



## About the Society of the Holy Child Jesus

### What is the Society of the Holy Child Jesus?

The Society of the Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ) is an international community of Roman Catholic Sisters founded by Cornelia Connelly in 1846. The Society is composed of three provinces (American, African, European). In addition to the United States, the American Province includes Chile and the Dominican Republic.

### What do the Sisters of the Holy Child do?

Today, nearly 400 Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus serve in ministries of teaching, spiritual direction, social and legal work, health care, parish administration, and pastoral care. The Society also sponsors 14 schools, a college, and several social service programs. Through the educational institutions the Sisters have founded, children are educated in an environment of love and respect, where they are encouraged to develop to their full potential. Since 1846, Holy Child educators have endeavored to develop mature persons capable of making choices which enrich their own lives and contribute to the lives of others. Through the social service programs the Society has founded, the Sisters of the Holy Child help many people, but especially women and children, develop the tools and skills needed to overcome obstacles such as poverty, illiteracy, and abuse so that they can lead meaningful lives. [For more information on the Holy Child schools, see \*Sponsored Ministries and Educational Ministries\*.](#)

### How many people are served annually by the Sisters of the Holy Child?

The Society of the Holy Child provides outreach to more than 7,000 individuals through education, as well as sponsored and collaborative ministries at various social service organizations, many of which they have founded. [For more information on these programs, see \*Sponsored Ministries and Educational Ministries\*.](#)

### What is the Society's mission?

As Sisters of the Holy Child, we strive to "help others to believe that God lives and acts in them and in our world, and to rejoice in God's presence."

### How many Holy Child Sisters are currently serving?

There are nearly 400 Holy Child Sisters ministering throughout the world. Approximately 190 Holy Child Sisters serve in the American Province, 85 of whom are in Southeastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

### Who is Cornelia Connelly?

Cornelia Connelly was a wife and mother who transformed unimaginable personal heartache into an unwavering mission to establish a religious congregation that could "meet the wants of the age" or respond the needs of the time. Cornelia's calling and steadfast faith inspired this Philadelphia native to found the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in England. Her focus from the outset involved educating young girls. She later ran boarding schools and began a teacher training college. [For more information on the Society's Foundress, see \*Cornelia Connelly\*.](#)

### Why is Cornelia Connelly's work still relevant to the Sisters of the Holy Child today?

The Holy Child Sisters continue Cornelia's legacy, while seeking to help people find a better life through education, social work, health care, legal work, pastoral care and administration, and spiritual direction. Cornelia's philosophy of "meeting the wants of the age" through "actions not words" is widely praised for its vision. It is because of Cornelia's successful early foundations that the work of the SHCJ continues to thrive today.

### Where do the Holy Child Sisters live and serve?

The Holy Child Sisters serve on four continents and in



15 states. In the American Province, Holy Child Sisters minister in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, as well as in Washington, D.C., Chile, and the Dominican Republic.

### **How many women are pursuing a religious vocation within the Society?**

In the Society's three provinces (American, African, European), there are approximately 10 women pursuing a religious vocation. The Society also has a house of welcome, prayer, and discernment, located in Philadelphia. Weekly evenings of prayer are held there. Those pursuing a religious vocation sometimes live in the house to get a better sense of the Society and community life.

### **How else is the Society's mission continuing?**

The Sisters of the Holy Child have long-valued partnering with the laity, or those who are not members of the clergy, to continue their mission. Throughout the world, the laity carry on the Holy Child mission—serving with us in our schools and ministries and on our boards. Together, we all carry on the Holy Child spirit.

In addition, many people have also become Associates in the Society of the Holy Child. Associates are men and women who have been inspired by the spirit of Cornelia Connelly and the Society and grow closer through faith-sharing and spiritual development with the Sisters of the Holy Child. Currently, there are close to 200 Associates in the Society's American Province.

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# CORNELIA CONNELLY

## The Life and Legacy of Cornelia Connelly

Cornelia Connelly, who in 1846 founded the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, was born in Philadelphia in 1809. The youngest of seven children, Cornelia had lost her parents by the time she reached the age of 14.

Her early sorrow perhaps foreshadowed the anguish that would soon follow. By the time she was 32 years old, two of Cornelia's five children had died and her husband of 10 years, Pierce Connelly, had chosen to enter the Catholic priesthood. When Pierce had told her of his decision, Cornelia responded selflessly, "If the good God asks the sacrifice, I am prepared to make it and with all my heart."

## Faith leads Cornelia on a new path

Since the Catholic religion does not permit its priests to marry, Pope Gregory XVI granted the couple a deed of separation contingent on Cornelia's vow of chastity and a promise that she would become a Sister.

Cornelia lived at the Trinita dei Monti in Rome with their children and began sharing in the life of the Sisters. Pierce was ordained in 1841, and, during the Mass, Cornelia sang in the choir and their daughter, Adeline, received her First Holy Communion.

## Cornelia strives to "meet the wants of the age"

Despite the obstacles she faced, Cornelia is respected, loved, and remembered today for her inspiring resilience in the face of adversity. While sharing in the life of the Sacred Heart Sisters, Cornelia expressed in a letter to her brother that she did not feel that God was calling her to join the Sacred Heart congregation. She articulated her belief as "meeting the wants of the age," which has since become a cornerstone of the Holy Child mission and spirit.

## Roots of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus

At the Pope's request, Cornelia was invited to begin a congregation that would educate Catholic girls in England. The words "Society of the Holy Child Jesus" came to her, reflecting her incarnational spirituality. She considered this a gift from God, and ultimately, it was the name she gave her congregation.

On October 13, 1846, the Society officially began as Cornelia traveled to Derby, England with three other women who became Sisters of the Holy Child. The Sisters began offering basic education to the girls who worked in the silk mills and factories surrounding the convent. They also ran a night school for about 100 girls and taught on Sundays to accommodate workers' schedules.

In December 1847, Cornelia officially took vows of poverty and obedience and Bishop Nicholas Wiseman installed her as Superior General of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.

By that time, Cornelia had welcomed 16 women into the community.

## Cornelia expands the reach of SHCJ

After two years in Derby and with the encouragement of Bishop Nicholas Wiseman, Cornelia moved the community to St. Leonards-on-Sea in England. The Sisters ran boarding and day schools and began a teacher training college. They were also involved in writing books, translating, painting, producing and publishing religious art and literature, offering retreats, and instructing people who were converting to Catholicism.

Less than 10 years after Cornelia and the three Sisters first began their community in Derby, the Sisters were working among the poorest of the poor in the slums of London, Liverpool, and Preston. Cornelia encouraged her Sisters to carry on the Society's mission, writing, "As you step on through the muddy streets, love God with your feet."

In 1862, the first Sisters to serve in America had sailed for Towanda, Pa., where they established a school and convent. By the time Cornelia died in 1879, the Society was flourishing in both England and the U.S. and Cornelia had fulfilled her dream of establishing convents in France.

## Cornelia's legacy lives on

The Sisters of the Holy Child carry on Cornelia's work in North America, South America, Europe, and Africa. They seek to help thousands find a better life through education, social work, health care, legal work, pastoral care and administration, and spiritual direction.

Cornelia's philosophy—while unconventional at the time—is widely praised today for its innovation and vision. Cornelia's leadership has allowed the Sisters of the Holy Child to "meet the wants of the age" through "actions not words."

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## American Province Leadership Team

### **Mary Ann Buckley, SHCJ**

*American Province Leader*



Born in Chester, PA, Sr. Mary Ann has been a Sister of the Holy Child for 47 years. She has served as a high school teacher, college administrator, the Director of Novices for the Society's American Province, and as the International Leader of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. In recent years, she was employed by the Religious Formation Conference to lead a formation program for men and women responsible for training new members of their congregations. In the past four years, she has been part of the SHCJ community in Chile, working as Vocation and Formation Director, with a special interest in ministering to migrant women.

### **Margaret Doyle, SHCJ**

*American Province Leadership Team Member*



A native of New York City, Sr. Margaret was taught by the Sisters of the Holy Child at St. Elizabeth's School and St. Walburga's Academy. After entering the Society, her first assignment was in Melrose, MA where she taught at St. Mary's School. She also taught and served as Principal at schools in Waukegan, IL including Our Lady of Humility and St. Anastasia; in Potomac, MD at the Connelly School of the Holy Child; and in New York, NY at St. Elizabeth's School and the Cornelia Connelly Center. For the past five years, she has been Coordinator of the Society's sponsored ministries in the American Province. Prior to that, she served on the American Province Leadership Team for six years. Currently, she is a member of the Board of Trustees of several Holy Child ministries. She will continue to serve on these boards, and in her role as Coordinator of Sponsored Ministries.

### **Sandra Lincoln, SHCJ**

*American Province Leadership Team Member*



Sr. Sandra has had a lifelong passion for science and teaching. She taught high school chemistry, physics, and math for many years at the Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child in Summit, NJ and the former Holy Child High School in Waukegan, IL. She earned both her master's degree and doctorate in chemistry. She then went directly to the University of Portland in Oregon where she advanced to the rank of full professor and was appointed Chair of the Department of Chemistry. Currently, Sr. Sandra chairs the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees of Rosemont College. A love of teaching at the high school level inspired her to establish chemistry and SAT/ACT tutoring programs at De La Salle North Catholic High School in Portland.

### **Eileen Moughan, SHCJ**

*American Province Leadership Team Member*



Sr. Eileen has extensive experience in elementary education, having taught at several schools. However, her depth of experience expands far beyond the classroom. Between 1976 and 1979, Sr. Eileen lived in Lo Barnechea, a town outside of Santiago, Chile where she used her talents in education and parish work during a time of upheaval and suffering in the country. She describes this as one of the most blessed experiences of her life. Continuing her post graduate education at New York's Pace University, Sr. Eileen was awarded a master's degree in the Family Nurse Practitioner Program. She interned at Covenant House in New York and was later appointed Director of Nursing at Holy Child Center in Rosemont, PA. Sr. Eileen also provided home care to North Philadelphia area residents and was involved in Providence Center's after school program. Following a term on the Provincial Leadership Team that ended in 2005, Sr. Eileen assumed the role of Administrator of New Sharon in Rosemont in 2006, where she is currently.

