



Venerable Cornelia Connelly Lesson Plan High School Lesson Plan

Objective

Introduce Cornelia Connelly to your students, who will learn about her rich legacy and deep spirituality, including her unwavering faith in God and Cause for Sainthood. Students will reflect on Cornelia's struggles and her founding of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus from both historical and modern-day perspectives.

Values

Resilience, Love, and Faith

Time

Thirty Minutes

Materials

[Short biography of Cornelia.](#)

Introductory Activities

1. If helpful, review all or some of the following vocabulary words as a pre-reading exercise.

Beatification – the second stage in the process of proclaiming a person a saint; occurs after a diocese or province and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints has conducted a rigorous investigation into the person's life and writings to determine whether they demonstrate a heroic level of virtue, offered their life, or suffered martyrdom. A miracle attributed to the person's intercession must be proved.

Blessed – a title bestowed on a person who has been beatified and accorded limited liturgical veneration.

Canonization – the formal process by which the Church declares a person to be a saint and worthy of universal veneration.

Extinguished – to bring to an end.

Idyllic – pleasing or picturesque in natural simplicity.



Miracle – something that has occurred by the grace of God through the intercession of a Venerable or Blessed and is scientifically inexplicable.

Resolute – marked by firm determination.

Self-effacing – having or showing a tendency to make oneself modestly or shyly inconspicuous.

Solace – to give comfort to in grief or misfortune.

Subservient – useful in an inferior capacity; subordinate.

Thwarted – to oppose successfully.

Venerable – the title given to a candidate for sainthood whose cause has not yet reached the beatification stage but whose heroic virtue has been declared by the Pope. Cornelia Connelly has the title of Venerable.

Zeal – eagerness and ardent interest in the pursuit of something.

2. Distribute [Cornelia's short bio](#) to each student. Give students approximately 15 minutes to read the four-page document.
3. After the students have read the short bio, discuss Cornelia's life and Cause for Canonization using the questions below as prompts.

Discussion Questions

- When Cornelia met Pierce Connelly, she was an orphaned heiress. Why do you think her sister disapproved of Cornelia marrying Pierce, a vicar? What do you think Cornelia's transition from Philadelphia, a large northern city, to Natchez, a small port city on the banks of the Mississippi River, was like?
- Today, Cornelia's reactions to some of Peirce's decisions seem odd or inexplicable to us. Why were they viewed as acceptable in the early 1800s? Did she have the same legal rights as women do today?



- The Connellys owned slaves in Natchez. The Society of the Holy Child Jesus believes that the Connellys, like many others at that time, were blind to the sins of racism and slavery. Today, the Sisters stand in solidarity with those who work to dismantle systematic racism and believe in reverence for all. This reverence and respect for all individuals remain the hallmark of Cornelia’s educational legacy. How do you think it was possible for Cornelia to live in a home with slaves and believe in the uniqueness and dignity of all people?
- How do you think Cornelia was able to accomplish so much in her life, despite being a Nineteenth-century woman with few legal rights? What role do you think her faith played?
- When Cornelia faced challenges, she trusted in God to help her. What challenges do you have to do? How can God help you?
- Cornelia founded the Society to “meet the wants of the age” and help those in need. Today, the Sisters serve in education, social justice, and spirituality and healing ministries. What do you think the “wants” or needs of our age are?

4. After a brief discussion, end the lesson by reading aloud the [prayer to obtain the beatification](#) of Venerable Cornelia Connelly (below).

O God, who chose Cornelia Connelly to found the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, inspiring her to follow the path marked out by your divine Son, obedient from the crib to the cross, let us share her faith, her obedience and her unconditional trust in the power of your love. Grant us the favor we now implore through her intercession...and be pleased to glorify, even on earth, your faithful servant, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Extension Activities

Students can learn more about Cornelia Connelly and the Society of the Holy Child Jesus by:

--Watching a short film on Cornelia’s life: www.shcj.org/american/our-story/cornelia-connelly-film.

--Visiting the Society’s website, where they can delve deeper into Cornelia’s life: www.shcj.org/american/our-story/cornelia-connelly.

--Learning how they can help with Cornelia’s Canonization Cause: www.shcj.org/american/our-story/cornelia-connelly/how-to-help-cornelias-canonization-cause.