Our life

is hid with Christ

in God.

As we enter more and more deeply

into this relationship,

God's power at work in us

can touch the hearts of those we meet.

They will be led to know

the Father's mercy and boundless love

through the mystery of Christ among us.

For this is our mission:

to help others to believe

that he lives and acts in them

and in our world,

and to rejoice in God's presence.

SHCJ Constitutions 4

Continue the Story

Continue the Story

A Resource for Reflection and Conversation

SHCJ

Society of the Holy Child Jesus

Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania

2004

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Introduction

Our pondering of the Society spirituality took as a starting point our awareness that, like all Christian spirituality, the Society's is a response in faith which is deeply rooted in the gospels. God's action in Cornelia Connelly's life story evoked in her a particular attentiveness to the gifts held by the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery. God has continued to evoke an attentiveness to those gifts in Holy Child sisters as they have lived out the mission of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.

The conversations suggested by *Continue the Story* invite participants to reflect upon nine distinct elements of the Society Spirituality. These nine elements serve to describe, but not exhaust, the characteristics of our Society spirituality. The reflection process invites us to grow in our awareness of how God continues to evoke those responses in women and men touched by the Society spirituality today. These elements are gospel-based and have always been dynamically combined and intertwined in a discernible pattern unique to the Society. It is not easy to give name and definition to the particular pieces of the puzzle, but the stories of Cornelia and Holy Child sisters offer some descriptive help. Our hope is that a new pondering of these nine elements – Trust, Simplicity, Prayer, Accepted Suffering, Reverence, Zeal, Discerning Love, Steadfastness, and Joy – will illuminate again how the Society spirituality is sustaining the Society's mission in all who share in it.

The process suggested invites a remembrance of earlier moments when the Society gave expression to these nine elements. It offers for prayer some references from scripture and the words of Cornelia Connelly. The process proposes a simple structure for a faith conversation about each of the elements. From these new moments of prayer and conversation, the story will continue.

Society Spirituality Task Force
August 2004

SUGGESTED PROCESS *for Group Conversations*

Pre-Meeting:
Choose one element to be used as theme of conversation —

- Leader selects element for first conversation;
- Group identifies the next theme to be used at the end of each subsequent conversation

Remote Preparation for Conversation
A. Leader

- Serves as facilitator of conversation on chosen theme
- Invites member of group to prepare any additional prayer that may be appropriate for session
- Gives attention to holistic environment, e.g. time, length of conversation, breaks, large or small groups, preparation of space
- Determines ways of adapting process for particular situation

B. Group

- Reviews resources for chosen theme prior to meeting time
- Links recent personal life experience with element of Society spirituality in private reflection using simple question such as *"When in the last month did I have an experience of living or being aware of this element?"*

Conversation

Each person will have a chance to share his/her recent experience of the element chosen for the meeting. These conversations about the wonderfully diverse circumstances in which each person has been touched again by God's faithful invitation to deepen our Society spirituality hold the promise of new gifts to us. While connections to some further task may surface, gratitude, reverence, affirmation of identity, confidence and hope are the intended consequences of the conversations.

Three phases in the conversation are likely:

1. Reflective interaction

After all participants have had a chance to share their responses, the conversation can move to reflective interaction. This interaction might include questions, but not be only questions. Participants might refer to and draw upon the booklet resources.

2. Moving forward with shared insights

Conversation about individual or group attitudes and actions may suggest new understandings of the element of the Society's spirituality. The element to be used for next session may emerge in this part of the conversation.

3. Review of experience of the conversation

"What has the experience of this conversation today been for me?"

After a few minutes of quiet reflection, each participant shares her /his response to that question. Responses may be in images, music, poetry, questions, or a short sentence.

Time-frame

This process can be adapted to various time-frames, e.g. a quarter of an hour, an hour, a half day, a day, an evening. Thus, it could be the introduction or the substance of a meeting, or the focus of a time of reflection and prayer.

Continue the Story

Trust

Trust

Cornelia's Story

As a new convert and still young in the Catholic faith, Cornelia could easily have turned down the proposal to begin in England, far from her own country and family and in a very different culture from her own. But when the Pope added his own urging and moral weight to the proposal, Cornelia recognized the will of God and threw herself wholeheartedly into the project. Her commitment was so total that she would visit her own country only once in the years to come ..... We are now ready to witness another moving scene. On Saturday, April 18, 1846, Pierce celebrated a farewell mass in the Trinitá chapel. The Berkeley family happened to be in Rome on a visit and joined the congregation. It was Cornelia's last moment inside a Sacred Heart convent and among the religious who had nurtured her faith and her vocation. After the Mass, Cornelia bid farewell to Pierce, and with Ady, Frank and the nurse, mounted the carriage that would set her on the road to England. Cornelia was thirty-seven years old. Ten years before she had come to Rome full of enthusiasm for her new faith and surrounded by a host of friends. Now virtually alone, she took the road away from Rome with meager material resources and with only her faith to illuminate the way. In this state of total dependence on God she would discover within herself new spiritual depth and new capabilities to bring to the work that lay ahead. Strub, pp. 62-63

... Pray and have great confidence in God ...

