

HOLY CHILD ASSOCIATES



In each place, at all times and in every action...consider God as present within you.

Venerable Cornelia Connelly

Photo by Tony Fortner

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.

Core Team



Happy New Year!

The Associate Core team intends to focus on the following for 2024:

Work with all Associates on promotion of the Cornelian charism with the goal of growing the numbers of Associates and perhaps lowering our average age!

Recruiting new Core Team members.

Co-sponsor four virtual retreats with Associates.

Continue to strive for fiscal self-sufficiency and stewardship of expenses.

Continue to improve on administration including the Associate Mailing List and Prayer Partners.

If there is something else you would like the Core team to address, please let us know!

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In this issue, find articles about our Associates and Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus as they traveled to the Internation Associates Conference in Santiago, Chile, and a pilgrimage to Cornelia's England.



*Above: Cornelia's Tomb, Mayfield
Sandy Lovascio, Angela O'Conner, SHCJ, Regina Di'Guilio, Jenny Bullen, SHCJ, Judy Talvacchia, Marianne Kirby, Emily Wells, Sally Coll, Mary Kirby, Joseph Kirby, Patricia Fell, Francine Gunther, SHCJ, John Boll, Barbara McCaffrey, Linda Mennis, Liam Mennis, Dian Taylor-Pringle, Desmondé Pringle.*

Front cover: Mary Munn, Rita Fortner, Sophie Rudge (UK Associates), and Mari, a Chilean Associate, explore Isla Negra along the South Pacific Ocean.

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Holy Child Associates

American Province - USA

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Pilgrimage to Cornelia's England

In October 2023, Linda and I joined a group of SHCJ Sisters, Associates and friends on a Pilgrimage to London and southern England to see and learn about Venerable Cornelia Connelly's time in England where she founded the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in 1846.

The Pilgrimage began in London on October 10. Linda and I arrived five days earlier for some personal travel and sightseeing. The highlight of these five days was a train trip (about 2.5 hours northwest from London) to Derby (pronounced "Darby"). Derby is where Cornelia started the Society, attending St. Mary's and teaching poor Irish girls who worked in the silk factory. Derby still is, as it was in the mid-1800's, a working-class town. Visiting St. Mary's, the silk factory museum, and walking about the town gave us a feel for what Victorian-age life, particularly for the working class and poor, may have been like.



On the fourth day of the Pilgrimage, we visited Mayfield, about a two-hour bus ride east of London. Mayfield is the home of Mayfield School, founded

by Cornelia and the Sisters over 150 years ago. It is a boarding school for girls, middle through high school, a collection of beautiful 19th Century stone buildings, including a chapel that houses Cornelia's tomb. We joined the students at a Mass celebrating the 150th anniversary of the school's founding, and then enjoyed a wonderful lunch where we met and shared in a lively conversation with the school administration and staff.

The eight-day Pilgrimage was filled with wonderful experiences and memories. Visiting Mayfield and Cornelia's final resting place was the high point and spiritually very moving, especially being with SHCJ companions. We renewed existing friendships and made new friends. It was a once-in-a-lifetime journey from which I strengthened my spiritual well-being through sharing the life and charism of Cornelia with members of the SHCJ community and others.



Meeting the Wants of the Age

Rich in so many ways! That is my overall impression of the pilgrimage to England. Several moments stand out. Given that we share the same language and, in some cases, the same faith, I was struck by how different British culture is from American. How disorienting this must have been for Cornelia. She was an experienced traveler, but to live and work in another culture was very different. Often, she “didn’t know what she didn’t know” and it got her into trouble! Her grounding in God and in the mission must have stood her in good stead as she navigated unfamiliar situations.

I noticed aspects of her vision for education that remained consistent, even though they contradicted accepted practices of the time in England. For example, each former school we visited in London was off the main road for the safety of the students, but close to a square or some type of green space. It was important to her that the girls experience God’s beauty in nature – a practice that was considered novel and unnecessary for female students.



Judy Talvacchia and husband John Boll



Ronan Lavery and Judy Talvacchia

During our visit to the Mayfield School, I met Ronan Lavery, the Lay Chaplain, and his two young daughters. In talking with him, I saw Cornelia’s desire to “meet the wants of the age” in action. A male chaplain in an all-girl’s school, Ronan told me that he wanted to be a positive male role model for the students at an impressionable time in their lives. What a gift to young women who receive so many mixed messages about masculinity in contemporary culture. And what wisdom on the part of Mayfield to hire someone like him. Cornelia Connelly would be proud!

I was grateful to experience the SHCJ charism and mission both past and present. The pilgrimage deepened my appreciation of the Incarnation, Christ leading us through the realities of life to recognize God’s presence and action and to respond with joy and generosity.

Meet the Associates

International Associates Conference, Santiago, Chile

In November 2023, I attended the International Associates retreat in Chile, gathering with about 40 other SHCJ Associates from the US, Chile, Dominican Republic, and England. When I decided to attend, I thought to myself, I don't know what to expect so I just let myself be open to whatever might happen.

