



SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN PROVINCE

WINTER 2008
VOLUME VI, ISSUE IV



With this issue, we continue our reflection on the Holy Child Spirit! Our focus is Humility. We will explore how Cornelia understood the virtue and offer ideas for further reflection.

May this journey together into the Spirit of the Holy Child bring us closer to the Holy Child Jesus and to one another!

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Rejoice & Renew!

Our bicentennial theme is a perfect greeting for Christmas and the New Year! May we each enter more deeply into the mystery and the gifts of the Incarnation this season.

Rejoice & Renew!

Rejoice in the multitude of blessings which we are given in each unique moment. May our recognition of these grow ever more fully and may our voices rise up in praise and thanksgiving to our loving God! May the blessings that we receive through our association with the Society of the Holy Child Jesus be even more present as we live the charism in 2009.

Renew and 'begin anew' to share our gifts with others in our family, our community, and in our global world in 2009. With the economic hard times expected to worsen, we are being offered (or forced) to re-evaluate our own needs and the often dire needs of others with whom we share the planet. May these reflections and insights lead us to be more generous in sharing our bounty humbly with others.

Wishing you the gifts of joy, peace, love, and laughter!

May 2009 bring you ever closer to our loving God!

*Cathi Duffy
Director*

Associate Upcoming Events

National	Jan 17	Core Team meeting - conference call
Anaheim	Jan 3	Epiphany Celebration
Charlotte	Jan 18	Bicentennial Celebration
Chicago	Jan 25	Faith-sharing Gathering
Pasadena	Lent	Monday Faith-sharing
Philadelphia	Jan 4	Epiphany at New Sharon
	Feb 1	Shared Sunday
Portland	Jan 11	Epiphany Celebration
Pompton Plains	Monthly	Faith-sharing Gathering
Potomac	Jan 4	Epiphany Celebration
Rye	Jan 4	Epiphany Celebration
Washington, DC	Tuesdays	Prayer at Annunciation School
	Fridays	Prayer and Faith-sharing, Newton St.
	Monthly	Shared Sundays, Newton St.

Visit www.holychild200.org for the latest on the Bicentennial. Enjoy the photo albums of the various events around the country!

Actions not Words: Associates across the World

CHILE

On Dec. 28, all the Chilean Associates will meet with Sister Helen McDonald, Provincial Leader, while she's in Santiago on a visit. They want to hear from her what is happening in the province and in the rest of the Society in the way of bicentennial celebrations. On that day, they will also draw names for an exchange of gifts and greetings at Epiphany.

The Sisters and Associates will celebrate Epiphany together on Jan 4. In honor of Cornelia, each one will bring a toy for a poor child.

In January and February, our summer months, about ten Associates will go on mission to rural areas to evangelize and prepare people for the sacraments.

During 2009 we have scheduled four gatherings at which SHCJ and Associates will reflect together on selected letters of Cornelia (in translation, of course).

Check out our website too - santoninojesus.org - it features several of our Associates.

Finally, the big news is that two of the Associates have been invited to go to the international meeting of Associates in Mayfield, England. They are in the process of deciding who will go.

EUROPEAN PROVINCE

The Associates returned to London for their September 2008 meeting, after several years in the North and Midlands. The theme of our meeting was "Meeting the wants of the age: reflections on last summer's Interprovincial gatherings". The three topics of the summer European meetings – Concern for the Planet, Intercultural Living and Human Trafficking – struck deep chords with the numerous Associates able to attend. Thus we appreciated the chance to develop further the ideas which emerged and to discuss the issues with Associates who had not attended. Each topic was presented by an SHCJ and we then divided into groups to discuss the implications for all of us in our daily lives, ending in a plenary session to draw our conclusions.

Sr. Pamela Hussey got the morning off to a bravura start with her extension of

*so ought all to begin again
with the most sweet and holy and loving
Child Jesus – a humbled God – walking
with Him step by step in the ways of the
child...*

Cornelia

1846-53 Society Constitutions

environmental issues into the sphere of cosmology – the need for a spiritual revolution whereby our fears for the planet can be addressed by ridding ourselves of greed, fear and our obsession with self-protection. Our human connectedness in stewardship of our world must be based on hope: we are here for a little span – let us not destroy life on the planet through selfish motives but allow God to continue his endless work of creation.

