



SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN PROVINCE

SPRING 2014 Volume XII Issue II

ACTIONS NOT WORDS



New Core Team members, Rita Fortner (Pasadena) and Bryna Bozart (Charlotte) at the May meeting.



Melrose Associates and Sr. Mary Samson for the International Day of Prayer and Cathi's visit in March. New Associate, Eileen Gorvin (lower left)



Associates from United States (minus a few) at International Associates Gathering in early March in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

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A Letter from the Director

Spring Greetings to All!

Annual Appeal

Each April, I ask you to contribute financially to the Associates with the goal to completely cover our administrative expenses within the next few years. This year, your support has been wonderful. We surpassed \$8,000 before the end of May and we will be able to cover a significant percentage of our costs this year. I am also grateful for those who contribute in-kind services and donations so that our overall expenses are lower. More on all of this in our annual report this fall. In the meantime, if you still wish to contribute, you can send a check payable to SHCJ Associates to the address shown on the side panel. Thanks!

International News Exchange

Associates and Sisters all received the Associates International News Exchange in May. The issue was dedicated to our International Gathering in the Dominican Republic. I hope that it gave all a sense of the significance of the event for all Associates attending! It does leave the question – what next for Associates and our own desire for the internationality of the Associate relationship!

Core Team

As you'll note in a photo above, there are two new members of our Core Team. Not only did Bryna and Rita join us this May, three additional members begin in October. You'll learn more about them in a future issue.

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Cornelia and Pope Francis on Mercy

by Judy Talvacchia

Pope Francis on Mercy

"Mercy is the name of our God and without mercy we're lost." These were the words of Cardinal Bergoglio during the conclave that would elect him Pope. He was responding to the gift of a book on mercy, written by his friend Cardinal Walter Kasper. Since his election, Pope Francis has used the word "mercy" more often than any other word except "joy." It seems that so far, these two words are setting the tone of the Francis papacy.



Mercy in Scripture

Why does Pope Francis use the word "mercy" so often? And why does he call it "the name of our God"? While I don't pretend to know the mind of the Pope, I suspect that the many references to the mercy of God in the Bible inspire him. The concept of mercy has a long and rich history in Scripture, going back to Adam and Eve when God fashioned clothes for them before expelling them from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:20).

But the bible goes far beyond describing a God who takes pity on disobedient creatures who suddenly are ashamed of their nakedness. What English language bibles translate as "mercy" encompasses several Hebrew and Greek words. Their shades of meaning reveal different facets of God's action towards creation, e.g. womb love, steadfast love, healing, forgiveness. Many passages describe in further detail the varied and even creative ways in which God shows mercy. Read the Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55), for example – God "lifts up the lowly", "feeds the hungry", etc. Or Joshua, chapter 2, where God gives the Hebrews shelter in the home of a prostitute, Rahab! As Pope Francis says, "There is no limit

to the divine mercy which is offered to everyone!" (4/6/14)

Mercy, as "the name of our God" and without which "we are lost" is a concept that would be very familiar to Cornelia Connelly.

Cornelia and Mercy

The core insight of her spirituality was the merciful love of God becoming human in Jesus Christ. So overpowering was her experience of God as Mercy that she envisioned the primary mission of the Society to be the manifestation of God's mercy – this before any specific acts of mercy had been decided upon.

When Cornelia realized that education was the best way for the Society to manifest God's mercy, her distinctive approach to schools emerged from an understanding of God's "mercy and boundless love" made visible in the life of the Child Jesus. She wanted students to experience rigorous instruction that would help them achieve their potential. At the same time, she envisioned a nurturing atmosphere where teachers would lead by love as a parent would. As Elizabeth Strub, SHCJ puts it in the *Informatio*, "Her very theory and practice of education were informed by the strength and tenderness of a compassionate parent." (p. 168) Our merciful and compassionate God was the One from whom it all flowed.

Like Pope Francis, Cornelia also made the connection between God's mercy and the poor. She understood that in the Holy Child, "God, like the poor, is at the mercy of others even while remaining the source of mercy." In the early years of the Society, Cornelia took over running many poor schools. She undoubtedly saw this as a way to bring the "source of mercy" to those who were "at the mercy of others", to share the redemptive mercy of God with people who had few advocates. In her own life and in the lives of her Sisters, Cornelia tried to foster the desire to serve as Jesus served, emptying himself in humility for the sake of the well being of others.

