

HOLY CHILD ASSOCIATES



Photo by Linda Tarney

*...be as diligent and vigilant as if all depended upon you
–be full of hope and trust in God.*

Venerable Cornelia Connelly

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



“Hope does not disappoint.” (Rom 5:5)

The times we live in demand a huge dose of Christian hope. Not a naïve optimism but a sure sense that God is with us always, prompting us to actions that will lead to fuller life. Our Incarnational charism and mission guide us in the ways of hope, helping us to be sensitive to the presence and action of God, always responding with zeal and generosity. Now especially, we respond with hope filled prayer for our Associates and all in the Los Angeles and Pasadena areas as they grapple with the effects of the devastating wildfires.

The Associates Core Team endeavors to foster hope by offering resources that support the spiritual

needs of members and provide opportunities for action on behalf of God’s creation. Both are necessary – attending to our own inner resources and from them, attending to the needs of our age in whatever way we are able.

Below are some highlights of our efforts in the past few months and our plans for the coming year. As always, feel free to contact us with questions, feedback or suggestions at Associates-USA@shcj.org.

Wishing you every blessing,

Judy Talvacchia, Core Team Chair

Associate Appeal

We are most grateful for donations to our annual appeal that amounted to almost \$8,000. We promise to use your gifts wisely to advance the Associate mission.

Associate Retreats

The Advent retreat, Reflecting on God’s Love Through the Mystery of the Incarnation, planned and facilitated by 3 Associates, was very well received. Three more Associates will offer a Lenten retreat, Jesus Waits for Me at the Well: Part 2, on Saturday, March 22. Details to follow.

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Jubilee 2025–Pilgrims of Hope

2025 is a year full of hope with it being a Global Jubilee for the Church, the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Sí* and the *Laudato Sí* Movement and the 800th anniversary of the “Canticle of Creation”.

In this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis reminds us that hope is a gift from God and a task that must be cultivated. We are called to discover hope in the signs of the times. In the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee Year, Pope Francis says “the first sign of hope is the desire for peace and a second sign is having an enthusiasm for life and a readiness to share it.” We are called to be tangible signs of hope, especially to those experiencing hardships, including the poor, prisoners, migrants, displaced persons and refugees, the sick and the elderly. Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Pope Francis challenges us not to be drawn toward pessimism and resignation despite wars and all kinds of social injustices but “to retain a gentle gaze of hope.” Those who love always view the world with a gentle gaze of hope.

I was also moved by Joyce Rupp’s words on hope as she says “we are meant to be hope-filled people but how do we keep an enduring sense of hope in a society where divisiveness and hostility work against it?” Using Elijah’s story of the angels who touched him, she asks her readers, “who are the angels who give us hope? Who sustains our hope on the journey and renews our spirit when we most need it?” Often, the angels in my life have been part of my SHCJ Family, including Sisters, Associates and friends from my days at Holy Child, Sharon. Their sense of joy, hope,

mercy and action on behalf of others continues to encourage me on life’s journey. A very specific and timely sign of hope from the SHCJ family is a grant from the SHCJ Wants of the Age (WOTA) Committee to support the rebuilding of the areas most affected by the wildfires in the Los Angeles area. A grant will go to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles’ office taking the lead in assisting those most impacted and two grants will go to the SHCJ Mayfield Schools to meet the needs of displaced faculties and staff.



In reflecting on the life of Cornelia, I most certainly see her as a person who retained a “gentle gaze of hope.” In spite of the many sufferings she bore, she clung to her relationship with the Holy One who dwells within us and built her hope on Him. She calls each of us today in 2025 to “be as diligent and vigilant as if all depended upon you – be full of HOPE and trust in God.”

As we begin the Jubilee Year which focuses on hope, may we discover the signs of hope in the signs of our times and as the Jubilee Year closes out next year on the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6, 2026), may we come to know that “Hope is a light in the night that never disappoints.”

