



Our Cornelia

FOR THOSE WHO KNOW AND LOVE CORNELIA

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✧ **Cornelia Connelly** **Promoters' Committee** ✧

BY SOPHIE RUDGE,
ASSOCIATE CO-ORDINATOR

This fifth newsletter presents me with the perfect opportunity to thank and acknowledge the enormous debt we owe to Sister Veronica Openibo, who had the wisdom and enthusiasm to set up the Cornelia Connelly Promoters' Committee, and to guide and stimulate our meetings. Western European perceptions about miracles make the task of finding the two necessary for Cornelia Connelly, which satisfy scientific, medical and rational thinking, seem impossible.

Vero, however, has encouraged us to think laterally and hopefully bring the charism of Cornelia to a wider audience. Sister Teresa Okure has written in the last edition about the equipollent process for canonisation and continues to encourage us all to continue with work and prayer for the cause of the Venerable Cornelia Connelly.

Again I should like to thank especially Teresa, all the contributors ,and as always, Sam Strike who has so helpfully and professionally produced this newsletter. I hope you have a very restful summer holiday.

A Personal Perspective: Thoughts and Questions on Cornelia Connelly's Cause

BY SR. TERESA OKURE, SHCJ

1. CC Promoters Committee Vis-a-vis the Society and Associates

The main purpose of the CC Promoters' Committee (composed of SHCJ and Associates from Africa, America and Europe), is to promote CC's Cause by spreading knowledge of her within our different Provinces and among Associates and outsiders. The current Committee has met twice since its inception; once in Oxford in September 2014, the other in New Sharon, Philadelphia 11th -14th June 2018. Unlike other committees, the fruit of the meetings of this committee is usually not shared with our wider constituencies. The idea of the Newsletter of the Committee arose in part to meet this need. But is committing this task to a Committee the best way to get this done?

Why not the get the whole Society involved? When we are personally involved, we perceive reality differently. My being appointed to this Committee has generated much interest in me for CC's Cause; it has made me to be more conscious, committed and sustaining a sense of responsibility for promoting the Cause than before. What a difference it would make, if all of us in the Society could be motivated to be personally involved and engaged in promoting the Cause; armed with theological, scriptural and ecclesiological backings to renew and sustain personal interest in and responsibility to pray for CC's canonisation.

A personal experience

Since I got appointed to the Committee, I have been motivated to show greater interest in and own CC's Cause. Concretely, at any given opportunity (when people ask me about my congregation, for instance) in Nigeria, Africa and beyond, in international conferences, I speak about the life and vocation of CC, our Foundress, highlighting her great witness to the gospel and gospel values; underscoring the importance of her witness for our times and asking people to pray for her beatification/canonisation. I distribute materials on her (the prayer cards for her beatification); circulate the annual Calendar produced by the African Province that carries CC's saying for each day of the month (buying and giving this calendar as Christmas presents, while drawing attention to CC's sayings on it). I have had feedback from priests who say they find her sayings rich food for daily thought. Two priests said they missed the calendar because of CC's sayings the year we did not publish it.



Sr. Teresa Okure, SHCJ

In particular, I make it my special prayer intention for the beatification of Cornelia, that we in the Society would be of one mind, heart and soul in praying for her beatification; and would together be passionate in our desire to see her beatified. I believe my experience is not unique; nor can it be that the prayer is unanswered. *(Continued)*

Suggestions for Possible United Actions

1. That given the importance of carrying the entire Society along, the SELT would consider being the pilot committee in this matter. That way they can engage the entire Society more fully than can the current Promoters' Committee that is on the fringe, so to say.

2. That in addition to the work of the Committee, we explore ways of reviving the interest of the entire Society and Associates in CC's Cause. We each commit ourselves to be personally engaged in the promotion of CC's Cause; regularly sharing with one another what we have done, and using our revived interest in the Cause as opportunity for bonding together more closely as one Society, Associates and friends united in life and mission.

