



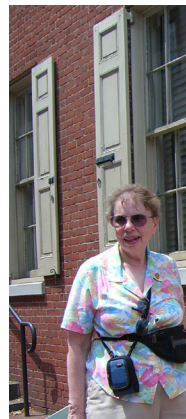
SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN PROVINCE

SUMMER 2008
VOLUME VI, ISSUE II

Spirit Alive! June 27 - 29 at Rosemont College

SHCJ Associates National Gathering



Inside this issue:

Spirit Alive!	1
Actions Not Words: SHCJ Corporate Stance	2
Connecting with Cornelia: Compass for a Cornelian Life	3
Cornelia's Writing	5
Book Recommendations	5
Spirit Alive - Business Summary	6
Spirit Alive Feedback Highlights	6
Spirit Alive Photos	7
Bicentennial News	8
Poetry off the Shelf	9
Associates around the World	10



Actions not Words: SHCJ Corporate Stance on Human Trafficking

The Sisters of the Holy Child in the American Province adopted a corporate stance on human trafficking this spring.

We, the members of the American Province of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, denounce the trafficking of all persons, especially women and children, for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor. We choose to stand in solidarity with those trafficked and with those who oppose this violation of human rights, and to help stop the demand for trafficked persons.

We commit:

- To province-wide individual and group prayer: UNANIMA has one or use this one: "Source of Abundant Life, please empower us to stop the demand for trafficked persons, stop the traffickers, and stop the poverty, violence, and environmental degradation that often lead to individuals being trafficked."
- To educate ourselves regarding the magnitude, causes, and consequences of this abuse and to share this information with others when possible
- To collaborate with other groups, such as the European and African Provinces, UNANIMA, and other religious congregations
- To contact legislators in support of legislation that addresses the prevention of trafficking and poverty and/or provide alternatives to persons who have been, or might be, trafficked

- To use our strength as consumers and investors to help create a socially just and environmentally sustainable society, one that eliminates incentives for, and vulnerability to, trafficking

What is one concrete way to help today?

Contact your representative in Congress (Capitol Switchboard 202-224-3121) and ask that s/he cosponsor HR. 3887, which increases US diplomatic efforts to stop trafficking worldwide. Thank legislators who are cosponsors.

Associate Involvement?

The Associates were asked if we wished to consider the corporate stance also. The Core Team felt that the Associates are too early as a national organization to enter into the stance. As individuals, we are definitely asked to embrace it. As a group, we need to begin the conversation about how we would proceed on discussions requiring consensus or approval of the entire body of SHCJ Associates. The questions of "voting" as much as follow-through need to be explored. As the positive energy of the business meeting at Spirit Alive proved (see article on Summary of Business Meeting elsewhere in this issue), Associates are ready to come together in planning and moving us forward. Share your thoughts on the Associates only website or contact Cathi.

*Let us try day by day to do what He would do,
to speak as He would speak,
to think as He would think,
to desire what He desires,
to love what He loves,
and thus make our life one with His,
being in one continued act of love
from night 'till night and from year to year.*
Cornelia April, 1854

Visit us on the web at www.shcj.org. Under the American Province, select *Sharing our Mission, Associates*.

Connecting with Cornelia and Charism: The Compass for a Cornelian Life

by Elizabeth Mary Strub, SHCJ

The following is the beginning of the Keynote by Elizabeth Mary Strub, SHCJ presented at the Spirit Alive! National Gathering of SHCJ Associates on June 27, 2008 at Rosemont College. Later this year, we will have an opportunity to explore the entire keynote further as part of Our Dear Retreat.



Elizabeth Mary Strub, SHCJ
and niece, Linda Mennis

This is a family affair. Linda, my niece, is Cornelian to the core. She grew up with Holy Child in Old Westbury, sent her children to Holy Child in Pasadena and serves as chair of the board there at Mayfield Junior School.

But this is even more of a family affair because you and I are part of Cornelia's extended family. If there is anything that touches my heart and sometimes brings tears to my eyes, it's the Associates. I almost said our Associates but caught myself because you are not 'ours' (meaning of the Sisters of the Holy Child). We are all spiritual progeny of Cornelia.

