

HOLY CHILD ASSOCIATES



May He Himself give you His choicest blessings and enrich you with a constant flow of the grace of charity and of prayer.

– Venerable Cornelia



Photo by Ashley Batz on Unsplash

ACTIONS NOT WORDS

Vision of Associates

*One in Spirit,
Holy Child Associates
collaborate with the Society
of the Holy Child Jesus to
embody the charism of
Cornelia Connelly
in our everyday lives while
responding to the
wants of the age
with generosity.*

Mission

Holy Child Associates of the United States are women and men rooted in the charism of Cornelia Connelly who want to grow in her spirit. The Associates strive to bear witness to a life grounded in the Incarnation. Associates are called to help others believe that God lives and acts in them and to rejoice in God's presence in our midst.

*The charism of Cornelia Connelly
is grounded in the gospel message
of the Word Made Flesh
and centered in the mystery of God's life and presence
in the lives of women and men.*

From the Chair



I hope the Fall has gotten off to a good start for you! The Core Team is excited to begin our Fall with a new team:

- Judy Talvacchia, Chair
- Eugenia Ukpo, Secretary
- Tricia Fell, Treasurer
- Sandy Lovascio
- Dian Taylor-Pringle
- Mary Alice Minogue, SHCJ
- Cynthia Vives, SHCJ

We hope to send bi-weekly email updates to keep you informed about our activities on your behalf. Please let us know if you have suggestions, questions, concerns for the coming year at Associates-USA@shcj.org or call me directly at 617 519-1617.

Remember that the Associates have access to grant funding to help with expenses related to expanding our mission. These funds have been used to create the new invitational brochure and to expand our newsletter outreach. Grant funds are allocated to an approved project in increments up to \$2,000. If you have an idea for a project to promote, preserve and advance the SHCJ Associates and its mission, please reach out to the Core Team for an application.

Our annual fundraising appeal letters have gone out. Please prayerfully consider a donation to help us sustain and further the mission of the Associates. No donation is too small!

Seven Associates participated in a recent online class "How to Lead a Spiritual Program." With this cohort in place, we will be able to offer more spiritual programs as many of you requested. Coming up will be an Advent retreat on December 7. Stay tuned!

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Charity and Prayer

Over the years, the “Share the Journey” column has focused on many of the amazing and varied ministries of SHCJ Associates and Sisters. Although the actions are impactful and life-giving, like Cornelia, we are called to be “contemplatives in action.” She shared the blessing with all her sisters and with all of us today: “May God give you His choicest blessings and enrich you with a constant flow of the grace of charity and prayer.” We are doubly blessed—not just with the grace of charity but also with the grace of prayer.

We are reminded that God blesses us with the gift of prayer and with that in mind, we need to stop, pause, reflect, pray, and then return to our everyday life nourished by contemplation. Our active life feeds our contemplative life and our contemplative life informs our active life. Our prayer life nourishes us and gives us food for the journey. Our Tuesday Faith Sharing time provides a real opportunity to gather, stop, reflect, and then we return strengthened and refreshed. In that time, we listen to Gospel readings we have heard for years which take on a new meaning as we take time to prayerfully reflect on them and share with one another. Often the thoughts of another touches our hearts and enriches us.

In a recent Tuesday sharing, we reflected on the “Parable of the Sower.” With a reflection from the book “Into the Mess and other Jesus Stories” by Debi Thomas, we came to a greater understanding that the message of Matthew’s gospel is not really about the soil the seeds land in but rather on the sower who so generously lavishes us with the seeds of grace.

As SHCJ Associates, we are blessed with many opportunities for prayer in addition to our Tuesday Faith Sharing, such as the monthly online meditations, special prayer services, Advent retreats, Epiphany celebrations and the list goes on. In the recent St. Phoebe Celebration, we took time to reflect on “What is Church to us?” Church means many different things to different people. In essence, the Church is the people of God journeying together. At a recent Tuesday Faith Sharing, we all agreed that our Tuesday mornings are “Church” for those of us who gather. God’s power and presence isn’t limited to sacred spaces or to a brick and mortar building. We are called to bear witness to a life grounded in the Incarnation with confidence that God will give us His choicest blessings and enrich us with a constant flow of the grace of charity and prayer.