Understanding Compassion and Mercy

In contemporary conversation, we tend to use the words "mercy" and "compassion" interchangeably; but, in fact, they have subtle distinctions. "Mercy" comes from Latin



words meaning “to pity” and “heart” – in other words “to have heartfelt pity.” In medieval times, mercy became associated not just with feelings but with actions that alleviate suffering. Think of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Mercy implies that action is performed as a favor by someone in power on behalf of one who is subject to the giver’s power. Certainly mercy, in this sense, is appropriate to describe the action of God towards creatures. But at times, the word has been used to describe condescending action that embarrasses or humiliates the receiver – a sense of “noblesse oblige”. This is not a definition of God’s mercy but mercy doled out by flawed human beings.

“Compassion”, also from the Latin, means “to suffer with.” Its meaning encompasses both empathy and (at least the desire for) action. It describes interaction between equals, as well as between the powerful and the disadvantaged. Compassion implies a respectful exchange between giver and receiver, even when there is a difference in



power. Sometimes in contemporary language, the word “compassion” is used deliberately instead of mercy to avoid giving the impression of condescending feeling or action.

Mercy Today

Both Pope Francis and Cornelia give preference to the word “mercy” but in its fullest sense, perhaps one might say in its biblical sense, of being both an attribute of the heart and a concrete action on behalf of another. Last March, I had the privilege witnessing mercy in action. As part of the International Gathering of Associates in the Dominican Republic, I visited the slum, Batey Lecheria, where SHCJ Sisters and Associates work with Dominicans of Haitian descent. The people of the batey are at the very margins of Dominican society – denied work, citizenship, human dignity. They are treated as disposable – not needed or wanted.

Sisters and Associates treat the residents of the batey as people made in God’s image. More important than anything they do for them, they accompany the people in their joys and sorrows as fellow travelers in the journey of life. Walking the streets of the batey, we saw their loving engagement with everyone we met. In the schools and the clinic, we witnessed their generous and joyful service. Their commitment to sharing God’s “mercy and boundless love” in word and deed, reminds residents that they are indeed God’s beloved who deserve the fullness of life.



...on Mercy

The legacy of Cornelia Connelly, the teachings of Pope Francis and the presence of the risen Christ were deeply felt by those of us who followed in their footsteps of mercy through the batey. I was especially proud that day to be a Catholic Christian and an Associate of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus!

Questions for Reflection

1. How do I experience God's mercy in my life?
2. How do I share God's mercy with others, with creation?
3. How does Cornelia Connelly's understanding of mercy affect me?
4. How does my Association with the SHCJ give me opportunities to receive and to share God's mercy?
5. How can studying and praying with the Bible deepen my encounter with the God whose name is Mercy?

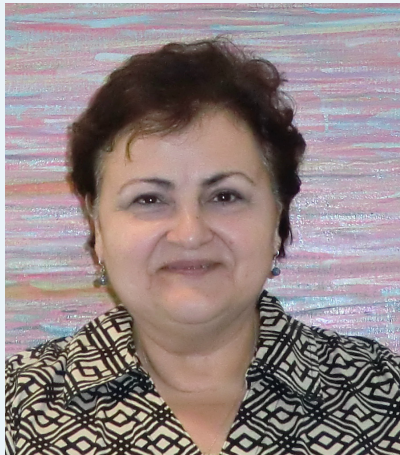


“In the humble and hidden life of the Holy Child Jesus, we find mysteries of the most sublime teaching. Here it is that God manifests to us in the most wonderful manner the treasures of His mercy and of His boundless love.”

Rita Fortner

by Barbara Bernardi

Editor's Note: This issue we feature Rita Fortner, one of the new members of the Core Team. Bryna Bozart, another new Core Team member was featured in our Autumn 2013 issue, <http://www.shcj.org/amer/documents/2013AutumnSHCJAssociateNewsletter.pdf>



Rita hails from a large family of 4 sisters and one brother. She is the fifth child of a Mexican immigrant father and Mexican-American mother and grew up near Los Angeles, California with a large extended family! Rita was always surrounded by many cousins and aunts and uncles!

