SHCJ

SOCIETY
OF THE
HOLY CHILD JESUS

FOUNDATION TEXTS
and
CONSTITUTIONS

1983, 1998

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
Historical Introduction	vii
Foundation Texts from SHCJ Constitutional History	ix
Constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus	1
Preface	3
Decree of Approval	5
Life in Christ for Mission	7
Spirit and Mission	9
Consecration in Community	12
Chastity	13
Poverty	14
Obedience	16
Prayer	17
Lifelong Formation	19
Initial Formation	20
Profession and Apostolic Life in Community	26
Union for Mission: Government	29
Ministry of Government	31
Structures of Government	33
Local Level	34
Provincial and Vice-Provincial Level	36
General Level	43
The General Chapter	49
Transfer	52
Separation	52
Temporalities	53
Force of Constitutions	54
Message of His Holiness John Paul II	55
Index	56

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

The Society of the Holy Child Jesus is a pontifical institute of the church. Cornelia Connelly, its foundress, was an American, wife of the Reverend Pierce Connelly, an Episcopalian minister. During the early years of happy married life, they were blessed with five children, and Cornelia and Pierce were received as converts into the Catholic Church (1835-36). Four years later, Pierce, convinced that he had a vocation to the priesthood, asked Cornelia to consent to a separation. She made the sacrifice, accepting his decision as the will of God, but it was not until 1844 that Pope Gregory XVI granted them a decree of separation. A year later, Cornelia made a vow of perpetual chastity which was all that was required of her at that stage. Pierce was ordained and arrangements, approved by the church, were made for the care and education of the surviving children. The two youngest, to Cornelia's great joy, were left in her charge.

Recognizing that God was calling her to religious life, Cornelia planned to found a new congregation in America, but, at the request of Bishop Wiseman and encouraged by Pope Gregory, she agreed to found it in England where the need for the education of girls was very great. She set up her first convent in Derby in 1846, and over the years established schools for the education of all classes. The strong spirit of simplicity, gentleness and trust in which she formed her sisters had its origins in her contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation and in her own experience of motherhood. She trained them to bring these qualities, along with a liberty of spirit, to all their dealings with others, and developed a method of education based on trust. Her concern for the wants of the age and the works of spiritual mercy

to be exercised led her to pay special attention to the training of sisters for educational work among the poor.

The constitutions she drew up for her Society were first officially approved by Bishop Wiseman in 1850, but the recognition by Rome of its pontifical status was not granted until 1887, eight years after her death. This delay was caused by the attempts of Pierce Connelly to pose as the founder of the institute. His removal of the children from her influence, his renunciation of the priesthood and his legal proceedings to regain Cornelia as his wife intensified the crucifixion of spirit which he had brought upon her when he had asked her to consent to a separation -- an anguish which she expressed when she said the Society had been founded on a broken heart. In spite of the difficulties caused by these events, her work flourished and the membership of the Society grew. During her lifetime she sent sisters to make foundations in America and France. After her death houses were founded in Nigeria, Ghana, Ireland, Wales and Chile.

In 1923 the motherhouse of the Society was transferred to Rome. The institute is centrally governed and is organized into a European province, an American province and an African province. Since the Second Vatican Council the Society has been responding to the church's call to new areas of evangelization so that, in addition to apostolic works in schools and colleges, the sisters have undertaken other educational services and a variety of pastoral and spiritual ministries which are appropriate to their charism.

FOUNDATION TEXTS
from
THE CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY
of the
SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS
1850 - 1880

FOUNDATION TEXTS

In writing constitutions for her Society Cornelia Connelly drew from many sources. She was particularly attracted to the Ignatian and Salesian traditions. Before she left Rome for England, she composed brief constitutions which she continued to develop and refine until her death in 1879. Certain selections have been chosen from the various versions of the constitutional texts because they contain fundamental statements of her charism and act as a touchstone for her spirit which we have tried to embody in our new constitutions.

