

NEWSLETTER



“LET US NEVER SAY WE HAVE DONE ENOUGH”
- CORNELIA CONNELLY

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To My Fellow SHCJ Associates,

We send you this newsletter in extraordinary times. We pray that you and your loved ones are doing well and staying safe during this pandemic.

In this newsletter, you will get to know the journey of some Associates in becoming Associates. You can also read how Associates all over the world are finding ways to help those in need and living out Cornelia’s “Yes, Lord, Yes, Always Yes.” Finally, learn more about what the International Committee is working on.

In one of Cornelia’s writings, she wrote, “Now is the time of trial...Take the cross He sends as it is and not as you may imagine it ought to be & He will bless you.” (to Aloysius Bellasis, 1874, CC 6:57). As we face so many unprecedented and unforeseen challenges, what are we doing now to prepare for a better future?

May our Lord Jesus shine His light upon us so that we live and act in His peace and joy as Cornelia demonstrated so many times in her life.

Peace & Blessings,

Eileen Dorman

Secretary, SHCJ Associates International Coordinating Committee



I would like to once again extend a special thank you to all the Associates who contributed to this newsletter and to all those who work behind the scenes putting it together especially Sam Strike, Director of Communications and Joseph Cerrone who translates all of our documents. I would also like to thank all of the Associates and my fellow Associates on the International Coordinating Committee for always demonstrating the joy of Cornelia.- Eileen Dorman

How We Became Associates

We thought it would be interesting to hear from Associates on how they became Associates. Perhaps these stories are unique, or perhaps, you can place yourself in these stories.

By Kay Rowan (US)

My life as a Holy Child Associate of the American Province was from a distance, on the fringes so to speak, as I stayed connected by reading every single bit of the quarterly newsletters, all the communications and materials mailed out, and participated in retreats and prayers from my home here in the desert of Arizona. Then a newsletter arrived announcing the Third International Gathering to be held in the Dominican Republic in late February, 2014 and I felt a compelling desire to attend this meeting despite any and all obstacles, and there were a few! In the DR I met old friends, made new and lasting friendships from all over the world and experienced the warmth, welcoming and acceptance that I knew was Holy Child.

Since that time, I have become a collaborative Associate, participated in gatherings, become a member of the American Associates Core Team and am part of a virtual Associate community with members in five states across the country. I am grateful to the Sisters for introducing me to Cornelia and I continue to look to her and her charism for the strength to live each day to the fullest.

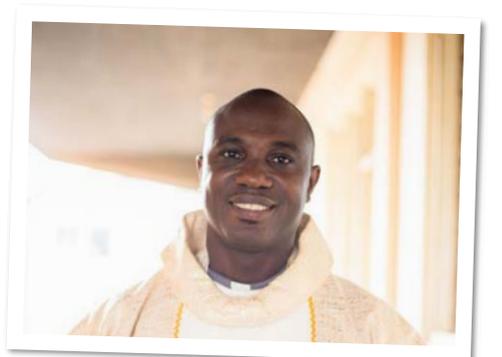


By Caroline Ogbaji (Nigeria)

I first met the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus when I started my teaching career at Holy Child College Obalende Lagos, in 2001. I decided to become an Associate because I was drawn to the life of humility, simplicity, friendliness and kindness of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus I worked with then. I became an Associate in 2003 and till date have enjoyed my relationship with the Sisters.

By Fr. Dieu-Donne Kofi Davor (Ghana)

I am a Priest for the Catholic Diocese of Ho in the Volta Region of Ghana but currently working at the National Catholic Secretariat, Accra as the Executive Secretary of the Department of Social Communications. My decision to become an Associate of SHCJ was necessitated through my contact with Sr. Juliana Abahi Omudu, SHCJ who inspired me by her way of life, dedication to duty and sincerity. *(Continued)*



I had the added advantage of being invited to celebrate Mass for the SHCJ Community at Accra and this became the routine for me until the proposal was made for my consideration to become an Associate. Through my encounter with other Sisters of the Society and after a good period of reflection, I have accepted the proposal and so put in my application to become an Associate of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, awaiting a positive response from the Leadership. Thank you!