**“Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all.”**

– Emily Dickinson

Care of Creation

Goatscaping Brings Hope in Restoring Native Ecosystems

What is an eco-friendly solution to invasive species and weeds growing on difficult terrain? The answer is goatscaping or target grazing. There are environmental, economic, and biological reasons for using goats in place of landscaping machinery and herbicides to remove invasive species to support the growth of native plants. Environmentally, goats require water, shade, and predator protection to graze, not fossil fuels. Goats do not give off pollutants like carbon. Their droppings are a natural fertilizer for the soil while their hooves aerate the soil. With goatscaping the use of herbicides that may



harm other organisms are not necessary. By eating the leaves and woody stems of the invasive plants, the goats allow more light and air to get to the native plants and grasses enhancing their growth. Also, as they eat these invasive plants, they sterilize the seeds and plant-reproductive material during digestion eventually breaking the re-growth cycle of the invasive plants. Goats preserve the habitats of the wildlife in a grazing area by eating around bird nests, avoiding leaves and twigs having cocoons and chrysalises, and letting small creatures (turtles, toads, and small mammals) move out of their way.

Economically, goatscaping is a viable option and cost effective compared to labor, equipment, and chemical expenses of traditional methods of invasive plant removal.

Lastly, goats are biological. Compared to chemical solutions, goats produce no toxins or pollutants. Boer goats, Kiko goats, and Nigerian Dwarf goats are all well suited for target grazing. Goats are natural browsers preferring broad leaved and woody stemmed plants. These ruminates will eat invasive plants like buckthorn, multi flora rose, bittersweet, English ivy, kudzu, honey suckle, burning nettle, poison ivy, or poison sumac. The grazing of goats is a testament to God creating plants and animals to coexist. Goats eat around goldenrod saving it for the pollinators. They will not eat milkweed which is the only food Monarch caterpillars eat. Goats eat most invasive plants up to 7 feet high leaving the lower portions still in the ground. This protects the goats from worms and other parasites found on the plants closer to the ground. These remaining stems will need to be pulled out manually. As goats will eat non-invasive plants like blueberries, these plants need to be protected during goatscaping. These ruminates do stay clear of Rhododendron which is highly toxic to them. Being prey, they need to be protected by a fencing system or by dogs, donkeys, or people.

These adorable grazers bring hope to recreating native ecosystems by their natural browsing. By reducing the growth of invasive species of plants, creating fertile soil, and providing more light and air for the growth of native plants, goats can once again bring to life a natural habitat for many of God's creatures to coexist together.



Share the Journey

Our Lady of Kibeho – Mother of the Word

Kibeho is a small village in Rwanda. Apparitions of Our Lady began on November 28, 1981 and lasted for eight years. I knew of the apparitions, but I had never been to Kibeho. This past November, I was able to join a pilgrimage to Rwanda with Immaculee Ilibagiza, a Rwandan genocide survivor and author of "Left to Tell."



