

HOLY CHILD ASSOCIATES



*We never know what we can do until we try.
Perseverance gains the crown.*

Venerable Cornelia Connelly

Photo by Trường Quyết Tâm 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



“Fear not, for I am with you.” (Isaiah 43:5)

In these challenging times, it is comforting to be reassured of God’s constant presence and action in us and in our world. It also gives us courage to look at the ways we can become more fully the people we are meant to be and to respond with love and action.

We Associates have looked inward during our Associates Lenten retreat. In company with the International Associates, we pondered both our desire and our reluctance to follow the call to discipleship. The story of the prophet Jonah reminded us that God keeps inviting, leading, guiding and loving us. Our challenge is to see with God’s eyes, respond as God would respond and trust God when our vision is cloudy!

We have looked outward as we welcomed two new Collaborative Associates in February, Jessica Keaveney and Sandy Lovascio. Two more are preparing to make their commitment. We have two Associates currently in the discernment process and several more ready to begin. God is indeed inviting!

The Core Team has also been reaching out to Associates we have not heard from recently to “check in.” We are striving to have up to date information that will help us to serve you better. You may receive a

phone call or email message from one of us in the coming weeks.

The Core Team met with the Province Leadership Team on April 5. It was a chance to share our plans and hopes and to deepen our bonds of association. The PLT was very supportive of our initiatives and offered whatever resources the Province can provide. We decided to be proactive about sharing information that is of interest to both Sisters and Associates using the Sisters NewsNotes and the Associate Updates. Our futures are intertwined, and we want to be in close contact with each other.

As we move into the Easter season, we will focus on the new life that is emerging in the Society and in us. Even if the future looks and feels different, we know that our loving God is leading us towards God’s reign of love.

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

Inside this issue

From the Chair	2
Share the Journey	3
Meet the Associates	4-6
Poetry Off the Shelf	7
Encore	8

Holy Child Associates American Province - USA

1341 Montgomery Avenue
Rosemont, PA 19010

Email: associates-usa@shcj.org

Instagram: HolyChildAssociates
Facebook: Holy Child Associates, USA

Share the Journey

"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

(Romans 5:3-5)

In reflecting on this article, I was really touched by the powerful way these lines from Paul's Letter to the Romans reflect the life and legacy of Venerable Cornelia Connelly. Her suffering was so real and so deeply personal that it certainly touched her heart and life in a profound way. Her suffering did indeed seem to bring forth perseverance, character and hope. She turned her suffering into a deep trust in God and a real zest for meeting "the wants of her age."

In 1865, Cornelia Connelly dared to dream of raising up a chapel, an orphanage, a novitiate and a school. In spite of all odds, she dared to dream and persisted. She saw the growing need for education for young women, especially factory workers and mill girls. She felt the call to teach and reach them wherever they were holding classes in the evenings and on weekends. Today's needs have changed, and we also focus on the hungry, the immigrant, the refugee, the unaccompanied child. With the perseverance and tenacity of Cornelia, SHCJ sisters and Associates dare to dream and act to build a world rooted in compassion.

One specific way this has happened has been through the Wants of the Age (WOTA) committee. Under the leadership of Sr. Marcia Sichol SHCJ, WOTA works "to do all we can, individually and together, to alleviate the struggle and suffering of migrants, internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers in whatever parts of the world

we find ourselves. Specifically, as a Society, funds have been allocated strategically to meet both emergency and long-term needs, locally, regionally and internationally."

One very current and major need is the result of cuts in USAID (United States Agency for International Development). As a result of draconian cuts, many international Church assistance agencies, such as Catholic Relief Services have been forced to shut down projects. These cuts are leading to hunger, malnutrition and even death. One country of real concern is Sudan. Thanks to a grant from WOTA, Catholic Relief Services will be able to keep 26 health and nutrition facilities open during a time when many other local systems have collapsed. These facilities provide services to approximately 24,000 individuals per month, including 719 children under five with an estimated caseload of 350.



Perseverance and tenacity are gifts from the legacy of Cornelia. In this Spring season of new life, may all of us carry on Cornelia's spirit to try in whatever way we feel called to make a difference. As Cornelia herself shared - "We never know what we can do until we try. Perseverance gains the crown."

For more information visit [CRS.org/act](https://crs.org/act).

Photo: Sister Amira Tabet hugs a Syrian refugee student at the Community Center of the Good Shepherd Sisters in Deir-al-Ahmar.
<https://photos.crs.org/journalists>

Meet the Associates

New Collaborative Associates

The journey to commitment as a Collaborative Associate is as individual as each Associate. Our three newest Collaborative Associates share how God drew them to association with the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, highlighting their unique paths.