This move would include recommitting ourselves more deeply to imbibe her incarnational way of life embodied in our Holy Child heritage: Jesus says, "Unless you become like little children you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Today people tend to feel it is silly to be asked to live this way. Is it?). Cornelia responds: "So ought all to begin life again walking with him, step by step, in the ways of the child". "In that divine Child . . . we are to see/find . . . our divine master, our model and our spouse". Jesus says, "Whoever loves father or mother or husband or wife or children or even their own live more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt 10:37-39). CC responds: "Doing the will of God is the only happiness and the only thing worth living for"; "God alone." "I would grind myself into powder if by doing so I would do God's will" (citing off-head). Are these virtues still relevant for us today as the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, in our postmodern world? If we say yes, then let us show it by "Actions not words."

3. That we each get to know CC's life and story better, and **reinterpret them** in the light of current developments in the church, in Scripture, theology and society; highlights of these developments include the church's renewed interest in the role of lay people, the family; and women in church and society. In short, that we jointly commit ourselves to rediscover Cornelia as "A Saint for Our Times".

4. That when we pray for CC's canonisation/beatification, we do not mention just any intention, such as safe journey, fine weather. We could pray to her for these other intentions, but not as part of the prayer for her canonisation. Praying for such intentions in this prayer for canonisation, waters down our prayer; it shows that we do not really know what we should be praying for in this context. It is possible, of course, to have a miraculous safe journey and fine weather. But then the miraculous nature of the phenomenon would be subjected to the scrutiny that the Congregation for the Causes of Saints requires for genuine miracles.

5. Most importantly and conclusively, that we as a Society desire "with one heart and soul" to have CC canonised; and have **faith** that she will be. Remembering that:

a. Jesus gives as a condition for answering corporate prayer that those praying be of one mind and heard: "If two [or many] of you on earth agree to ask for anything at all in my name, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven" (Matt 18:19; John 15: 7, 16). He asks those who approach him with requests: "What do you want me to do for you?" "Do you believe that I can do this?" Then when he has done it, he tells them, "Go, your faith has done it for you". (cf Luke 18:342).

b. As a Society we lack concentrated strong faith and desire that CC can/will be canonized. Our part is to pray with united faith for her canonisation either through a miracle or through the equipollent process. Only God can give or deny the canonisation. But let us do our part; want, deeply desire and show it by our actions, like "the importunate widow" (Luke 18:1-8) or the "friend at midnight" (Luke 11:5-8), that we want CC canonised.

(Continued)

c. Together we desire to see CC canonised, if not for us, at least for the sake of her witness; most importantly in justice to the tremendous work done unremittingly on this Cause for more than half a century. Let us not be like people “who lay their hands on the plough then look back” and prove themselves unworthy of the grace God has in store for us and for God’s people worldwide (cf. Luke 9:42). Or who make mockery of ourselves because we “started to build” and could not complete the building (Luke 14:30).

2. Reviewing Genuine Objections to CC’s Canonisation

Some SHCJ and others have raised genuine objections to CC’s canonisation: a) CC is already a Saint and does not need to be canonised within this current male dominated hierarchical church; b) the canonisation will consume money that should be spent in serving the cause of the poor; and c) Cornelia will never be canonised because she abandoned her children (!). We look briefly at these objections/reservations.

a) Cornelia is already a saint and should not be canonised within the current hierarchical, sinful, male dominated church structure

We recall that Jesus was born into such a system. He chose to be born in it, to be fully part of it, in order to redeem and transform it from within, in depths and to the roots. His parents fulfilled all that the law required of him and them (cf Luke 2:22-40). He staged his most important miracles in the synagogue and the commercialised Temple. We cannot change any system from the outside. That is the point of the incarnation. God-Word became like us in all things except sin, so as to free us from the one thing which was not part of our legacy from God, namely, sin. Celebrating Cornelia as a saint within the structured clerical system that gave her endless troubles would be a way of celebrating God’s triumph over this system.

