



SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN PROVINCE

ACTIONS NOT WORDS



Core Team during October meeting. Newest team member is Hope Gillespie (left front) Welcome to the team Hope!



Associates Meeting in Rome. Sr. Carmel(SLT), Irene Figueroa (Chile), Melania Fortunato (DR), Ruth Mendez (DR), and Juliet Njoku (US)



Associates and Sisters at International Associates Coordination Meeting in Rome in late October

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A Letter from Director

Dear SHCJ Associates and Sisters,

In late October, Juliet Njoku and I represented the United States Associates at the International SHCJ Associates Coordination Meeting in Rome. Two Associates from each country / province in the Society were invited to participate. There were 8 Associates and 2 Sisters in attendance. Sadly, we did not have representation from the African Province for this meeting.

The Holy Child bond united us immediately despite our language barriers. It was truly bilingual with 4 Spanish speaking Associates and 4 English speaking Associates. We were and are grateful that the Society Leadership Team provided us with a translator for simultaneous translation.

Our goal as a group is to explore and implement ways in which the Associates across the Society can be united in our expression of the Holy Child charism and mission. Sophie Rudge, coordinator for the European Province Associates, was our secretary. Her minutes of our meeting are available to all Associates and Sisters. In addition to our work on behalf of the Associates, we also attended the papal audience, were treated to dinner with the SLT, and participated in a walking tour of Cornelia's Rome. It was a busy five days but we all left feeling that we accomplished a great deal. We all left with work to do!

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Visit of Pope Francis & Our Charism

by Judy Talvacchia

The visit of Pope Francis to the United States captivated the nation. I couldn't help being struck by how much his message resonated with the Holy Child charism and Incarnational spirituality. Over and over again, he asked us to behave with compassion and mercy, especially to the least among us. He called us to be our best selves, the selves God wants us to be.

The evening celebration at the World Gathering of Families drew me to reflect on the distinctive role that family plays in the SHCJ charism and spirituality. As a wife and mother, Cornelia wove her lived experience of family life into the fabric of the Society.

When she chose the name "Society of the Holy Child Jesus", she found a compelling and accessible way to express her insight into the Incarnation. As a sign of infinite mercy, God became one of us as a helpless child, totally dependent on his family who were poor and powerless. It was in the Child Jesus, this unlikely manifestation of divine presence, that the salvation of the world would be accomplished.

Just as an infant is completely loved and lovable simply by existing, the Holy Child reminds us that this is the way God loves us. Apart from anything we can do, God cherishes us because we exist and will do anything to nurture and protect us who have been created out of love. Cornelia shaped the Society to look for this God of boundless love and mercy in the humble and the hidden. In turn, the Society was to share what they found with those most in need.

Cornelia also applied her familial instincts to her model of education. She wanted the Sisters to encourage students to become their best selves - developing their strengths first, then "smoothing out the rough edges." She included celebrations, dancing and picnics in the course of the school year so that students could balance the challenging aspects of their education with relaxation and fun. She wanted to maintain an atmosphere of freedom, love and joy in which students



felt confident to develop every part of themselves. How many of us who attended Holy Child schools mention the family environment as one of our most enduring memories!

In his remarks during that evening celebration in Philadelphia, Pope Francis affirmed family life, in all its pleasures and foibles in a very down to earth way. But throughout his visit, he also challenged us to recognize

our connection to a larger family – the poor, the marginalized, the lonely and forgotten in our own communities and throughout the world. At Catholic Charities USA in Washington, DC, the Pope reminded us that "the Son of God came as a homeless person." He went on to describe the sufferings the Holy Family faced when Jesus was born and related it to those faced by the homeless today. Indeed, at the UN he identified all of creation as one family, deserving of our care. He reminded us that all of creation is interdependent. Each created entity both affects and is dependent on every other.

As SHCJ Associates, we are challenged to take the family values we experience through the charism and spirituality of the Society and share it with an increasingly wider circle, until we can say with Cornelia, "The whole world is my country..."

Questions for Reflection

1. How do you experience God in the Holy Child Jesus?
2. How are you affected by the "family" dimension of the Society?
3. What opportunities do you have to "make the whole world your country?"

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

Cornelia's Rome

by Cathi Duffy

For me, one of the highlights of the International Associates Coordination meeting was the walking tour of Cornelia's Rome. We walked streets where Cornelia lived, visited churches of significance to Cornelia, toured parts of Trinita Monti, and saw the homes of her new friends in Rome, such as the Borghese and Shrewsbury families.