Holy Child Sisters' Story

From "Come Little Children" by Therese Currie SHCJ and Mary Urban Haughton SHCJ, in *History*, III, pp. 55-56.

I felt totally unprepared for this new ministry. My exposure to television programs was very limited. I felt hopelessly unable to rise to this challenge. I remember going up to the roof-garden at St Leonard"s crying and screaming to the Lord, 'I can't do it! I can't possibly do it!' I really felt that the situation was beyond me. Suddenly I heard within me a voice telling me clearly, 'You don't have to do it. I will do it.' With these words came deep peace and calm. For me, this was a startling experience of real ministry which would draw me ever closer to our dear Lord. I returned to my room and opened my Bible at random and read the words God spoke to Moses: 'Go now and I will be with you. I will tell you what to say.' This was such an amazing reassurance that I copied out the words and kept them before me on my desk. And so began Urban's new ministry …

Cornelia's Words

It is not presumption to have hope and joy and confidence in God's grace. *CC 21:7*

Pray and have great confidence in God who will take care of his own work and guide and govern it by his Holy Spirit. *CC 7:6*

You do not think of God's providence. Where would we be now if we had not trusted to it? God knows what we require. *D 76: 139*

They must strengthen themselves in hope and trust in God, in self-mistrust, which has for its companion true humility giving strength which is the strength of God. *CC 54:66*

Trust the children and never let your confidence in them be easily shaken. Confidence begets confidence. *D 74: 324-325*

Scripture

But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God." *Psalm* 31:14

Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. *Psalm* 62:8

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. *John* 14:1

He said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing .... of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life .... Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well .... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. *Lk* 12: 22-34

My Story

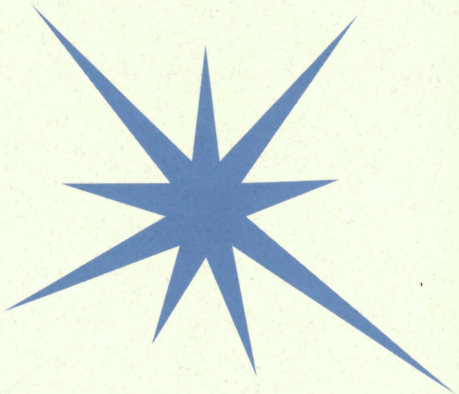
When

in the last month

did I have

an experience

of *trust*?



Continue the Story

Simplicity

Simplicity

Cornelia's Story

What was Cornelia like at this stage of her life? [i.e. in the early days of the Society] She was the "life and spirit" of the group, according to Maria Joseph Buckle, one of the converts who joined the Society early on. Buckle remembered Cornelia's many talents, her good humor, and her lovely voice, to say nothing of her natural beauty. It would be impossible to meet her without being struck by her manner, she said. In the convent, Cornelia's mere presence made for a climate of peace and spiritual happiness … She wanted each one to fulfill her God-given promise, so she would study her character and find ways to promote what was best in her. Her great respect for the work of the Holy Spirit in each person determined her mode of government and her way of dealing with the individual. Cornelia's intention was to form strong, independently motivated, mature and holy women, each one according to her measure of grace. In fact, she would adopt God's perspective when dealing with anyone and this allowed her an objectivity free of personal prejudice. Strub, p. 71

Be yourself but make that self just what our Lord wants it to be.

A Holy Child Sister's Story

Eva Heymann, SHCJ, describes the deepening simplicity of her later years. From "Retirement" by Eva Heymann SHCJ, *History*, IV, p. 114.

My personal definition of retirement is: a journey into freedom. Another way of expressing that would be to say that the experiences of the last twelve years are enabling me to prepare for my final journey into eternity! I hope that increasingly I can travel light! It is indeed freeing when I become aware that things which once held me captive, e.g. striving for perfection and success and conversely the fear of failure no longer dominate me, or the desire to seek the good opinion of others and also material possessions which gave me a false sense of security; none of these have the same controlling power they once had. That is an immeasurable gift. I no longer have to prove myself as the God who loves me unconditionally does not require that! But my trust and hope in Him still needs to grow and it is a blessing to be aware that time exists, each new day, for that to be more firmly rooted.