Articles I - III are the 1861 revision of texts which Cornelia wrote in the Rule of 1854. She herself revised them before they were printed for the Society in 1861. These paragraphs show her profound understanding of the meaning of the Incarnation. They call us, as Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, to abiding union with God in Jesus Christ who is the Father's Son, servant and beloved. The articles reveal Cornelia's vision of the way of life, holiness and mission of her Society. Themes from the **Spiritual Exercises** of St. Ignatius are evident in our constitutional history and spirituality from the beginning of the Society's existence.

I As it is the duty of every Christian to follow the example which our divine Saviour has given, according to the measure of grace received, and as it is only in striving to imitate this Great Model that salvation is to be attained, so it is more particularly the duty of those who are called by His infinite mercy to serve Him in holy Religion, to seek in the mysteries of the life of this Divine Lord all that can serve to their greater perfection and to the good of their neighbour. FT1

In the humble and hidden life of the Holy Child Jesus[1] we find mysteries of the most sublime teaching. Here it is that God manifests to us in the most wonderful manner the treasures of His mercy and of His boundless love. In that Divine Child, inclosed for nine months in the womb of His Mother, born for us in a stable, exposed to suffering and poverty, now flying into Egypt, and then hidden and labouring for thirty years in a carpenter's workshop, we find our Divine Master, our Model, and our Spouse: and from the living wells of His perfect humility, His divine charity, and His absolute obedience, we are to receive the Spirit of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. FT2

II In this school of divine science, contemplating the Eternal Wisdom in the lowliness of His humanity, we are to seek to attain the knowledge of our own nothingness and misery, and that of His infinite love and mercy; we are to learn to uproot the evil inclinations of our corrupted heart, and to cultivate therein the germ of practical mortification, studying in the example of a hidden God the sweetness of suffering and contempt, that we may thus rejoice to labour and to die with Him in the constant practice of poverty, chastity and obedience, opposed to the three human motives, profit, pleasure and ambition, the one being the perfection of the Gospel, and the other leading to death. FT3

Nourished from the well springs of this heavenly fountain, and fed in the pasture of His divine love, we are to run with ardour in the way that He has pointed out, and to employ every effort to bring others to taste and to embrace the sweet yoke which He offers them, labouring with all our strength to increase the love, the devotion for and the imitation of the interior and FT4

[1] In the first statement of this paragraph in 1854, Cornelia had written: 'What more sublime teaching can we find than the mystery of the Incarnation...'

exterior virtues of the hidden life of our most sweet Jesus, thus endeavouring to fulfil the end and aim of this little Society.

And it is particularly necessary at this time, when all seems to tend towards relaxation and instability, to bring up and to strengthen the young in a spirit essentially opposite: and how can we better secure this great end than by vividly unfolding in the course of our education the beauty of the morality, charity, and truth of the One, Apostolic, Holy Roman Catholic Church, and this in such a manner, as not only to confirm the children of the Faithful in their belief, but also to attract and bring the children of indifferent parents to appreciate and embrace its divine doctrines? FT5

III And since the Church in her divine universality encourages the means of education best adapted for each particular state of life we are especially bound to act in unison with her, and to meet the wants of the age, while leading our children to true piety, and the practice of solid virtue. FT6

Thus the end of this Society is not only to provide for our own salvation and our greater perfection, but as far as accords with humility, to employ ourselves for the salvation and the perfection of our neighbour, especially -- FT7

1. In the education of females of all classes of society. FT8
   (a) In the highest schools.
   (b) In middle and training schools.
   (c) In charity day-schools and industrial orphanages.

2. In receiving into houses of retreat, pious ladies, catechu- FT9
mens, neophytes, and young persons preparing for their first communion.

3. In profitable and necessary relations with externs, espec- FT10
ially by teaching the Catechism to children, and preparing sick females to receive the Sacraments at the request of the parish priest.

Note. -- It is understood that the second and third of FT11
these works are subordinate to the first (education), which is the primary and essential object of our vocation.

(1861 printed text, **Constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.** Articles I, II, III as in **Source IV**: 77-79.)

In the Rule submitted for Bishop Wiseman's approval in 1850, Cornelia began Part II with the subject of Formation. Using St. Francis de Sales' rule for the Novice Mistress, she added her own conclusion. This paragraph is the earliest statement of the spirit of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus seen within the context of the paschal mystery.