Think of how much family meant to her - her mother and father, her sisters and brothers and nieces especially. And she was never without the heart wound of Pierce and her children. So I know she looks at us and with so much affection. And some of that affection spills over into my own heart and eyes as I look at you today.

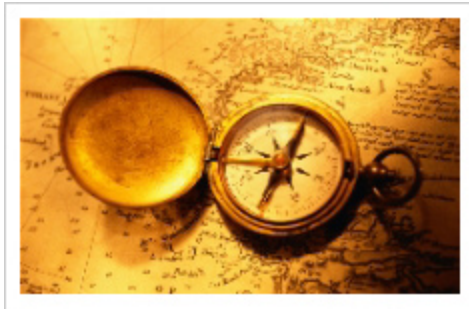
So take a minute to recognize your spiritual cousins, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews. In this almost 200th anniversary of Cornelia's birth, the same Spirit that touched her touches us and creates a family resemblance. Are we happy to be here at this family reunion, or not?

Let me return to my niece, Linda. As we stood up from a meal together in Pasadena a couple of weeks ago, I asked her what I should talk about today. She said to bring Cornelia's spirit into our own time so as to relate it to our lives today. So if there's a key note to be struck, that's it.

One thing I want to make clear from the beginning: we are talking about a Cornelian spirituality which applies as much to you as Associates as it does to me as a religious. There are not two different spiritualities in this room; there are two different life-styles. The same Cornelian legacy passes to us both though we live it with different accents in our different settings. So what I will say is

for me as much as it is for you.

But my hope is that you will put a fresh spin on Cornelia's legacy and make it truly an everyday rule of life for yourselves as Associates.



The thought occurred to me as I was preparing my remarks that you are asking for compass points. By that I mean spiritual traits and attitudes - takes on life - that are typical of Cornelia and that point the way for us in a variety of settings and situations.

Before elaborating, I would like to point out that we are looking at ways to happiness, and personal fulfilment. Because there is perfect correspondence between God's dream of and for me and my own wellbeing, body, mind and spirit. The fact that I come alive to certain dimensions of the Cornelian charism, whether reflected in her or in people touched by her spirit, tells me that my plenitude, my fullness of being, lies in that direction. I am in sync with myself and with God. Better said, in sync with God through myself.

I think that the overarching trait of Cornelia's spirituality is her built-in awareness of God's claim on her. Her 'I belong all to God' is not the cry of the convert, the nun or the awakened contemplative. It's the cry of the creature before the creator. It's everyman's, everywoman's cry, even when the inner voice is muted by the noise of everything else. Cornelia invites a listening inner ear to this fundamental truth of our being. Indeed we belong all to God. And this belonging is the rock of our stability and the root of our peace. It relativises the ephemeral, the trivial, and the trendy. It also lights up wide domains of non-belonging, sharpening our capacity to discern what does not belong to God - in the world, in the thought patterns of our culture, in our inner world. True, as the psalm says, 'The earth is the Lord's and its fullness', but some of it got away into the land of unlikeness.

This belonging is what I think of as the north-point of the compass. It's the fundamental option that orients every other point. I opt because already I've been opted for. I think we all need quiet spaces in our lives dedicated to awareness, awakeness. Times when we can pierce the quotidian clouds and

Connecting with Cornelia (continued)

come at the reality that undergirds our existence. Such times give us a sense of homecoming. We are where we belong. And we come back to our everyday lives empowered, refreshed, more ourselves than ever.

Cornelia was a woman of the gospel's single eye, her phrase for it: "that one simple remembrance of God's presence that unwraps all the windings of the heart and makes us true as he is true". True north ...



How wonderful it would be to go through life like that. It's just a question of consulting the compass. When the soul's compass points north, the single eye sees clearly, isn't easily fooled, knows what's real and what's false, detects traces of glory in unlikely places and people, and sees to the depths of things. It's a kind of holy clairvoyance.

Cornelia also liked the phrase, 'the undivided heart'. Her heart was torn in pieces over and over again, but again and again she sewed it up – her expression. Undivided, her heart had room for light and darkness, triumphs and disappointments, enemies and friends, opponents and allies. Her heart's compass was set on the heart of a God who holds together in one embrace the sinner and the saint, the lovely and the unlovely.