By Mary Daysi Guzmán (DR)

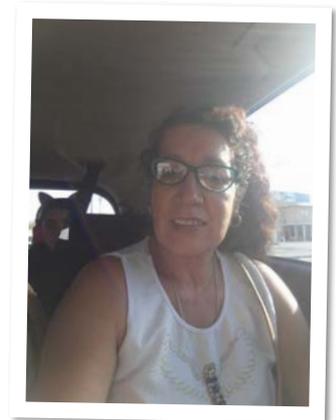


In 1998, thanks to the invitation of an old Associate and minister in my chapel, Our Lady of Mercy, I attended a spiritual retreat with Sister Ann Joyce Peters, SHCJ. This event made me fall in love with SHCJ spirituality so much that Sister encouraged me to become a Cornelian (stage of initiation) and attend meetings with the other Associates in her house. Due to this, a year later I officially became an Associate. What makes me happiest is the fellowship that thrives between lay people and Sisters.

By Virginia Cepeda (Chile)

My commitment to the Lord came through Sister Teresita Currie. By knowing her and seeing her passive, humble, and simple devotion, which she offered without looking at my social condition or where I had come from, I began to feel the love of Jesus and I committed myself with a “Yes” to serving him and bringing His love to my neighbors.

This “Yes” drives me to serve the Church, the Sisters, and the Associates of the Holy Child Jesus. Every day I commit myself with a “Yes, Lord, Yes, Always Yes.”



By Rose Mensah-Akollor (UK)



I am privileged to be both a past student of Holy Child Training College, Takoradi, as well as a former teacher of Holy Child School at Cape Coast. I joined the Holy Child Past Students Association - HOPSA UK when it was newly formed in London in 1988. I have served both as a Deputy and President of HOPSA UK.

When the Holy Child Associate was to be formed, an invitation was extended to HOPSA UK to attend. Myself and Sabina Yedu-Aggrey volunteered to represent HOPSA at the first meeting in Oxford. I have since been a regular member and currently serve as the Secretary on the Core Team.

“Yes, Lord, Yes, Always Yes”

Each day all over the world Associates demonstrate how they live out Cornelia’s quote of “Yes, Lord, Yes, Always Yes.” Here are just a few examples of their inspiring stories.

By Nonie Murphy (US)

In 2015, I was honored to say “Yes” to the invitation to become an SHCJ Associate. After 23 years of teaching students about Cornelia, here was an opportunity to deepen my own appreciation of and participation in the Cornelian/Holy Child mission of recognizing God’s presence in our lives – and celebrating that presence. When Sister Cynthia Vives organized a prayer group of Holy Child educators, I was – and continue to be - delighted to say “Yes” to gathering and praying on a regular basis with some of my former colleagues. Participating in the Associates pilgrimage to Grand Coteau in 2017 deepened my connection to Cornelia – and to the Associates in a profound way. The US Associates Meeting at Rosemont in 2018 was like a graduate course in the life and spirituality of Cornelia Connelly and the works of the Society.



Since 2014, I’ve been graced to be a volunteer religion teacher at the Connelly Center on New York’s Lower East Side. Fortunately, for me, the Connelly administrators had said “Yes” to me. On Tuesdays, it is my great joy to teach religion to enthusiastic and responsive students - and to observe their extraordinary teachers. Because of the opportunity to teach religion and to share our Holy Child faith tradition at Connelly, I was humbled to be this year’s “Faith in Action” honoree at the SHCJ dinner which had been scheduled for March in New York City. Of course, during these days of the pandemic, the dinner had to be cancelled. And the Connelly students – like all students – are learning from home. From a distance, I’ve observed as my colleagues at Connelly – and my former colleagues at Oak Knoll – adapt by saying “Yes” to completely new ways of teaching their students remotely. They are certainly “meeting the wants of the age.” An invitation from Cathi Duffy, Director of Associates for the US Province, to participate in a daily prayer meeting on Zoom during the pandemic received a resounding “Yes” from me. Praying with Associates from around the country – and across the sea – has been reassuring and spiritually enriching during these homebound days. Thank you, Cathi. And thank you, Society, for the invitation to be an Associate.



By Cesar Hinojosa (DR)

Cornelia's "Yes" moves us each day to want to constantly help others believe that God lives and acts in them and in our world and to rejoice in His presence. Cornelia's "Yes" transcends historical, ethnic, and religious contexts and from 1840 to our times has been a seed of faith that continues bearing fruit in each person who has had the privilege of knowing and being educated by this humble, and yet marvelous, Cornelian spirituality.

