

## **Living Incarnational Spirituality as Associates**

Review the Associate Mission Statement which defines the goals of our association with the Society:

SHCJ Associates of the United States are women and men rooted in the charism of Cornelia Connelly and desirous to grow in her spirit. The Associates strive to bear witness to a life grounded in Incarnational theology. 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.

We use four defining elements to help us achieve the goals of association:

1. Personal prayer and reflection, which mark us as a people of God.
2. Spiritual development, which helps us to discover and manifest the Incarnate God wherever we are.
3. Ministry, which opens us to engage the crises of our time and place and challenges us to embrace an ecumenical vision in a global world.
4. Community, which is fostered through our participation with the Sisters in Eucharist and in community events, in our sharing of the charism of Cornelia Connelly and in our readiness to welcome one another in faith, hope and love.

These defining elements or "pillars" support our association with the Society. They give us concrete ways of giving flesh to our desires for connection with Cornelia, her spirit and the Society. They help us to move from contemplation to action within the context of our daily lives through the lens of incarnational spirituality. What follows are some specific suggestions for living each pillar of association.

More details about practices are listed in the section labeled "Resources".



### **Cornelia's Thoughts**

*"It is precisely because you are called to live busy lives, that you must lead a life of prayer." Spiritual Instructions*

*"Sit in silence before Our Lord and be more ready to listen than to talk." Derby, 1847 or 1848, Spiritual Instructions*

*"It is because you are ceaselessly in the mountains and valleys, in the streets and in the classroom, that you must know how to remain loving and silent, close to God, in the cell of your soul." Spiritual Instructions*

*"They only who listen hear the voice of God...is mine a listening soul?" CC 54:36*

*"Take care not to lose the interior spirit by the pressure of activity." CC7:1*

*"Prayer is the great source from when the graces of God flow into our soul..." Manual for Novices, 1869*

*"Let us love one another and pray,  
Let us love one another and be faithful,  
Let us love one another and be humble,  
Let us love one another and be filled with the charity of God.  
Let us love one another with God, in God, and for God." London, 1851*

*"Work and prayer. Prayer and work. Neither as they ought to be till God, not you, work and pray. Let him reign in your soul and in every movement of your body, not I but Christ in me." D 63.67*

## Pillar 1 – Personal Prayer and Reflection



As SHCJ Associates a basic goal of our prayer and reflection is to deepen our relationship with the Incarnate God living and active in all of the circumstances of our daily lives.

### Suggested Practices

1. Eucharistic Liturgy – our primary encounter with the Word made Flesh.
2. Regular personal and communal prayer.

Review the following to discern if and how they might be gradually incorporated into your prayer practices. Details about each are in Pillar 1 Resources.

- Scripture - reading and reflection on passages that deepen our encounter with the God who came as one of us in Jesus Christ. The passages below have particular significance to the m:
  - Matthew, chapters 1 and 2
  - Luke, chapters 1 and 2
  - John 1:1-14, 18
  - Philippians 2:6-11
- Daily Examen – a practice suggested by St. Ignatius of Loyola that helps to review the day in light of God's presence and action in us and in creation.
- Spiritual Exercises – a set of spiritual guidelines composed by St. Ignatius of Loyola which have as part of their focus "finding God in all things." The Spiritual Exercises were instrumental in Cornelia's spiritual journey into the mystery of the Incarnation. They are usually offered in a retreat format.

## Pillar 1 Resources

Review these briefly to see what resonates with you and save them for future reference.

### Ignatian Spirituality

The spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola had a profound effect on the development of Cornelia's spirituality. The Ignatian focus on "finding God in all things" was very compatible with Cornelia's attraction to the mystery of the Incarnation as the privileged place of encounter with God. In Grand Coteau, she was introduced to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius through a retreat she attended for 3 days with the Religious of the Sacred Heart. This retreat was a turning point in the deepening of her faith. The Exercises and Jesuit spiritual directors facilitated her spiritual growth for the rest of her life. Because of the intimate connection between Cornelia's spirituality and Ignatian spirituality, several Ignatian resources are included in this section.

### Guidelines for Ignatian Examen

- Pray for the light of God's grace as you reflect on your day.
- Review the events of your day.

*What were God's gifts to you today?*

*What was your response to God's presence and action in the people and events of the day?*

- Pray in gratitude for God's gifts.
- Pray for forgiveness for the ways in which your response was not what God wanted it to be.
- Pray for God's help and for the people and events in the day to come.