On their first visit, Cornelia and Pierce stayed on a side street a few blocks off Piazza di Spagna. It was a fashionable shopping area then and now. The narrow streets may have reminded them of Philadelphia and their apartment would be entered similar to the row houses of Cornelia's upbringing. When looking to the homes of the Borghese and Shrewsbury families, any familiarity with an American home ceased. Their homes were each a full city block of several stories! Cornelia wrote letters about sitting next to dukes and lords but first Pierce and Cornelia walked into homes that were beyond their American experience! The extravagance of the art on a second floor ceiling was still visible from the street today. One can only imagine what the rest of the home revealed.

The size, art, and architecture of the churches also



would have surpassed any experience in America. Philadelphia was considered a cultural, cosmopolitan city in Cornelia's youth. Its Quaker background and colonial roots had little of the opulence that Rome displayed. The art within each of the churches would definitely have caused Cornelia to feel that she needed

to study the art within it. For me, each included a sensory overload – where to look, what to focus or gaze upon! I recall



that the Mass was in Latin and the Mass 'participants' were not necessarily following along. Each painting would be a source for much reflection to Mass attendees.

Our visit to Trinita Monti was special. We prayed in the small, simple chapel where the Mater

Admirabilis was painted during Cornelia's stay. It was easy to imagine Cornelia spending hours there praying, imploring God's help, discerning her future calling. From the small convent chapel, we went to the large church in which Pierce celebrated his first Catholic Mass and Adeline received her First Communion from her father. Joy for Cornelia but what else did the church hold for her?



During the visit to the Trinita Monti, I was struck by the enclosure in contrast to the lively square just below the Spanish steps, of the expanse that Grand Coteau or the



Natchez countryside provided, and of the world unseen from the small cloister courtyard that became Cornelia's world. It was also striking that the Connelly's first apartment in Rome is only a few blocks from the Trinita Monti – a recognition that in such a small space of time and distance, Cornelia's life was entirely changed.

Cornelia experienced joy and sorrow in the simplicity that life offered at Natchez and Grand Coteau. She appreciated that the trappings of the social life in Rome were not needed or desired. From all we read, she adapted well to the setting but, unlike Pierce, did not grasp at these external expressions of grandeur.

By the end of the tour, I felt a new appreciation for Cornelia's life in Rome – especially her initial visit and the time of her formal separation and founding of the Society. Her faith, her strength and courage, her love of God and family echoed in those places – *Yes, Lord, Always Yes!*

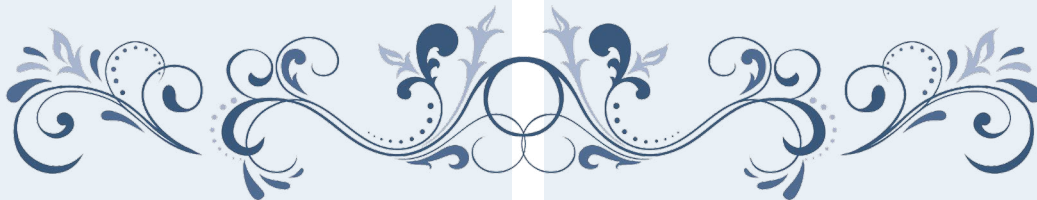


*View from outside Trinita Monti
Vatican in the distance*

Reflection

1. Have you been exposed to new world views? What was your reaction initially? What would it be today?
2. How do you experience a life of simplicity in the midst of the riches of our world?
3. What provokes in you awe and wonder of God's grandeur?

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



Frances and Mark Flint

Barbara Bernardi

What a treat you are in for this issue! We are interviewing the only mother/son Associates.

Mom is 97 years old Frances Bradley Flint and her son, Mark. They are native Bostonians, Mom was born in Hyde Park and raised in JP (Jamaica Plains to you non-Bostonians).

As a newly graduated senior Frances attended Boston Clerical School which prepared her for a job at John Hancock Insurance Company and then on to work for the State Department of Insurance. After getting married in Our Lady of Lourdes Church in JP, Frances and her new husband moved to Melrose MA where the family remains to this day.

Frances worked for the state until Mark was born, then she stayed home caring for him. Once Mark entered first grade at St. Mary's School, Frances became a school volunteer. When Mark was twelve, Frances was asked to become the school secretary and she accepted. Then, when Mark was a freshman at Boston College High School, Monsignor Palladino asked Frances to take on the position of Parish Secretary. She very capably held this position for 38 years, until she retired at the tender age of 95, yes that is not a typo. This little dynamo worked until she was 95 years young!

Mark attended Boston College where he earned his degree in Elementary Education with a minor in Math. He then went on to attend the University of Massachusetts Boston, where he earned a Master's Degree in Educational Administration.

