

***Collaborative Associates
Period of Discernment, Prayer, and Study
Guide***



The gift you received, give as gift.
Mt. 10:8

SHCJ Associates, USA
*A ministry for lay spirituality
of the American Province of the
Society of the Holy Child Jesus*

Welcome to this special time of grace.

You have decided to enter this period of prayer, study, and discernment towards becoming a SHCJ Associate. May you find Cornelia's life, charism, and mission a source of insight and inspiration as you respond today to your own unique baptismal call to live the gospel values.

Your knowledge of any or all of the reflection topics may be extensive or minimal. This journey gives you the opportunity to explore how you are living with the mystery of the Incarnation in your life today.

Sit with Cornelia's thoughts and life.

Ponder the Society's mission and response.

Reflect upon the SHCJ Associates' mission and defining characteristics.

Is God calling you to a deeper intimacy as a SHCJ Associate?

May this journey of faith touch your heart, mind, and spirit in new and exciting ways.

May this period of grace bring you to a deeper holiness/wholeness.

Enjoy!

The photo on the cover was taken in Grand Coteau, April 2006.

The Alley of Oaks was planted in 1837 before the arrival of Cornelia and her family in 1838.

Overview

Before becoming a SHCJ Associate of the United States, you are entering a period of prayer, study, and discernment. With an Associate companion / mentor you will be exploring how Cornelia's story, spirituality and legacy are being incorporated into your own life today.

Individuals desire Association to the Society as a means of growth in personal holiness / wholeness.

Goals & Objectives

The goals of this period of prayer, study, and discernment are:

- To have an understanding of Cornelia's life story, her spirituality and her "charism", i.e., the gift of God given to her for the good of God's people.
- To reflect how the spirit and charism of Cornelia and the Society is lived within your own spiritual journey.
- To reflect on Cornelia's gift through the history, mission and spirituality of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.
- To discern whether you are called to be a SHCJ Associate at this time and if a formal commitment is appropriate.

In taking this journey of faith, you may look at the following broad questions:

1. How does your story and Cornelia's story connect?
2. Where is God leading you in this process spiritually?
3. What is your particular way of connecting with God at this time?
4. Why does Association with the Society of the Holy Child Jesus attract you?

The objectives for the companion/mentor are:

- To provide a forum that facilitates your growth in the charism and mission of Cornelia and the Society,
- To walk with you in the discernment about becoming a SHCJ Associate, and
- To discern if it is appropriate for you to make a formal commitment.

Areas for Reflection

During this period of study, prayer, and discernment, you will reflect on:

- Your current spiritual experience and your attraction to the Associates
- Cornelia Connelly: Her Life
- Cornelia's Charism and Mission
- The Incarnational Spirituality of Cornelia
- Society of the Holy Child Jesus: The expression of Cornelia's charism and mission -
History, Mission and Ministries
- Baptismal Call & Association
- Associate Vision and Mission
- Living Incarnational Spirituality as an Associate
 - Pillars of Association – Prayer, Spiritual Development
 - Pillars of Association – Ministry, Community
- Discerning the Call to Formal Commitment

A Companion/Mentor



To journey with you in this period, a companion / mentor will be assigned. The companion/mentor will meet with you in person or online, individually or with a group, based on a mutually agreed upon discernment plan.

What is Expected of a Companion/Mentor?

1. **Create an atmosphere of hospitality and confidentiality.**
2. Journey with you as a facilitator who listens to your experience of each topic. Share his/her own faith and community experiences as appropriate.
3. Pray for and with you.
4. Introduce you, when and where feasible, to other Associates and to members of the Society over the course of the discernment period.
5. Determine your readiness to make a formal commitment as a SHCJ Associate in conjunction with your own discernment and make a recommendation to the Associate Core Team including the Province Liaison.

What is the process for journeying with a Companion/Mentor?

To give you sufficient time to reflect upon each topic, it is suggested that meetings with the companion occur on a monthly basis for approximately one hour. Adjustments can be made based on need and availability.