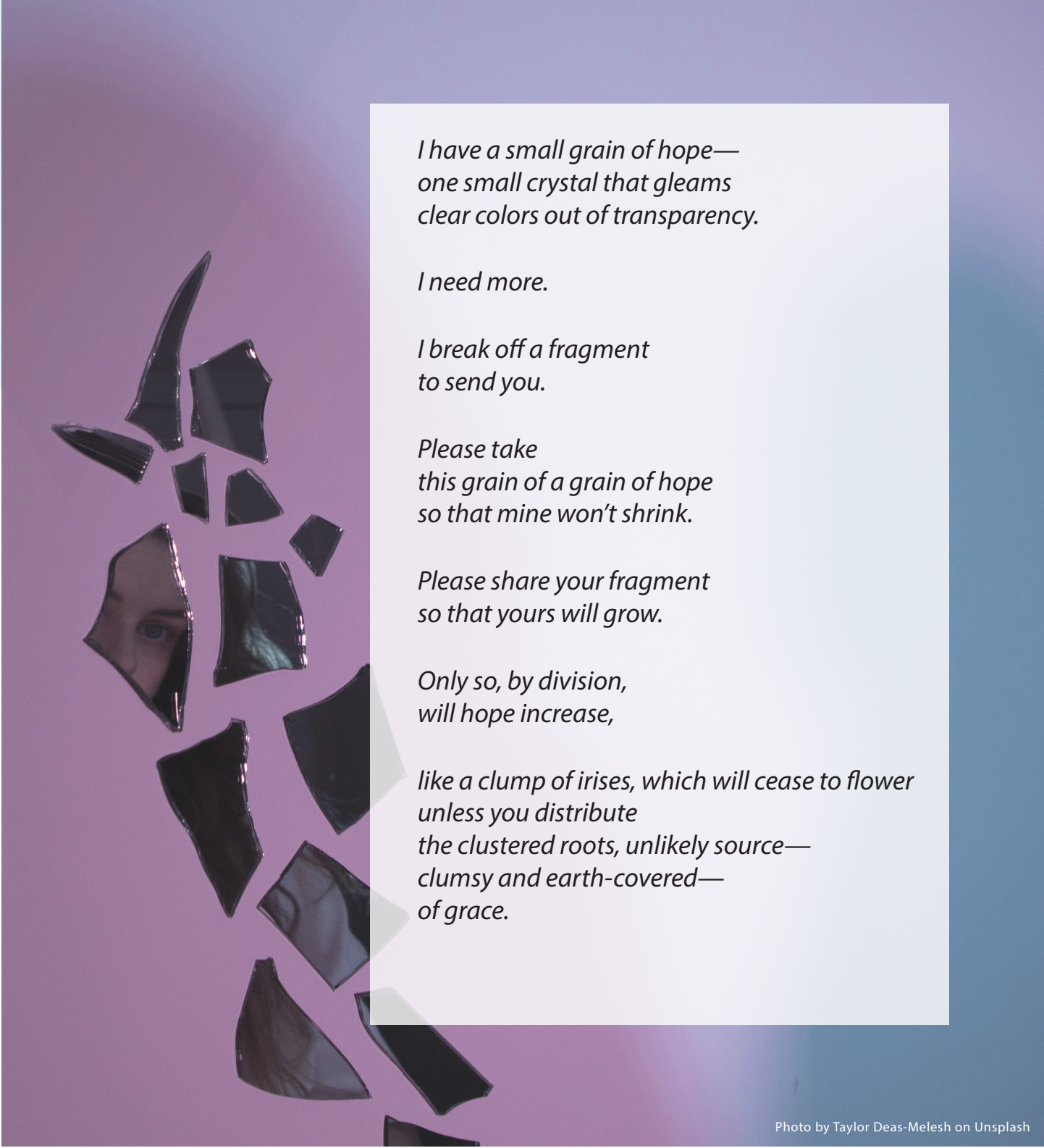
Our Lady of Kibeho reminds me of the mystery of the Incarnation. When Mary first appeared to Alphonsine Mumureke, a young High School student, she identified herself in the Rwandan language of Kinyarwanda as "Nyina Wa Jambo," which means "Mother of the Word." In the history of Marian Ap-

paritions, it is the first time Mary introduced herself in these words. Her message at Kibeho combines all the messages of Jesus - a call to repentance, conversion of heart, to be faithful, to pray without hypocrisy, but with a reconciled heart. Another message is closely related to God's incarnation in creation. The visionaries mentioned the "field of flowers" or "trees" which Our Lady asked them to water. Cardinal Antoine Kambanda explained that these "flowers" or "trees" of different species and colors symbolize the cultures and people God has brought together to receive the message of Our Lady. Mary asked for conversion – "these are my flowers, water them so that they don't go dry." Thus, the blessing of people with holy water is very common at the shrine.

Four days after I returned from Rwanda, I facilitated the Associates Advent retreat on Incarnation. God provided a particularly Rwandan bit of inspiration to help my retreat.



“For the New Year 1981”



*I have a small grain of hope—
one small crystal that gleams
clear colors out of transparency.*

I need more.