Upon graduation, Mark began teaching 7th and 8th grade at St. Mary's School in Melrose. He currently holds the position of Junior High Coordinator and Student Council Moderator. With all his education and talent, (Mark is one of the best and most popular teachers at St. Mary's), Mark could have earned a lot more money but he stays at St. Mary's because of his commitment to Cornelia, her philosophies and her wonderful sisters.

This dynamic duo between has over a 70 year relationship with the SHCJ!



Frances and Mark Flint

Mark and Frances believe that, even though the Sisters no longer have an active presence in the school, it is important to keep Cornelia's philosophy alive since the school was founded by her nuns. As members of the first group of Associates, and in view of their many dedicated years as active supporters of the SHCJ, it is apparent that Mark and Frances epitomize this philosophy. Members of their parish see evidence of this every day in their ongoing dedication to, and love of, the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. God Bless them both!

Editor's Note: Barbara is originally from Melrose and still has several family members living there. With the youngest generation attending St. Mary's school, Barbara speaks with authority about Mark's popularity!



*Mark and Frances at
2009 Cornelia Bicentennial
celebration at
St. Mary's Melrose, MA*



William Stafford

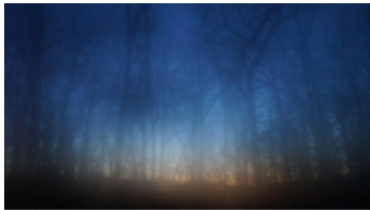
by Michelle Dugan

A Ritual to Read to Each Other

If you don't know the kind of person I am
and I don't know the kind of person you are
a pattern that others made may prevail in the world
and following the wrong god home we may miss our
star.

For there is many a small betrayal in the mind,
a shrug that lets the fragile sequence break
sending with shouts the horrible errors of childhood
storming out to play through the broken dyke.

And as elephants parade holding each elephant's tail,
but if one wanders the circus won't find the park,
I call it cruel and maybe the root of all cruelty
to know what occurs but not recognize the fact.



And so I appeal to a voice, to something shadowy,
a remote important region in all who talk:
though we could fool each other, we should consider—
lest the parade of our mutual life get lost in the dark.

For it is important that awake people be awake,
or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep;
the signals we give — yes or no, or maybe —
should be clear: the darkness around us is deep.



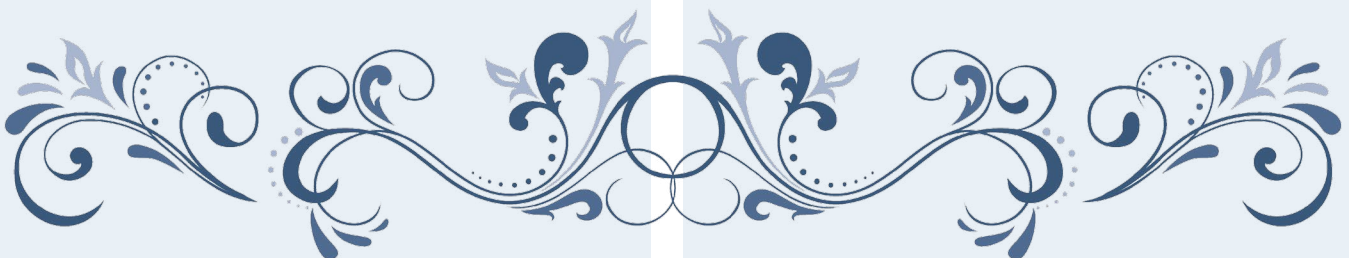
A Message from Space

Everything that happens is the message:
you read an event and be one and wait,
like breasting a wave, all the while knowing
by living, though not knowing how to live.

Or workers built an antenna—a dish
aimed at stars—and they themselves are its message,
crawling in and out, being worlds that loom,
dot-dash, and sirens, and sustaining beams.

And sometimes no one is calling but we turn up
eye and ear—suddenly we fall into
sound before it begins, the breathing
so still it waits there under the breath—

And then the green of leaves calls out, hills
where they wait or turn, clouds in their frenzied
stillness unfolding their careful words:
“Everything counts. The message is the world.”





