



SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN PROVINCE

ACTIONS NOT WORDS



Faith-sharing this Lent at Mayfield Senior School: Sr. Barbara Mullen (I), Amy Macklin, Christina Schweighofer, and Virginia Jones.



Associates at JPIC April Meeting - Italy Michelle Dugan (USA) with Betsy Keating (Britain)



Cindy Platko and students at Fe Y Alegria school in Batey Lecheria this April. To learn more about the Platko's recent visit, check out their blog, <http://www.domrepadventure.blogspot.com/>

Inside this issue

A Letter From Director	_____	1
Reflection on SHCJ Charism	_____	2
Reflection Question	_____	4
Meet the Associates	_____	5
Poetry Off the Shelf	_____	6
2015 SHCJ Jubilarians	_____	8
40th Anniversary	_____	8

A Letter from Director

Dear SHCJ Associates and Sisters,

How do we understand the Associate relationship today? Many Associates prayerfully reflected on this topic earlier in 2015. The International Associate Newsletter will soon be released and contain feedback from Associates throughout the Society on the meaning of Association in our lives today and ideas that will move us forward. All U.S. Associates have already received a copy of all responses from the United States; if you would like a copy, you can contact me directly.

Associates will again gather to reflect on our own matters of great importance as input to the Core Team's July meeting at the Province Chapter and to an international gathering of Associate representatives in Rome this October. Thanks for your participation in this important process! Feedback is expected by mid-June.

Annual Appeal Update

Special thanks to all who have already participated in the Associates' Annual Appeal. Thirty (30) percent/ 58 Associates have contributed this year and we are over half way to our goal of \$10,000. Your support helps us cover our operating costs, including postage, printing, software, director's (continued page 4)

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Associate Reflection on SHCJ Charism

by Judy Talvacchia

The Society Leadership Team in Rome recently sent a reflection to Associates called *SHCJ Charism: Another Facet of the Gift Given*. They invited responses from Associates and offered five guiding questions:

1. What does this article spark in you?
2. In what ways does it give you life and hope?
3. Are there difficulties encountered?
4. What essential aspects of the Charism have we neglected?
5. How would you like to respond?

What follows is my own personal response to the article. My hope is that it will invite you to reflect on what the charism means to you. Maybe you will even be inspired to share your thoughts with the Sisters and Associates!

The SHCJ Charism

First of all – what is a charism? The Sisters who contributed to the article define it as “a specific grace, a free gift granted for the common good, for building up the Body and Kingdom of Christ in love.” Our wildly generous God gives an abundance of gifts to individuals and to communities – all in the service of bringing about the fullness of God’s reign of love.

As the article points out, the gift given to Cornelia, and through her to the Society and to us, lies in the name Society of the Holy Child Jesus. The Incarnation roots and grounds us in the merciful God who became human as a vulnerable child. Through Jesus, the Holy Child, we understand that nothing is too humble or hidden for God not to be present and active. The charism helps us to see God in the most unexpected people, places and things and to respond with action to the God we recognize.



Early Religious Education

My religious education began in a parochial school in the pre-Vatican II Church. There I learned that the Incarnation was “God the Father sending his son down from heaven to save human beings from our sins”. In my experience, the focus of the Incarnation was on the person; that is, Jesus became human to free me and all human beings from the consequences of sin. That explanation resonated with me since I have always been a people person. From a very young age, I was sensitive to the needs of others. I have always been fascinated by what makes people tick, what makes them who they are. I loved learning about other cultures – how different people can be and yet how much we have in common. That may be part of the reason why the charism of the SHCJ attracted me. It spoke to something very deep in me about finding God in anyone and everyone. I learned, as the article says, that “...nothing truly human is foreign.” Although I enjoyed and appreciated the non-human world, my passion was always people.



Creation Spirituality

The recent insights of science and of creation spirituality have deeply challenged my lived experience of the Incarnation. My head tells me that much of what I am learning makes perfect sense. But try as I might, I don’t feel as passionate about ecological projects as I do about projects, for example, to support children in the batey. Even so, God has been drawing me slowly but surely towards a more expansive understanding of the Incarnation.

Two thoughts in the article spoke to me about the strategy God seems to be using in my spiritual journey. The idea that we have responsibility, not just for humans, but for “all that touches the human” has ignited



my curiosity about what those things are and how they affect people. God is showing me that if I want to support people, I cannot do it without supporting the natural world. But God draws me even deeper to see that “the expansion of our very selves, as well as of all creation are inextricably intertwined.” I am realizing that humans need to support the well being of the natural world for its own sake as well, if God’s reign of love is to be accomplished. All of God’s creation needs to flourish before Jesus can hand everything over to the Father at the end of time.