Cornelia's Words

Simplicity seeks God, purity finds and enjoys him. *CC 30:16*

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*

When we acknowledge to God our selfishness, our crookedness and all our miseries, in humility, and ask him to change our selfishness into charity, our crookedness into straightforwardness, our miseries into perfections, this is what he delights in and it is the first step to this purity of heart and intention. The only way to obtain purity of heart is to reject what is impure and the same in our intentions, reject what is double ... *CC 1:101-102*

Act with a single heartedness and the Almighty will bless you with a faith and a peace that will enable you to go through with happiness all the misery that troubles this life. May he guide you. *CC 1:46*

Scripture

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully. *Psalm* 24: 3-4

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes .... *Psalm* 19: 7-8

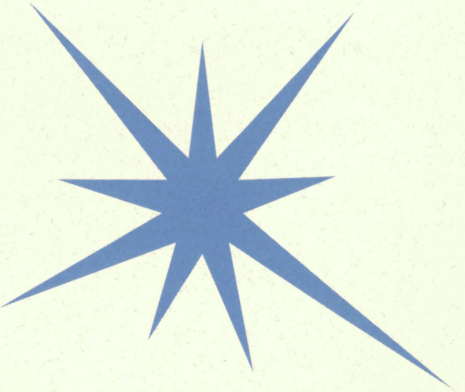
The Lord protects the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. *Psalm* 116: 6

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness .... No one can serve two masters. *Matthew* 6: 22-24

... for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars ... *Phil* 2: 13-15

My Story

When
in the last month
did I have
an experience
of *simplicity*?



Continue the Story Prayer

Prayer

Cornelia's Story

It is impossible to penetrate the deepest secret of a person or to describe it. What was the color, taste, feel of Cornelia's inner life with God? Sometimes her vocabulary gives a hint. She loved the word "hidden". Other words appear frequently: "ardor", "union", "undivided heart", "simplicity", "accepted suffering", "truth", "delight", "sweetness", "joy", "attention", "humility", "peace", "beauty". These words point to something holy and at the same time comfortable and familiar, the furniture of her inner room. They signal a mutual love which goes beyond the power of words to express – a love that wants to pour itself out to the other and is realized only in that way. Surely Cornelia's married life with Pierce was a powerful symbol of what she came to know as union with God.

Strub, p. 114

. . . speak often to Him in your heart. . .

A Holy Child Sister's Story

Ann-Joyce Peters, SHCJ quotes the prayer that missionaries and volunteers pray together in the Dominican Republic where they minister among some of the world's poorest people, from " History of the Mission in the Dominican Republic", *in History* VI, p. 98

CHRIST JESUS, You have invited us to continue Your mission to incarnate God's love in this sector of Santo Domingo;

gift us with the ability to enter into the simple life here;

make us always grateful for the opportunity to experience life's reality more and more from the viewpoint of Your poor;

help us to stand, as You did, with those whose choices in life are extremely limited;

You are our example: You never sought comfort or privilege, but entered fully into our human condition, as friend and servant;

strengthen our faith in Your power at work in us to touch the hearts of those we meet; help them recognize Your life and action in themselves and in our world;

You are faithful and walk with us; remind us likewise to walk humbly with your people, to learn from them, and to rejoice in Your presence. AMEN.

Cornelia's Words

Dwell with God and speak often to him in your heart, and from time to time help each other in the divine presence. *CC 54:66*

Sit in silence before Our Lord and be more ready to listen than to talk. *D 63:66*

Make now a lively, powerful and loving union of your will with the will of God: and then amidst the actions of the day, spiritual and corporal, make frequent reunions. *CC 23:8*

Take care not to lose the interior spirit by the pressure of activity. *CC 7:1*

Let all be diligent in giving proofs of love this year, and as you step on through the muddy streets, love God with your feet, and when your hands toil, and when you teach the children, love him with His little ones ... *CC 8:87*

Scripture

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts ..." *Heb* 3: 7-8

[Jesus] went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. *Lk* 6:12-13

Jesus ... cried out: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me." *Jn 7*: 37-39

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. *Rom* 8: 26-27

Rejoice in the Lord always ... the Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. *Phil* 4: 4-9

My Story

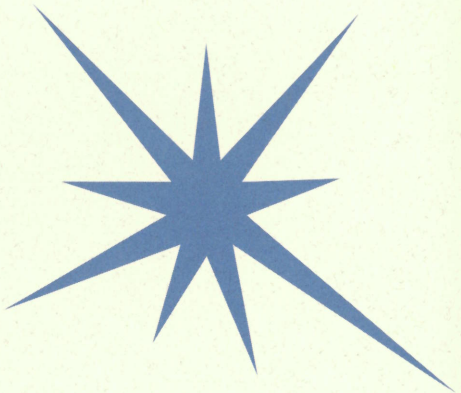
When

in the last month

did I have

an experience

of *prayer*?



Continue the Story

Accepted Suffering

Accepted Suffering

Cornelia's Story

In October, Pierce again made a retreat. Cornelia must have known that her own future and that of the children hung upon his discernment. On Sunday, October 13, Feast of St. Edward, Patron of England, Pierce and Cornelia were walking home from church when he divulged the outcome of his election. He wanted her permission to seek ordination as a Catholic priest. It would mean celibacy and separation. She told Père Abbadie how she had answered him. "This is a very grave matter," she told him. "Think about it deeply and twice over; but if the good God asks the sacrifice, I am prepared to make it & with all my heart." Cornelia's heart was completely at God's disposition but that did not mean it could not break. Years later, she told a confidante that the Society of the Holy Child Jesus was founded that day on a breaking heart.