Associate Sandy Lovascio says that making her formal commitment was her "Holy Child life coming full circle." She first encountered the SHCJ at St. Leonard's Academy in Philadelphia, PA during her early school years. Even as a child, the uniqueness of her experience left a lasting impression that kept her connected to the Sisters. She later sent her own children to a Holy Child school, further deepening her bond with the Society. Twenty years ago, she took on the role of Mission Advancement Director for the American Province, where her understanding of the charism and commitment to the mission grew significantly.

For Associate Jessica Keaveney, the connection began later in her life. After growing up in Media, PA, she began her professional life working with people in need, first at a non-profit, supporting low-income women and their children in staying together, then at an early childhood education program in their corporate office. The seeds of seeing God in the humble and hidden were planted. As Human Resource Director for the Province, she came into contact with

the Holy Child charism and mission. She says "the feeling grew over time" that association with the SHCJ resonated with her spirituality, values and way of life.

Associate Patti Cepparulo serves as Lower School Religion Teacher, Religion Program Coordinator and After School Program Coordinator at Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child in Summit, NJ. She met the SHCJ during the interview process for her current position. Patti was particularly inspired by the words of Cynthia Vives, SHCJ who was Head of School at the time. It was from Sr. Cynthia that she learned about the charism and mission of the Society. Over her 40 years at Oak Knoll, she gradually felt a calling to become a "minister of God's word" through prayer, action and teaching.



Joanne Ainsworth, Nonie Murphy, Patti Cepparulo, Cynthia Vives, SHCJ, Tricia Fells

The three Associates credit significant moments in their faith journeys that led them to the Holy Child Associates. Patti acknowledges the example of her parents' strong Catholic faith with motivating her desire for God. From them, she saw "the importance of faith and love in everyday life." Jessica remembers

a defining moment of "deep grief and loss." During that time, faith became her anchor, providing "unexpected blessings in the midst of pain." It became a transformative experience in her relationship with God. She brings that perspective now "to others

facing their own trials.” Sandy’s faith developed through her twelve years of Catholic education. Through those years, she recognized the uniqueness of the Cornelian way of connecting with God, which resonated with her own approach to living out her faith.



Sandy Lovascio, Jessica Keaveney

When asked to consider a formal commitment to the Associates, each of them had very personal approaches. Jessica was attracted to the Associates but didn’t understand fully what it meant to be an Associate. The Discernment Process for Collaborative Associates provided her with “the perfect opportunity to explore it.” At the end of the process, she knew “this is exactly where I was meant to be.” Sandy says she was intimidated when asked to pursue commitment. Catherine Quinn, SHCJ, Cathi Duffy and other Associates pointed out that she was already living the vision and mission of the Associates in her daily life and professional work. The discernment process confirmed and deepened that awareness.

Patti had been part of an Associate prayer group for several years. She said, “I never felt I needed a formal title to know that I was part of this group.” Gradually, she realized that as a committed Associate, she could “more easily spread the word about this incredible

community and the work of Cornelia Connelly.” She completed her discernment with Sr. Cynthia.

Both Jessica and Sandy were asked by their Associate Mentor, Judy Talvacchia, if they would be willing to do the discernment together and online with Judy. The discernment material, previously used with great success in a printed binder, had been recently moved online. The hope is to accommodate the needs of Associates who are not physically near a mentor or who prefer a group format, regardless of location. Jessica, Sandy and Judy were the first to use the online process. All three agree that it worked well. Jessica and Sandy appreciated sharing each other’s reflections and experiences. Judy liked the ability to access resources easily and to add new resources as they became available. Feedback from Jessica and Sandy was invaluable for Judy to refine and enhance the process and the material.

The commitment ceremonies of these Associates reflected their individual approaches. Patti made her commitment on October 15, 2024, during the Founders Day celebration at Oak Knoll. This gave Patti the joy of sharing the gifts of Association with faculty, staff, students, parents, Sisters and Associates



*First row: Sandy Lovascio, Jessica Keaveney
Second row: Marie Ursino, SHCJ, Dian Taylor-Pringle, Mary Ann Buckley, SHCJ*

both in person and via livestream. Jessica and Sandy celebrated on February 19, 2025, during an intimate prayer service at Holy Child Chapel, Rosemont, PA. Sisters, colleagues, Associates and guests present joined them for a joyful celebration afterwards in the Holy Child Center dining room.

So how are the new Collaborative Associates living the mission now? Along with her professional role as HR Director, Jessica lives the mission in her very full personal life, beginning with her husband and three teenagers. She has a passion for story telling through creative writing and in film as a background actor. She has become more mindful of her interactions in all these areas, knowing that she is “part of a community united by a shared purpose – to reveal God’s presence and action in the world.”

