

HOLY CHILD ASSOCIATES

AMERICAN PROVINCE - USA



“Be full of confidence in God and in humble resignation to these crosses while we must do all that depends upon us for our safety.”

Venerable Cornelia Connelly

Photo by Gift Habeshaw 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



In American society, Labor Day seems to be our unofficial “New Year.” A new school year begins; businesses and organizations gear up again. It feels like we get our second wind after a summer break. How are our lives as Holy Child Associates and as people of faith gearing up this fall? With all of the challenges in our country and our world, it can be overwhelming to think about action.

The pillars of Association—prayer, spiritual development, ministry and community—help to rejuvenate our inner selves, so that action seems not only possible but energizing. Daily prayer is our foundational practice. It keeps us connected to our compassionate God made manifest in the Holy Child Jesus. It gives us the courage to follow Jesus from the crib to the cross. Prayer helps us to be attentive to the presence and action of God in us and in our world, in the midst of so much that is not of God.

When we gather together in prayer, faith sharing, and community, we draw strength and encouragement from each other. We deepen our grounding in Jesus who assured us of his presence when we are together. We can more easily respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit towards individual or communal action.

Our Associate witness is more needed than ever! In the coming months, may we all find ways to give voice and action to the charism and mission. Whether hidden in daily life or manifest in the public realm, we can trust that what we say and do will be fruitful in God’s eyes; that God will use our efforts to further the work of salvation, no matter how insignificant they may seem to us—or to others. Now that is something to rejoice in!

As always, feel free to reach out to the Core Team at Associates-USA@shcj.org if you have suggestions about ways we can strengthen Associate witness and support for you.

Judy Talvacchia
Core Team Chair

SAVE THE DATES

SHCJ Associate Fall Retreat

Saturday, November 8, 1:00-2:30pm EST, titled “Jesus Waits for Me by the Well” Part 2.

Advent Open House and Nativity Display self-tour

Monday, December 8, at New Sharon in Rosemont, PA. from 9:30 AM-11:15 AM.

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Share the Journey

We are carrying many crosses these days due to what is happening in the USA and in the world, not to mention in our own lives and the Society's. Although our personal crosses seem burdensome to us, we realize that the crosses carried by many of our global sisters and brothers in war torn countries and countries lacking the basic necessities of life are so much heavier. With that in mind, we must bear these crosses hand in hand with God and each other.

With the pressing needs of others in mind, members of the Wants of the Age (WOTA) and SHCJ Social Justice committees gathered for a Zoom session to identify the "wants of the age" facing us in today's world and plan for ways to make a difference in meeting them. The list of wants was extensive and the mapping took up a full page. In addition to identifying the wants, we came up with ways to meet those wants for the purpose of advancing the SHCJ mission and spirit.

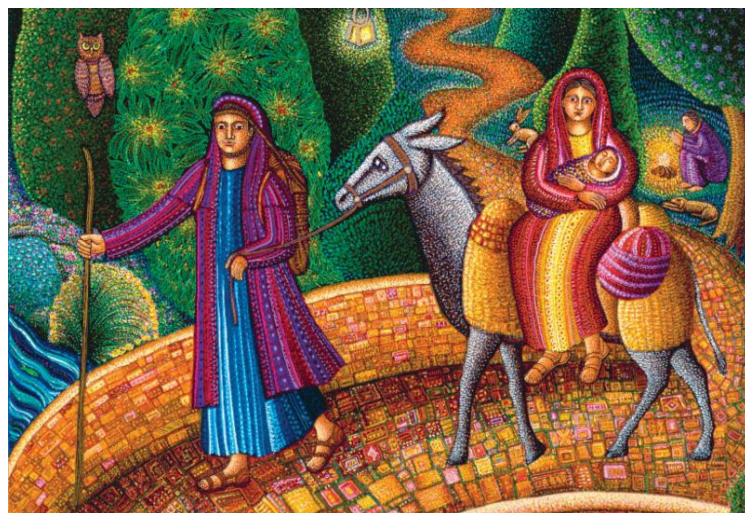
Our 2.5 hour session was very productive and described by Mary Ann Buckley, SHCJ as, "graced with practical compassion." Both groups identified very similar needs. While recognizing that we cannot meet all needs, we decided we will respond to domestic and global needs including emergencies and crises.

Cornelia Connelly reminds us that we must "Be full of confidence in God...while we must do all that depends upon us." In a recent reflection from the International SHCJ Associates, Yoselin Suriel Sosa from the Dominican Republic shared that we cannot be indifferent to others' suffering. "It is not enough to do no evil, but we are called to do good and to commit ourselves to transforming the world—we are called to give an expression of God's love for humanity." With that in mind, we are calling on Associates to help us continue the critical

work that WOTA has funded for the past eight years. If you are interested and able, please send any donations you wish to the address below.