My experience at CIWA (Catholic Institute of West Africa), in Port Harcourt shows that if I were not there to tackle the issue of clericalism and sexism in the church from within, on the basis of Scripture, I would have made little or no impact on the clergy as I have done over the past thirty-seven years by being there. The clergy themselves testify to the impact that I have made on them, both at CIWA and in other theological institutions and associations where members are mainly the clergy. It takes time even for people to hear what the problem is, but when they catch on they move on fast, like Paul after his conversion on the road to Damascus. We cannot change the church of God by opting out of it.

b) CC’s Beatification will be waste of money and show of triumphalism

To my knowledge, the church does not define how we are to celebrate the beatification. We have our leadership team in Rome already. We can decide that they will be the only ones to attend the event, and maybe the person cured to serve as witness during the ceremony. The Update on the Canonisation Process in the previous Newsletter speaks to this matter. Costs can be shared. Besides, we spend money individually and collectively on a host of things. If we all decide to make sacrifices and give part of our personal, community and provincial budget expenses to the canonisation event, we would have reduced the overhead cost of this at the level of the Society. We also need to recall Jesus saying, “The poor you will always have among you, but you will not always have me among you” (John 12:5-8). CC will be beatified and canonised once and for all. We will all be happy! And the money will still be there.

Viewing the Beatification/Canonisation from CC’s Perspective

The church of CC’s day was in many ways like that of today: male, clerical, domineering, etcetera; perhaps even more so. CC worked within that church, nonetheless, while standing her ground. I feel she *(Continued)*

expects us to do the same today. Let us also make her dream come true. “God wants me to be a saint, I must be a saint, therefore I will be a saint” (citing from memory). I imagine when saying that, she was thinking of being a canonised saint. It is not inordinate, spiritual love of self to want to be a saint. For that purpose she made God alone her goal and purpose in life. We are all endowed by virtue of our baptism to be recognized as saints.

Example of Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi. In Nigeria we celebrate annually the feast of Blessed Cyprian Ikwene Tansi, the first Nigerian declared Blessed by the universal church. We celebrate it almost as a first class feast, with Gloria and all. One year the celebrant narrated Blessed Tansi’s story and many drew inspiration from it. Particularly striking was that he had enough grace of conversion to give up the amulet which his father had given him, the only heritage he had left from his father who died when he was about eight years old. At first he strongly resisted giving up the amulet; but when it dawned on him that it was a condition for his being baptized, he gave it up. Before Tansi, Paul of Tarsus Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles, did the same with his entire Jewish traditions and upbringing counting it “as rubbish”, in order to pass from being in the law, in tradition of boastful personal achievement and merit, to being “in Christ” and his gospel of grace; as he tells us in his bio data (Phil 3:3-14).



*Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi
(1903-1964), Trappist Monk at Leicester
Abbey, England, Beatified by John Paul II
on 22nd March 1998.*

I doubt that Tansi’s story would have made much impact on the people (if it would have been told at all), had he not attained the status of blessedness recognized by the universal church. We draw inspiration from the lives of saints precisely because they are recognized as saints. Very many people (my parents included) are saints in heaven, but their lives are not presented by the church as worthy of emulation because they have not been canonized. We ourselves bear the names of and do pray to some of these saints, don’t we?

c) The Charge that Cornelia abandoned her children

This charge dies hard and is a hard one to swallow, a stumbling block, some people say, in the canonisation process. People’s instinctive reaction when they hear of the allegation that CC abandoned her children is “How could she do that?” There are two ways of viewing this issue, the human way and the gospel way.

1. The human way. One way of looking humanly at Cornelia’s relationship with her children is to blame her for being so heartless and selfish in abandoning them. Another way is to feel deep compassion for her, for the abiding suffering and pain she endured because of separation from her children, especially when Pierce apostatised, took them away from her and turned them against her. We need perhaps to believe her when she says “The thought of my children never leaves me”. She bore permanently the pain of that forced separation and loss while carrying on the mission of founding the Society “on a broken heart” (her words) with all the other sufferings entailed. The Decree of Veneration compassionately testifies to these sufferings. If the many postulators, especially Fr James Walsh, SJ who worked on the Cause for years, and our many SHCJ, who devoted such love and commitment to working on the Informatio and Positio, had felt that CC abandoned her children, one wonders whether they would have been so spiritually naive as to continue with the Cause. Did the Society at the beginning not know about CC’s relationship with the children when we started the Cause? Was the Diocese of Southwark that grounded the Cause *(Continued)*

ignorant of CC's relationship with her children? It is best to let this issue rest with God while we do what is needed from us to complete this Cause by getting CC canonised.