Sr. Cecilia Snape developed further the ideals of intercultural living by describing to us her visit to the SHCJ African province. Her time in Nigeria had given her a whole new perspective on what interculturality might mean.

Finally, Sr. Emma Nolan related the painful topic of human trafficking to her experience of working with vulnerable women in London.

The discussion groups allowed everyone to ask questions and the final plenary session, chaired by Julie Courtney, provided a chance for us to analyse the possible ways in which we, as Associates, can attempt to meet "the wants of the age" by our action and involvement in these three important spheres.

After a simple sandwich lunch, which the beautiful September weather allowed us to eat outdoors, we had a short review and planning meeting. The day ended with Mass. So our next meeting will be at Mayfield!

Every blessing for Christmas and the New Year to you and all the USA Associates!

Jenny Banks Bryer

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

Connecting with Cornelia and Charism: Humility

from *Positio: Informatio* for the Canonization Process for Cornelia (pages 182 - 185)

Cornelia's humility as inspired by the Holy Child hidden and humble

... she looked upon the infant Jesus as would a mother who knew both the pain and the incomparable joy of bringing forth the child of her womb.

Cornelia brought to the crib of Bethlehem an awe-inspired faith and a love rooted in the human experience of childbearing and subsequent mourning. For her, the mystery of Jesus' holy childhood was deep indeed (714: 715). In himself he summed up for her the full gamut of human experience from the physical to the highest reaches of the spiritual; and he embodied all the fulness of the Godhead. He was the Holy Child.

a. The Holy Child,

a hidden God: Cornelia adored the Child Jesus as a "hidden God" (792,D4). In her short theological prologue to the constitutions, she used the word "hidden" four times: "The hidden life of the Holy Child Jesus"; "hidden and laboring for thirty years"; "studying in the example of a hidden God the sweetness of suffering and contempt": "The virtues of the hidden life of our most sweet Jesus" (791-2.D4).

Early in her Catholic life, Cornelia took note of this hiddenness by copying into her spiritual notebook Thomas Aquinas' "Adoro Te devote, latens Deitas" (CC21:49). What constituted Jesus' hiddenness was his interior life with his Father... She further saw that Jesus' infancy, even more than his adulthood, was the appropriate analogy for his hiddenness because the child conceals the full potential of the human person. Those who wanted to find him in the secret of his being would have to go to the place where his divinity was most hidden: his infancy (1130; 1365/21). There in his school they would learn how to replicate his way of being,

choosing obscurity and humble labor rather than notoriety and a "great name in the world" (1861 Constitutions).

Cornelia's Epiphany letters often dwelt on the theme of hiddenness. In 1856 she wrote: "If you have Faith you will learn the value of a suffering and hidden life and it is to this life you are called by the very Name you bear ..." (724). In 1878, she had occasion, in her own obscurity (804; 925) to reflect even more deeply on the implications of the hidden life. In her last Epiphany letter she called attention to "the hidden acts of your everyday life -- with only God to witness the crucifixion of the will and inclinations" (1351/65). It is worth noting that on a feast when the Society commemorated the revelation of Jesus to the nations, Cornelia consistently stressed the hidden source of his light.



Those who tried to describe Cornelia always emphasized her love of the hidden life. It was exemplified in her great reticence about the graces and favors given her by God (1117; 1121; 1260/16; 1357/131), her dependence on the hidden direction of her interior guide, the Holy Spirit, (Gompertz: 228), and her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament (D75:563). Both in the Holy Child and in the Blessed Sacrament divinity was concealed by appearances; both were powerful signs calling her to adore the reality (see also CC22:22).