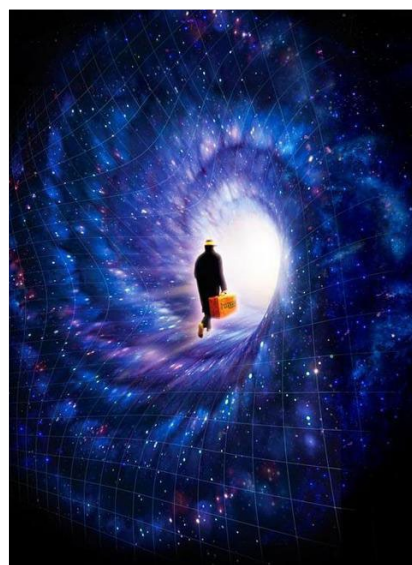
William Stafford from Friends of William Stafford website

From the website “Friends of William Stafford,” we encounter a somewhat blurry photograph of the poet in the woods. He is looking away from the camera at an unknown something that could be alarming. The two Stafford poems here,

“A Ritual to Read to Each Other” and “A Message from Space,” might also awaken a sense of apprehension in you as you read them. Though he tethered his poems to the natural world and to ordinary experience, William Stafford was also a committed pacifist, a conscientious objector during World War II, someone who was deeply concerned with the human condition.

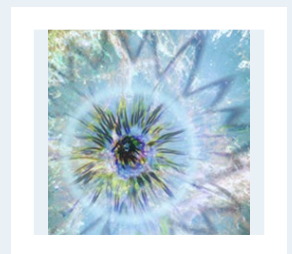
The title itself, “A Ritual to Read to Each Other,” tells us that this poem will ask for our engagement, “an appeal to a voice, to something shadowy,” – conscience, it seems to me. Each and every one of us has a responsibility to be “the kind of person” who will speak the truth. The prevailing pattern, as Pope Francis likewise warns us, involves “following the wrong god.” The “shrug” of indifference “lets the sequence break”; this is “maybe the root of all cruelty.” Stafford uses the unusual image of the elephants to urge us to cling to one another in “the parade of our mutual life.” The “horrible errors” are those of a childish humanity, all too willing to “fool each other,” “storming out to play” at games that are anything but innocent – war, human trafficking, the destruction of our Earth itself – yes, we “know what occurs” but do not always “recognize the fact.”

In the final stanza, the image of the fragile line of our connection merges with a familiar Biblical imperative: stay awake! Clear signals give us hope, but make no mistake, Stafford cautions: “the darkness around us is deep.” It is through “many a small betrayal in the mind” that “we miss our star.”



Whereas “A Ritual” focuses on our responsibilities to “consider” and “recognize” what leads to evil in our world, Stafford approaches the mystery of existence from a different angle in “A Message from Space.” Here the poet calls us to another aspect of awareness: listening. The first and last lines are clear: “Everything counts.” Now with our “dish/ aimed at stars,” we wait. Understanding comes by “breasting a wave,” by “crawling in and out,” by embracing paradox: “...knowing/by living, though not knowing how to live”; “no one is calling but we turn up”; “we fall into/ sound before it begins.” We “loom” our worlds, weaving meaning through the “dot-dash” of our words, the siren wail of our suffering, and the “sustaining beams” of light we send to rescue one another.

In the third and final stanzas, Stafford moves us from human activity to the stillness of “breathing...under the breath” and “the green of leaves.” In the conjunction of opposites – the “frenzied stillness of clouds” – the words unfold carefully: “The message is the world.”



The Friends of William Stafford include many esteemed contemporary American poets, all “devoted to the free expression of literature and conscience.” Although Stafford published prolifically and received numerous honors in his lifetime (1914-1993), literary critics of his day were ambivalent in their responses to his work, according to the American Poetry Foundation. Perhaps current readers are better attuned to poetry like his, plain spoken and fearless in confronting questions of meaning and ethics. For those of us who seek, in the spirit of Cornelia and now Pope Francis, to meet the wants of the age, Stafford inspires us to listen for the message, hold fast, and stay awake.

International Meeting

The team plans to meet electronically each quarter and hopefully in person in a few years. There were four key areas in which we initially plan to coordinate efforts:

- International prayer requests on a monthly basis
- International Associate newsletter support
- Common prayer and/or prayer resource for all Associates
- Common understanding and/or norms for all Associates

Juliet has agreed to be the US Associate contact for the prayer requests. This project will start in January so expect to get more info then.

If you are interested in helping in any of the other three areas, do contact me. We need to have a US Associate as part of each working group. Don't worry, the efforts will all begin in 2016.

The present coordinating group will continue for 2 years and then one Associate from each country will rotate off. This rotation will keep the continuity while allowing other Associates to participate. The Associates in the Dominican Republic have already indicated that future Dominican team members will need to know English to participate. Melania has excellent English skills already and we were grateful for her translations when the official translator was not available. I am learning Spanish but have a long way to go to be as competent in Spanish as Melania is in English. An admirable goal for which to aim!

I wish all of you many blessings this Advent and Christmas!

Abundant blessings,

Cathi