Her faith is deeply rooted beginning with 12 years of Catholic education and a home which strictly enforced following the Church. Being a Christian has always just been a way of life for her.

Rita went on to UCLA and majored in Fine Arts. Her love for drawing and painting brought her to a vocation of teaching art in a Catholic high school for the past 30 years.

Rita is a passionate artist, daughter, wife, mother and teacher who has been involved in her parish, Holy Family in South Pasadena, as a catechist, and currently as a member of *Living your Gifts* ministry and as a Eucharistic Minister. She also has been a facilitator of a Lenten faith sharing group in her home for the past 10 years. In these aspects of her life Rita always tries to follow Jesus and

live a life of faith as Cornelia did. She reflects on Cornelia's life as a mother and strong woman, and strives to be as faithful. Cornelia's quote, *"You must not hide the gifts God has given, but use them in his service in all that I do."* guides Rita in all that she does.

Rita has been married to her wonderful husband Anthony, for 28 years and the couple have 2 children, Alyson (24) and Jordan (23). Rita's association with the SHCJ began almost 10 years ago when her daughter began high school at Mayfield Senior School in Pasadena, CA. where she quickly joined Sister Barbara's prayer group during Lent and Advent and has been going ever since.



Melrose Associates and Rita Fortner for the
Rita meeting Associates Sarah Brabant and Anita
Martineau at 2008 Spirit Alive National Gathering at
Rosemont College.

After reading Cornelia's journals, Rita fell in love with Cornelia and her life. Rita became an Associate because of her wish to continue the charism and passion of Cornelia and the Sisters. Rita has a strong belief that our Church needs people like us to continue the work of the Sisters and to keep our Church alive and to make a difference in the world.

As a Core Team member, she hopes to contribute a positive, uplifting attitude and to share her gifts in any way, small or large as she believes that we all need to do all that we can to continue Cornelia's legacy.



Hafiz

by Michelle Dugan

I Know I Was the Water

Who can believe the divine kindness of God?
Who can comprehend what happens when
Separation ends?

For now,
Because of my union with Reality,
Now,
Whenever I hear a story of one of His prophets
Having come into this world,

I know I was a tree that stood near,
Leaned down and took notes.

I know I was the earth that measured the infinite
Arch in His feet.

I know I was the water,
I know I was the food and water that nourished Him –
That went into our Beloved's mouth.

Pilgrim,
If it is your wish, you will someday see
You sat inside of Hafiz

And it was with the lyre you gave me
We sang of truth and the sublime intimacy:

"I know I was the water
That quenched the Christ's thirst.

I know I Am the food and water that goes
Into every
Mouth."

Wise Men Keep Talking About

Time is the shop
Where everyone works hard

To build enough love
To break the
Shackle.

Wise men keep talking about
Wanting to meet Her.

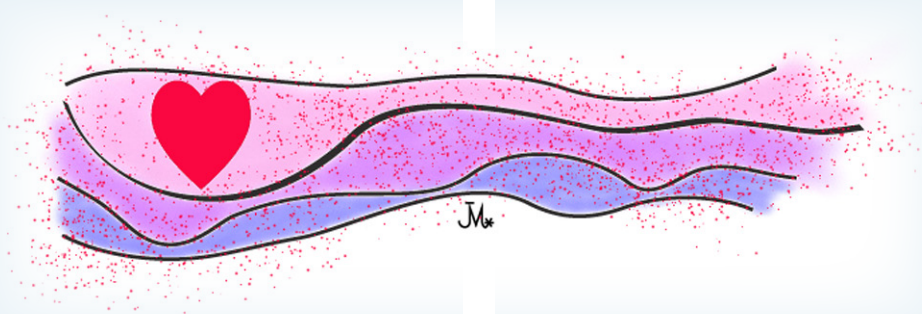
Women sometimes pronounce the word God
A little differently:
They can use more feeling and skill
With the heart-lute.

All the world's movements,
Apparent chaos, and suffering I now know happen
In the Splendid Unison:

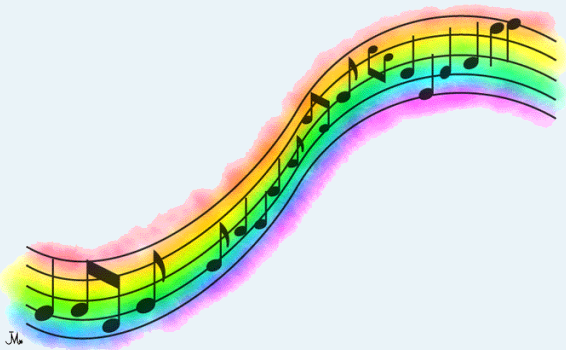
Our tambourines are striking
The same thigh.