The Cosmic Christ

The biggest stumbling block for me, however, is the concept of the Cosmic Christ – the Christ who came to save the entire universe, the Christ whose Body includes all of creation. I believe in the resurrected Christ, living and active, but my image of him is still the man portrayed in the Gospels. I don’t want to give up a personal relationship with Jesus! I can’t relate to him as a disembodied cosmic force.

Fortunately, Jesus has been patiently teaching me and drawing me closer to his resurrected life. A couple of examples. When I traveled to the Holy Land, I was struck by the commercialism of many of the pilgrim sites. It was hard at times to identify with Jesus in his life on this earth, in the face of so many distractions. I remember complaining in prayer, “Why did I come here if I can’t be immersed in what your earthly life was like?” It was as if Jesus directed my attention to the reality around me and said, “I’m happy that you came to the land where I lived, but I also want you to see me as I

exist today – in the people, places and things around you; this is my Body today!” Since then, I have become more aware of the risen Christ who lives and acts in all of creation. And to my surprise, the more I do that, the closer I feel to Jesus and to the God he embodies.

Of course, it’s still a challenge – sometimes in the most unexpected ways. I was on retreat and walking along a beautiful country road. Wild flowers were in bloom everywhere. While admiring them, I thought about



how Christ is present in each of them. But I could feel my spirit resist. “I don’t want a relationship with a flower petal when I want to be close you, Jesus.” With sublime irony, Jesus responded to my spirit, “Don’t you experience a deeply personal connection with me in the Eucharistic bread and wine?” Touché!

Embracing the Unfolding Mystery

So I willingly and joyfully, but with a hint of trepidation, join the Sisters in “embracing on a fresh level the mystery of Incarnation and Creation as united revelation of the greatness and goodness and Allness of God.” I am grateful to the Sisters who contributed to the reflection for articulating the evolving understanding of the charism in a way that speaks to my own evolving spiritual journey. It has given me more confidence to respond generously to God’s invitation; to explore new facets of the Incarnation with trust that God is leading me to fuller life and love. And I commit myself with Sisters and Associates to be one of the “ones chosen now to make known the reality of the Incarnation ever being revealed and newly understood.” How about you?

Reflection



travel expenses, and much more. I hope to hear from the rest of you soon. Your participation is important whether the gift is small or large!

This spring I will be visiting Associates in Mint Hill (NC), Melrose (MA), and Rockport (MA). Let me know if you'd like me to plan a visit close to you in 2015!

The Sisters of the American Province will be meeting for the delegate session of the Province Chapter July 2 to July 5. Please keep them in your prayers.

Abundant blessings,

Cathi

Questions for Reflection

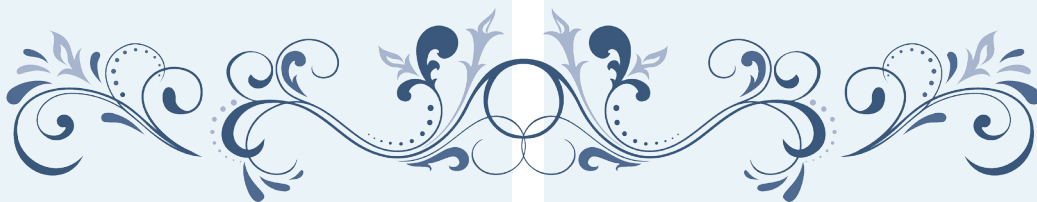
How would you respond to the questions offered by the Society Leadership Team to the article *SHCJ Charism: Another Facet of the Gift Given*?

You may send any reflections you would like to share to Cathi Duffy at cduffy@shcj.org.



Core Team Meeting - April 2015
Marilyn Nigro (l), Rita Fortner (c), and Juliet Njoku (r)

Special thanks to Anita Martineau for sharing her photos for many of the images in this issue.



Eugenia Ukpo

Barbara Bernardi

This spring we have the privilege of reading about another outstanding Associate, one who overcame nearly insurmountable obstacles to have an incredibly successful and rewarding life. Eugenia Ukpo grew up in Okpoma, Cross River State, Nigeria in a large, devout Roman Catholic family. She had ten older siblings and two younger ones and when she was four Eugenia lost her father. Her mother, who must have been a remarkable woman, was left to care for this large family. She brought her children up to be strong, to assist other people and to share whatever they had with others. Although Mrs. Ukpo had no formal education she was determined that all her children would go to school. Eugenia's oldest brother became the first indigenous priest of Ogoja Diocese in Nigeria, and later became the Archbishop of Calabar. How proud she must have been of this feat!