## **Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius**

Books that may be helpful if you are unfamiliar with the Spiritual Exercises:

*Letting God Come Close: An Approach to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises* by William Barry, SJ

*Inner Compass: An Invitation to Ignatian Spirituality* by Margaret Silf

*Ignatius, The Spiritual Exercises & Cornelia: A Retreat by All Means* by Elizabeth Mary Strub, SHCJ

### **Websites that offer information and resources for Ignatian spirituality**

<https://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html>

<http://ignatianspirituality.com>

**Two passages from the Spiritual Exercises are particularly helpful for reflecting on Incarnational spirituality:**

- The Principle and Foundation
- The Contemplation on the Love of God

## **The Principle and Foundation**

The goal of our life is to be with God forever. God, who loves us, gave us life.

Our own response of love allows God's life to flow into us without limit.

All the things in this world are gifts of God, presented to us so we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily.

As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God insofar as they help us develop as loving persons.

But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives, they displace God and so hinder our growth toward our goal.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance before all these created gifts insofar as we have a choice, and we are not bound by some obligation.

We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one.

For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a deeper response to our life in God.

Our only desire and our one choice should be this:

I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening life in me.

(Paraphrased by David L. Fleming, SJ in *A Contemporary Reading of the Spiritual Exercises: A Companion to St. Ignatius' Text*)

### ***The Contemplation on the Love of God***

The Contemplation on the Love of God is the concluding meditation of the Spiritual Exercises (Spiritual Exercises, 231–237). It presents a God who loves without limit and who invites us to make a generous response of love in return. The contemplation invites reflection on four themes.

1. Reflection on God's gifts to us (life, family, friends, faith, church, eternal life).
2. God's self-giving in Jesus.
3. God's continuing work in the world.
4. The limitless quality of God's love. As a contemporary paraphrase has it, "God's love shines down upon me like the light rays from the sun, or God's love is poured forth lavishly like a fountain spilling forth its waters in an unending stream."

At the end of this contemplation, we are invited to make a generous response in return. Ignatius Loyola suggests the *Sucipe* prayer:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will—all that I have and call my own. You have given it all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace. That is enough for me.

**Video of the Contemplation on Divine Love with Fr. Kevin O'Brien, SJ**

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/the-contemplation-on-divine-love/>

## **Pillar 1 - Reflection Questions**

- From what you know of Cornelia, what speaks to you of her relationship with God?
- Do you know individuals like Cornelia whose presence exudes the presence of God?
- With how much desire do you seek God?
- What is your most usual way of being with God? How often do you pray?
- When you make a commitment, you will commit yourself to spend time in prayer. How do you imagine yourself setting aside time for prayer each day?
- What prayer resources in this section attract you? How can you make time to explore them?

## Pillar 2 – Spiritual Development

The practices under this pillar are meant to broaden and deepen our knowledge and practice of Incarnational spirituality as lived by Cornelia Connelly.

### Possible Practices

- Study/pray over/reflect on the life of Cornelia Connelly and her legacy.
- Reflect prayerfully on quotes from Cornelia's writings.
- Reflect on passages from the foundational texts of the SHCJ.
- Participate in retreats with a theme of Incarnational spirituality, either individually or with other Associates.
- Participate in a faith sharing group in your own community or with other Associates.
- Attend lectures, workshops, classes on Incarnational theology and spirituality in the Catholic tradition.
- Have conversation with others who are living Incarnational spirituality.
- Draw on principles of Incarnational spirituality when speaking with others about living in today's world.
- Engage in spiritual direction.



## Pillar 2 – Resources for Spiritual Development

### Resources for information about Cornelia Connelly

[SHCJ website](#), Venerable Cornelia Connelly tab

[Cornelia Connelly](#) in Cornelia Connelly Library

### A Sampling of Quotes and prayers from Cornelia Connelly

Let us love one another with God, in God, and for God. (London, 1851)

*They only who listen hear the voice of God...is mine a listening soul? (CC 54:36)*

Let us not resist...for we are ourselves the only obstacle to the overflowing of His Divine Love. (St. Leonards-on-the-Sea, Epiphany, 1857)



*He will dwell with us in secret and condescend to love and be loved by his creature with an intensity far beyond all comprehensible human love. (CC 8:4)*