2. The gospel way. Looking at the issue from the gospel way is equally humanly hard to swallow. I often ask Jesus if he was serious when he said, "Whoever loves father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, children, yes, and one's own life also, more than me is not worthy of me". "Whoever loses their life on my account will save it; and whoever saves their life will keep it for eternity" (cf. Matt 10:37-39; Luke 14:26:27, 33). This is free translation; the text (Luke 14:26) actually speaks of "hating" these relatives, where hating signifies total detachment! This surely is a hard saying for the twenty-first century to accept. The gospel imperative does not operate on human criteria, nor can it be rendered null and void because of what we humans have determined as good and acceptable. We thank God for that; because the permanent and unchanging nature of the gospel is for our own human good, not that of God who needs nothing from us; and who will not allow us to destroy ourselves for good because of our "hardness of heart" to accept God's ways for us (cf. Mark 10:5).

As the wife of an Episcopalian Priest, Cornelia would have been well versed in the knowledge of the Scriptures more than an average Catholic in the nineteenth century. Before the Second Vatican Council, the Bible was a forbidden book to Catholics. For the church itself, the only version allowed was the Vulgate, Jerome's translation of the Bible into Latin. Knowledge of the Scriptures would have made Cornelia aware of the gospel imperative just cited which Jesus demands of his followers. It is perhaps because of CC's abiding love for her children that God gave her the name of the congregation "Society of the Holy Child Jesus", when she prayed for its name. Her image of the Child Jesus is one of suffering: "obedient from the crib to the cross" (Prayer for Beatification). Suffering was so real in CC's own life (witness her devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows), as it was in that of Jesus. She made "accepted suffering" part of our Society heritage. We have to believe that CC was also vividly aware throughout her life of the suffering which the entire situation of separation would have caused her children.



Venerable Cornelia Connelly

Jesus dispossessed himself, took the nature of a slave, even lower than a slave to accepting death on a cross, so as to identify with us in depths and to the roots; and thereby take us home with him gloriously to God (Phil 2:6-11; Col 2:10-15). To him we, humanity, were a treasure lost, buried in the field, for whom he gave his entire life (as Eucharist, unto death and resurrection) in order to redeem and take ownership permanently as his treasure for good (cf. Matt 13:44-46). CC allowed herself to be stripped, dispossessed of all she had valued and treasured in life; in order for the Society of the Holy Child Jesus to come to birth, mature, grow and wax strong. Had God's hand not been with her in the founding of the Society, it would not have survived and continued to grow, almost in spite of us, till today, as it is doing. Having Cornelia recognized as a saint by the universal church would be a way of saying "Thank you" to God for God's abiding work in her and through her.

American Province's Promotion of Venerable Cornelia Connelly

BY COLLEEN CARROLL, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, AMERICAN PROVINCE

As an American, Venerable Cornelia Connelly's life offers a special inspiration and enduring connection to people in the United States. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where the country's Declaration of Independence was signed, Cornelia's resourcefulness, verve for life, zeal, and perseverance embodied the values and spirit of her birthplace. Throughout her life, she faced tragic losses and significant obstacles with determination, grace, and humility. In 1846, Cornelia's deep faith and love of God led her to found the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.

While born more than 200 years ago, Cornelia's life remains relevant. Her steadfast faith, commitment to serve, and reverence for all of God's people continue to provide hope and inspiration, especially to individuals who have suffered the loss of children or experienced difficult marriages and divorce.

Emeritus Archbishop of Philadelphia Charles Chaput and current Archbishop of Philadelphia, Nelson Perez, believe Cornelia's heroic acts, faith in God, and cause for canonization should be wider known. To date, the American Province and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's efforts to promote Cornelia's life include:

Establishing the Holy Child Shrine and Memorial to Venerable Cornelia Connelly in the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in fall 2021. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 500,000 people visited the Cathedral.