Sandy attempts to “joyfully, compassionately and spiritually journey in a world in constant flux.” She delights in her connection with Sisters and Associates who help her “continue to grow in Cornelia’s

charism and spirit.” She hopes to deepen her relationship with God and engage her faith in “Actions Not Words.”

Patti delights in her sons Joe and Ben, and daughter Jessica who also teaches at Oak Knoll. Her most recent pride and joy is her granddaughter, Lucelia Ann. Each morning, she reflects on the mission she has accepted and tries to live it throughout the day – being all that God wants her to be, seeing the good in others and reminding others of it when they can’t see it in themselves. Her dearest hope is “to inspire someone just as Sister Cynthia inspired me.”

Welcome to our new Collaborative Associates! We are blessed with the gifts that you bring to our community. If you feel, like Jessica, that this is “exactly where I’m meant to be” consider the discernment process towards commitment as a Collaborative Associate. Reach out to Associates-USA@shcj.org.



Photo by Daniel Frank on Unsplash

Poetry Off the Shelf

"Let This Darkness Be a Bell Tower"

by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Joanna Macy

Quiet friend who has come so far,

*feel how your breathing makes more space
around you.*

*Let this darkness be a bell tower
and you the bell. As you ring,*

what batters you becomes your strength.

Move back and forth into the change.

What is it like, such intensity of pain?

If the drink is bitter, turn yourself to wine.

*In this uncontainable night,
be the mystery at the crossroads of your senses,
the meaning discovered there.*

*And if the world has ceased to hear you,
say to the silent earth: I flow.*

To the rushing water, speak: I am.

Sonnets to Orpheus II, 29

When "Let This Darkness Be a Bell Tower" was featured back in the winter 2014 issue of this newsletter, each beautiful line of poetry was offered as a guide to inner transformation. Cornelia's concept of accepted suffering – the bitter drink that turns oneself to wine, as Rilke puts it – is deeply personal: "the mystery at the crossroads of your senses." The choice to revisit this poem now had to do with another aspect of Cornelia's vision: actions, not words. In this tumultuous spring of 2025, there is a need to ring out: "speak: I am."

Imagine the very first line of this poem as the starting point: 2014. You are the "quiet friend," and as you reflect on your associate's journey of prayer, contemplation, and service, "your breathing makes more space around you." Then the future unfolds and the challenges feel overwhelming. Rilke advises, "Move back and forth into the change." In Romans 5:3-5, Paul tells us that with God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, we can go from suffering to perseverance to strong character and, at last, to hope. For Cornelia perseverance was the answer to whatever life threw at her. Hope is a virtue that allows us to act because we are confident in God's goodness.

To experience hardship and pain is part of the human condition; can we allow it to transform us into compassionate beings who will be a voice for the voiceless, to ring out in love and truth, to act on what we believe? Listen to our dear Cornelia when she counsels, "We never know what we can do until we try." Let the beauty of this poem strengthen our resolve to be, if I may paraphrase the Jesuit mantra, mystics for others!

Encore

The American Province Laudato Si' Committee shares the following prayer from Catholic Climate Covenant in honor of Earth Day.

Let us pray...

In the beginning, there was a place without form or shape. It was in darkness over an abyss. It was devoid of life and warmth. And God said: Let there be light, and there was light. The light was good, and creation began to grow.

God of creation and life, we seek the light of hope and love, which shapes all of creation on our planet. In light, we seek strength to resist the darkness of fear and despair, desiring instead to be illuminators of truth, clarity, and the good of all life. In becoming witnesses to life, we yearn to share with all the gift that is creation, resplendent in light and beauty.



EARTH
DAY '25



May we never succumb to the original darkness, without form or shape, but be filled with light, hope, and vision. May we possess the courage to reach out to all people on our common journey to care for our common home, Earth.

~Fr. John Grace, Immaculate Conception
Catholic Church, Hampton, Virginia

We invite you to view the Catholic Climate Covenant's video on Earth Day, "We are the Light of the World." View it at <https://vimeo.com/1072607166>.



Laudato Si' Week 2025

Laudato Si' Week 2025 marks the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home". Let's raise hope for all creation this year by celebrating Laudato Si' Week on May 24th-31st. As we celebrate, "Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope." (Laudato Si' 244)

For more resources refer to the website:
laudatosiweek.org.



NOTABLE... AND QUOTABLE



SPRING

Photo by Gleive Marcio Rodrigues de Souza on Unsplash

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