The topics covered within this guide are the basis for mutual reflection and discussion. Each topic includes related readings, reflection questions, scripture passages, and Cornelia's thoughts related to the reflection focus.

Because individuals will be coming to this discernment process with different awareness of Cornelia and of the Society, introductory and advanced readings are suggested within the guide.

After an initial introductory meeting, the mentor will, in consultation with you, recommend the appropriate study sources for the topics to be studied and reflected upon over the period.

How long does the companion/mentor relationship last?

The companion/mentor relationship lasts until the commitment ceremony or the end of the discernment process.

Monthly Process for the Collaborative Associate and Companion/Mentor

Initial Introductory Gathering

1. Prior to the meeting, you should spend time responding to the questions under the Intro Gathering in this guide.
2. The initial meeting is a chance to meet and for the companion to learn from you about your desire to be a SHCJ Associate. It is an opportunity for you to verbalize what being a SHCJ Associate means.
3. It is a time for the companion to understand your background in areas that will be explored during the period of prayer, study, and discernment. The companion may recommend the appropriate resources based on your background and lifestyle.
4. Develop an initial plan with your companion about the frequency of meetings.

Prior to Meetings

1. You will spend the time between meetings in study and prayerful reflection on the selected reflection topic.
2. Cornelia's thoughts and your responses to the reflection questions are ideal as the starting point for the dialogue with your companion. Prior to any meeting, you may want to consider the highlights and areas that you wish to share.

At the Meeting

1. Begin with an opening prayer.
2. It is appropriate to lead the conversation with reflections from "Cornelia's thoughts", the reflection questions, resources, and any questions that arose during the month. The companion will also share her/his own related faith experiences.
3. The mentor may help you explore where your studies, prayer, reflection and daily life may have been leading you.
4. During the conversation, the companion and you will determine if you have a sufficient grasp of the topic. No Associate is expected to be an expert within this period but, hopefully, you will feel that you have journeyed deeper into the role of Cornelian spirituality within your own daily faith experiences.
5. Review of the next meeting's topic. The companion may recommend resource materials to use in prayer and study. You may also determine who will lead the prayer for the following session.
6. A closing prayer

Introduction / Initial Gathering

Scripture

Jeremiah 29:11-14

"Yes, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then, when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me."

1 John 1:1

"We declare to you what was from the beginning what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life..."

John 15:1 – 16

Ephesians 1:3-18

1 Peter 1:3-16

Cornelia's Thoughts



Be yourself but make that self all God wants you to be.

Let us not resist...for we are ourselves the only obstacles to the overflowings of His Divine Love.

St. Leonards-on-the-Sea, Epiphany, 1857

Generosity, generosity, generosity must be the beginning and ending of our life. CC 54:13

Grant us especially, O most liberal God, all the gifts necessary to accomplish Thy designs. CC 31:27-28

O charity patient! O charity kind! O charity bearing all things.

Charity full of hope. Charity thinking no evil.

Charity rejoicing in all good.

Possess me – rule me – inflame me –

that I may remain in God and God in me forever.

CC 54:19

O You who love me so much ...may your pleasure be my pleasure, my passion, my love! May I love everything that belongs to You, but You above all, my God. At every hour...may my soul take flight toward You: may my life become a simple act of love, my devotion less a habit than a continual élan of the heart. CC 31

Resources – Click on the title to view the resource.

1. [SHCJ Associates Mission statement with Defining Elements of Membership](#)
2. [SHCJ Mission statement](#) from SHCJ Constitution
3. [A Personal Reflection on Lay Association](#) by Jeanne M. Connolly. (Appeared in NACAR's *The Associate*, Fall 2013)

Reflection Questions

1. What do your values, spirituality and/or life circumstances have in common with what you know of the SHCJ?
2. What attracts you to Association with the Society of the Holy Child Jesus?
3. What challenges you about being an Associate?
4. What desires/hopes do you have that would be addressed by being an Associate?
5. What might God desire for you through Association?
6. What do you expect of this period of prayer, discernment and study?