American Province Chapter

A warm reception was given to the 4 Associates who attended the American Province Chapter in early July. Anita Martineau, Barbara DeConcini, Kathy Gibbons, and myself participated in many lively discussions about the various proposals that the sisters were considering.

We also were blessed to be a part of the many different liturgies and prayer services over the several days. Two of the prayer rituals included contemplative multi-media reflections. These reflections are to be available on DVD and Cathi will have a copy. Use of these reflections for future Associate gatherings is likely.

As the Sisters begin to incorporate the enactments into their own plans for the next 6 years, we too can look at some of these focus areas and reflect how, as Associates, we might be engaged to participate. Over the next year, we will present the relevant topics. We hope that there will be a sharing of ideas and suggestions about how Associates do or can embrace these in our own lives.

Cathi Duffy  
Director of Associates, USA

Come to the Water

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Cathi Duffy  
SHCJ Associates  
460 Shadeland Ave.  
Drexel Hill, PA 19026
Jesus Calls Women dvd release

While watching the coming attractions at her local movie theater, Sister Pat Phillips heard a call. And this call, although meant for another listener, reached her just the same. “I saw this ad for the Marines and it stirred me,” Sr. Pat said of the recruitment clip. “It said, ‘We don’t take applications, we take commitments,’ and I thought, ‘I wish we had thought of that.’”

But, Sr. Pat, a movie buff and executive director of Wordnet Productions, Inc., a Catholic television ministry headquartered in California, has devised her own tool to reach the masses. For the last year, Sr. Pat has worked behind the scenes with the Wordnet staff producing a 30-minute DVD titled, “Jesus Calls Women.”

The DVD features honest and compelling interviews with Sisters of various Catholic denominations – from habited to non-habited, cloistered to non-cloistered – explaining, in their own words, the

(continue on page 5)
“Oh God of Gods and light of light and joy of joys fill my poor heart that I too may love thee with an everlasting love, that we may all be one in Thee and live and breathe for Thee alone” (CC27:3). This was a counterpart to her own coda to I Cor 13: “0 Charity ... Possess me - rule me - inflame me - that I may remain in God, and God in me forever”

Cornelia taught the love which she lived. Her own little son Mercer reported to his mother from Stonyhurst that he “had lately felt a burning love within” knowing that this would please her. The sisters were to love God as they “step[ped] on through the muddy streets”; “to love all and each in one heart, in the very heart of the HC [Holy Child] Jesus to whom [they] belong, one body and one Spirit ...”; “to remain loving and silent close to God in the cell of their souls” because they were, at the same time, very busy and active; finally, they were “... to love what He loves and thus make [their lives] one with his ...”(CC8: 88). Love was to be spent rather than to be hoarded up simply for personal enjoyment: “Kindle your fires - do not stop to warm yourselves”.

Her spiritual direction was simple, direct and full of the wisdom taught by love. She counselled those on the Society’s first mission to consign their homesickness for St Leonards to “the ‘soul strengthening flame of love’ loving in strength rather than in too much sweetness”. The sisters were to cooperate with God’s grace, “... not resisting the love that would fill our poor hearts. - let us not rest ... for we are ourselves the only obstacle to the overflowing of His Divine love”.

Prayer was mainly for loving and for making acts of love, not for “multiplying of thoughts”. And she urged her sisters to “... delight in Him by our homely actions of charity ...”(CC8:94). Action was to be no less loving than prayer. Perhaps the most telling piece of advice Cornelia ever gave is contained in a manuscript entitled “Our Mother’s Holy Words”. It is headed “Sursum Corda” and reads: “If you can only remember to offer all the turmoil within at the time as an act of burning love, and tell Our Lord that you will to turn it into love, and prove it by fervent acts of love to Him, again and again, and still again repeated, till you find yourself really burning with the love of God, instead of the burning of wounded sentiments - if you really do try this at the time - I promise you that He will quite fill your heart with love, and give you with this love, the fortitude and strength to keep yourself in His Holy peace”. These words of Cornelia ring with the authority of one who knows of what she speaks.

It was love on which the continuity between eternity and time was based, so that heaven, to Cornelia, was to consist simply in “loving God without interruption”. Now, in time, one could make one’s heart into a “closed garden’ where He will dwell with us in secret and condescend to love and be [loved] by his creatures with an intensity far beyond all comprehensible human love” (and Cornelia was one who comprehended human love). “Thus,” she prayed in a letter to her sisters, “may you be blessed ... with an abundance of Divine Love and purified and prepared in this world ... to
Cornelia and Charism (continued)

enjoy an eternity of love”.