Despite the difficult and challenging times in which we live, we cling to the HOPE that things can be different, and we can make a difference. As Pope Leo reminds us, "We are all in God's hands. Therefore, without fear, united hand in hand with God and each other—let us go forward."

HAVE HOPE!



SHCJ Mission Advancement Office
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Rosemont, PA 19010

Care of Creation

God's Grace Sustains All Creation

In the natural world, the remarkable phenomenon of inosculation, where trees organically fuse and share life, serves as a beautiful, tangible metaphor for God's persistent hope and unending grace in sustaining and renewing all life. Inosculation from the Latin roots in + ōsculātus means "to kiss into or against." It is a type of natural grafting where the life of a new species (a new hybrid organism) is created and sustained (when trees of different species inosculate).



Inosculation can be the joining of two trees of the same species or of different species via their branches, trunks, a branch to a trunk or their roots. In some areas of the world, inosculated trees are called "marriage trees."

How do these trees unite or marry? Two branches growing in proximity rub together in the wind thereby wearing away the outer layers of bark (epidermis), the cortex and the endoderm. This wearing away in turn exposes the vascular cambium of each branch which consists of stem cells. These stem cells are remarkable in that they keep their embryonic capacity for growth and differentiation, as well as having no defense capabilities. The defense structures in the layers that surround them protect them. These properties of the cambium layers enable the branches to fuse. During the fusion process bark cells are produced outwardly while the cambium builds new xylem and phloem layers that unite the two branches (trees) into one.

Unification of these trees or branches takes time and you may see different stages of inosculation

in surrounding trees. These stages are completely fused, nearly fused with a seam still present, in the process of fusing, or an aborted fusion. The cambium layers may not have fused because branches grew up, out and apart from each other. Or the cambium layers were never exposed. God's loving hand in sustaining life is visible in all these stages of inosculation.

"...all these stages of inosculation—complete, in progress, and aborted—are an incredible metaphor for the church," according to the author, Judy Wu Dominick of "Inosculation, A metaphor for the Church." In John 15:5, Jesus states, "I am the vine; you are the branches." While the bulk of the relationships in the church are in the in-progress stage and can go either way, there are some special relationships growing. These extraordinary, beautiful relationships provoke awe in their interconnectedness. These individuals reached a point of mutual vulnerability and were open to new growth and differentiation. Then upon intermingling a degree of unity and interconnectedness appeared with no visible scar.



May this awe-inspiring interconnectedness remind us of God's love for all creation and our responsibility to till and keep the garden of the world (Genesis 2:15). Jesus is our vine and His blood connects us to Him and each other.

Wu Dominick, J. (2023, March 16). "Inosculation". Life Reconsidered. <https://lifereconsidered.substack.com/p/inosculation>

Spengler, T. (2023, Feb. 17). "Inosculation and Trees Growing Together." Gardening Know How. <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/trees/tgen/trees-fusing-together.htm>

Poetry Off the Shelf

"Beannacht/Blessing"

For Josie, my mother

by John O'Donohue

*On the day when
the weight deadens
on your shoulders
and you stumble,
may the clay dance
to balance you.*

*And when your eyes
freeze behind
the grey window
and the ghost of loss
gets into you,
may a flock of colours,
indigo, red, green
and azure blue,
come to awaken in you
a meadow of delight.*

*When the canvas frays
in the currach of thought
and a stain of ocean
blackens beneath you,
may there come across the waters
a path of yellow moonlight
to bring you safely home.*

*May the nourishment of the earth be yours,
may the clarity of light be yours,
may the fluency of the ocean be yours,
may the protection of the ancestors be yours.*

*And so may a slow
wind work these words
of love around you,
an invisible cloak
to mind your life.*

from *Echoes of Memory* (Transworld Publishing, 2010)

When Irish poet John O'Donohue died in early 2008, he was only 52 years old; yet he left us a treasure trove of meditative works. "Beannacht/Blessing: For Josie, my mother" was published posthumously in 2010. Simultaneously a prayer and a poem, it reflects his belief that beauty is essential to human flourishing, a belief we know Cornelia shared. Whereas Cornelia was first a laywoman and then a religious, O'Donohue left the priesthood to follow his artistic and philosophical vocation more freely.

The poet begins by acknowledging the pain his mother is feeling, the weight on her shoulders. Right away, however, he assures her that balance can be restored by "the clay dance" of the earth that sustains us. In the next verse O'Donohue describes suffering and sadness—"the ghost of loss"—as colorless, frozen, a "grey window." It's only "a flock of colors" that, by awakening the senses, can replace melancholy with delight. The third stanza presents a metaphorical

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Meet the Associates

New Collaborative Associates: United in Prayer and Mission

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.

With these words, four Connecting Associates made commitments to become Collaborative Associates in October—two at Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child in Summit, NJ and two at Cornelia Connelly Center in New York City. These Associates share strong ties to the Society with three having served as educators at Holy Child schools, and one is an alumna. Each individual describes her journey towards becoming an Associate.