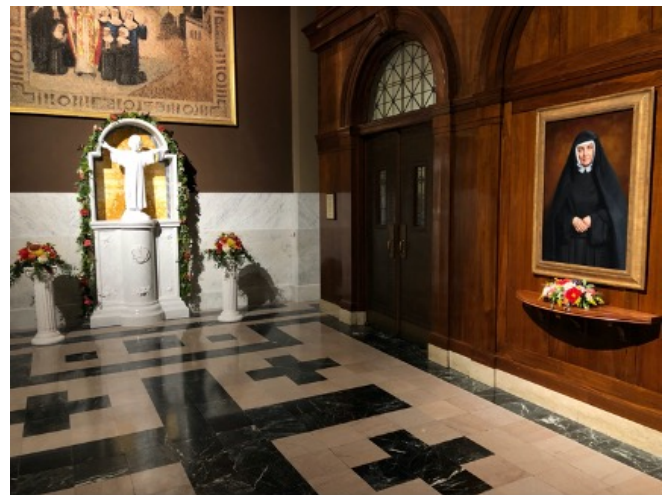
Offering printed copies of Cornelia's life and prayer for beatification in the Cathedral's gift shop.

Inviting Archdiocesan schools and ministries to visit the Holy Child Shrine and Memorial to Venerable Cornelia Connelly and pray for her beatification.

Creating a landing page for the Holy Child Shrine and Memorial on the Cathedral's website (<https://cathedralphila.org/venerable-cornelia-connelly/>).

The Holy Child Shrine and Memorial to Venerable Cornelia Connelly are located near the Cathedral's baptismal font. According to Reverend Gerald Dennis Gill, Rector of the Cathedral Basilica, the shrine and memorial have become an unexpected, new gathering area for guests attending baptisms. Father Gill shared that children reach out to the Holy Child statue and adults are learning about Cornelia's history and the shrine's significance.

In the coming months, the Society's American Province will share additional plans to make Cornelia's life and cause for canonization better known within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and throughout the United States. *(More photos on next page)*



*Holy Child Shrine and Memorial to Venerable Cornelia Connelly,
Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, Philadelphia, PA*



Reverend Gerald Dennis Gill, Rector of the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, gathers the PLT and Provincial office staff for prayer in the Holy Child Shrine and Memorial to Venerable Cornelia Connolly, May 2022.



American Provincial staff and PLT members sit in front of Venerable Cornelia Connolly's portrait at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul during a presentation by the Cathedral's Rector, May 2022.



Above left: The five roses below the Holy Child statue symbolize Cornelia and Pierce Connolly's five children, three who died tragically at an early age. Their other two children were separated from Cornelia by Pierce. Cornelia's greatest sorrow was the loss of her children, and her words speak of her heartache. "The remembrance of my children never leaves me." Photo by Sara Webb.



Above: Most Reverend Nelson Pérez, Archbishop of Philadelphia, solemnly blesses the Shrine of the Holy Child and memorial to Venerable Cornelia Connolly at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul after the Closing Liturgy of the 175th Anniversary of Society of the Holy Child Jesus in October 2021. Photo by Sarah Webb.

Left: Following the solemn blessing of the Shrine of the Holy Child and memorial to Venerable Cornelia Connolly, Archbishop Nelson Pérez congratulates Carroll Juliano, SHCJ, American Province Leader. Photo by Sarah Webb.

Notes from Meeting with Ralph E. Moore,

Member of the Social Justice Committee, St. Ann's Catholic Church, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

BY ANITA MARTINEAU, SHCJ ASSOCIATE, CC PROMOTER'S COMMITTEE

On Thursday June 30, 2022 I visited Ralph E. Moore at the St. Francis Recreation Center Peace Camp in Baltimore, Maryland to learn about the process he and the Social Justice Committee of St. Ann's Catholic Church are using to promote the canonization of six African Americans to sainthood: Henriette DeLille, Mary Elizabeth Lange, Pierre Toussaint, John Augustine Tolton, Julia Greeley, and Thea Bowman. Currently, there are no African American saints. African Americans have been Catholics since early enslavement in the US and rendered much service to the church and society.

I first learned of the effort of the St. Anne's Social Justice Committee when it was reported on a CNN video in the spring of 2022. This is the link to the video: <https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2022/03/02/first-black-saints-in-us-catholic-church-suffrage-orig.cnn/video/playlists/represented-by-cnn/>.

The Cornelia Connelly Promoter's Committee on which I serve agreed for me to reach out to Mr. Moore for this interview.