You Associates have guessed these things and are drawn to them. They have insinuated themselves into your consciousness. So together, let's take a quiet few moments just to know ourselves as God's and be grateful. If we do this often, our association will take on depth and, like Cornelia, we'll be graced with 'a love full of action'.

[Elizabeth Mary continued at this point to present the remaining compass points which will be presented in Our Dear Retreat later this year.]

Concluding Remarks

Well, we have a compass of six points *[belonging to God, love in action, joy, accepted suffering, Church, Mary]*. I leave space for your own additions. But, even with these, we have all we need. Each Holy Child sister and each Associate marks the way with her or his own footprint. In the going, each one slashes a further opening into uncharted territory,

carrying within the Cornelian DNA. There is no one way to be of Cornelia. She honoured the uniqueness of each person and the promise each one held curled up inside. She wanted everyone to flourish. She wants us to flourish, we who are so intimately integrated into her extended family.

After orientating yourself to your true North, tell yourself where you want to go. Pick one compass point that you feel represents your present calling and follow, follow, follow. Your beginning and end will meet when you come full circle. Beginning from God, love in action, joy, accepted suffering, the church and Mary will all finally fit together in God. A distinctive Cornelian way of life will open before you and you will have a few fixed compass points to steer your course.

It's been privilege to join you and to cross paths with you at this Rosemont point of the compass. If I'd been more up to date, I would have used a global positioning device to situate my reflections. Never too late, I'll pray that, whatever satellite tracks our destinations, the God of space and time may always keep us at the same still point.



To Access the Video of the entire Keynote, go to <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/shcj-associates-08>

Then click on the clip that you want to see. The clips are in reverse order of the program (Keynote, Snapshot of the Charism, Spirit Alive with Creation). In other words, the Keynote presentation by Elizabeth Mary is the third clip from left to right. The person you see introducing Elizabeth Mary is her niece Linda.

*that one simple remembrance of God's presence
that unwraps all the windings of the heart and
makes us true as He is true*

Cornelia

Cornelia's Writings

In this letter (from Volume 1, page 71-72) to her brother, we can see Cornelia's interest in family life, her pain at the loss of her own children, and her dreams and constraints for the Society.

[March 30, 1854]

Rome "66 Via Ara Coeli"

My dear Brother [John Bowen]

Your letter followed me to this place, where I am stopping to have our Rule examined and approved, but the likeness of dear little Mary was not sent with the letter but kept till I return.

Thank you very much for sending me something of dear Georgy and I need not say how happy I feel for [him] and all you tell me regarding both Elizabeth and Mary - As you had a dispensation it is all right both for her and for the dear children.

Your letter tells me throughout how little you understand my heart and feelings either regarding the sacrifice of the world or the giving up of natural happiness with my darling children, ever dearer to me than my own life. I have long since given up the world (without casting aside the good habits of civilized life) and my dear children were as much under my eyes as if I had not left the world till their father broke his word and his promises and stole them away from me in a moment of excitement and unjust anger, may God forgive him.

I am much interested in all that you tell me concerning yourself & family and I should like to have a Convent at San Antonio very much if you think the Bishop would wish it: but I could not promise to come there myself unless with the consent of our English Convents because I am not my own mistress quite and have only to do that which our Chapter decides upon as wise, & prudent and good; But this need not prevent your having the advantages - others being sent - and as we are devoted to education of the highest standard both among the poor and the rich, it would not be a small benefit you would confer on your neighbourhood by founding a Convent. . . .

I have just had a letter from Ady - She tells me that Mary is well married, and seems to think her troubles are nearly at an end. Kate & Julia are with her. She has indeed had her troubles and perhaps much less through her own fault than you think - It is always best to err on the side of charity, and the safest to take the best view we can of everyone, especially of our own family.

Ever your own
Sister C.

Book Recommendations

For those of us who have not already explored Henri Nouwen, begin with this recommendation.

Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World
by Henri Nouwen, 2002, 10th anniversary edition

"This spiritual classic began as a simple request from one friend to another. Fred Bratman, a secular journalist and writer, asked friend and renowned author Henri Nouwen to write a book explaining the spiritual life in terms that he and his friends could understand, avoiding theology and technical language."