Motivated by this "Yes," the Associates of the Dominican Republic manifest our Cornelian spirituality through our Holy Child Educational Center with Fey Alegría. Founded by SHCJ Sisters, a large portion of the teaching and administrative staff is composed of Associates who said "Yes" to the call to educate boys and girls of Haitian origin. The Our Lady of Good Counsel Medical Center is managed by one of our Associates, who gave her "Yes" to helping provide medical consultations and services for more than 500 families who have scarce resources and are in a vulnerable position. We have also said "Yes" by planning and organizing silent Spiritual Retreats each year, some open to the public and others only for Associates. This strengthens our personal prayer and our relationship with God.

By Betsy Keating (UK)

"I'm Cosmopolitan, the whole world is my country; and heaven is my home." CC

Visiting the Salford Cathedral Drop-in Centre in 1995 changed my life, as I was so inspired by the SHCJ Sisters who also welcomed my idea of giving reflexology treatments to the vulnerable and homeless people who attended the Centre. This was a surprisingly popular therapy and once the routine of washing their feet was established, the therapy became a much-loved highpoint of the week, easing the mind as well as the body of these homeless people.

The pandemic of HIV/AIDS was expanding across the world and was decimating the East African country of Uganda, so inspired by the Cornelian saying, "Yes, Lord, Yes, Always Yes," it seemed a natural progression to take reflexology training to Uganda. Over a ten-year period, going annually for a month, with the help of 18 UK volunteer reflexologists, we set up training programs across the country in the AIDS clinics and hospice. The Ugandans were so thrilled to learn these new skills and mothers with babies on their backs travelled great distances to attend our training so our vision was realised that once the Ugandans were trained and had passed their reflexology exams, they too could train others. Subsequently, the good news is in 2020 reflexology treatments are continuing to be used in the Ugandan hospices.





By Alejandrina Vergara (Chile)

When I learned about Cornelia's story from the Sisters of the Society, I was greatly impacted by her suffering, and also by her faith and strength to face challenges and continue on with her life. In those moments I did not think this faith and strength came from her commitment to giving a "Yes" to the Lord but I realized this when I was chosen to live through something similar to what she experienced as a mother and wife.

First was my separation when my husband went off pursuing other interests. This was an enormous loss for me as we had shared 17 years of our lives together. During those years, he was an excellent father and husband and as a woman this made me feel guilty asking myself how I had failed. ("A broken heart is love's cradle when our Love is crucified." CC)

To overcome this, I took refuge in my Lord and my children who supported and accompanied me. Over time I wound up with only my young 15-year-old son at home. We lived together for nine years of support, strength, and mutual understanding. But the Lord called him to his presence at 24 years-old. He tragically died in a work accident. ("How full of pain is this fleeting world, and still how full of joy in the depths of pain!" CC)

While I was fully coming to terms with this, the life of Cornelia and her suffering came to mind. I also thought about the Virgin Mary. They both bore the pain of losing a child and I supported myself with this same strength. And I prayed to the Lord, give me the strength of your Mother and Cornelia, to bear witness that in You all pain is overcome. ("The remembrance of my children never leaves me." CC)

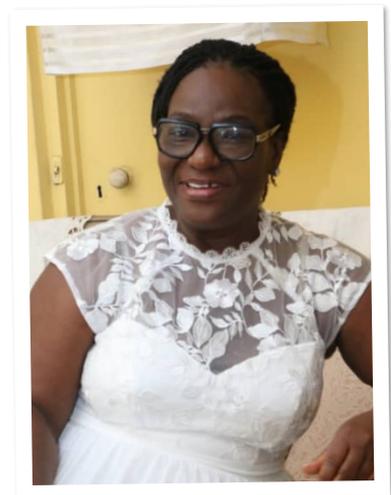
By Irene Saltson (Ghana)

The accolade of Cornelia is awe inspiring and to demonstrate some of her sterling qualities to my character as a person is quite a humbling experience.

On reflection I can identify two key areas from Cornelia that resonates with me:

Cornelia had the desire to live a life of holiness in total unity and commitment to God. I have been fully committed to God in my dedication for a significant number of years through my pastoral work as a catechist.

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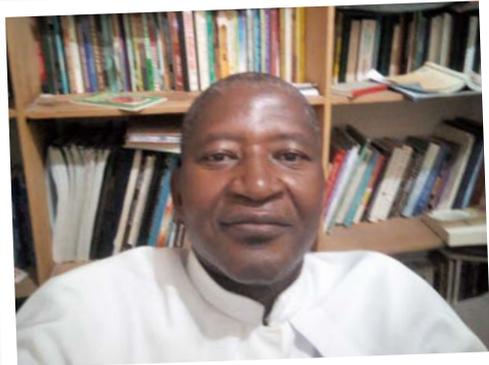


In my local parish I have been preparing the youth for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. I have demonstrated full dedication to this role and fervently believe it is one of the ways that demonstrates my commitment to God.