Anita Martineau and Ralph Moore

Introduction

Mr. Moore is a 69-year-old African-American man who has spent his entire life in St. Ann's parish. He received a Jesuit education at Loyola High School, is a peace activist, and is a writer for the AFRO newspaper in Baltimore. He explained that St. Ann's Catholic Church has been an historically black Catholic parish since its founding and includes a school and a recreation center. Its mission has always included extensive community service to the surrounding area that is economically depressed. The current pastor is a Josephite from Nigeria. Due to the shortage of ordained priests in the US, their pastor also serves as pastor of two additional black Catholic parishes in Baltimore and works several days per week at a part-time administrative job for the church in Washington, DC that is one hour away from Baltimore.

Following the murder of African American George Floyd by the police in the US in the summer of 2020, there was a nationwide awakening about institutional racism in the US and many organizations began a period of self-reflection on efforts to be taken to eliminate racial injustice. *(Continued)*

Bishop Lorre of Baltimore wrote an article in America Magazine published by the Jesuits in defense of the Black Lives Matter movement. He and the diocesan priests spoke of it in church homilies across the diocese and on Zoom.

In recognition of the discrimination against African Americans since the founding of the USA and in the American Catholic Church, in the autumn of 2020 the Social Justice Committee at St. Ann's comprised of seven people decided to pursue the Cause of canonization of the first black Catholic saint as an inspiration for all American Catholics. The pastor agreed, but otherwise has not been involved in supporting their efforts.

Mr. Moore stated that there had been separate groups promoting sainthood for each of the six people until the national Association of Black Catholics convinced the separate groups to unite to support all six Causes as one. The St. Ann's group contacted the Association of Black Catholics who suggested they do the same. The committee agreed and began a period of discernment on how to pursue their efforts. They decided that their efforts to promote the Cause would be termed an "initiative," not a "movement."

The six candidates for sainthood have not been declared venerable or blessed, as the traditional method to achieve sainthood has not been pursued. The candidates represent diverse geographical areas of the US. Mr. Moore stated to me that he believes that each area of this big country deserves to have their own local patron saint to which local Catholics can relate.

All Saints Day Mass 2021

The committee introduced their work by organizing a special Mass on All Saints Day in 2021 that they began promoting several months in advance. Normally about 100 people attend that Mass. However, in 2021 there were more than 400 people in attendance with seven African-American priests concelebrating. The committee had printed large 2 feet by 3 feet portraits of each of the six candidates with their names under them. These were processed into the Mass to the opening hymn of "When the Saints Come Marching In" which originated from African-American culture and was accompanied by clapping that involved the congregation in the rhythm and praise. Each portrait was carried by a prominent African American Catholic whose work was in a related field to the person in the portrait. For example, Pierre Toussaint was a black American businessman, so his portrait was carried by a contemporary black American businessman. The portrait of Mary Elizabeth Lange who founded the black Oblate Sisters of Providence and served at St. Ann's Parish in Baltimore was carried by the current leader of the order. The portraits were placed in front of the church where they remain today as a visual reminder of the canonization initiative for the parishioners.

At this Mass there were pre-printed letters in all the pews with pens. The letter was addressed to Pope Francis at St. Martha House in Vatican City and asked him to canonize the six African-American saints. Each Mass participant was asked to sign the letter that was collected at the Mass. *(Continued)*

Previously parishioners were asked to write letters and although they stated they were willing, few people followed through. The committee decided to provide the letters for signature to track the number of letters and measure effectiveness of the initiative through data. After the Mass the letter was circulated in other black Catholic churches. When 1,115 were collected, they were blessed by the bishop and mailed to Pope Francis at St. Martha House in December 2021.

At the Mass each participant was given a copy of the book “Black Catholics on the Road to Sainthood” by Michael R. Heinlein that is available on Amazon books: https://www.amazon.com/s?k=black+catholics+on+the+road+to+sainthood&crd=3F77U2FA3T8C2&srefix=Black+Catholics%2Caps%2C83&ref=nb_sb_ss_ts-doa-p_1_15 for them to learn more about the six candidates and share this initiative with others. It is a small book, approximately twice the size of Judy Talvacchia’s book on Mother Cornelia Connelly.