When my husband realized I really was going, he also said, "I am going too!" So, we took the 10 hour flight to Santiago excited and open to visiting a new country.

Sister Nancy Bello and the Chilean Associates were very welcoming and showered us with hugs, kisses and hospitality. The week was carefully

planned out with a balance of prayer, reflection, sharing, sightseeing, shopping and of course, wine tasting. The theme of the week was "We have started-the boat has set sail, now we have to row." We received a welcome note in our rooms, a notebook and gifts which all appropriately carried out this theme. We were well fed—physically, spiritually and culturally.

It is hard to pick out a specific favorite take away, but I will share three. The Chilean women sang a song of prayer all week and I would get teary-eyed upon hearing it but never mentioned it. Finally at the Mass at the end of the week, a seminarian played the same song and I asked him what the name of the song was. Since then, I can't get the tune out of my mind and I have played it every morning as part of my prayer. It is Pescador de Hombres. (<https://>



youtu.be/dTqRkYTXotU) The words in Spanish are so beautiful and of course I looked it up on YouTube and now the chorus is always playing in my head. Señor, me has mirado a los ojos, sonriendo has dicho mi nombre, en la arena he dejado mi barca, junto a Ti buscaré otro mar. (O Lord, with your eyes set upon me, gently smiling, you have spoken my name; all I longed for I have found by the water, at your side.) This song represents the whole week and I am challenged to see what God is calling me to do next.

How am I going to continue to row? The second highlight was the trip to the sea. The coast was gorgeous and the air was crisp and clean. The bus ride allowed us to see other parts of the country. The best memory was when Sister Nancy realized we were behind schedule and we had to miss lunch in order to make our reservation at the Pablo Neruda Home, so she and her Associate helpers went to the town and bought 40 delicious hot empanadas and drinks so we could eat while we were at the seashore! What a great snack to eat while walking by the sea!



cont. on p. 7

“When I Was the Forest”

*When I was the stream, when I was the
forest, when I was still the field
when I was every hoof, foot, fin and wing,
when I was the sky itself,*

*no one ever asked me did I have a purpose,
no one ever wondered
was there anything I might need,
for there was nothing
I could not
love.*

*It was when I left all we once were that
the agony began, the fear and questions came,
and I wept, I wept. And tears
I had never known before.*

*So I returned to the river, I returned to
the mountains. I asked for their hand in marriage again,
I begged—I begged to wed every object and creature,*

*and when they accepted,
God was ever present in my arms.
And He did not say,
“Where have you been?”*