Cornelia was entirely familiar with the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola and their final "Contemplation for Obtaining Love". It proposed the sort of faith-vision which enabled her to find the Incarnate Word hidden and at work in the world restoring everything to the Creator through love. This was the model for her own zeal. In 1875, Cornelia listed the resolutions of her annual retreat. One of them was: "To offer myself for what is humiliating, troublesome and hidden if there is an

Cornelia and Charism (continued)

opportunity". In the four years which remained to her, opportunities abounded (CC22:22 see also 925). Bellasis describes Cornelia in her last illness singing her thanksgiving after communion: "O Jesus hidden God, I cry to thee ... hidden light...hidden love..." (D75:629).

b. The Holy Child, a humbled God: In the Holy Child Jesus, Cornelia saw a "humbled God". He was divinity in "lowliness" (717). His humility was shown not only in the great leap downward from eternity into time, from his high state as God to "becoming as all human beings are"; it was also shown by his following the laws of human growth and development, step by step, from infancy to childhood, to adolescence to adulthood (707,D2). In every beginning Cornelia saw the Child's beginning and she advocated, as an act of humility, a repeated return to the beginning: "So ought all to begin again with the most sweet and loving Child Jesus -- a humbled God -- walking with Him step by step in the ways of the child, in humility and poverty, mortifying their senses, their imaginations, passions, whims, inclinations and aversions, that they may finally be united to our crucified Lord and thus look forward to a glorious eternity" (707,D2). This was Cornelia's equivalent to Philippians 2.

The Calvary side of her humility has already been demonstrated -- her wanting to be "united to our crucified Lord". Its symbol is the cross. There is also a Bethlehem side to her humility whose symbol is the crib. In the early days of her conversion, Cornelia spoke to Pierce of "taking the words of our Savior with the humility of a little child -- and how wise it is in the Almighty to prove us by exacting humility" (103,D4). Jesus was the single motive for both sides of her humility, although the historical point of reference for each was different. Inevitably when she followed with Jesus the route of the Incarnation, she was led along the road to Jerusalem where Jesus became "humbler yet" and reached the term of his Incarnation in death. In general, however, one might say that when Cornelia chose to imitate Jesus' humility in the Incarnation, her

inspiration was the crib; and when humiliation was brought upon her by others, her inspiration was the cross.

A walk with Cornelia step by step reveals something of the Bethlehem side of her humility. Starting in 1844, one sees her at a lay women's retreat at the Trinita. The ladies were edified by the graceful humility of her manner as she, their equal, served them at table (189). At the end of a desolate retreat which followed, she wrote: "I abandon myself to thee, Oh my God and beg of thee to preserve me from all illusion and to keep me in the holy justice of humility" (228,D5a). Buckle tells how her superiors at the Trinita tried her and wisely tested her spirit by "every means in their power. Humiliations, contempt and reproaches ... were not wanting ..." (215). ... In her dealings with Bishop Grant and other bishops, Cornelia habitually revealed her humble attitude (662)...

Cornelia taught her sisters that humility was the ground of all virtue: "... for all true charity lies founded in humility which is always mistrustful of self and full of confidence in God" (CC8:118 see also 709,D3). She observed that obedience led to humility which in turn led to preferring the will of God "to anything in this world ..." (935). In success it was best to let others take the credit (915); in failure the thing to do was to "begin again" (707,D2), because, as she said, "humility must be dear to us as the apple of our eye" (1428/8). From her first foundation in London which was poor in the extreme, she wrote back to St Leonard's: "Let us try to be great in Humility and little in ourselves" (515,DI). For Epiphany that same year she had written: "May the constant practice of this virtue [humility] grow and increase in you till it brings you to the perfection of Charity -- and to the eternal enjoyment of the Beatific Vision" (709,D3). One October, Cornelia wrote to a young sister who was chafing under a difficulty with another sister: "... thank God for all humiliations [underlined 3 times] sent to you straight from His own humble heart. Christmas will show you." (CC7:29).



Cornelia's Writings

In these letters to Postulants and Novices in America, we read some Cornelian lessons on humility.

Volume 8, pg 113 (SHCJ Archives Rome)

For Bridget [Nearns] Mary Jane [Tierney] and Lucie [Villiers]

The Convent
St L. on Sea
Nov 16th 1872

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JMJ

My dear Postulants

Your letters were most heartily welcome you may be sure! And I thank God a thousand times that you are safe - Dear Mother M Xavier wrote as soon as she read the telegram from N York so that I was relieved from the anxiety two days before I read your letters. - They are now on their way to Mother Catherine so that all the children may rejoice with us in your safety - May our Lady of the Angels guard & protect you & keep you as her own dear Children. Never forget that every act of humble self denial will make you more pleasing to her & to her Divine son. Be simple & humble & you will be sure of being blest Do not be ashamed to ask what you do not know. And when you are in doubt as to what you ought to do ask with humility and you will be told. Do not expect to be more than good postulants till you are Novices & then aim at being all that the hints at the end of the Manual advise you to aim at. If you keep these in mind you will only have to be faithful in observing them practically - & may God ever bless you all

Yours Affectionately in Jesus Christ
Cornelia Connelly

P.S. The children had their concert this morning - It is snowing & very cold - All as usual.

The Novices had a grand holiday yesterday & enjoyed themselves immensely. I was with them for reading & work but we talked over the old days the greater part of the time & Mth Theresa & Mth M. Ignatia came and played Bezique in the evening.



Volume 8, pg 118 (SHCJ Archives Rome)

The Convent St L. on Sea
Nov 13. 1876

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JMJ

My dear Novices [in America]

On this dear Feast of St Stanislas we are with you in Spirit, for it does not require much time for the spirit to wing its way to our dear ones in America. The Novices at Mayfield will also pray with you, and as we are at Mass six hours before you we have the advantage of the Sacrifice of Holy Mass while you are sleeping! - Ah, how much we must all pray for each other that we may prove our gratitude to God for all he has done for us, & for our dear little Society of the Holy Child. - I wish we could pray so fervently as to obtain for all the true spirit of the Holy Child & the love of all that He loved & taught. - Prayer & self denial will obtain this if we persevere in Humility Humility must be dear to us as the apple of our eye, for all true charity lies founded on Humility which is always mistrustful of self & full of confidence in God. How truly ought we to cherish & be grateful for every little cross we have for it is only suffering which brings us to the peace of God which passeth all understanding! - May our dear Lord give you this sweet joy is the best wish of your

Affectionate Mother
In Jesus Christ
Cornelia Connelly

Poetry off the Shelf by Barbara DeConcini



Well, so that is that. Now we must dismantle the tree,
Putting the decorations back into their cardboard boxes—
Some have got broken—and carrying them up into the attic.
The holly and the mistletoe must be taken down and burnt,
And the children got ready for school. There are enough
Leftovers to do, warmed up, for the rest of the week—
Not that we have much appetite, having drunk such a lot,
Stayed up late, attempted—quite unsuccessfully—
To love all of our relatives, and in general
Grossly overestimated our powers. Once again
As in previous years we have seen the actual Vision and failed
To do more than entertain it as an agreeable
Possibility. Once again we have sent Him away,
Begging though to remain his disobedient servant,
The promising child who cannot keep His word for long.
The Christmas Feast is already a fading memory,
And already the mind begins to be vaguely aware
Of an unpleasant whiff of apprehension at the thought
Of Lent and Good Friday which cannot, after all, now
Be very far off. But for the time being, here we all are,
Back in the moderate Aristotelian city
Of darning and the Eight-Fifteen, where Euclid's geometry
And Newton's mechanics would account for our experience,
And the kitchen table exists because I scrub it.
It seems to have shrunk during the holidays. The streets
Are much narrower than we remembered; we had forgotten
The office was as depressing as this. To those who have seen
The Child, however dimly, however incredulously
The Time Being is, in a sense, the most trying time of all.
For the innocent children who whispered so excitedly
Outside the locked door where they knew the presents to be
Grew up when it opened. Now, recollecting that moment
We can repress the joy, but the guilt remains conscious;
Remembering the stable where for once in our lives
Everything became a You and nothing was an It.
And craving the sensation but ignoring the cause,
We look round for something, no matter what, to inhibit
Our self-reflection, and the obvious thing for that purpose
Would be some great suffering. So, once we have met the Son,
We are tempted ever after to pray to the Father:
'Lead us into temptation and evil for our sake.'
They will come all right, don't worry; probably in a form
That we do not expect, and certainly with a force
More dreadful than we can imagine. In the meantime
There are bills to be paid, machines to keep in repair,
Irregular verbs to learn, the Time Being to redeem
From insignificance. The happy morning is over,
The night of agony still to come; the time is noon;
When the Spirit must practice his scales of rejoicing
Without even a hostile audience, and the Soul endure
A silence that is neither for nor against her faith
That Gods Will will be done, that, in spite of her prayers,
God will cheat no one, not even the world of its triumph.