Mr. Moore explained that his committee has continued to reach out to his and other black and diverse Catholic churches and circulated a second letter for signature to Pope Francis. Last week in June 2022 Mr. Moore mailed a second box of 1,995 letters to him at Vatican City.

The committee hopes that these letters will be accepted as evidence of the “cultus” needed as one of the criteria for equipollent process of canonization.

Budget

There is no budget allowance for the canonization initiative at St. Ann’s. The only expenses so far have been for producing and mailing the letters. The church provided the paper, copying fees, and pens that are recycled. The cost of postage (\$75 and \$85 USD) has been paid by donations to the Social Justice Committee.

The Initiative within the Wider Church

Mr. Moore stated that the committee made an intentional decision not to ask the religious sisters and priests to become involved in this initiative. The committee recognizes that religious orders are under the scrutiny of the church hierarchy and have experienced racial and gender discrimination historically and contemporaneously. He said the committee wished to minimize any negative impact on them from church authority who may not support the initiative. He stated, “We want to allow the sisters to keep their eyes on God.” He is proud that four of the six candidates are women, as they have been viewed as “second class citizens” within the church and are the unsung heroes of Catholicism who have been the primary teachers of the faith. The committee did not request permission from any religious orders to begin this initiative.

The St. Ann’s Social Justice Committee was surprised to learn that their pastor in preaching to his other two assigned churches in Baltimore told those Mass participants that if they were given “a protest letter to the Pope” by anyone from St. Ann’s parish not to sign it. *(Continued)*

The Social Justice Committee then met with their pastor to explain to him that this was not a letter of protest to the Pope and reviewed the true intention framing it as “pro-Gospel,” relating it to Gospel words and lessons. The misunderstanding was resolved. The pastor later corrected his misinterpretation in subsequent homilies to the other two parishes explaining it was “pro-Gospel.” The letter was distributed in the other two parishes and signed. Mr. Moore believed the misinterpretation by the pastor was partially based on culture.

The Power of Social Media to Promote the Cause

As the initiative began to take root, it began to be mentioned on parish websites. Catholic parishioners were encouraged to write about it on Facebook and other social media platforms and they did. The Social Justice Committee posted a petition on Facebook. At that time, the Vatican correspondent for the Wall Street Journal (a prominent American newspaper) named Francis Rocca decided to write an article about the process of sainthood. When he googled the term “sainthood” up came information about the Baltimore initiative. Ms. Rocca reached out to Mr. Moore that resulted in this article being published in the WSJ: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/to-canonize-a-new-catholic-saint-it-takes-a-miracle-11639198861>.

A producer from CNN saw the article in the WSJ and reached out to Mr. Moore. This resulted in the CNN video (see link above in paragraph 2). Mr. Moore said this media coverage resulted in an outpouring of inquiries about the work of the committee. This has raised widespread interest in and support of the Cause.

Challenging the Process

Mr. Moore said that the approach of the committee to sainthood is non-traditional. As he stated, “We have challenged the process.” He cited the early history of the church when for centuries local churches identified their own saints for veneration and the subsequent centralizing of church authority requiring the formalized canonization process with documented miracles and papal approval. He finds the need to spend great sums of money for postulators distasteful and a source of potential discrimination against the poor.

He also cited some examples when church authority has responded to public pressure. For example, in Baltimore a new Catholic school was recently built as others were closing. As the name of the new school was being considered, local black Catholics began a successful campaign for the school to be named after Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange who was from Baltimore and founded the Oblate Sisters of Providence.

He also cited that several years ago the bishop of Baltimore was considering closing St. Ann’s Parish. The parishioners began a collection called “Pennies from Heaven” in which pennies were collected outside the church to save it and the media was contacted to cover the story of parishioners efforts to save their historic parish where Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange herself served with the Oblate Sisters of Providence. As a result, the bishop reversed his decision to close the parish. *(Continued)*

Mr. Moore referred to the path of peaceful non-violence as an instrument to approach change within the church. He cited the passage from Martin Luther King's famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" that the creation of tension is part of the work. He also encouraged the exploration of alternative approaches such as the equipollent process of canonization.