Strub, pp 41-42.

... answered by the King Himself, giving abundantly that jubilee of heart ... not ... bargained for in this life of accepted suffering.

A Holy Child Sister's Story

"Marian Hill, Calabar, [Nigeria] in the war years 1967-69", from *History*, V, pp 62-65

It is difficult to write an account of our work during the past six years as our Records and Journals were destroyed or carried off when our Convent was looted after the Federal Army occupied Calabar on 18 October 1987. The following is a quotation from Sister Teresa Xavier who was here at the time with Sister Helen Mulligan:

"Wednesday, October 18th, 1987. The shelling began before 6:00 a.m. We had Mass as usual at 6:30 ... During Mass, the shelling came very close. Our tall policeman (an Ibo) was there at Mass. He hurried out, but soon returned on his motorcycle to tell me that the shelling was under control!! ... It had been more or less arranged that we would be notified by the priests what to do in case of an attack. The soldiers were passing back and forth very often ... At 4:00 p.m. Father Morris called, said it now was safe to go out, that we should consume the Blessed Sacrament and leave at once for St. Patrick's, Ikot Ansa .... We rolled up some bedding and went out quickly ...

We were intercepted at Calabar Road by the Biafran soldiers near the Pharmacy. They told us that we could not pass, and pointed along the road to the invasion force entering it. We had to reverse. Rain was falling and visibility was poor. I think that was what saved us, as we could not be easily seen at a distance .... As we passed the Casement tanks at the Diamond, and entered Odukpani Road, we came face to face with the troops coming up from the Cement Factory Beach. They stopped us, and made us get out of the car ... An officer then came up and told the sergeant to let us pass! We reached Ikot Ansa safely ... On the third day we reached Ututu, and the next, Ifuho ... I want to say that M.M. Audrey (Helen Mulligan) never lost her nerve for a minute .... If the soldiers at Odukpani had only put down their machine guns I would not have feared so much. But we were six feet from them, and the sergeant came alongside and opened the car door. That was a bad moment! I said an Act of Contrition and expected to be with the corpses on the ground ... We were certainly helped by God Himself."

Cornelia's Words

O my God! If all this happiness is not to Thy greater glory and the good of my soul take it from me. I make the sacrifice. *D 76:155*

I love my husband and my darling children. Why must I give them up? *D9*

The remembrance of my children never leaves me. *D 63:41-42*

It is in suffering & especially the suffering of the heart that Charity takes root, but it requires always the soil of humility to nourish it. *CC 58:71*

Crosses and upsets prove to us how little Christlike we are, and how quickly the thermometer of supposed heroism falls to zero when put to the test. *CC 17:15*

How truly we must be grateful for every little cross we have for it is only suffering which brings us to the peace of God which passeth all understanding! *CC 8:118*

"... that kingdom of peace within, where the soul's whisperings are answered by the King Himself, giving abundantly that jubilee of heart which had not been bargained for in this life of accepted suffering. *CC 30:1*

Scripture

I pray therefore that you may not lose heart over my sufferings for you. They are your glory. *Eph.* 3: 13

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. *1 Cor* 1:18

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. *Gal* 2:19-20

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son he learned obedience through what he suffered .... *Hebrews* 5: 7-8

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us ... we know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit .... *Romans* 8: 18, 22-23

My Story

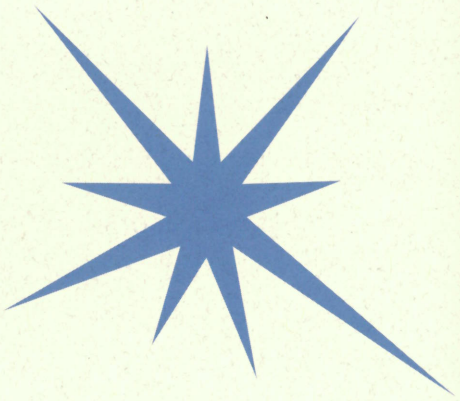
When,

in the last month,

did I have

an experience

of *accepted suffering*?



Continue the Story

Reverence

Reverence

Cornelia's Story

The object of her synthesis was the unique person, and the model, the incarnate Son of God — the Holy Child. Each person who passed through her hands was of infinite value, dignified by a shared humanity with that Child. Each one was destined to grow into an original variation on the model with talents and gifts just suited to that purpose. Cornelia, therefore, understood education as an organic incremental process in which each one's potential would gradually be called into realization until the plenitude ordained by God was reached. She took it for granted, therefore, that education began in the cradle and was life-long. The school years, the formal part of the process, were to be organized in such a way that body, mind and spirit found delight in becoming, and just the right stimulus to open up to the next stage of becoming. Graced with the Ignatian optic, Cornelia saw connections, not divisions; God in all things did away with false distinctions between sacred and secular. "A geology lesson was as much about God as a religion lesson." Strub, p. 110

The ways of God are many...

A Holy Child Sister's Story

From "Hospital Ministry" by Mary Leo Bryan SHCJ, *History*, VI, p.65.

For 25 years, through formation, education and classroom apostolate, I could readily discern through obedience "the way that God was pointing out." Studying and teaching the invisible, material world of Chemistry was an incomparable promontory for wonder at the intricacies of creation. Every instrument or equation that pushed back the limits of what could be measured rekindled my awe and strengthened my faith. Opening the doors for students to share the joy of this understanding was energizing and challenging. As the pace of change accelerated around me through the late '60's and early 70's, I began to muse: "What I have not been able to do for Rosemont College (and its students) in my first 25 years there, I am less likely to be able to do in the second 25."

In August 1981, eight years after the silver jubilee of my profession, I completed those first 25 years of teaching at the College. Earlier in a remarkable weekend seminar on "Professional Development in Ministry" held in Lancaster, PA, I had been the only SHCJ present. My new acquaintances, mostly non-Catholic, mostly male, perceived me in an unfamiliar way. Instead of the teacher, administrator, organizer I had grown accustomed to, they identified me as a minister, witnessing to faith and capable of caring listening, counseling, offering support in one-to-one situations. In this context, my childhood dream of nursing began to reassert itself through all the layers of circumstance that had led me in another direction.

Cornelia's Words

What more sublime teaching can we find than the mystery of the Incarnation. Here it is that God manifests to us in the most wonderful manner the treasures of His mercy and of His boundless love. *FT 2*

She would say that reverence was fast disappearing from the world; and that reverence was the outcome of Faith, and that when reverence goes, Faith is going, and that neither can there be true love without Faith. Should children go forth into the world without reverence they leave us without that which is of the most vital importance for their salvation, and the salvation of those for whom they eventually become responsible.
(As quoted in an early biography by Mother Francis Bellasis, a contemporary of Cornelia, D 74:327)

Be yourself but make that self just what Our Lord wants it to be.
D 73:174

Let us take God's view. What does God think of this? How shall I view this in Eternity? *CC 22: 18*

Do you realize the privilege of giving to God? It is yours at every moment.
D 77:18

Scripture

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble". *1 Peter* 5: 5

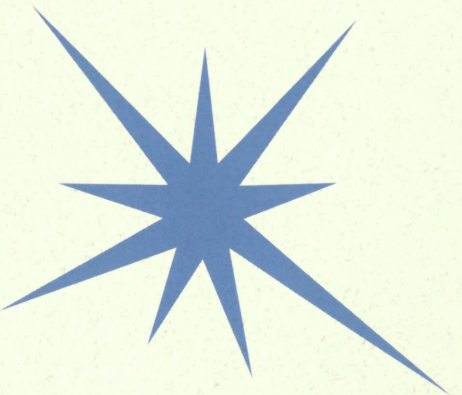
Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. *Phil* 2: 3

But in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence. *1Peter* 3: 15

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom ... and whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. *Col* 3: 16-17

My Story

When
in the last month
did I have
an experience
of *reverence*?



Continue the Story

Zeal

Zeal

Cornelia's Story

The Catholics of the area [St Leonards on Sea] were invited to the vow ceremony and many came out of curiosity and interest. When the chapel was set up a little later, Cornelia invited them to attend Mass. And so began a long tradition of aesthetically beautiful and deeply reverent liturgical celebrations open to the area. Cornelia's educated taste allowed her to bring to the act of worship the best music and the best liturgical art available. Care for the dignity and beauty of the liturgy was one of her lifelong interests .... Cornelia herself supervised the studies of the two girls who came as boarders from Derby, but also in the convent she very soon established a school for the poor of the neighborhood, and she hoped to provide for children of the middle class. At the same time, five of the young community were being prepared to form the core of a teacher training college but Cornelia's first priority was the formation of her young religious, some of whom had very little formal education.

Strub, p. 85.

... run with ardour in the way that He has pointed out ...

A Holy Child Sister's Story

From "Memories of My Ministries in France 1965-1996", by Marie Cecile Bouffandeau SHCJ, *History*, III, p. 100.

When Reverend Mother Marie Osmonde came back to France from the missions she followed the inspiration of the Bishop, Msgr. Feltin, that every congregation open itself to less favored places than Paris or Neuilly .... The bus 163 took her to Bezons which at this time was considered a very poor and Communist town ... So I was chosen to go every Thursday to teach catechism to the children. On Sunday we animated the Mass and Sister Claudia (Dalglish) would play the harmonium. We also went with the children to *colonies de vacances* (holiday camps) in the mountains and in Brittany. It was not long after that that we met another Fils de la Charité, Pere Moulin, who asked for help with the Gitans or Travellers .... For seven years I went to visit their settlement,trying to teach the "3Rs" to children and also catechism, preparing them for their Communion and sacrament of Penance. And by the way I prepared an old couple to receive the sacrament of Matrimony both of them aged 82! They lived in yards where they could put their roulottes (caravans) and stay there during the winter or when they were too old to travel.

Cornelia's Words

The spirit of this institute ... embraces in a very special manner the virtue of zeal .... a well-regulated zeal ... a courageous zeal, ready to sacrifice all for the glory of God. A humble and disinterested zeal, which seeks nothing but the honour of God. A gentle and insinuating zeal, to draw hearts to God. A patient and persevering zeal .... Finally, a discreet zeal according to knowledge which leads us to instruct ourselves before attempting to teach others .... *1877-80 SHCJ Constitutions*

I wish wih all my heart that I had 500 to take to America this year. Ah! my Lord, if you only knew the needs of a vast and new country your heart would warm with zeal for the souls of the poor children in utter ignorance of the true faith. *CC 14:52*

What a sweet consolation it is to think that union with the will of God, and a heartfelt desire that He may be known and blest and served by all mankind is a constant act of adoration .... We may carry this into all our actions everywhere. *CC 7:69*

"By their works ye shall know them." Let all be diligent in giving proofs of love this year, and as you step on through the muddy streets, love God with your feet, and when your hands toil, and when you teach the children, love him with His little ones ... CC8:87

Scripture

For the love of Christ urges us on ... *2 Cor* 5:14

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word. *2 Thes* 2: 16-17

And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it. *Mark* 16: 20

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... teaching ... everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. *Matthew* 28: 19-20

... at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. *Phil* 2: 10-11

My Story

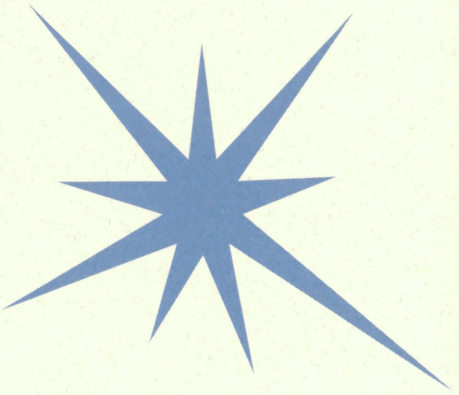
When

in the last month

did I have

an experience

of *zeal*?



Continue the Story

Discerning Love

Discerning Love

Cornelia's Story

At one point during the St Leonards property dispute, Cornelia reached an impasse. She could satisfy neither her bishop, nor Rome nor the mission. In desperation, she wrote to Grant: "My Lord Bishop, I took your letter … after having read it twice myself, and read it to Our Lady of Sorrows asking her in her own sweet meekness to listen to it, and the interior answer I got was 'burn the letter & tell the Bishop to forget what he wrote & come and tell you what more you can do than you have done'. I have burnt it my Lord, & now will you come down and tell me what more I can do than I have done?" Strub, p. 181

How do you follow the inspirations of grace ?

A Holy Child Sister's Story

In 1973 eight SHCJ were arrested and jailed along with many others when they joined with César Chavez and the United Farm Workers Union in their struggle for justice for the workers. Lucy Malarkey SHCJ tells her story , from "Letters from Fresno County Industrial Farm – 1973 by Lucy Malarkey SHCJ, in *History,* V, pp. 81-90 .

Fourteen of us met to discuss the picket lines and share what we knew and how we felt. No one put pressure upon anyone else or judged another's point of view …. I planned to go down to the picket lines, but I was not sure of what I was going to do beyond that. My hesitation came from feeling that I really did not know enough background on the problem to make a valid intellectual decision, yet the Mexican people mean a lot to me from my last two summers teaching marine biology in Baja California Sur Mexico. As a general principle, it seemed to me that siding with the oppressed is right …. At midnight six of us left in one car for Parlier, near Fresno …. There was silence as we rode; some were sleeping; I was praying to know what I should do. I still felt some anxiety as to whether I could make a valid decision since I could not argue this thing politically. It also seemed right, however, to choose to suffer with Christ

by standing with his people who were suffering ... At 4:00 AM, we stopped at a Denny's restaurant for breakfast. I had a wonderful and big omelet figuring that it might have to last a good long time. Then we pushed on to the park in Parlier, arriving there about 5 A.M. As I got out of the car and stood in the chill of the early dawn, I knew deep inside what I was going to do. I experienced a deep, quiet peace with all anxiety gone. From then on my way was clear. Police cars surrounded the park .... Speeches were made in Spanish, punctuated by shouts of Viva! .... Then Caesar Chavez arrived and talked to the people for 20-30 minutes. It was obvious how much the Hispanics loved and revered him. After seeing the beauty, faith and peace on the faces of the farm workers, I asked myself how I could ever have doubted that supporting them might be wrong. All was very spirited, but non-violent as we left for the fields .... Around 8:30 we reached the fields where police lined the edge with rifles in their hands ....

CORNELIA'S WORDS

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

.~

What is the soul's habitual feeling - peaceful or agitated ... how do you follow the inspirations of grace ?... What is your greatest obstacle in the spiritual life? ... Am I in consolation or desolation ? *CC 22:17*

.~

We must learn to discern the spirits in order to conquer the evil ones and to be docile to the good ones. *CC 54:11*

.~

True liberty is that of the children of God. It consists in commanding the inclinations of the heart, in raising itself above all human fear and in walking with agility in accordance with the precepts of God. *CC 22:1*

.~

.. distinguish between fervour of sentiment and fervour of action. *CC 22:11*

.~

Give me, O Lord, a love full of action. *CC 54:26-27*

Scripture

Morning by morning he wakens — wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. *Isaiah* 50: 4

... I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live. *Deut* 30:19

Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" *1 Kings* 3:9

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness .... then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit returned to Galilee. *Lk* 4: 1, 14

If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. *Gal* 5:25

... but test everything; hold fast to what is good ... *1 Thes* 5:21

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. *Eph* 4: 30

My Story

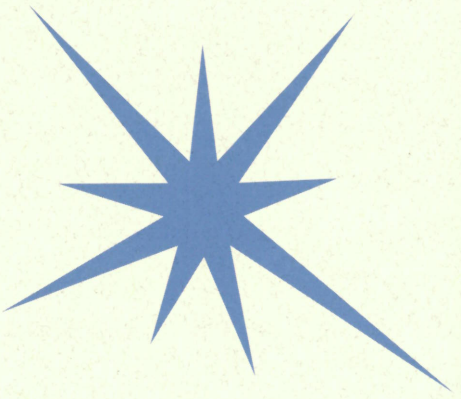
When

in the last month

did I have

an experience

of *discerning love*?



Continue the Story

Steadfastness

Steadfastness

Cornelia's Story

For the first time in her life, Cornelia found herself in the midst of extreme poverty. The England she already knew was the England of Alton Towers and Spetchley Park. Derby was a town besmirched by the industrial revolution. The atmosphere was thick with factory smoke, and at the bottom of the convent garden, an open sewer flowed. Masses of immigrants from Ireland crowded into Derby in search of work in the mines and factories. Workers could attend school only at night and on Sundays, so Cornelia and Emily organized classes within their meager free time. During the day, the sisters staffed a poor school of 200 or more children of whom never more than 60 were able to attend on a typical day. Strub, p.69

It is not presumption to have hope, joy and confidence in God's grace.

A Holy Child Sister's Story

From "No Bread – No Gas – Breakfast Will Be In Five Minutes" by Helen McDonald SHCJ, *History*, V, p. 126.

Food, light, heat, water – all became increasingly scarce during the war. Coffee, tea, sugar, flour, eggs, meat, fish, salt and milk gradually disappeared. Even after the liberation of Rome in June 1944 the situation did not improve much. The allies gave priority to keeping the roads open for their armies and supplies ... and that meant keeping heavily laden Italian food trucks, which often broke down, off the roads .... Early in the war years Imelda and St. Luke began a vegetable garden: onions, carrots, beets, lettuce, tomatoes, parsley. The sisters bought four hens from the Notre Dame sisters and kept them on the terrazza where their egg production was carefully noted by the journalist after one week: 'between the four of them they have given us 18 eggs. So we are well pleased with our experiment. The number of hens increased to seven by 1943 and the journalist records the grand total of 1000 eggs in 18 months!

Cornelia's words

Remember, of yourselves you can do nothing, but in God and for God and with God you can do all things. *D74:362*

Make acts of the love of God, and one day you will find your soul inundated with his love. Acts of virtue prepare us to receive the grace and gift of it from God. *God Alone 31*

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

... a patient and persevering zeal ... which, without being discouraged when labour is not crowned with success, continues to sow and water, waiting in patient hope for the increase that God will surely give to those who confide in Him. *1877-80 SHCJ Constitutions*

We must be practically convinced that God alone is to be served. Let us labour for him alone with great joy, and look to him alone and to his recompense for our reward. *CC54:46*

Scripture

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him. 1 John 3: 18-19

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. *1 Cor* 15:58

So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter. *2 Thes* 2:15

... they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. *1 Tim* 3:9

... but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." *2 Cor* 12: 9

My Story

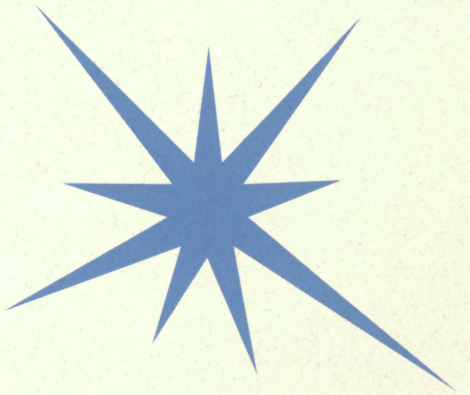
When

in the last month

did I have

an experience

of *steadfastness*?



Continue the Story

Joy

Joy

Cornelia's Story

In 1868 the Church at All Souls was dedicated at St Leonards on Sea in England. Cornelia's contemporaries tell this story of that event:

The night before the dedication, Cornelia and a young Sister went into the dark church to make sure that everything was ready for the next day's ceremony. Overcome with emotion, Cornelia burst into song and went on singing, hymn after hymn, filling all the space with her lovely voice. This church became the center of the liturgical life of generations of St Leonards pupils and Sisters.