From W. H. Auden, *For the Time Being*



Poetry off the Shelf (continued)

W. H. Auden wrote his Christmas Oratorio, *For the Time Being*, in the darkest days of World War II, shortly after his return to the Christianity of his youth. One of his “longer poems,” it presents the Christmas story in a series of dramatic monologues, with the concluding narrative commentary presented here.

Shocked by the evil unleashed on the world from the heart of Western civilization, Auden turns to the core mystery of Christianity, the Incarnation, for some viable possibility of meaning and some credible sense of hope. By the poem’s end, he suggests, paradoxically, that it may well be just as hard—even harder—for us to sustain a sense of faith and meaning during the mundane stretches of our lives as it is when we are confronted by some great evil.

The narrator’s final commentary serves as a kind of distillation of Auden’s Incarnational vision: that God-among-us redeems our mundane lives from insignificance not by offering us a way out of the monotony and sheer slog of the everyday but rather by entering into it with us. The narrator claims that the challenge is to remember, in the midst of the ordinary, that extraordinary incursion—of the Infinite into our finitude, the Immortal into our mortality. The Word made flesh, God become a child—the time when ‘everything became a You and nothing was an It’—how do we nurture that life within us during the long stretches of ennui and acedia, when even the Spirit must practice His/Her scales of rejoicing?

I love the way Auden uses a colloquial phrase like “for the time being” with its connotation of the temporary and the episodic to invite a deeper reflection on the passingness of all things, including, in Shakespeare’s words, our own “little lives rounded with a sleep.”

Reflecting...



*Mother and Child
Holy Child Park
Melrose, MA*

*O Jesus hidden God,
I cry to thee ...
hidden light...
hidden love..*

*Spend some time in prayer
and reflection on Humility this
season.*

*Explore when and how you follow
in the hidden and humble ways
of the Holy Child Jesus.*

In what way do I desire to be humble of heart?

*When my life is hidden, am I hiding or am I
following the example of the Holy Child?*

*What daily experiences help me to be reminded of
Jesus’ humble life?*

*As I try to live the gospel value of humility more
deeply, how does it promote God’s Kingdom in my
world?*

*And when you are
in doubt
as to what you
ought to do
ask for humility
and you will
be told*



Meet the Associates by Barbara DeConcini

With this issue of the newsletter, we are introducing a new feature, "Meet the Associates." We hope that this feature will help us to get to know one another a little better and even to foster personal contacts beyond our regions and the occasions when we gather. Please let us know what you think, suggest some exploratory questions, and especially tell us if you are willing to be featured in a future newsletter. Contact Barbara by email at bdeconc@emory.edu.

In this issue, we feature Shirley Samson and Jessie Suozzo, two Associates from Melrose, MA, who have been involved in the associate relationship since its start,

Barbara: Tell us a little bit about yourself.

SS: My family moved to Melrose just before I turned four, and here I am at the same address 65 years later! I've remained single and share my home with fellow Associate, Jessie Suozzo. I am retired now--and I love every minute of it! Life has reverted back to the days of my childhood, when my days revolved around the church and the school. I am



Shirley Samson

an altar server (especially for funerals) and an extraordinary Eucharistic minister. I'm also actively involved in the local food pantry which our parish community staffs and supplies.