Hafiz stands
At a juncture in this poem.
There are a thousand new wheels I could craft
On a wagon
And place you in –
Lead you to a glimpse of the culture
And seasons of another dimension.

Yet again God
Will have to drop you back at the shop
Where you still have to work
With
Love.



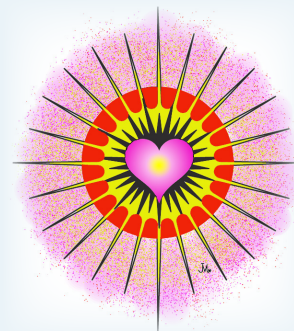
Last spring, when I wrote my first "Poetry Off the Shelf" column, I had fallen in love with Rumi, the 13th century Persian mystic, whose ecstatic poems seemed to capture a joy akin to Cornelia's: finding God in all things. A year later, Sr. Tese Currie gave me a gift (actually, I borrowed the book from her and have still not returned it): *The Gift, Poems by Hafiz, The Great Sufi Master*. Tese had chosen a poem to share with the Evergreens as we met during Lent to pray with Sr. Terri McKenzie's reflections on water. I was moved to tears and asked her to read it again, and then afterwards she handed me the book. Written in 14th century Persia and translated by Daniel Ladinsky, the poems of Hafiz, like Rumi's, defy explication. "I am/A hole in a flute/That the Christ's breath moves through--/Listen to this/Music," Hafiz tells us. Having spent untold hours working on the translations, Ladinsky believes that Hafiz was one of those "rare souls" who achieve sacred union through the intensity of their love for God.



To be a poet of the sacred, of course, requires not just the experience but the ability to capture it in words, thereby offering the reader entrance into the mystery. In "I Know I Was the Water," the images Hafiz uses are both easily understood and fabulously large; Hafiz is fearless! He knows he was a tree! He measures the arch of God's feet, quenches Christ's thirst, and feeds every mouth in creation, all because of his "union with Reality." When he speaks directly to us: "Pilgrim,/If it is your wish, you will someday see," we are invited to sing with him of "the sublime intimacy." His ecstasy becomes ours; his union with God, ours.

"Wise Men Keep Talking About" begins with the word "Time" and ends with the word "Love." For me this poem captures the essence of our mortal existence; we are creatures who are bound by time. We must work hard to break the shackles, to build enough love. Yet while we are surrounded by chaos and suffering, Hafiz promises us a glimpse of eternity. He reassures us that the "Splendid Unison" is real; the world's apparent movements are the illusion. But for now, we must do God's work here, as incarnate souls, learning to love others as God loves us.

In his introduction, Ladinsky writes that his task was "really an attempt to do the impossible: to translate Light into words – to make the luminous resonance of God tangible to our finite senses." Let us all join in this work as Associates, playing our heart-lutes and striking our tambourines joyfully!



2014 SHCJ Jubilarians

by Cathi Duffy

As Associates, we offer our deep gratitude to all Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus for sharing themselves with us and for being models of living the charism and mission of the Holy Child for us. In a special way, let us honor those Sisters who will be celebrating special anniversaries of their profession as Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus this summer.

We celebrate you!
We honor you!
We applaud you!
We thank God for you!

60 Years

The American Province celebrates the following Sisters who will celebrate 60 years professed this summer:

Nancy Callahan, SHCJ
Caroline Conway, SHCJ
Jeanne Marie Guerin, SHCJ
Clarita Hanson, SHCJ
Mary Jane Hicks, SHCJ
Ruth McCarthy, SHCJ
Patricia Tirrell, SHCJ
Ann Schwarz, SHCJ
Elizabeth Mary Strub, SHCJ
Nora Sweeney, SHCJ

50 Years

The American Province celebrates the following Sisters who will celebrate 50 years of profession this summer:

Jeanne Ronzani, SHCJ
Carol Ann Smith, SHCJ
France White, SHCJ