The Table of Contents itself is intriguing: Being the Beloved, Becoming the Beloved (Taken, Blessed, Broken, Given) and Living as the Beloved. The anniversary edition also contains a reflection guide.

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier
by Ishmael Beah, 2008

Kathy Gibbons Schuck heard Ismael when he was the keynote speaker last April in Virginia at the Africa Faith and Justice Network's 25th Anniversary Conference. "He is a gentle, charismatic young man who has lived through horror most of us can't even imagine." We all will be inspired by the life story of Ishmael Beah.

The paperback edition is scheduled for release in early August

If you have a book recommendation to share with us, please send it to associates-usa@shcj.org.

Cornelia's Letters Volume 1 - 12

The sisters of the European Province are creating master CDs with copies of Cornelia's letters. The first 12 volumes of Cornelia's letters are available as a collection on a first CD. If you are interested in having a copy of the CD, please contact Cathi Duffy at

*cduffy@shcj.org
for more information.*

2008 SHCJ Associates Spirit Alive! - Summary of June 29 Business Meeting

by Anita Martineau

Thank to Anita for capturing the information from a business meeting of Associates that was held prior to our closing liturgy on June 29. Although the timing and location were less than ideal, the conversation was vibrant and joy-filled for our future.

- There was discussion on how to disperse involvement and leadership among the wider membership, rather than have it so concentrated among Core Team members.
- Supportive Associates may be pleased with a strong centralized Core Team, but may like to be more included in thinking about how to incorporate the charism of Cornelia.
- It is difficult for Associates to travel, but verbal communication is important to develop and maintain bonds among members. Perhaps conference calls will allow for more verbal communication.
- The internet should be utilized to maximize communication among Associates, even internationally.
- Several participants are isolated in regions where there are no other Associates.
- In Chile, the Associates are more self-focused in their own parishes. Perhaps they would benefit from a more general focus that all Associates in the Province are doing something together.
- It is unifying when all Associates use the same prayer resources.
- The group generally agreed that they are looking for spiritual development/spiritual direction for lay people
- Some wanted a clear picture of what a Collaborative Associate is committing to.
- There was discussion, but no conclusion, about whether or not the Associates should/could develop group activities.
- One member thinks her role is to grow intentionally in Cornelian spirituality.
- North Carolina members have gone to foreign missions.
- One member commented that, like Abraham, we must be careful not to let organizational anxiety overwhelm us. Being an Associate is both a private and collective movement and it's OK to be where we are.
- Time is needed to discern if and how regional dialogues can begin/continue.
- Members expressed interest in sharing our stories, perhaps in writing. (It was noted that the newsletter will include one such story in each issue.)
- The metaphor of the compass used in the keynote address helps us reflect on the diverse reasons and ways for us to associate with one another at different points in our lives.
- Participants agreed that national gatherings should occur every two years. There was consensus that the locations for the gatherings should alternate between Rosemont (to allow the sisters to attend) and other regions throughout the province to allow other Associates to attend.
- Participants praised the theme of "Spirit Alive" as reflective of the gathering experience.
- Sisters who attended were moved by the experience and need to talk to other sisters about it.
- Participants affirmed their desire to remain inclusive of those from non-Catholic religions.

2008 SHCJ Associates Spirit Alive! - Overall Reactions

As part of the feedback survey, Associates were asked "What is the most important thing you are taking away from this experience?" Here are some responses:

- We all have challenges just as Cornelia did. As she carried the joy and sorrow in her heart, we are called to do the same but be ever mindful of opportunities to reveal Christ to others and really look at ways He is present for us in others.
- Deeper understanding of the charisms of Cornelia and how the Sisters live them
- I enjoyed meeting of SHCJA and SHCJ - Hearing about all the ministries, life experiences, impact of Cornelia on all, the spiritual community I'm blessed to be a part of ---
- What I heard at the creation panel
- A sense of belonging! Meeting people who have the same goals, needs, and focus
- Spiritual growth and the joy of friendships
- Thoughts from Elizabeth Mary's talk
- Sense of community and shared purpose, ideas on how to put the charism into my daily life
- Knowing that there are other Associates out there all around the country was a delight to digest as the meeting began. I just wish that we could have gotten to know one another in a deeper way.
- More awareness of living the charism of Cornelia intentionally in my daily life.





On January 15, 2009, the Society will mark the 200th Anniversary of the birth of the Venerable Cornelia Connelly. Born in Philadelphia, PA, Cornelia

founded the Society of the Holy Child in England in 1846. She encouraged her sisters "to meet the wants of the age" while serving with joy, love, and compassion.

Today, Cornelia's vision remains at the heart of the Society. Throughout the world, close to 400 Holy Child Sisters carry on her legacy through educational, social, spiritual, pastoral, parish, healthcare, and legal ministries.

To commemorate the 200th Anniversary of Cornelia's birth, the Society is hosting a yearlong celebration that begins this October. Be sure to watch your mailbox for invitations and details. Here is a preview of some of our Bicentennial events.

Opening Celebration / October 12, 2008

The celebration will begin with a 2:00 p.m. Mass at St. Agatha-St. James Church in Philadelphia, PA, followed by a reception at the Hall of Flags on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania. St. Agatha-St. James Church has special significance to the Society: The Holy Child Sisters taught at St. Agatha's from 1891 to 1912 and at St. James from 1870 to 1967. In addition, the church is located across the street from St. Leonard's Academy, which Cornelia purchased on her only visit as a Sister of the Holy Child to the U.S. Prior to Mass, from 12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m., guests are welcome to tour the building that housed St. Leonard's Academy (39th & Chestnut Streets). Today, the building is known as St. Leonard's Court.

Opening Mass in Rome / October 27, 2008

Cornelia discerned her vocation to begin a new religious congregation, the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, at the Chapel of the Sacred Heart Convent in the church of the Trinita dei Monti in Rome. The Opening Mass for the Bicentennial in Rome will be at the Trinita. John Cardinal Foley will preside.

Service Projects / Ongoing

Experience the work of Holy Child firsthand. Many of our ministries often need extra hands and expertise. Several service days will be held where everyone is invited to lend their time, talent, and treasure. The ministries have a variety of needs that include reading to or tutoring children, painting an area of a building that houses a ministry, gardening and tidying up as part of an annual "spring cleaning," and assisting with mailings and phone-a-thons.

Program & Reception / April 20, 2009

A short program and reception will be held at Fordham Law School's Atrium at Lincoln Center in New York City to honor the life, legacy, and spirit of Cornelia Connelly. More details will be provided as the event gets closer.

Holy Child Awards Dinner / April 30, 2009

At this inaugural Awards Dinner, we will honor two individuals with the Faith in Action Award. Presented annually, this award honors individuals whose lives and work embody Cornelia's spirit. The dinner will be held at the Philadelphia Marriot West Hotel in West Conshohocken, PA.

Cornelian Tour / May 2009

Because Cornelia was born in Philadelphia, many areas in the city are significant to her and the Society. Several Holy Child Sisters will lead a walking tour that highlights these areas and offers further insight into Cornelia and her life.

Celebration at St. Mary's / October 2009

The Sisters of the Holy Child taught at St. Mary's School in Melrose, MA for 80 years and have remained involved in the life of the parish. In conjunction with the school beginning a 100th Anniversary Celebration, the parish will also have a Mass in honor of Cornelia. More details will be provided at a later date.

Closing Prayer Service / October 11, 2009

The Bicentennial Celebration will close with a prayer service in Philadelphia, PA.

Visit www.holychild200.org for the latest on the Bicentennial Celebration.

It is not presumption to have hope and joy & confidence in God's grace.

Cornelia, Grand Coteau, 1840 CC 21:7

Poetry off the Shelf by Barbara DeConcini

The Only Animal. Franz Wright

*The only animal that commits suicide
went for a walk in the park,
basked on a hard bench in the first star,
traveled to the edge of space
in an armchair
while company quietly
talked, and abruptly
returned, the room empty.*

*The only animal that cries,
that takes off its clothes
and reports to the mirror, the one
and only animal
that brushes its own teeth—somewhere*

*the only animal that smokes a cigarette,
that lies down and flies backward in time,
that rises and walks to a book
and looks up a word
heard the telephone ringing in the darkness
downstairs and decided
to answer no more.*

*And I understand,
Too well: how many times
Have I made the decision to dwell
From now on
In the hour of my death
(the space I took up here
scarlessly closing like water)
and said I'm never coming back,
and yet*

*this morning
I stood once again
In this world, the garden
Ark and vacant tomb of what
I can't imagine,
between two eternities,
some sort of wings, more or less equidistantly
exiled from both,
hovering in the dreaming called
being awake, where
You gave me
in secret one thing
to perceive, the
tall blue starry
Strangeness of being here at all.*

You gave us each in secret one thing to perceive.

*Furless now, upright, My banished
and experimental child*

*You said, though your own heart condemn you
I do not condemn you.*

In 1965 at the age of 12, Franz Wright was abandoned by his father (poet James Wright). At 16, he suffered his first bout with clinical depression. For most of the next thirty years he struggled with that depression, as well as addictions to alcohol and drugs. Sometimes homeless and often dirty, he writes, "I was always drawn to Catholic churches. I would wander into them, sit in the back, and attend mass." Asked by an interviewer what it was about the church and the mass that kept drawing him back, he muses, "It was being in a place where you feel a completely unqualified acceptance and love, completely safe and at home. The mass seemed to be . . . a focusing of all the energy in the universe into this place." By the late 1990's, fallen into a state of "real despair," he stayed after to ask the priest, "How do I join?" Wright comments, "The priest was afraid of me, he told me later, but he took me into the initiation course."

His is an intense and somewhat unorthodox believing, a faith of darkness as much as light. "The church," he says, "is a place for people who are vividly aware of their own evil and their own failings and do not wish to be evil, and who find with dismay that they are, again and again."

The Only Animal (from his collection *Walking to Martha's Vineyard*) lives in this juncture of despair and faith. I take it that the title is a riff on the scholars' age-old attempts to identify the distinctively human (home sapiens-the wise animal; the talking animal; etc.). He comes up with quite an unedifying collection of distinctively human traits, and perhaps the poem works best for those who recognize themselves in them! All in all, they seem to stress human being's self-awareness, the consciousness that is always conscious of itself, or what Heidegger calls our "living towards death."

With the line "And yet" about halfway through, the poem turns, mirroring perhaps the speaker's (and our) conversion—a turn that we find ourselves having to make and being invited to make over and over. While perhaps at first unclear in its reference, the "You" of the fifth stanza is familiar to the believer.

I love this poem, not least because I have always been taken by a line in John's First Epistle that seems to get little notice: "Even if your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart" (I John 3:20).

The "tall blue starry strangeness of being here at all" can be sometimes blessing, sometimes curse. In this poem, the haunted and tormented poet reminds himself and us to open ourselves to the blessing.

SHCJ Associates, U.S.A.

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Associates around the World

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATES HOST MAYFIELD ENGLAND INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATE GATHERING IN APRIL, 2009

In 2009, the Society celebrates the 200th birthday of Cornelia Connelly. SHCJ Associates are in the final planning for a gathering of international Associates in Mayfield, England. The dates for the gathering are April 1 - 4, 2009. For Associates from the United States, we'll add a few days to the trip to see other important sites in England. Initial thoughts/hopes are that we will include a trip to the Archives in Oxford as well as a day or two in London. What a place to visit for Cornelia's 200th! If you have ideas, do share them with me at cduffy@shcj.org or leave a message at 610-626-1400 ext. 605.

INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER

Hopefully all of you received a copy of the annual International Associates Newsletter published from the Society's Generalate in Rome this June. This year's issue was sent electronically to all with known email addresses. If you did not receive a copy, please contact Cathi Duffy so we can update the records in Rome. You can also view this year's edition, in English or Spanish, at

shcj.org/sharingmission_InternatAssocNews.html.

What a wonderful way to learn how Associates are living the spirit and mission of the Holy Child throughout the world!

Let us love one another with God, in God, and for God.
Cornelia, London, 1851