In short, as the Society of the Holy Child Jesus is spiritually FT12
founded on the virtues of poverty, suffering and obedience, which our most Blessed Redeemer came down from heaven to practise in the grotto of Bethlehem and thence through His whole life unto Calvary, so ought all to begin again with the most sweet and holy and loving Child Jesus -- a humbled God -- walking with Him step by step in the ways of the child, in humility and poverty, mortifying their senses, their imaginations, passions, whims, inclinations and aversions, so that they

may finally be united to our crucified Lord and then look forward to a glorious eternity.

(1846-53 **Constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus**, Part II, as in **Source IV**: 51-52.)

Cornelia was a compiler of texts from other sources. Central to her charism was an interior response to the third degree of humility as expressed by St. Ignatius first in the **Spiritual Exercises**, then in his constitutions. With slight adaptations she incorporated his text into our constitutions. This selection and the remaining passages further elucidate her charism.

It is necessary to keep in mind (considering it very important FT13
in the sight of our Lord and Creator) how eminently useful it is, and how beneficial to the spiritual life, to abhor, not only in some particulars, but altogether, all that the world loves and desires, and with our whole strength to accept and desire what Christ our Lord loved and embraced; for as men of the world, who seek after the things of the world, love and seek with great diligence, honours, fame and a great name in the world, as they are submitted to the world, thus those who in spirit walk with and follow everywhere Christ, our Lord, love and ardently desire everything contrary to these, which is to clothe themselves with the same garment and life as their Lord, out of love and reverence to Him, so as even, if it were possible without offence to the Divine Majesty, and without sin of their neighbour, to suffer insults, false witness and injuries, and to be held and esteemed as fools (without giving, however, any occasion for it) through the desire of becoming like, and of imitating in some measure, our Lord and Creator Jesus Christ, being clothed with His shame since for our spiritual profit, He

clothed Himself for us and gave us an example, that as in everything, when it is possible with the help of Divine Grace, we should desire to imitate and follow Him, He being the True Life who leadeth men to life.

(1850 **Constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus**, as in **Source IV**: 27. Original source: St. Ignatius Loyola.)

She [the Novice Mistress] is not to expect that the novices will form their spirit on her own, but she is rather to bend hers to theirs, making herself all in all to them to assist them to advance in their way. All ought to form themselves according to their vocation and *thence* to the spirit of the Society. The ways of God are many, and He knows how to lead to the same end by diverse means. The Mistress of Novices must *study* the manner in which grace tends to sanctify each one, and she must act accordingly. FT14

(**Customal of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.** CC LIV: 85, as in **Source IV**: 156-57. Original source: Daughters of the Sacred Heart.)

The spirit of this Institute, being that of the Holy Child Jesus, is a spirit of simplicity, humility, obedience and charity, together with a spirit of affectionate devotion to the works of zeal and charity undertaken by its members. FT15

This spirit embraces in a very special manner the virtue of zeal.... It should be

A well-regulated zeal, which begins by the extirpation of our own faults and the acquisition of religious virtues, and is always subject to obedience.

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, which knows how to bear with the defects...of children and the poor, and 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.

Finally, *a discreet zeal* according to knowledge which leads us to instruct ourselves before attempting to teach others....

(1877-80 **Constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus**, as in **Source IV**: 138-39. Original source: Cotel.)

Although in all confidence we should trust that Almighty God who has raised up this Institute, will, in His goodness, watch over and direct it in His holy service, and although the interior law of love and charity which the Holy Spirit engraves on the heart of each of its members, contributes more efficaciously to FT16

this end than all exterior laws, nevertheless, it is necessary that the Sisters should have written Rules which may help them to walk more securely, according to the true spirit of their vocation. It is therefore the duty of each sister to endeavour, as far as possible with Divine Grace, to forward the work of God -- not only by docility to the interior law of charity, but also by faithfully observing the Rules and Constitutions of the Institute.

(1880 **Constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus**, as in **Source IV**: 140. Original source: St. Ignatius Loyola.)