There were two sides to Cornelia’s faith. The gift of faith received at baptism opened her to the impact of God’s absolute holiness. “Ever Silent, Tranquil, Immutable, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God,” she began an Epiphany letter to her Society in 1857. The other side of Cornelia’s faith was her fidelity -- that tenacity by which she adhered actively to God amidst terrible tests. It is the side by which she tended toward union and on which her faith and her charity met and mingled. “Is not our faith a sword of strength I feel it so my Lord [sicl,” she said in a postscript to a letter to Bishop Grant at a very trying moment. To her sister Adeline she wrote just after her conversion: “While we have Faith will we not be able to bear all even unto death?” The events of her life demonstrate that she did bear all in faith. The most striking instance of Cornelia’s fidelity was her holding fast to God when faced with Pierce’s apostasy and the risk of losing her children. She had made vows, and keep them she would.

Writing from Rome in 1854 to Elizabeth Bowen, her brother Ralph’s wife. Cornelia uses a description of life in the convent as a means of arousing in her sister-in-law something of her own ardor. Cornelia is not simply pouring out her own enthusiasm; she is calling Elizabeth to a life of sacrificial love in her married state. She says: “We get up at 5 1/2 in the morning and make the Sign of the Cross and give our whole hearts to the God who created us and loved us from all eternity. and we tell him as it were leaning on His Heart that we wish to love Him for all Eternity. and then we love. while we dress ourselves in the presence of the Angels and with them offer our acts of love, and our desires to make all love Him with pure hearts and especially to lead little children to his love” (CC1: 58). Although she goes on to describe in detail the events of a typical day, the message is clear: it is all love. (See Cornelia’s Writings for more of the letter.)

Cornelia’s Writings

This letter to Cornelia’s sister-in-law, Elizabeth Bowen, describes her enthusiasm for her life as well as a remembrance from her childhood.

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Rome “66 Via Ara Coeli”
March 30th 1854

My dear Sister

Though I have not the pleasure of having seen you the name of Sister brings you very near and dear to me; the more so from the circumstances of past years, united to those of the present. I regret not having yet seen the likeness of little Mary which my brother tells me he has sent, but as I hope to return to England towards the last of May it will not be sent here. It was very kind of him to send it and I should like to have one of the whole family circle, as there is little chance of my seeing you in this world. You perhaps know but little of Convents or of our life in general; but as I am interested in hearing from you all that you can tell me, so I have no doubt you are interested in the same way in hearing all that I can tell you about ourselves. As an individual my brother can tell you more than I can relate, but that you may tell me how you pass your time and what you do all the day long I shall first tell you what we do. We get up at 5½ in the morning and make the Sign of the Cross and give the Sign of the Cross and give our whole hearts to the God who created us and loved us from all eternity, and we tell Him as it were leaning on His Heart that we wish to love Him for all Eternity, and then we love. while we dress ourselves in the presence of the Angels and with them offer our acts of love, and our desires to make all love Him with pure hearts & especially to lead little children to His love. When we are dressed we go to our Meditation & then we say the Office of our Blessed Mother which consists

“Give me O Lord
a love full of action;
a love patient in labor
exact in daily employments.
pure in intention.
so that I may ever accomplish the
things that are
most pleasing to Thee”
Give me O Lord,
a love full of action

Spend some time in prayer and reflection on Discerning Love. Explore when and how you follow Cornelia in ‘being in one continued act of love from night till night’.

Abide in my love
John 15:9

Reflecting...

chiefly of the Psalms of David, the Antiphons & Hymns to honour her as the chosen Creature of God, chosen from among all others to be His Mother – that is the Mother of His son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity! After the Office we follow the Holy Mass and go to Holy Communion as often as we have leave to go, then we make our thanksgiving and at 9 go to breakfast then to our Schools or other occupations in the house until 12½ then Office, Examen of Conscience and at 1 o’clock Dinner – At 1½ Recreation, either walking or sewing etc etc At 2½ we say our Rosary and to the Schools: at 6 Spiritual Reading 6½ Office of our Lady - 7½ Supper ¾8 Recreation ¾9 Litanies of the Saints Night Prayers and Repose – I have given you all our day –

... We had also a pretty little Theatre with 8 side scenes and three black curtains which I painted with water colours and honey. We are not painting in oils, while we’re stopping here for the Rules – Tell Ralph that I remember his priming the canvas for me to try oil colors when I was about thirteen years old. I wonder if he recollects it! God bless you and your little ones & I hope you pray for me in my heavy troubles while I am your affectionate Sister in J.C.

