



# SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER AMERICAN PROVINCE

Volume II, Issue I

November, 2003

## TRAINING: ASSOCIATES RETREAT

On the beautiful Indian summer weekend of October 31 – November 2 a group of Associates and SHCJ gathered at the Spiritual Center in Rosemont to “road test” the “Retreat on the Road” that will be offered in several locations throughout the country over the coming year. Some Associates were former SHCJ who had intimate experience of the Society; some had come to know the Society as adults through friendships and shared prayer and ministry with SHCJ; some were taught by SHCJ as children and had long and deep ties to the Society. But from the moment that Connie Bush invited the gathered SHCJ and Associates to share what had brought each of them to the weekend, there was a remarkable seamlessness of warmth and collegiality.

Saturday morning began with a guided meditation facilitated by Gail Ferraiolo that allowed the retreatants to articulate where they found themselves in the landscape of their own journeys. Thus all began in the context of a recollection of graces given, struggles encountered and hopes cherished. The weekend’s reflections were organized around events and themes from Cornelia’s life as given in a new edition of “One Woman’s Journey in Faith.” Each session generated a wealth of discussion with one person’s observation sparking another’s insight. For example, Mary Samson, SHCJ gave a poignant presentation on Cornelia’s life in Grand Coteau and then in Rome. She pointed out that Pierce left Cornelia in the Bishop’s Cottage with two small children and set off

with Mercer for Europe. While Pierce was living his “highs,” traveling and visiting aristocrats in Europe, Cornelia was living her “lows,” suffering the prospect of the dissolution of her marriage and the uncertainty of her future. This remark led Kitty Sheridan to comment that when Pierce later hit his own “lows,” he sought his comfort level, which was Cornelia. But in her own “lows” Cornelia had gone deeper into her relationship with God and undertaken the discernment of how she was being led.

At one point during the sharing Eileen Moughan, SHCJ said that she often ponders what it was that kept Cornelia going through so many difficulties. She often wonders, “What  
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As one of a handful of men who are Associates, I find this connection with SHCJ enriching for my spirit and growth in my personal life. Cornelia Connelly is a woman of depth through her faith and the clarity of her relationship with God. However, Cornelia is not just for women; she is also for men of faith. The well-spring of her life reveals an inner power that comes from yielding to God’s intention for one’s life. This power is for all persons, men and women alike.

As an SHCJ Associate, I am not only drawn to the wellspring of Cornelia’s life, but also to connection with women Associates in a unique way. This uniqueness is participating in mutual understanding and sharing in each other’s lives as we are called to live out mission through service and love. Men, by and large, are connected with male dominated organizations, while here men and women are equal partners. Growing to relate to women in new and enriching ways is a great opportunity for personal growth and perspective.

I encourage men to look deeply into their own inner lives and find there a well-spring of faith, which is nurtured and expressed in the Associates of SHCJ.

## RETREAT ON THE ROAD: UPDATE

In our August newsletter, we published a tentative schedule for a "Retreat on the Road" that we plan to conduct in different regions throughout the U.S. Due to the logistics associated with securing locations for weekend dates and coordinating schedules with retreat facilitators, there have been some changes to the originally proposed schedule. (See page 4 for an updated schedule and contact list.)

In the fall several SHCJ and Associates, who will facilitate the regional retreats, met in Rosemont for a run through to test the format and content of the retreat. Those who attended were pleased with the structure, pace and the focus on the Society's charism and how that charism speaks to Associates in the development, support and growth of a spiritual life.

This retreat was developed in response to a request for spiritual formation for Associates in the charism of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, the basis for association. These regional retreats will afford more Associates the opportunity to gather for shared prayer. Drawing on Cornelia's life experiences, the retreat will also provide an opportunity to reflect on the spiritual journey of Cornelia Connelly in relation to our own lives and how each of us experiences our journey in faith.

Recognizing the geographic realities that confront us as a group, we encourage Associates to plan to attend one of these retreats. We hope as many Associates as possible will join us for this opportunity to deepen the spiritual bonds that link us. Please plan to join us!