Eugenia started her elementary school education at Holy Child Convent School and finished at Christ the King School, both Catholic schools in her town. She went to Holy Child Secondary School, Mt. Carmel Ogoja, which was a boarding school. The sisters were primarily from the European and American Provinces. The sisters not only taught academic subjects, they taught the art of proper bed-laying, how to starch and iron uniforms which were pinafore pleated skirts, etiquette, craft and needlework. Eugenia always looked forward to school holidays when she practiced these skills at home.

Eugenia obtained her Doctor of Education (EdD) degree in Management and Policy from the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom; her Bachelor and Master degrees in Education were from the Universities of Benin and Jos in Nigeria. Eugenia taught English Language and Literature in secondary schools in Nigeria. Later she worked for the National Teachers Institute, a distance teacher training institute, where she served in various administrative positions: designing training programs/materials, working closely with teacher trainees on classroom practice and organizing professional development programs. During her tenure, Eugenia attained the position of Deputy Director of Education.



*Eugenia Ukpo (l) and Debbie Margulis (r)
Commitment 2014*

In 2009, after 24 years at the Institute, she retired and moved to California. One of her brothers had become a US citizen and petitioned for her to come to the United States. Eugenia now has dual citizenship with Nigeria and America; she currently calls Anaheim home.

After arriving, Eugenia joined the Adult Literacy Services of the Orange County Public Libraries as a volunteer tutor. Through this program Eugenia has helped beginning English learners improve their Reading, Writing and English skills. She has continued working in the education field; tutoring K-12 students in English Language Arts and substitute teaching across middle and high schools within Orange County. Eugenia also writes "occasionally" (her word); she recently published a children's alphabet book, *A as in Africa: My Alphabet and Word Practice Book*, which, in September 2014, was approved for use in grades 1-3 by the Cross River State Ministry of Education, Nigeria.

Eugenia reconnected with the SHCJ and learned about the Associates through a relative, Sister Margaret Odeh, who was studying at Rosemont College and spending Christmas 2012 with the Sisters in Anaheim. Eugenia also discovered that one of her High School Principals, Sr. Michelle Puma, was in Philadelphia; they were able to speak by phone. Sister Margaret mentioned to Sister Kathleen



Eugenia at Epiphany 2015

Dullea that Eugenia should be an Associate. Eugenia was invited to the Epiphany celebration where she met other Sisters and Associates from California. Later that year Cathi and Eugenia got together with Debbie Margulis and thus began the journey to becoming an associate. Eugenia formally made her commitment in August 2014.

Eugenia hopes to live her commitment in the spirit of Cornelia and, together with the SHCJ, serve God's people. Reflecting back on her immigration to America, her journey to becoming an Associate, and role as President of the Legion of Mary at her parish, her thoughts go to Cornelia's words: "I am Cosmopolitan. The whole world is my country and heaven is my home." This very busy and talented woman firmly believes that God's presence and love is indeed everywhere, and she plans to share it with everyone she meets.

Majmudar and MacKenzie

by Michelle Dugan

His Vision

I never saw the root of the real
In arboreal flare,
Nor witnessed this man walk on water,
Nor that one float in air.

I sat beneath the bodhi tree;
I felt my body itch.
Between the true cup and the false
I knew not which was which.

My eyes have never blown like fuses
Sparked black upon a wall,
No surge of sight or insight mine,
No whisper, and no call.

My thousand suns have been my twins,
My Beatrice, my wife,
My way to immortality
The living of the life—

No visage singed into a shroud
Or knotted in a tree.
A newborn in a swaddling-cloth
Was the vision given me:

Someday the faces round my sickbed
Will blur and superimpose
Into that single human Face
The visionaries know,

My humble human loves collected
And, for the first time, seen
Intensely, like diffraction
Narrowed to a beam.

By Amit Majmudar



Imagine!

Set afire by sparks
from scientific revelation,
charism and consciousness
ignite to meet Earth's needs.

Doctrines melt to metaphors.
Enduring sacred stories bear the heat
and wrap with warmth
the mystery of life and love:
God lives and acts in all our world.

Fear finds solace
and opens to new truth,
however challenging.
Energy, illumined,
surges to and from our roots.

Within our garden —
sacred, seamless, all-
relational —
Cornelia's family, con-
sumed by wiser
contemplatio and
cosmic compassion,
kindles healing fire in
all creation.



By Terri MacKenzie, SHCJ (1996)

By the time you read what I am writing now, the Easter season will have arrived at last, renewing our spirits in the Risen Christ and the longed-for flowering of spring. Yet in this moment of my writing, Holy Week is just beginning and the Passion is yet to be endured. So it is with a special awareness of the mysteries of time – mortal life unfolding within the context of eternity – the Incarnation – that I offer these two poems in celebration of our SHCJ charism, so beautifully captured in the article we received at the end of March from Rome, "SHCJ Charism: Another Facet of the Gift Given."