Cornelia
P.S. I hope to return to England very soon. Write to me there as usual

All Souls
St Leonards
Sussex

I must not forget to say that tho’ you laugh at my note paper for letters, it is the usual paper in England for ladies letters, and I had not observed using it to you because I use it daily in writing to everybody. I have taken letter paper this time without and envelope to please you – but it is according to common sense to conform to the customs of the Country we live in.

Cornelia’s Writings (continued)

Jesus Calls Women (continued)

importance of becoming a Sister and detailing the triumphs and challenges that arose during the discernment process.

The multi-cultural Sisters represent different Catholic sects and live in different parts of the country. The DVD for which they are featured, is even-handed in terms of religious orders highlighted. That generic quality is exactly what Larry Jilk had envisioned. Jilk, of Philadelphia, funded the making of “Jesus Calls Women,” in hopes of spurring more vocations, as well as laying the groundwork for similar multimedia outreach efforts with the same intent.

Sr. Pat contends that the DVD aligns perfectly with the Holy Child mission of education and empowerment and carries on the legacy of Cornelia Connelly. “I believe that there are calls to religious life out there,” Sr. Pat said. “It’s a wonderful life and I don’t want prospective sisters to miss out.” To learn more about the DVD “Jesus Calls Women,” visit http://www.holychild200.org/home/Sr.PatsVocationDVD.html.

Scene at Mayfield England that is similar to scene created at St. Leonards during Cornelia’s time

Scene at St. Leonards during Cornelia’s time
This seems a fitting time for a poem by the 20th Century American poet Robinson Jeffers, as many of us take advantage of the “lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer” to spend more time outdoors. If we’re prepared, it might well also be an occasion for what Jewish theologian Martin Buber calls the “I-Thou” experience. Most of our relationships, Buber thinks, are “I-It”, i.e., we encounter others (all others: persons, places, and things!) instrumentally, in terms of what they mean for us. But in the “I-Thou” we meet the other (all the others) in respect, mutuality, and genuine communion. Buber’s famous example is a person’s “I-Thou” relationship with a tree. So, too, is Jeffers’ with a rock.

California’s Big Sur was the poet’s enduring and always-fresh place of encounter with the mysterium fascinans et tremendum. As Robert Brophy comments, Jeffers’ poetry “quarried its seascape and crenelated canyons, isolated beaches, and foreboding headlands for symbol, theme, and story.” As the poet himself puts it, “My love, my loved subject: mountain and ocean, rock, water and beasts and trees are the protagonists; the human people are only symbolic interpreters.” So in this poem, the dramatic situation is the speaker’s camping trip with his son and his son’s friend. But the love at the heart of the poem is a mystical religious encounter. (continued on next page)
The son of a Presbyterian minister who is himself squarely in the Romantic tradition, Jeffers combines his ‘pantheistic’ religiousness with a stern Calvinist indictment of humankind, who are mostly deaf and blind to the consciousness of everything that exists beyond ourselves. The poet’s role is a priestly one, intervening in praise of the immanently divine that we ordinary persons ignore. He called this mystic stance ‘inhumanism,’ a conviction that the natural world is charged with God, a god of change, of life and death, pain and pleasure. Suffering is and is to be endured. The key is to “fall in love outward,” to approach the earth and all it contains with awe, to open ourselves in mutuality and reverence to “this lonely rock.”

Perhaps we can find the time and place during these months for our own “I-Thou” with a tree, a rock, a cloud? Nothing strange—I cannot tell you how strange.
BD: *How has being an SHCJ Associate affected your everyday life?*
Liz: For me, one of the great gifts of becoming an SHCJ Associate has been being matched with a Holy Child sister, especially for the several months of preparation. I enjoyed meeting with Sr. Joanne Sullivan who encouraged me to make time to pray and to appreciate God at work in my life and in the life of Response-Ability. Getting together with Joanne for tea and conversation gave me a chance to think about God’s action in my everyday life and my response. Taking time to sit down and be quiet even when days are busy has helped me to listen and to be more grateful.

BD: *What are your “dearest hopes” for the SHCJ Associate relationship?*
Liz: The Associate community is continually growing. I want to help with that growth by inviting other Response-Ability volunteers (as well as alumni and staff who live the mission of the Society through service) to connect with and join the SHCJ Associate community. I know that there are many who would enjoy being part of an ongoing spiritual community both during and after they finish the Response-Ability program.