From the Chair, cont.

We lovingly remember Sr. Catherine Quinn, SHCJ, who died on August 24, 2024. She was instrumental in formally establishing the Associates in 2002 and remained a strong supporter and inspiration to us over the years. In a farewell address that she composed to be read at her funeral, Sr. Catherine said, “Relationships, beauty, good humor, quiet serenity have always meant much more to me than anything I have done... You have helped me to learn the truth

from the Imitation of Christ: Love knows no measure, fears no labor, makes sweet all that is bitter, finds rest in God alone.” Rest well, dear Sr. Catherine! We will honor you by living faithfully the charism and mission of Cornelia Connelly in daily life. I end with Sr. Catherine’s favorite farewell: Blessings all around!

Judy Talvacchia, Core Team Chair

Dr. Sarah Callaway Brabant

I was born into a bereaved family. My mother's aunt died in surgery following an automobile accident, her father died by suicide shortly afterwards, and my parents' little girl died from cancer the day before her second birthday, all within three years. My father was a pioneering cancer specialist, and I worked with him in his clinic. As a university professor, I wanted nothing to do with grief and death. I had had enough. My areas of interest were sex roles and poverty thank you very much. Then my mother died of cancer. My father always told his patients the truth and my brother and I followed his lead with my mother. After her death I decided to offer a one-time seminar on the sociology of death and dying. Two years later, some students came to me and asked me to teach it again. I thought, "Sure, I can do that." I ended up teaching it twice a semester for twenty-six years. It became my life's work.

Twenty-five percent of the students who took my course were bereaved. Many had spiritual issues. My prayer life was meager to say the least, and I felt ill equipped to help them. After looking for places to go throughout the world, I eventually ended up at Grand Coteau LA, only twenty minutes from where I live. I collected pictures of graves and learned about the two Connelly children's grave behind the church. They led me to their mother, Cornelia Connelly. As a former victim of domestic abuse, I had become a survivor. Through Cornelia, I became a woman of joy. This did not take place overnight. It took four years of patient spiritual counseling from my director, Mary Elisabeth Loomis, SHCJ. I am alive today because of her and Cornelia. It was through Mel that I learned of the Associates and was invited to the first meeting. I had joined the Catholic church when I married, but the betrayal of a priest led me to return to the Episcopal church of my youth. Because of Cornelia, I am now a communicant once again. I am long since retired (I will be ninety-two in November), but I still see bereaved persons for no charge. It is my ministry. "Yes Lord, Always Yes," is my credo. I can't imagine what I would be today without Mel's help and the intercessions of Mother Connelly.

Sarah Callaway Brabant, PhD, CSP, CFLE, FT
ULL Emerita Professor of Sociology

Left: Anita Martineau and Dr. Sarah Brabant paint the cross of John Henry and Mary Magdalen Connelly in Grand Couteau, LA

Below left: The before photo of the cross at the gravesite.

Below right: Anita Martineau and Dr. Sarah Brabant admire thier finished charitable work sprucing up the Connelly childrens' cross and gravesite to keep Cornelia's legacy shining bright.



Share the Journey

Actions Not Words

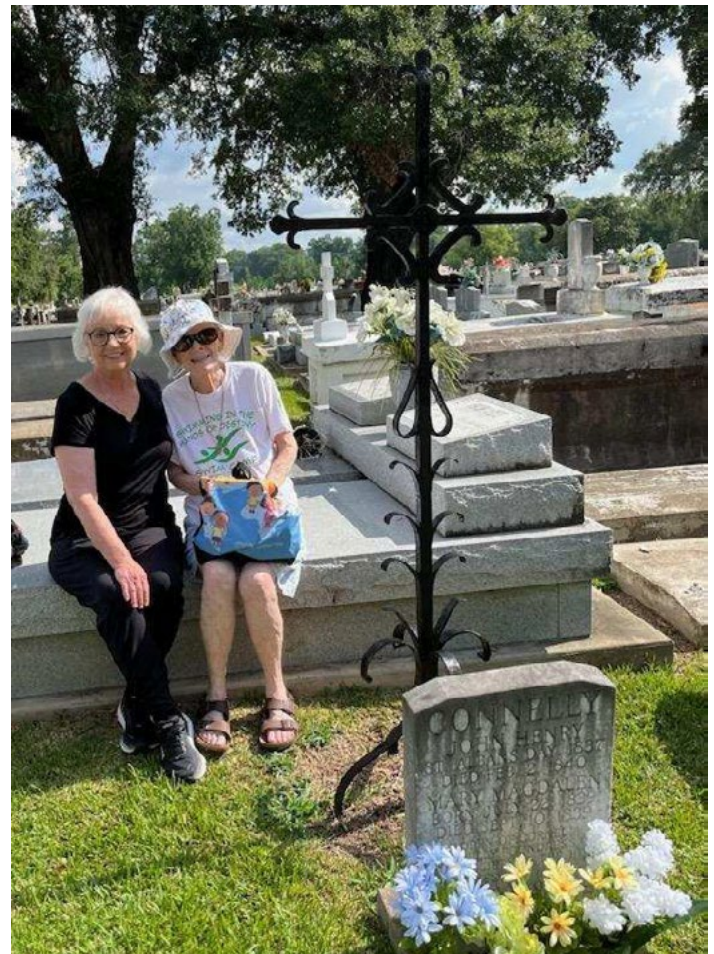
Earlier this year, Associate Dr. Sarah Brabant spent some reflective time at the Jesuit Retreat Center in Grand Coteau, LA. While visiting the grave of Cornelia Connelly's two children, John Henry and Mary Magdalen, she noticed that the cross was rusted, and the gravestone was weathered. She began thinking what she could do about it!

Sarah contacted Associate Anita Martineau who was coming to the retreat center in June to make a 30 day Ignatian retreat. They decided that the two of them could at least repaint the cross. After obtaining approval from the Province, Sarah set out to gather the necessary materials. During her free time, Anita sanded the cross. When Anita completed the retreat, they joined forces to paint the cross. The before and after pictures testify to the success of their efforts!

They are now arranging for someone to power wash the headstone so that the grave continues to be a fitting monument to the love Cornelia had for her children. They found a concrete and fairly

simple way to express their devotion to Cornelia and the Society.

I wonder what opportunities there are in our lives to give concrete witness to the charism and mission that we live as Associates. A neighbor in need. A local charity to support. It can feel overwhelming these days to have a positive impact on the enormous needs of our times. But God incarnate in the Holy Child Jesus reminds us that the smallest actions can have a redeeming effect on us and on God's creation. How can each of us practice "Actions Not Words" in the coming weeks?



"St. Kevin and the Blackbird"

*And then there was St Kevin and the blackbird
The saint is kneeling, arms stretched out, inside
His cell, but the cell is narrow, so*

*One turned-up palm is out the window, stiff
As a crossbeam, when a blackbird lands
And lays in it and settles down to nest.*

*Kevin feels the warm eggs, the small breast, the tucked
Neat head and claws and, finding himself linked
Into the network of eternal life,*

*Is moved to pity: now he must hold his hand
Like a branch out in the sun and rain for weeks
Until the young are hatched and fledged and flown.*



Photo by Nancy Hann on Unsplash



*

*And since the whole thing's imagined anyhow,
Imagine being Kevin. Which is he?
Self-forgetful or in agony all the time*

