

Discerning the Call to Commitment

Scripture

Galatians 5:22-23

"If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

1 Cor. 12: 4-7

"There are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

Psalms 37: 4-5

*Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord.*

Baruch 3:14

Learn where there is wisdom, where there is strength, where there is understanding, so that you may at the same time discern where there is length of days, and life, where there is light for the eyes, and peace.

Cornelia's Thoughts



"The invitation comes from God, and to him you must give your answer. Don't talk about what you are going to do for God but reflect on what God is doing for you." D73:209

"Our Lord regards what you sincerely desire to become rather than what you are. Try to help others and each effort will be blessed on yourself." CC 6:51

"Pray and have great confidence in God who will take care of his own work and guide and govern it by his Holy Spirit." CC7:6

You have engaged in a process of reflection on the call to Association with the Society of the Holy Child Jesus over the last months. In this final session, reflect on whether you are ready to make a formal commitment as an Associate.

1. Review the Associate Mission, Vision and Charism

MISSION

SHCJ 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.

VISION

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.

CHARISM

Holy Child Associates embrace the charism of Cornelia Connelly – a charism 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, men and all of creation.

2. Review what it means to be an Associate of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.

An Associate is invited, first and foremost, to a way of life; to a way of being that influences everything we do.

The Holy Child Jesus leads us “from the crib to the cross” and beyond, to the fullness of resurrected life. Associates are guided by Christ, the Incarnation of God, and the foundational insights of Cornelia Connelly, founder of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.

We share Cornelia Connelly's spirituality, grounded in the Incarnation: God's merciful love, embodied in the humble and hidden life of the Holy Child Jesus, reveals the presence and action of God in everyone and everything.

We adopt a way of life that reflects the Holy Child mission: “To help others believe that God lives and acts in them and in our world and to rejoice in God's presence.” We make the Society's mission our own, responding to God's love with joy and zeal in daily life and in “meeting the wants of the age” especially among the humble and hidden of our world.

We are supported by participation in the four pillars of Association:

- **Personal Prayer**
By prayer, reflection, and personal connection with God, we become hearers/discerners of God's presence and action in ourselves and in the world.
- **Spiritual Development**
Together with the Sisters and Associates, we engage in a lifelong process of growth in Christ, in the spirit of the Society - for example, through communal prayer, retreats and reflection material.
- **Ministry**
Prayer and spiritual growth lead to “actions, not words,” to loving service within the family, at work, in the local or global community and/or in SHCJ ministries and initiatives. Associates support each other in the joys and challenges of discipleship.
- **Community**
We gather in fellowship with Sisters and Associates for prayer, social activity and significant events, bonding us to each other through the spirit of the Holy Child.

3. Review the Associate Commitment

Drawn by the Spirit of the Holy Child Jesus

and inspired by the vision of Cornelia Connelly,

I _____ wish to deepen my commitment to Christ Jesus through closer association

with the Society of the Holy Child Jesus

and to accept its mission as my own:

"To help others believe that God lives and acts in them and in our world, and to rejoice in God's presence."

4. Review the Associate Commitment Ceremony

Holy Child Associate Commitment Ceremony

Leader

"God has chosen to need women and men in every age to reveal divine love and to make known the reality of the Incarnation." We rejoice that Holy Child Associates are joining with the Society in answering God's call to share in our mission to reveal divine love.

You, *(Name)*, are inspired by Cornelia and the life of the Holy Child Jesus. You strive to incorporate the gospel values in your daily life through prayer and reflection, spiritual development, ministry in daily living, and community.

Prayer:

Cornelia tells us that "It is precisely because you are called to live busy lives, that you must lead a life of prayer." (Spiritual Instructions)

Do you commit to make time and space for personal prayer and, when possible, to participate in various prayer opportunities offered by Holy Child Associates and the Society.

Associate - I do

Leader

Spiritual Development:

Cornelia tells us that "you must take for your pattern the Holy Child Jesus, not only to love him and his Blessed Mother, but to imitate him as he lived with her in the house of Nazareth...You must learn then, how he looked, how he acted, and how he prayed." (CC30:10)

Do you commit to continue to enhance your own appreciation of the mystery of the Incarnation in our world?

Associate - I do

Leader

Ministry:

Cornelia calls us to "try day by day to do what He would do, to speak as He would speak, to think as He would think, to desire what He desires, to love what He loves, and thus make our life one with His, being in one continued act of love from night 'till night and from year to year." (April 1854)

Do you commit to help others to believe that God lives and acts in our world and to rejoice in God's presence by:

striving to live your life in the spirit of Gospel values,

witnessing to God's presence in your own life, and

embracing an ecumenical vision in our global world?

Associate - I do

Leader

Community:

Cornelia calls us to "Love all and each in one heart, in the very heart of the Holy Child Jesus, to whom you belong, one body and one spirit." (CC 54:69)

Do you commit to share in the life that marks us as the People of God and to live the spirit of Cornelia Connelly in the communities you interact with and to be ready to welcome others in faith, hope, and love?

Associate - I do

Leader

(Name), will now recite the Associate commitment.

(See Associate Commitment above)

Leader

May you be a 'bearer of hope, joy, and life among God's people.'

(Name) receives the SHCJ Associate pin from a member of the Core Team.

Core Team Member

Receive this pin as a visible sign of your commitment.

Sisters Present

We rejoice that Cornelia's story inspires you and we welcome you into closer association with the Society and especially with the American Province.

We will continue to share a faith that broadens our vision and deepens our commitment to revealing God's presence in our midst and in all of creation.

We offer our love and support and prayers.

Leader

In the name of this gathered community and of all Sisters and Associates of the Holy Child Jesus in the American, African, and European Provinces, let us ask God's blessing on (Name).

Leader

Would everyone raise their hands in blessing for (Name).

Through the hidden and humble life of the Holy Child Jesus, God shared with us boundless love and mercy.

May God bless you with gifts of simplicity, zeal, joy and discerning love

as a messenger of divine love within your life and in all of creation. Amen.

All Present

Glory be to God whose power working in us
can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine!

Reflection Questions

1. As you reflect on this period of prayer, study, and discernment, what feelings did you experience?
2. How have your thoughts and feelings changed about the SHCJ Associates over your period of prayer, study, and discernment?
3. As you prayed with the SHCJ Associates Commitment and the promises that you will be asked to make, what feelings did you experience?

6. What are you hoping for in this relationship for yourself, for the Associates and Society, for others?

7. Are there reasons why you should not make a formal commitment at this time?

8. Do you feel called to proceed toward a formal commitment?



SHCJ ASSOCIATES
AMERICAN PROVINCE—USA