I see a tremendous opportunity for the Associates to connect with the whole range of SHCJ ministries to share prayer, to volunteer their time and expertise whether full or part-time, and to collaborate on special projects. Personally, I want to keep getting to know other Associates and to see how we can put our love into action.

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Batey Beads by the Jewelry Sisters: Calling All Associates
By Barbara DeConcini & Cindy Platko

During the year SHCJ Associates Cindy and Greg Platko spent working with the SHCJ in the Dominican Republic (DR) as Response-Ability volunteers, Cindy became aware that the women of the Batey had nothing to nurture their imaginations or give them a sense of personal accomplishment. They were spending all their time caring for their children, washing, cleaning, and cooking—all without any electricity or plumbing.

These Haitians and Haitian Dominicans are descendants of Haitian migrant slave workers, sold by one dictator to another to work in the sugarcane fields. Now that work is gone, but these people live on in their original one-room cells in the work-camps. They are caught as virtual non-persons, without papers, without jobs, without resources. SHCJ’s Kathleen King, Mary Alice Minogue, and Ann-Joyce Peters have spent collectively more than 35 years there, where they run a Montessori school and a medical clinic. Parishioners from Sister Rosemary McSorley’s and Sister Veronica Grover’s parishes (in Pompton Plains, NJ and Charlotte, NC, respectively) continue to support the work with their time, talent, and treasure.

While Greg dug latrines, Cindy, in addition to her nursing duties, came up with the idea of starting a beading group. Some 15 or so women joined her each week to learn to string beads into necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. After a while, the group named themselves “the jewelry sisters” to convey the fresh sense of camaraderie and connection they had formed around beads and beading. Cindy brought the women’s work back to the U.S. with her and began selling it to friends and colleagues.

At the Associates’ Gathering in June 2008, Cindy met Barbara (both were displaying jewelry) and suggested that she go to the DR to help the women enhance their bead designing and stringing techniques. Barbara collected lots of beads and supplies from the various vendors from whom she buys for her own jewelry-making and headed down with her husband, Walt Lowe, this past March.

The fifty-three women of the Batey who worked with Barbara during the week sent her home with more than 325 pieces of jewelry to market and sell. (Go to www.flickr.com/photos/4thedr to see Walt’s photos of the week.) Thanks to the generosity of friends, colleagues, Associates, and SHCJ sisters, Cindy and Barbara have already sold virtually their whole inventory. Cindy spent 2 weeks in the Batey in July, and Barbara is going down for two weeks in December. The Jewelry Sisters continue to bead!

Thus Batey Beads by the Jewelry Sisters came to be! Cindy and Barbara are enthusiastic about establishing a viable “cottage industry” with the Jewelry Sisters of Batey Lecheria. We’re committed to spending time there at least four times a year and to helping the women to develop the sorts of business skills they will need to make their beading enterprise a success. Now we need your help.

With the blessing of the Associates’ Core Team, Barbara and Cindy are inviting all SHCJ Associates to participate in this wonderfully rewarding and fun project. We are asking each of you to host a house party for your own friends and colleagues to show and sell Batey Beads. You provide the guests

Continued on previous page

Batey Beads______________________

By the Jewelry Sisters

Hand-crafted jewelry by the Haitian women of the Batey Lecheria, Dominican Republic. Your purchase helps them feed their children. Thank you for supporting the Jewelry Sisters!

Batey Beads is a fair-trade enterprise.
Book Recommendation

For this issue, the book recommendation is *Caritas in Veritate* (“Charity in Truth”), Pope Benedict’s new social encyclical. Besides the timeliness of the encyclical, it fits perfectly with our issue’s featured topic of Discerning Love.

The full text of 144 pages is available online at [www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/index_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/index_en.htm). It is also available in paperback.

*A Generous Love* by Catie McElwee

To celebrate Cornelia’s bicentennial, the Holy Child Sisters in Latin America wanted to have Cornelia’s life in story form for children. Catie McElwee, a Response-Ability volunteer who just completed 2 years in the Dominican Republic, is the author of this new book, *A Generous Love*.

Full page original illustrations for each page were done by Sister France White, SHCJ. Each chapter includes conversation questions.

What a wonderful way to share Cornelia’s story with your children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews!

The English version of the book will be available in November but orders are requested by September 30th. Each copy costs $6.00 or you can pay $8.00 and help with the costs for providing school children in Nigeria and Ghana with copies.

You can order by contacting Sister Therese Currie by email, tcurrie@shcj.org or by sending an order request to: