoughts. This type of sharing gives us the opportunity to connect with one another. Hoping to hear from you!

### CORNELIA CONNELLY CENTER, ROSEMONT, PA

The Cornelia Connelly Spirituality Center, a ministry of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, is located in Rosemont, PA and is situated in the restful and quiet setting of woodlands and gardens.

We offer opportunities for days of prayer, private and directed retreats, and programs in spiritual and personal growth. Many come to spend a day of quiet and prayer and to avail themselves of the beauty of the surrounding grounds.

The following programs will be offered for winter 2005-2006:

Advent Day of Prayer – December 8  
Advent/Christmas Retreat – December 16-18  
Walking and Praying with Cornelia Connelly  
– January 11

Finding God in Daily Life: Retreat for Beginners  
– January 20-21.

Each Monday evening (7:00 – 8:00 p.m.) we gather for prayer. The Sunday gospels of the Liturgical year are the focus for contemplative prayer and faith sharing.

God has a dream for us. What is that dream? We find God’s dream in the quiet of our hearts, open and receptive to the gifts and graces offered. The Spirituality Center welcomes you to share in the contemplative, quiet, peaceful setting where God speaks to hearts. If you live in the Philadelphia area come and spend a day or a few hours with us. For those living at a distance, you are always welcome as our guest when visiting in this area.

Visit us on the web at [www.shcj.org](http://www.shcj.org). Click on the American Province.

## THEOLOGY COMMITTEE

The SHCJ Theology Committee extends an invitation to all Associates to participate in the work of this committee for the coming year. The following outlines the committee's work this past spring and the plan that was developed:

### CONTEXT

We spent time considering again the task of theological education and updating for Province members and Associates. We discussed the relationship of what we might plan to the key concepts and suggestions generated at the Unity in Diversity workshops and to the up-coming Province Assembly. We pulled from the Unity in Diversity summary concepts and recommendations that related to theological education and spirituality.

We noted that from the experience of some Theology Committee members that the notion of story, especially one's own story and the sharing of these stories, was of particular importance and value to the experience.

We discussed the use of the term "journey" in the title of the justice workshops and reminded ourselves that all we try to do and try to become is process... so what we will contribute is part of a larger and on-going process not only of Theology work but related to the continuing efforts of other groups and individuals.

### THEME

We chose "STORY" as our unifying theme for the upcoming year (Sept. 2005-Sept 2006)

In discussing "story", from a personal, theological, cultural and Society perspective, we designed 6 segments to be explored:

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. My Story     | 2. God's Story  |
| 3. Gospel Story | 4. Church Story |
| 5. History      | 6. SHCJ Story   |

We brainstormed the various topics that would fit under each of these segments, always with a strong reference to multi-cultural aspects.

### THE PLAN

During May, June and July each member of the Theology Committee will hunt for good articles or book chapters that address the topics above. Each committee member has responsibility for one but will also contribute to the other topics, if she finds something particularly good.

We will send copies of what we have found to each other by August 1; and we plan to read each entry before our meeting in September. At the next meetings we will choose one or more articles for each of the topics/segments. We will draft a letter of explanation of the entire program. We will draft an introductory note for the section to explain how it is related to the whole. We will design discussion questions for each segment.

The materials can be used in a variety of ways: personal reading, group discussion – special groups for this project-or in communities, or membership groups, etc. They will be circulated in several installments during the year.

Questions and/or suggestions can be addressed to the Theology Committee Chair, Tobie Tondi, SHCJ, through the Provincial Office.

*If you wish to receive the materials the committee will gather for personal reading or if you wish to participate in the discussions and groups that may form, please request that your name be added to the mailing list for the SHCJ Theology Committee by contacting Pat Hope in the SHCJ Provincial Office 610-626-1400 or email [phope@shcj.org](mailto:phope@shcj.org).*

## ASSOCIATE STORIES

As you can read, the Theology Committee has identified "story" as an important theme in our spiritual development. As a group. Associates share a common bond that unites us spiritually despite the distances that may separate us. Sharing our stories will help us to bridge the gaps of those distances as we come to know a little about each other.

We encourage each of you to share your journey. Consider writing a brief essay that tells us your story: How did you encounter the charism of Cornelia Connelly and the Society? Why were you attracted to it? How does it help your prayer life and spiritual journey? Have you shared it with others? Can you point to a specific incident in your life where embracing this charism helped you? Is there something specific in Cornelia Connelly's life from which you draw strength or inspiration?

Do any of these questions elicit a response? If so, consider jotting your answers down and sharing it with us. You can mail it to the address below. We welcome your stories.

The next newsletter is planned for November 2005. Do you have any news or regional announcements for winter? Please forward to SHCJ Associates Newsletter, 460 Shadeland Ave, Drexel Hill, PA 19026