*For then I knew my soul—every soul—
has always held
Him.*

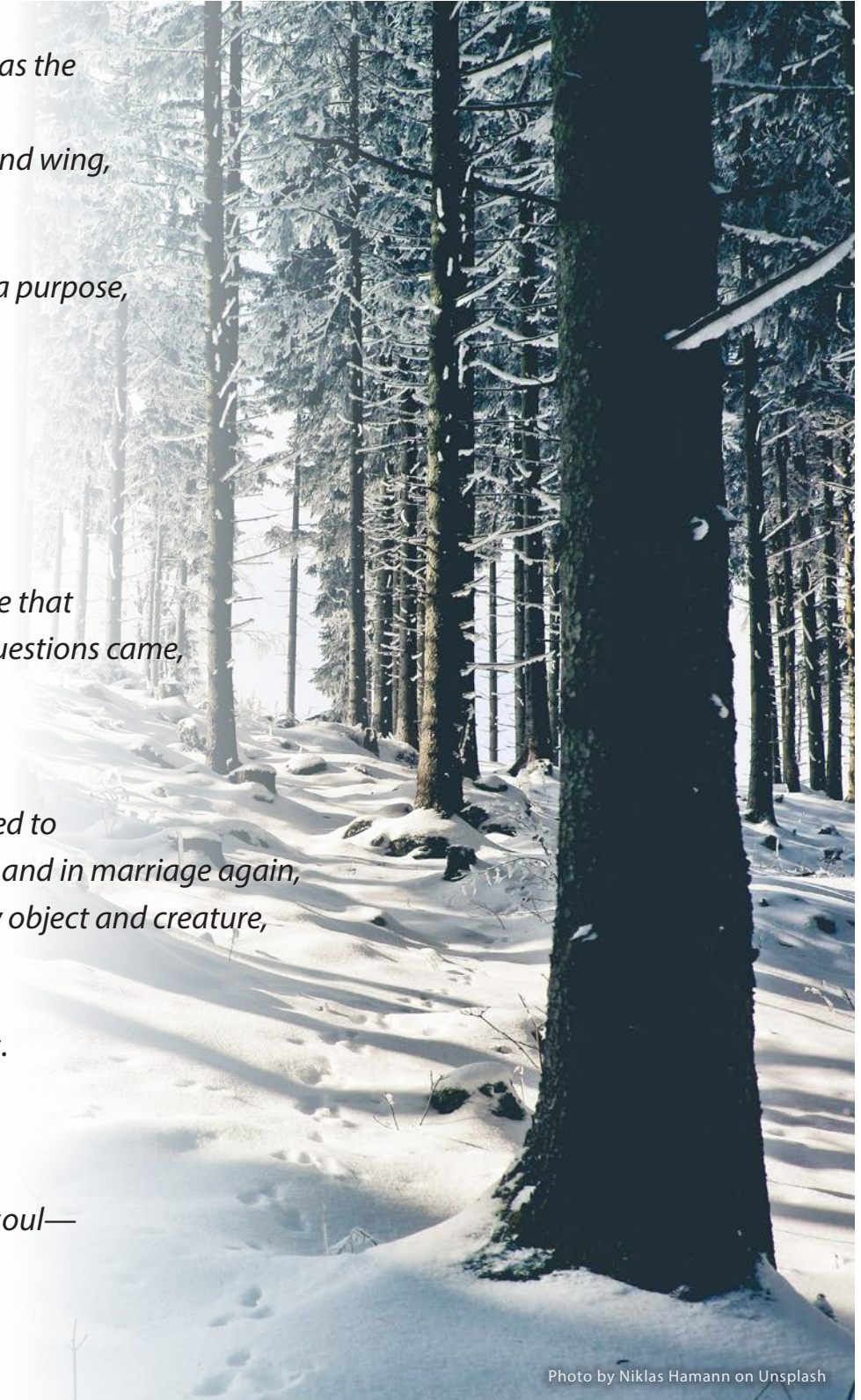


Photo by Niklas Hamann on Unsplash

Poetry Off the Shelf

Though Meister Eckhart (1260-1328), the German priest, scholar, and mystic, is highly regarded today by the Dominican order to which he belonged, considerable controversy surrounded him during his lifetime. He was accused of heresy in 1327, and the Church condemned and suppressed his work; fortunately, two Latin manuscripts were found in the 1880s. Daniel Ladinsky has rendered "When I Was the Forest" into beautiful English poetry and included it in *Love Poems from God*, published in 2002. In this marvelous volume, Ladinsky presents the work of mystics across the ages and from varied traditions, all to celebrate the "Divine Higher Power."

The opening stanzas begin in oneness with the created world, not merely by observing, enjoying, or even cherishing it, but by being it. Eckhart feels himself a stream, a forest, a field, as expansive as "the sky itself." Using synecdoche (a part standing for the whole), he is every sort of animal, "every hoof, foot, fin and wing." In this mystical state of unity, all purposes and needs are dissolved, "for there was nothing/ I could not/ love."

The third stanza describes the poet's terrible sense of loss, "leaving all we once were," akin to humanity's exile from the Garden of Eden. Agony, fear, questions, tears – "I wept, I wept" – characterize the human condition of perceived separateness, a departure from the natural and certain fullness of love.

In the concluding stanzas of the poem, the poet returns to wholeness; it is something he must choose. The humility and intensity of his entreaty – "I begged – I begged" – echoes the painful repetition of "I wept, I wept." The metaphor of marriage – "to wed every object and creature" – captures both the depth of his desire and the fidelity he promises.

As it turns out, after all the pain he has experienced, Eckhart realizes at last that "God was ever present." There is no rebuke, only acceptance, on the part of Creator and Creation both. Union with the Divine is ever-present to those who seek it. In "When I Was the Forest," Meister Eckhart is inviting us to join him in his spiritual journey, to know, as Cornelia surely did, that "my soul – every soul/ – has always held/ Him."

Pilgrimage to Chile, cont. from p. 5

The last highlight was the final evening at Santo Tomas Parish where Sister Nancy works. We attended Mass and afterwards were surprised in the parish hall with barbecue skewers and entertainment. We were treated with a warm welcome by the parishioners.

Each day presented us with a new treat and surprise, like exchanging a gift from another country, learning to dance a Chilean dance, eating "choclo" corn and visiting the shrine



of St. Teresa of the Andes, the Chilean saint.

In our group work and discussions, we shared how each region carries out the SHCJ spirituality. We decided to dedicate this year to praying and working for PEACE. We made goals and plans for the coming year. I will cherish the beautiful memories of spending time with my new friends and looking forward to the next gathering! All week the vibe was joyful, faithful, and the spirit of Cornelia was alive!

Encore



Cornelia's England



International Associates Conference



NOTABLE AND QUOTABLE

The Great American Eclipse of 2024

In the cosmos, on April 8, 2024, a spectacular phenomenon will take place connecting us with the universe. Our moon will line up between the Earth and the Sun casting an umbral shadow on the Earth. The path of totality will go from Mazatlán, Mexico to St. John's Newfoundland and Labrador crossing the United States. The total eclipse will last 4 minutes and 27 seconds with about 43 million people living in the path of totality. This eclipse is very rare in that the Sun will be at maximum activity, so at totality the corona (the Sun's outermost atmosphere) will be very active. Using ISO-certified safe solar eclipse glasses you can witness the power of God within the Sun. (Always keep your solar eclipse glasses on when the eclipse is not in totality

phase.) This awesome phenomenon will not occur over the contiguous U.S. again until 2044. Witness interconnectedness with God's creation as you experience with your senses the effects the total eclipse has on our Earth.

Photo by Lenstravelier 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>

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