Joanne Ainsworth: A Lifelong Connection

Joanne first encountered the Holy Child Spirit as a high school student at Oak Knoll. She later chose the same Holy Child education for her daughter. Returning to Oak Knoll Lower School, Joanne served as a teacher, religion coordinator and eventually principal. Her 24 years as Lower School principal deepened her understanding and appreciation of Cornelia Connelly and the Society. After retiring, she yearned to maintain this connection “most dear.” In her words, “Being an Associate allows me not only to feel part of the Society but also provides opportunities to develop spiritually.”



Jeanne Mackin: Living Faith with Joy

Jeanne is a cradle Catholic who says she began to live her faith in a more spiritual way when she met the SHCJ as an educator at Oak Knoll and Holy Child School Rosemont and as a volunteer at Cornelia Connelly Center. She was drawn to the joyful and positive spirit of Cornelia Connelly, which she experienced through her colleagues and students. Being a part of that, she said, helped her to be “not only a better teacher, but also a better person.” Now retired, being an Associate keeps her connected to the spirit and mission of the Society and allows her to share what inspired her with others. Jeanne believes that the SHCJ Associates will be “among those who will carry the spirit of Cornelia Connelly into the future.”



Shalonda Neeley Gutierrez: Embracing Faith and Community

From her initial interview at the Cornelia Connelly Center, Shalonda knew that it was a very special place. "A joyful, welcoming spirit," she says, "pervaded every hallway and encounter." She quickly learned that she was part of a larger network of schools, all connected by the charism of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. She was drawn to become an Associate through nurturing relationships with Sisters and lay colleagues. Having embraced Catholicism as an adult, Shalonda values the support of Sisters and Associates in her unfolding faith journey. She strongly believes in Incarnational spirituality. "As someone who grew up feeling less than those around me, when you know that God's presence is in all things and people, you begin to understand your worth." From all she has been given, she now feels called to do the same for others. She hopes to offer the Sisters a sense of peace that "they can trust us with the next chapter of their story."



Mary Sciarrillo: Sharing Faith and Empowerment

Mary's connection with the Society began when her two girls attended Oak Knoll. She later joined Oak Knoll as Dean of Students and then as Principal of the Upper School. She discovered that the Holy Child beliefs, values, and educational model were strongly aligned with her personal beliefs. Years later, Mary founded a new all-girls high school in Monmouth County, NJ. Although the school was not officially Catholic or affiliated with Holy Child, it was rooted in the Catholic tradition; the Holy Child model of education informed the values that Mary sought to develop in the school. She saw the core values of leadership, respect, perseverance, and faith through the eyes of Holy Child. Mary was drawn to the Associates through Associate Nonie Murphy, who invited her to join a Holy Child prayer group. Many of the participants are current or retired Holy Child educators. She found that the group nurtured her lifelong faith and reconnected her to the importance of Holy Child values in her life. As an Associate, she is more mindful about sharing her faith and

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Encore

Meet the Associates, cont.

her passion for educating and empowering young women. As for the future, Mary says, "I want to help spread the SHCJ mission and charism to assure the Sisters that they have my support."

All four of these new Collaborative Associates are members of the Holy Child prayer group in Summit, NJ which includes Cynthia Vives, SHCJ. Cynthia has served as an inspiration and mentor to them all.

Together they support one another in the pillars of Association—prayer, spiritual development, ministry, and community.

If their stories resonate with you, consider beginning the discernment process toward commitment as a Collaborative Associate. For more information, reach out to Associates-USA@shcj.org.

Poetry Off the Shelf, cont.

journey, the "currach" being a small Irish boat. Again the imagery of despair—fraying, staining, blackening—is countered by the brightness of "yellow moonlight." There is a path forward.

Now "safely home," Josie and we readers are ready for the full blessing. There will be no more mention of the sorrow that begins each of the preceding

stanzas with the word "when" in each opening line. Instead, O'Donohue repeats the word "May" with full confidence, naming what he prays his mother will have: nourishment, clarity, fluency, protection. Influenced powerfully by Celtic spirituality, O'Donohue fuses art and faith. "Beannacht" concludes by winding "words of love" like "an invisible cloak" around his mother and all of us who believe.

NOTABLE AND QUOTABLE

Feast of St. Francis

Season of Creation 2025 ended on October 4th, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi. The inspiring, theological poem, "Canticle of the Creatures" written by St. Francis is celebrating its 800th anniversary. According to Daniel P. Horan in the NCR, "The 'Canticle' is a celebration of the chorus of praise expressed by the whole cosmos." St. Francis is a role model worthy of our praise in today's world. As Pope Francis stated, "Francis of Assisi for me is a man of poverty, a man of peace, a man who loved and protected creation."

"We are all in God's hands. Therefore, without fear, united hand in hand with God and each other—let us go forward."

—Pope Leo XIV

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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