*I break off a fragment
to send you.*

*Please take
this grain of a grain of hope
so that mine won't shrink.*

*Please share your fragment
so that yours will grow.*

*Only so, by division,
will hope increase,*

*like a clump of irises, which will cease to flower
unless you distribute
the clustered roots, unlikely source—
clumsy and earth-covered—
of grace.*

Photo by Taylor Deas-Melesh on Unsplash

Poetry Off the Shelf

When “For the New Year, 1981” appeared in my inbox recently, as usual it felt like a gift from the Holy Spirit. The poetry of Denise Levertov (1923-1997) has been familiar to me since my college days, when she was well-known as an anti-war poet of the Vietnam era. Further online exploration revealed that she was actually born in England, where she and her sister were completely home-schooled by her literature-loving Welsh mother and her Russian-Jewish father (who converted to Christianity and became an Anglican minister). At the age of twelve, without any formal education, Denise pursued her poetic vocation by sending her work to T. S. Eliot, who actually responded with two pages of advice!

My internet research led me next to a 2007 National Catholic Reporter article, written by Catholic peace activist John Dear and entitled “Denise Levertov’s Peacemaking Poetry.” As Dear recounts his friendship with Denise, he evokes the spirit of the protest movement that connected Levertov, a convert to Catholicism, to fellow peace activists Thomas Merton and Daniel Berrigan and to Pax Christi. Dear goes on to praise *Making Peace*, the posthumous collection of her anti-war poetry in which “For the New Year, 1981” was published in 2006.

The poem begins so very simply with the familiar phrase “a small grain of hope” – and it will remain spare, offering only two concrete images and developing through a series of one, two, or three lines of sentences a child could easily understand. The first of these images is the “one small crystal that gleams.” As beautiful as these “clear colors” are, the poet tells us that more is needed: “break off a fragment/to send.” We must reach out to one another. The message is urgent: “Please take...Please share.” Hope shrinks without solidarity and grows “by division.” Does the miracle of the loaves and the fishes come to mind, perhaps?

Thus as the poem moves to its conclusion, the poet’s voice, at first a single “I” who speaks of one fragment to a single “you,” now seems to address a plural “you,” a beloved community. No longer is the central image crystalline, transparent, ethereal; instead Levertov asks us to envision this sharing of hope as “a clump of irises” – not the flowers but “the clustered roots.” This image, the one that promises a true blossoming of hope, is “earth-covered” and “clumsy.” We have arrived at a very Cornelian place, humble and hidden, the “unlikely source” of the “grace” that multiplies as it is shared freely with others.



Photo by Krystal Ng on Unsplash

Encore

From the Chair, cont.

Visits with the Sisters at Holy Child Center

The Core Team will be working on a plan to arrange periodic visits from Philadelphia area Associates with the Sisters at Holy Child Center. We see this as an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of Association with the Sisters and to provide them with additional social opportunities. We will communicate details as they become available. Anyone interested in helping with planning and/or visits can contact us at Associates-USA@shcj.org.

Zoom Hosts and Social Media Volunteers Needed

The Core Team will be inviting Associates who have Zoom hosting and/or social media experience to join a Tech cohort who can help us to deliver programs and disseminate information. Our hope is to have 2 or more Associates in each area of expertise who can share the work of providing these online resources, so no one has sole responsibility. Requirements will be posted in Associate email updates. If you have interest or questions, contact us at: Associates-USA@shcj.org.

**“There is always light if only we’re brave enough to see it.
If only we’re brave enough to be it.” - A. Gorman**



Earth Day 2025

Let us continue celebrating the 800th anniversary of the “Canticle of the Creatures” by St. Francis of Assisi by honoring our planet and all of God’s creatures on Earth Day, April 22, 2025. Take time to observe the changes in the seasons and the life cycle of animals and plants which does take patience. Patience sustains our hope and strengthens it.



To learn more about Earth Day visit, <https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2025/>

To learn more about the Canticle, visit <https://franciscanvoice.org/800th-anniversary-for-the-canticle-of-the-creatures/>

NOTABLE... AND QUOTABLE

**“We must accept finite disappointment,
but never lose infinite hope.”**

- Martin Luther King

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>

ACTIONS NOT WORDS