## TRAINING: ASSOCIATES RETREAT

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was that pearl?" Associates are anxious to know the powerful secret of Cornelia's spirit. Who was this woman and what was the source of her strength and holiness? At another point an Associate asked the SHCJ which insights about Cornelia and the Society they would want the Associates to treasure. Mary Samson said that her first thought was the opening sentence of the Constitutions: "God has chosen to need men and women in every age to reveal divine love, to make known the reality of the Incarnation." The retreat was a time for realizing that being an Associate will not mean getting an immediate, intuitive insight into Cornelia's heart and mind. Rather it will mean living into the inexhaustible mystery of her deep union with the God revealed in the hiddenness and vulnerability of the child Jesus. It will mean growing in her charism as we begin to share the privilege of incarnating it in our own age, which surely as much as hers, cries out for tenderness and healing.

The heart of the retreat was the celebration of the Eucharist on Saturday evening. The feast of All Souls, it began with a litany during which retreatants were invited to name their beloved dead, many of whom were Sisters of the Holy Child. Fr. Tom Higgins, of Visitation Parish, Philadelphia, and Mary Lou Bishoff, SHCJ, shared Gospel reflections on the beatitudes. The liturgy concluded with two verses from the Society's "Hymn to the Holy

Child," written by Sr. Ursula Blake. Kathleen Popit, SHCJ, taught it to the Associates:

*"Thou art the Light, the bright and morning star,  
in whom we ever live and move and are;  
thou art the Key to treasures new and old  
that turns the toil of everyday to gold,  
O Holy Child.*

*Thou Alpha Omega, first and last,  
in whose eternal love our lives are passed.  
Thou art the Christ, the living God's own Son.  
Make us with Thee in heart and spirit one,  
O Holy Child."*

The extraordinary grace of the retreat seemed to come from a particular realization of deep desires. The participants had come because their attraction to the person of Cornelia Connelly and the spirit of her Society is precious and central to their lives. The desire to share their love and take it deeper with others of the same disposition was met it seemed, beyond expectation. The retreat confirmed that Cornelia's charism engages profound spiritual longings for contemporary people, both religious and lay. As the weekend came to a close the retreatants were conscious that there had been something more to their experience together than met the eye. Cornelia said that the Society was God's work, not hers. Those gathered felt that they had planted a seed for the Associates prayerfully and lovingly but that it had truly been the gift of the Spirit.

## CONNECTING WITH CORNELIA AND CHARISM: THE FEAST OF EPIPHANY — *Rosemary McSorley, SHCJ*

I'm recalling the feast of the Epiphany – when Christ was manifested to the world in the persons of the three Wise men who came as strangers to Bethlehem to find the new born King – I remember how precious this feast was to Cornelia Connelly. Cornelia chose this feast and not January 1<sup>st</sup> as the date on which her Sisters would annually renew their vows of Holy Charity and Obedience. Every year she wrote a special Epiphany letter to all the Sisters of the Holy Child of Jesus. I began to ruminate and surmise as to what Cornelia would have written to our newly formed Associate members in this year of Our Lord 2004.

*My dearest co-workers and friends to whom I feel such a very special bond!*

*Many of you have been led by the star of a relationship with one of my sisters or by some other brightness to make the choice of following Christ in the*

*Spirit of the Holy Child Jesus. As the three astrologers believed, in spite of Jesus' smallness, that he really was the manifestation of the True God here on earth, so we are called in 2004 to continue to share God's love with all those we meet – friend or foe alike.*

*It becomes more clear every day how precious to God is our entire earth family and each one of you who are blessed to continue seeing the face of God in every being in Creation, from the smallest flower to the tallest tree and from the smallest insect to the wildest mammal. Lift up your hearts to the Lord and commit each hour to doing His will and sharing in His marvelous works of all life.*



### EPIPHANY REFLECTION

*“Contemplating the eternal wisdom in the lowliness of his humanity.” (CC)*

Cornelia encouraged the Society members to make the Epiphany an occasion of offering gifts just as the Magi did, recognizing the “new born King.” Christ is manifested as God, as light revealed to all. At Epiphany, we celebrate his coming into our lives today – in the present, the here, the now.

*What do you see/ hear as a manifestation of our God-with-us this year?*

*What gifts do you have and wish to offer in order to make known the reality of the Incarnation in our world today, in your world today?*

The Holy Child, the Word made flesh, speaks God's word even today.