JS: My Mom and Dad were immigrants from Italy--my mother from Salerno and my father from Naples. When my mother informed her family that she wanted to be a Franciscan missionary, her brothers decided it was time to arrange for her to marry. The story is that her only contact with her future husband was seeing him a couple of times from her bedroom window! She refused to leave her bedroom for two weeks until the mother superior came to convince her that this was the will of God. My mother was 16 ½. A deeply religious woman, she accepted my father's proposal, devoting her life to God

and family.

Barbara: How did you come to know the Society?

SS: I was educated by the SHCJ for the first twelve years of my education. Ten years after graduating from St. Mary's High School, I entered the Society. I spent a year in the Society--a year I will always cherish. Having a sister and many friends in the community has kept me in constant contact with the Society.

JS: I came to know the SHCJ through Shirley and her SHCJ sister, Mary Samson. At the time, I was instructing children at St. Rose Parish, Chelsea, in CCD classes, preparing them for their first Communion. Shirley was the CCD Coordinator. We became good friends.



(l-r) Mary Samson, SHCJ and Jessie Suozzo

Barbara: What attracted you to join the SHCJ Associates?

SS: My past and present are so tightly interwoven with the Society, I cannot imagine not being associated with them.

JS: Since Shirley and I live together and Mary is an SHCJ, I developed an interest in joining the Associates.

Barbara: How has being an SHCJ Associate affected your everyday life?

SS: Although we no longer have a lot of sisters here, to me they (indeed, all the SHCJ) are members of my extended family. My life hasn't really changed because I am an Associate, but I would be less of who I am if I wasn't in association with the Society and SHCJ values.

JS: I have become more involved with local charitable organizations, such as our community food pantry, our Good Friday Walk for Sharing, and our parish organizations.

(continued on next page)

Meet the Associates (continued)

Barbara: What are your “dearest hopes” for the SHCJ Associate relationship?

SS: I once said to Cathi Duffy that I do not see yet where the Associates are going or what we will become, but I would like to be part of our journey of becoming.

JS: My hopes are that the Association grows each year with more SHCJ school alumni and friends joining. Individually, we can maintain contact with the Sisters, so being in association goes beyond that. There are already a variety of ways in which people are associated with members of the Society (e.g., through alumnae groups, work environments, volunteer programs, family and friendships). If we think of these existing associations as foundation blocks, we can develop the notion of ‘association’ as the cement or mortar which binds the blocks together as one whole. We all share a desire to join together to celebrate a common bond.

I think Associates share as well an expressed desire for spiritual growth in the spirit of Cornelia Connelly. We want to get to know her better!



Debbie Margulis accepting the Associate pin from Kathleen Dullea, SHCJ during Debbie's commitment ceremony in Anaheim



Anita Martineau representing Associates in Prayers of the Faithful during Opening Liturgy of Bicentennial



(l-r) Elaine Patterson, Tricia Fell, Gail Ferraiolo, Linda Mennis, Rosemary McSorley, SHCJ and Eileen Dorman at Opening of Bicentennial, Philadelphia. All except Linda are with the Associates in Pompton Plains, NJ.



(l-r) Dona Lambert and Elizabeth Clarke, SHCJ at Re-dedication of Holy Child Park in Melrose, MA

Book Recommendation

Typically, we won't be recommending one of the latest best-sellers to read but this book is different. *The Shack* by William Paul Young delves into our beliefs about the Trinity. It is a story of tragic pain but also of redemption. From the back cover, one reads:

Mackenzie Allen Philips' youngest daughter, Missy, has been abducted during a family vacation and evidence that she may have been brutally murdered is found in an abandoned shack deep in the Oregon wilderness. Four years later, in the midst of his Great Sadness, Mack receives a suspicious note, apparently from God,

inviting him back to that shack for a weekend...

In a world where religion seems to grow increasingly irrelevant THE SHACK wrestles with the timeless question: *Where is God in a world so filled with unspeakable pain?*

The answers Mack gets will astound you and perhaps transform you as much as it did him. You'll want everyone you know to read this book!

Normally the description about the abduction and murder would stop me from picking up the book. Resist that urge. You will find Mack's encounter with the Trinity inspiring!

*Christmas Blessings to you
and your loved ones!*