Keep yourself in the presence of our good, good God who is all truth and gives the spirit of truth and simplicity to all who walk in his holy presence. (CC 1:24)

*Sustain a bright and joyful spirit. (1870, Rule for Local Superiors)*

Love what he loves and thus make your life one with Him, being one continued act of love, from night to night and from year to year.  
(CC 8:88)

*The invitation comes from God, and to him you must give your answer. Don't talk about what you are going to do for God but reflect on what God is doing for you. (D73:209)*

Let us simply give God what he asks of us. (D 76:20)

*Yes, Lord, yes, my Father, yes, always yes. (CC 23:8)*

Remember of yourselves you can do nothing; but in God and for God and with God you can do all things. (D 74:362)

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

As you step through the muddy streets, love God with your feet; and when your hands toil, love him with your hands. (Rome, Epiphany, 1854)

*To do anything well we must do it with our heart, with our mind and with our strength for the love of God, of ourselves, and of our neighbor. (CC 1:27)*

Open to me O Jesus thy Sacred Heart! Unite me to it forever...  
that each breath, each palpitation of my heart which ceases not even in sleep may be a witness of my love and say to thee without ceasing "Yes Lord I am all thine..."

Receive O my God the little good that I may do this day and give me the grace to repair the ill done, that I may bless thee during this life and praise thee through all eternity. Amen. (CC 21:54)

*O charity patient! O charity kind! 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. (CC54:19)*

Give me, O Lord, a love full of action; a love patient in labor, exact in daily employments, pure in intention, so that I may ever accomplish the things that are most pleasing to thee. (CC 54:26-27)

Note: For additional quotes see [Cornelia Connelly Anthology: Selections from the Writings of Cornelia Connelly](#).

## Retreats

- The Associates periodically offer retreats for its members. Contact the Associates Core Team for further information. [Associates-usa@shcj.org](mailto:Associates-usa@shcj.org)
- Jesuit retreat centers are a good source of retreats with an Incarnational theme. You can find websites and locations for their retreat houses by going to: [Jesuit Retreat Centers](#)
- You can also check with your parish or diocese for retreat resources in your area.
- There are books available that allow you to make a private retreat at your own pace. *Moment by Moment: A Retreat in Everyday Life*, co-authored by Carol Ann Smith, SHCJ and Eugene F. Merz, SJ is a good resource, especially for those not familiar with Ignatian spirituality.
- There are online retreats available from a number of websites. For example:
  - [Creighton University Online Ministries](#)
  - [Loyola Press – Ignatian Spirituality](#)

## Faith Sharing

Faith sharing involves a small group of people reflecting prayerfully on God's Word and sharing their reflections with each other. The goal of faith sharing is to integrate faith with daily life and to live faith more concretely in all the circumstances of life.

- If you live near other Sisters/Associates, you could form a group among yourselves. The Director/ Coordinator of Associates can provide you with guidelines, if needed.

- If you are not near other Sisters/Associates, you can check with your parish or diocese for opportunities in your area.
- You might also share with Associates online, via Zoom or another networking tool.

## **Books, Lectures, Classes, Workshops**

Of the many resources available, some possibilities are:

- A local school of theology or seminary in your area that offers educational opportunities for the general public.
- Diocesan and parish offerings.

## **Spiritual Direction**

Spiritual direction involves one on one spiritual conversation with a trained companion. Spiritual directors may be found through the parish, diocese, local retreat houses or schools of theology.

A good online resource for Ignatian spiritual directors on the East Coast is the [Office of Ignatian Spirituality](#).

Spiritual Directors International has access to spiritual directors from many different traditions – [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org).

## **Pillar 2 – Reflection Questions**

- What desires do you have for spiritual growth in your relationship with God? With others? With creation?
- What areas of spiritual growth do you sense God calling to pursue?
- Do any of these desires or promptings excite you, invite you, challenge you?
- Do any of them make you hesitant, fearful, resistant?

- How can you work through these feelings with God or with a trusted companion?
- What opportunities are available for spiritual development?
  - a. In your local Church/community?
  - b. Through the Associates/SHCJ?
- How can you make time to explore some of the spiritual development opportunities listed in this resource which attract you?

*The invitation comes from God, and to him  
you must give your answer.*

*Don't talk about what you are going to  
do for God, but*

*reflect on what God is doing for you.*

*(D73:209)*