*From the neck on out down through his hurting forearms?
Are his fingers sleeping? Does he still feel his knees?
Or has the shut-eyed blank of underearth*

*Crept up through him? Is there distance in his head?
Alone and mirrored clear in love's deep river,
'To labour and not to seek reward,' he prays,*

*A prayer his body makes entirely
For he has forgotten self, forgotten bird
And on the riverbank forgotten the river's name.*

Poetry Off the Shelf

In 1996, the year after he received the Nobel Prize in Literature, the beloved Irish poet Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) published *The Spirit Level*, his ninth collection of poetry and the one in which “St. Kevin and the Blackbird” appears. This poem does indeed transport the reader to the spirit level. While its central image, derived from Irish folklore, is clearly depicted and the straightforward language easily understood, the mystical depths to which we are summoned resist explanation.

“St. Kevin and the Blackbird” is divided into two parts, each with four three-line stanzas. In the first part we hear the story itself: the saint is kneeling in prayer in his narrow cell when a blackbird decides to make her nest in his outstretched palm. Introduced as St. Kevin in the opening line, he is called simply “Kevin” at the start of the third verse. Here is a human being having a sensory experience: the warmth of the eggs and the bird’s breast, her claws. What happens next transcends this moment in time between two creatures, man and bird: Kevin “finds himself linked/ Into the network of eternal life.” Because he has been “moved to pity,” the saint “must” embrace his role as “a branch out in the sun and rain for weeks.” The story concludes back in the natural

world with the young birds “fleshed and fledged and flown.” Nevertheless, something beyond the physical experience – and yet intrinsic to it -- has transpired.

Heaney asks us in the second half of the poem to “Imagine being Kevin.” Specific details that capture the “agony all the time” of standing still for weeks – how that would make a body suffer – are contrasted to another state entirely, one that is “self-forgetful.” Consider the way the poet describes this transfigured state: “the shut-eyed blank of underearth,” “distance in his head,” “mirrored clear in love’s deep river.” With a series of questions, the poet leads us back to where we started: in prayer – prayer that begins with “arms stretched out,” open to the world. Heaney quotes St. Ignatius, then goes further: “A prayer his body makes entirely.” Such incarnational prayer as this surpasses understanding, to paraphrase St. Paul. Perhaps this mystical oneness is what Fr. Richard Rohr calls the nondual mind, or what Cornelia meant by “a constant flow of the grace of charity and of prayer.” Through it, St. Kevin arrives on the banks of “love’s deep river,” where everything is forgotten except Love itself.

Photo by Allen Y on Unsplash



Encore

Season of Creation 2024

On September 7th of this year's Season of Creation, the province's Laudato Si' Committee presented a virtual workshop, "The Importance of Knowing Your Carbon Footprint." This workshop was one of the actions for the "Response to the Cry of the Earth" goal in the province's Laudato Sí action platform. Knowing your carbon footprint is a wonderful place to start your ecological transformation. It will inform you of how and where you need to be more sustainable to decrease your greenhouse gas emissions. You may view the workshop at the links below.



TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION

SEASON OF CREATION 2024

The firstfruits of hope
(Rom 8:19-25)

[Click here](#) for the PowerPoint, "Why Knowing Your Carbon Footprint Is Important."

[Click here](#) for the recording of the full workshop. Check out some good discussions at 31:53 and 48:51.

"Prayer, humility, and charity toward all are essential in the Christian life: they are the way to holiness." - Pope Francis

NOTABLE... AND QUOTABLE



"Our prayers for others flow more easily than those for ourselves. This shows we are made to live by charity."

- C. S. Lewis

SAVE THE DATE

December 7, 2024, the Associates will be presenting an Advent retreat on the Incarnation. Save the date on your calendars.

If you feel drawn to the Associates or would like more information, connect with us.

✉ Email: associates-usa@shcj.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HolyChildAssociatesUSA>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/HolyChildAssociates>

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