"His Vision" came as a gift from Judy Talvacchia, who emailed me the link to the issue of America magazine

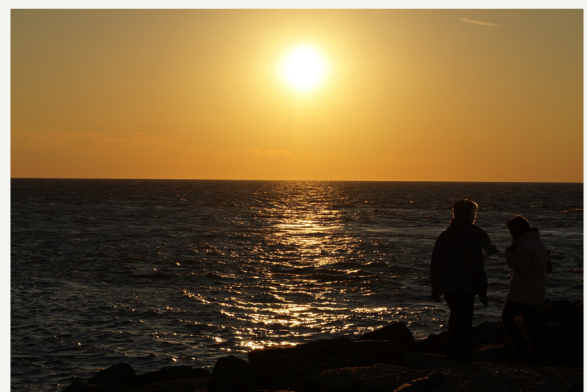
that featured the poem. Contemporary poet Amit Majmudar, a nuclear radiologist who lives in Ohio, chooses the simplicity of rhyming verse to emphasize that his vision is grounded in "humble human loves." The idea of enlightenment makes him itchy; he sees no burning bushes, hears no voices, and makes no claim to wisdom: "Between the true cup and the false/I knew not which was which." In fact, he almost seems to mock the mystical experience (or perhaps just those who flaunt it) with the marvelous image of the blown fuses. Yet after these disclaimers comes the revelation that there is "a way to immortality" through "the living of the life." The poet reveals that he is indeed a visionary after all: "A newborn in a swaddling-cloth/



Was the vision given me." With great faith Majmudar concludes by picturing "that single human Face/ The visionaries knew." How like Cornelia when she writes, "Mysteries of the most sublime teaching are to be found in the humble life of the Holy Child Jesus"!

"Imagine" was also a gift, this time from Terri MacKenzie, SHCJ, curator of the ecospirituality website www.ecospiritualityresources.com and spiritual mentor to me and many others. As the essay on our charism explains, "With trepidation, yet with courage, we acknowledge that in our day, another facet of our charism is beginning to shine forth." Terri has been helping to lead the Society forward as we attempt to incorporate our faith – Cornelian, Catholic, Christian – into the Universe Story, a wondrous evolution that we share with the entire living community on Earth. "The March 1996 issue of SHCJ Voices requested replies to the chapter committee's question about how the contemporary shifts in consciousness (cosmology, theology...) had affected how we lived and witnessed to our charism," writes Terri. "Pondering how discoveries in cosmology, quantum physics, biology, and chaos theory were affecting me, I wrote the poem." Animated by the imagery of fire (notice the poet's marvelous choice of words throughout, from sparks that ignite to kindling, melting warmth), "Imagine" counsels all of us who seek to live out the SHCJ charism to trust that our sacred stories can and will endure. Fear is overcome by illumination. Healing of our Earth becomes, like all things, possible with God.

Poetry can be a form of prayer. My thanks to Judy and Terri for blessing me with the poems they shared, and to the sisters who offer us such an inspiring meditation: "Our treasured charism affords us the will and power to reveal God's presence in our care for one another and all of creation, the universal eco-system."



We congratulate the Sisters of the American Province who are celebrating significant Jubilees this year. A special celebration will be held at the end of June in Rosemont to commemorate their dedication and service to the Church.

I am sure that I speak for all Associates when I say to each Sister: *Thank You for your life of dedicated service to the Church, for "meeting the wants of the age" with a love full of action! May your special day be a celebration of your participation in bringing forth the Kingdom of God! We rejoice with you!*

Platinum (70 years)

Katherine Tracy

Diamond (60 years)

Jane Dawley
Mary Anne Haren
Eleanor Hauck
Melinda Keane
Nancy Logan
Terri MacKenzie
Catherine Quinn
Rosemary Ritchie
Joanne Sullivan
Joanne Wegener

Golden (50 years)

Barbara Bartlett
Margaret Mary Bell
Catherine Callaghan
Elizabeth Gilmore
Carol Ann Knight
Bernadette Longtin

We have not celebrated anniversaries of Associate commitments but I wanted to recognize a special one. Ruth Kugler is celebrating 40 years as a SHCJ Associate this year. She made her initial commitment on March 25, 1975.

The Associate relationship may have changed from 40 years ago but Associates have always had a deep connection with the Sisters as well as with the mission and spirit of the Society.

Thank you Ruth for being one of the pioneers for Holy Child Associates! We wish you great joy on this milestone!