**Please send your responses to the reflection questions on the sheet enclosed. Please send responses by March 1, 2004**

### REFLECTION RESPONSES

**What & where are the wellsprings in your life from which you are nourished and from which God's graces flow?**

[I am] nourished by graces drawn from daily mass and reception of the Eucharist.

*Ruth B. Kugler*

I am nourished by the work and dedication of our Response-ability volunteer teachers, who work so hard in the inner-city Catholic schools and in the Dominican Republic and Chile.

*Audrey Ruppert*

[\* *Response-Ability* is an SHCJ Ministry.]

**What spiritual resources passed through Cornelia do you claim for yourself and pass onto others?**

I rely on Cornelia's perseverance in the face of all her trials.

*Grace Hallahan Kearney*

I truly desire her ability to be joyful in tough times; her warmth, her single-heartedness...

*Stephanie Terril*

### *Feast of Epiphany*

This season of Christmas-tide is special for members of Cornelia's extended family. Years ago, with wisdom gleaned from Cornelia's Epiphany letters, the Society chose Christmas and Epiphany as its principal feasts, although in the true Cornelian spirit of simplicity and joy, there were many occasions that called for feasting and celebration.

Traditionally, the SHCJ renewed their vows during Mass on the feast of Epiphany. In recent years, associates and other friends have joined in Epiphany celebrations in various parts of the Society. This year, why not plan to participate in an SHCJ community celebration, or plan an Epiphany celebration for your own circle of friends?

### **Retreat Schedule 2004**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Dates</b> * tentative	<b>Contact</b>
San Diego, CA	February 20-22	Jim Ewing (619.295.5431; jweec@cox.net)
Rye, NY	April 23-25	Connie Bush (212.982.2287; cbush@connellycenter.org)
Washington D.C.	April 30-May 2	Mary Popit, SHCJ (202.635.4552; mpopit@shcj.org)
Philadelphia, PA	May 21-23	Stephanie Terril (206.349.7861; sterril@msn.com)
Charlotte, NC	October 15 - 17	Pat & Willa Izzo (304.497.2001; wilpat@frontiernet.net)
Midwest	October 15 - 17*	Kathleen Popit, SHCJ (847.625.1573)
Northwest	Fall 2004*	Connie Bush (212.982.2287; cbush@connellycenter.org)
<b>Pilgrimage Retreat in 2005</b>		
Grand Coteau, LA	January 14 – 16*	Details to come

## **THE SOCIETY'S ROOTS IN AMERICA: TOWANDA, PA** – *Jeanne Adams, SHCJ*

What a joy it was for us to meet so many Associates at the Chapter this past summer. We so look forward to your newsletter to learn of your progress in developing the Associates in this province. You will, I am sure, be very happy to learn that this past February, we found out that our very first American convent, opened in 1862, is still standing in Towanda, PA. We thought it had burned down long ago.

In August, 1862, five young English SHCJ and a postulant arrived in Towanda, Bradford County, PA, and amidst great hardships and trials, opened an academy, a parish school and a night school for working girls. They had been sponsored by Louisa Catherine, Duchess of Leeds, an American, who had recently met Cornelia Connelly and her sisters in St. Leonard's—on—Sea in Sussex, England. Two years later, though the schools were thriving, financial problems were increasing and

the sisters, sadly, had to leave. In July 1864, they went to Philadelphia, where the works of the Society grew. August, 2012 will be the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SHCJ's beginning in America. In order to complete the research for a full account of the American Foundation, we will open a convent in Towanda in April, 2004. Aside from being a center for research, it will be a house of prayer and hospitality, to which all will be welcome.

You may wish to save some of the following dates when Days of Recollection will be held:

July 24-25, 2004 – Mary Bryan, SHCJ

October 23-24, 2004 – Mary Bryan, SHCJ,

December 10, 11-12, 2004 – Rosanne MacDougall, SHCJ and Spring 2005 – Jeanne Marie Guerin, SHCJ.

For further information, contact Jeanne Adams, SHCJ at jadams@shcj.org or call 215-471-1146 evenings, up to February 29, 2004.

The next newsletter is planned for delivery by April. Do you have any news or regional announcements for spring/summer 2004? Please forward to SHCJ Associates Newsletter, 460 Shadeland Ave, Drexel Hill, PA 19026 or e-mail: cquinn@shcj.org. Please mark e-mail subject line "Associates Newsletter."