Secondly, my willingness, without hesitation to the perfect plan God has for me, to be affiliated to the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus as an Associate. This I have done by reflecting and listening to prompts from God about my future. My willingness to accept God all these years has been “Yes Lord! Always Yes!” This also depicts one of Cornelia's qualities.

By Rev. Fr. Joseph Choji (Nigeria)

Mother Cornelia Connelly’s assertion, “Yes Lord, Yes, Always Yes” stirs a strong resonance in my heart as Associate in Mission of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. It was not a mere coincidence but divine plan. Her assertion “Yes Lord, Yes, Always Yes” has similar connotation with Isaiah 6:8 “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘whom shall I send?’ and I said ‘here I am send me!’ ” Same words I chose as captured on my priestly ordination souvenir card. As a priest, the Lord inspired me to become an Associate in the mission with the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, my eyes lit, life filled with happiness and satisfaction, following Mother Connelly’s footsteps I said I’m ready, send me. My excited face was never hidden as I followed the Sisters to the big celebrations in Lagos and Calabar.



In my second missionary journey as principal of St. Murumba College, I heard the Lord speak through the Archbishop ‘you are also to be the chaplain to the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus.’ The resounding words reechoed “Yes, Lord, Yes, Always Yes” as I prayed in the daily celebrations of the Holy Eucharist, special masses for retreats. Of recent, I had to obey the Lord's voice “Yes, Lord, Yes, Always Yes” as I walk or ride my bike to celebrate with the Novices and Sisters joyfully even in this period of COVID19 Pandemic lockdown. The Holy Spirit has guided me to always say yes. All these in addition to my primary duties as a Principal, Dean, Chaplain to other societies, Coordinator Pontifical missionary union of Priests and Religious, and now President of Diocesan Clergy Catholic Archdiocese of Jos. God gives all the enabling strength and grace to borrow a leave from mother's divine inspired example of amiable yes, I will go.

Associates International Coordinating Committee Updates



By Sophie Rudge (UK)
Facilitator, SHCJ Associates International Coordinating Committee

At the moment all provinces are currently organising events to mark the 175th anniversary in 2021 of Cornelia Connelly founding the Society.

As we go to press the world is in chaos with the Corona virus pandemic and no one knows what the future holds for international travel.

The International Core Team is planning a general international meeting in Rome at the Retreat Centre, Centro Ad Gentes at Nemi, which is in the hills outside Rome quite near to the Pope's summer residence at Castel Gandolfo. It is a beautiful place and would be idyllic to sit around and socialise with Associate friends. We are considering the meeting for Spring 2022; however, as the time approaches we will see how the pandemic resolves before committing to paying a deposit.

Please keep the possibility in your holiday plans and budgeting as it would be wonderful to have another gathering which was as well supported and enjoyable as our last meeting in the Dominican Republic.

Wishing everyone continuing health and prayers.



What's Happening?

By Eileen Dorman

Secretary, SHCJ Associates International Coordinating Committee

Since our last newsletter, the team has been very busy implementing the many projects that were discussed at our meeting in Rome. They are:

- Prayer requests and prayers of gratitude are now being sent monthly.
- Starting in July of last year and every few months, each group has been creating a reflection sheet. Our topics have included Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Against Abuse in the Church (European Province); Call to Holiness (African Province); Climate Change (Chile); and Current Pandemic (US).
- Cathi Duffy (Director, US Associates) coordinated an international Zoom meeting so all Associates could participate in the International Day of Prayer written by the DR Associates.
- Finalized the Norms which provides guidance on the work of the Committee.

Looking Ahead:

- As Sophie mentioned in her letter, we are looking to have an international meeting possibly in Rome in Spring 2022. The International Committee will also hold their in-person meeting prior to the international gathering.
- Creating a Prayer Resource Book which would include prayers from each of the Provinces/Groups. We are looking to send this out in October 2020 as we start the 175th Anniversary celebration.
- Each Province/Group will be creating events to celebrate the 175th Anniversary starting in October 2020 and ending October 2021 using the Society theme of "Love And Serve."

We continue to work together to put forth information that helps to unite us as a Community and to look for ways through technology to bring us together.

Prayer for Cornelia's Beatification



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.

**We are always looking to improve upon our newsletter. If you have
comments regarding this newsletter, please send them to**

associates-international@shcj.org.