### **Marie Ursino, SHCJ**

*American Province Leadership Team Member*



Sr. Marie attended Holy Child Academy in Sharon Hill, PA and received a bachelor's degree in biology from Rosemont College, an MST in teaching from the University of Dayton, and an MBA from Pace University's Lubin Graduate School of Business. For 16 years she taught biology, human physiology, and math and was Director of Student Activities at the former St. Leonard's Academy in Philadelphia, PA, the Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child in Summit, NJ, and the School of the Holy Child in Rye, NY. Her journey then brought her to Stuart Country Day School of the Sacred Heart in Princeton, NJ, where she was Head of the upper school for seven years. For the past 16 years, she has been Director of Counseling at Prep for Prep in New York City. Since 1978, Prep for Prep has identified New York City's most promising students of color and prepared them for placement at independent schools in the city and boarding schools throughout the Northeast. As Director of Counseling, Sr. Marie is responsible for the academic, social, and emotional well-being of Prep for Prep's 770 students enrolled in independent day and boarding schools in grades seven through twelve.

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## SPONSORED MINISTRIES

### Sponsored Ministries Expand the Society's Reach

Many Holy Child Sisters have identified needs in underserved areas and founded ministries which are supported by the Society. Combined, these sponsored works serve more than 2,000 people every year. The Society's sponsored ministries include:

**African Sisters Education Collaborative** – Begun in 2002, the African Sisters Education Collaborative helps Catholic Sisters in Africa access education so they can become qualified to serve as teachers, as well as in health care, spiritual, or social service ministries in their countries. As the Sisters themselves are educated, they, in turn, educate more African people.

**Casa Cornelia Law Center** – Founded in 1993, Casa Cornelia Law Center has handled nearly 600 cases. The Center provides a variety of pro bono legal services to immigrant women and children in San Diego, Calif.

**Centro Cornelia Connelly** – Located in Santiago, Chile, Centro Cornelia Connelly offers spiritual direction and retreats.

**Escuela Fe y Alegria** – The learning center and medical clinic, which serves close to 1,000 individuals a year, began in 1995. Fe y Alegria is located in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic.

**Los Angeles Ministry Project** – Begun in 1993, the Los Angeles Ministry Project offers parenting classes, English classes, childcare, and bilingual counseling to 200 of the poorest residents of Los Angeles, Calif.

**Providence Center** – Founded in 1993, Providence Center offers afterschool and summer programs, retreats, sewing classes, prayer groups, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to 300 individuals in Philadelphia, Pa.

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## Society Keeps Education at the Forefront

*“Trust the children and never let your confidence in them be easily shaken. Confidence begets confidence. Let them show their true colors and then we shall see the highlights and what needs to be toned down.”*

—CORNELIA CONNELLY, FOUNDRRESS OF THE SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS

The Society of the Holy Child Jesus employs Cornelia’s powerful words and her early groundwork for educational success. Since its founding, the Society has sponsored a number of schools, as well as a college. Today, Holy Child schools in the U.S. educate more than 5,000 students annually.

The **Holy Child Network of Schools** is an association of 10 Catholic, independent elementary and secondary schools founded by the Sisters of the Holy Child. Together, these Holy Child schools educate more than 3,500 children every year. The schools, which are located in California, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, are committed to the educational mission of the Catholic Church through the philosophy and spirituality of Cornelia Connelly.

**Rosemont College**, an independent, liberal arts institution in Rosemont, Pa., was founded by the Holy Child Sisters in 1921. After undergoing an intense yearlong strategic planning process in 2007-2008, the College’s Board of Trustees voted to make the college co-educational in September 2009, while also expanding the College’s programs and offerings. The College is rooted in Catholicism and guided by the educational principles of Cornelia Connelly and the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.

The Society also sponsors **collaborative schools** which were founded through partnering with other religious communities and nonprofit organizations. This collaboration enables the Society to operate four schools that serve more than 700 at-risk youth in New York, Philadelphia, Illinois, and Washington, D.C.

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### **Holy Child Network of Schools**

Connelly School of the Holy Child (Potomac, MD)  
Cornelia Connelly Center (New York, NY)  
Cornelia Connelly School (Anaheim, CA)  
Holy Child Academy (Drexel Hill, PA)  
Holy Child Academy (Old Westbury, NY)  
Mayfield Junior School of the Holy Child (Pasadena, CA)  
Mayfield Senior School of the Holy Child (Pasadena, CA)  
Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child (Summit, NJ)  
Rosemont School of the Holy Child (Rosemont, PA)  
School of the Holy Child (Rye, NY)

### **Higher Education**

Rosemont College (Rosemont, PA)

### **Collaborative Educational Ministries**

Cristo Rey New York High School (New York, NY)  
Hope Partnership for Education (Philadelphia, PA)  
St. Martin de Porres High School (Waukegan, IL)  
The Washington Middle School for Girls (Washington, DC)