Strub, p. 135

O God of God, light of light, and joy of joys!

A Holy Child Sister's Story

Margaret Mary Loughran SHCJ tells the story of teaching in the University of Asmara in Eritrea, East Africa from 1968-1979, from "Thirteen Months of Sunshine" by Margaret Mary Loughran SHCJ in *History,* VI, p. 17.

Teaching in the night school was often very humbling. Seeing men older than I struggling to learn, and often in an unfamiliar language, was painful. I knew they struggled financially to come to the University, no matter how little they paid. The chance of a job promotion, a salary increase, or a new job opening led them to seek the proof of on-going education at the cost of family life, missed meals and constant anxiety about doing well. For younger and middle-aged adults worry was less pressing. It was a middle-aged Muslim night student who once "made my day." My offer to teach some courses in Moral Philosophy was accepted and, of the two I offered, the one on world religions was very popular and I offered it to advanced day and night students several times. One evening, after concluding the segment on Islam to a large class, I walked into a hallway filled with students but could not miss seeing one who was obviously waiting for me. He was a short, thin, serious, hard-working student whom I had taught before and found formal and distant. Now he was smiling and making low, swift jumps in the air. "Sister!" he cried, "You did it, you did it. I didn't think you could do it, but you did, Sister. It was wonderful!" "What was wonderful?" I asked. "Sister, you told about our religion just as it is. Everything. It was beautiful, Sister. And you know what, sister? From now on I'll respect every man who believes in God!" Women's Lib. was not strong in the Muslim world, but I got his message and I, too, was happy.

Cornelia's Words

Yesterday we had a delicious drive out on the Via Appia in the midst of the beautiful old tombs & overlooking the ancient aqueducts to the mountains, with Frascati & Albano in view just as you pass the magnificent tomb of Cecelia Metellus … all this was our view going out … with the sun striking on the objects giving them the hue of reddish gold; then on turning round to come back, we had the very beauty of paradise in the setting sun behind Rome and its exquisite mountains in face of us all the way … Never shall I forget the rapturous beauty of the scene …
CC 8:103

The more we love God the more perfectly we shall be in the joy and liberty of his children — forgetting ourselves and rejoicing in him.
CC 8:98

First to bear adversity with endurance — then with willingness — then with joy. *CC 54:19*

... giving abundantly that jubilee of heart which had not been bargained for in this life of accepted suffering. *CC 30:1*

May your stability prove true till constancy is sealed by death, and by a death which is quickly to introduce you to the Beatific Vision, where you are to be filled with the joy of heavenly light, and encouraged by the ecstatic delight of loving God without interruption. *CC 8:98*

Scripture

I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. Jer 31:13

... and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior ... Luke 1:47

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see ... I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. Luke 2:10-11

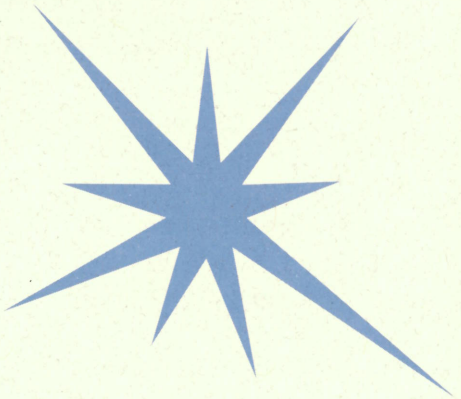
They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" Luke 24:32

I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. John 15:11

Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy. 1 Peter 1:18

My Story --

When
in the last month
did I have
an experience
of *joy*?



Sources

All scriptural quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible.

All stories from the life of Cornelia Connelly are from *Yes, Lord, Always Yes* by Elizabeth Mary Strub, SHCJ.

All stories of Holy Child Sisters are from *History — Society of the Holy Child Jesus,* Issues I-VI.

References to the words of Cornelia Connelly, designated by "CC" or "D", are taken from the 145 volumes of writings presented as documentation for her canonization process.

"FT" refers to Foundation Texts from the *SHCJ Constitutions.*

Task Force Members:

Mary Ann Buckley, Caroline Conway, Jeanne Marie Guerin, Anita Quigley, Carol Ann Smith (chair-person)

FURTHER RESOURCES *for Reflection and Conversation*

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An extended bibliography of publications on Cornelia Connelly and the history, spirit and mission of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus can be found at: www. shcj.org

**Publications marked with an asterisk may be obtained from:*
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Our life

is hid with Christ

in God.

As we enter more and more deeply

into this relationship,

God's power at work in us

can touch the hearts of those we meet.

They will be led to know

the Father's mercy and boundless love

through the mystery of Christ among us.

For this is our mission:

to help others to believe

that he lives and acts in them

and in our world,

and to rejoice in God's presence.

SHCJ Constitutions 4

Continue the Story