Recommendations

Mr. Moore make the following recommendations for promotion of sainthood Causes from his experiences:

1. Capitalize on All Saints Day as an effective time to create special events around the Cause.
2. Create ways to document the existing cult and demonstrate their devotion to venerating Cornelia such as writing letters or other actions.
3. Contact the Wall Street Journal reporter Francis Rocca at Francis.Rocca@wsj.com or call him at his number in Rome: +39 325 3386 550 to share information about Cornelia's Cause.
4. Utilize social media as widely as possible to engage other Catholics to get involved with the Cause of canonization and spread the news to other media platforms.

A Final Word

I gave Mr. Moore a brief overview of Cornelia Connelly's life and charism along with a copy of Judy Talvacchia's book and a Cornelia Connelly relic card to thank him for sharing the initiative of the St. Ann's Social Justice Committee. I also showed him a copy of the Positio and copies of Cornelia's letters. He said he would share the information about Cornelia with the St Ann's committee.



Venerable Cornelia Connelly

The Power of Prayer:
Finding Lost Items Through the Intercession of
Venerable Cornelia Connelly and Mama Paulina Affiong Okure
BY BERNADETTE EYEWAN OKURE, SHCJ

On Thursday 23rd June 2022, Samuel Emmanuel Udoh of Akwa Ibom State, my nephew, and a final year Higher National Diploma (HND) student in Lagos, lost his wallet containing five different ID cards and ten thousand naira. He had it with him when he left the house.

He left the family house at Ibono Street, Anua Offot, took *Keke*, the local means of transport, along Nwanga Iba-Uyo road. He got off at the Fountain junction and crossed over to Oron road to take a second *Keke* to her 38-year-old senior sister's house whose funeral was the following morning, Friday 24 June 2022. On searching his pockets so he could pay for the next fare, he realized that his wallet was not with him. He walked back to where the first *Keke* dropped him off searching for the wallet but did not find it. In deep sorrow, Samuel could not continue the journey. He turned back and with no money, walked home, a distance of about four kilometers, weeping.

On reaching home he broke the news to his parents then went to his room laid down weeping, not so much for the money but for his IDs. It would take a long time, police report, and money, for him to get new IDs. In the meantime, there are things in his daily routine that without his IDs, it would be impossible for him to do, hence his weeping and lamentation. We had family prayer 8:00pm – 10:00pm. Samuel was not at prayer. After prayers the mother, Ms. Maria Abasiama Udoh told the family what had happened to Sam.

I went to his room and found Sam lying down still sobbing. I gave him my hands. He took them crying even louder and his tears wet my hand. His younger brother, Abraham, his parents - Emmanuel and Maria Abasiama were present. They were all struck by grief, knowing the implications of his loss of IDs, on top of the death of their daughter and sister.

In a moment I remembered! So, I let go his hands, went downstairs to my room. Took Venerable Cornelia Connelly's image and Mama Paulina - his grandmother's picture and quickly returned to Samuel. I invited him to sit up, stop crying. Then I asked him to pray asking Venerable Cornelia Connelly and Mama Paulina, the two of them to find the wallet for him. He took the two pictures together, begging each of them to work together and help him find the wallet. He prayed he would not mind if someone took the ten thousand naira but let someone find the wallet and all the IDs.

We all answered Amen! *(Continued)*

At about mid-morning on the third day, Saturday 25th June 2022, Samuel received a phone call from a lady telling him that she found a wallet on the roadside. She opened it, found Sam's number so she decided to call him. The person described where Sam would find her.

Sam took public transport to the place and the young lady handed the wallet to him. The ten thousand naira was missing but all IDs were intact. She said she found it on the roadside.

This for us this was a first-class miracle God worked for us through Venerable Cornelia Connelly and Mama Paulina Okure's collaborative intercession. I decided to write this down and share it with others. It is striking that Sam called on two women – his grandmother Mama Paulina and Venerable Cornelia to intercede for him. And behold, another woman – a third woman – was the agent of retrieving and returning his identity documents to him on the third day!

Actions not Words! To God be the glory.

PRAYER TO OBTAIN THE BEATIFICATION OF VENERABLE CORNELIA CONNELLY

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.