Since the Society can neither be maintained nor increased by human means, but by the grace of Almighty God, in Him alone ought our hopes to be fixed, that He may preserve and promote that which He has vouchsafed to His own service and praise. FT17

(1850 **Constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus**, as in **Source IV**: 71. Original source: St. Ignatius Loyola.)

Until the end of her life Cornelia kept refining her vision for the Society, bringing her constitutions into harmony with the requirements of the church, and expressing the life experience of the early members of the congregation. Cornelia's freedom as foundress encourages us to move with theological developments in the church, to enlarge her vision while remaining true to it; constantly to renew vitality within the Society by adapting to the needs of succeeding ages in response to the calls of the church.

CONSTITUTIONS

of the

SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS

1983 approved text incorporating
Canon Law Modifications of 1987
plus changes made by 1992 and 1998 general chapters

1983, 1998

PREFACE

Let us hold these constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in reverence. We composed them with the help of God; and through his church God gives them back to us with the confirmation of his blessing. They have become for us an authentic way of holiness. These constitutions are new. A new age in the church and in the world, a new experience of life, have gone into their making. Just as Cornelia put into a constitutional text what she had seen and heard, what she had touched and experienced, so we have done the same. And it is the same Child, sought and found, growing to maturity, dying and rising that both texts celebrate.

It is a constitution permeated by tradition. It breathes Cornelia's spirit because her spirit was alive in all those who labored over it in consultations, in commission and in chapter.

Our constitutions are both an answer and a call. They answer the need for a reference point which corresponds to the grace of our vocation. They call us continually to live that vocation more fully and more faithfully.

By asking the church to approve our constitutions, we are asking her to hold us accountable for the way God has inspired us to want to live. The norms we ourselves have composed and appropriated in chapter we now assume as personal obligations

because we "intend to do all things according to the constitutions of this Society..."

May God who moved us to desire to serve him this way bring about his kind purposes in and through each one. May the Society he continues to call continue to bring him delight.

Elizabeth Mary Strub, SHCJ
Superior General
Rome 1983

SACRA CONGREGATIO
PRO RELIGIOSIS
ET INSTITUTIS SAECULARIBUS

Prot. n. S 36 - 1/81

DECREE

This Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes by virtue of its authority to erect, guide, and promote institutes of the consecrated life, after careful examination of the Constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, acceding to the petition of the Superior General and her Council, hereby approves these Constitutions within the limits of common law and as amended according to the observations made by this Sacred Congregation. May the generous living of these Constitutions encourage all the Sisters of the Society to an ever-deeper commitment to their consecrated life, to Christ and to his Church in the spirit of the Society and after the example of their foundress, Cornelia Connelly.

Given at Rome, January 6, 1983
Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord.

E. Card. Pironio, Pref.
+ Augustine Mayer O.S.B.
Sec.

LIFE IN CHRIST FOR MISSION

SPIRIT AND MISSION

The Word was made flesh, he lived among us and we saw his glory... Jn 1:14

God has chosen to need men and women in every age to reveal his love, to make known the reality of the Incarnation. 1

Cornelia Connelly, contemplating the child Jesus with his virgin mother, sought and found the God who is both hidden and manifest. Through suffering and joy she learned to love him and the world he came to consecrate, with an undivided heart. The fullness of her response brought forth the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, an apostolic community in the church. Drawn by the Spirit in the same way Cornelia was, we wish to share in the self-emptying of the Son and in the mission which he joyfully accepted from the Father. 2

In the name Cornelia gave the Society she expressed her insight into the mystery of God the Son made man to save his people. The humble, hidden life of Jesus is the wellspring of the spirit of the Society, the source of its ardor and joy. Studying the example of this hidden God, we desire to be with him in the way of simplicity, humility and 'accepted suffering.'[1] We aspire to that 'one simple remembrance of his presence that unwraps all the windings of the heart and makes us true as he is true.' [2] 3

Our life is hid with Christ in God. As we grow in intimacy with him, his power at work in us can touch the 4

---

[1] CC: Preface to **Walking With God**

[2] CC 1:25

hearts of those we meet. They will be led to know the Father's mercy and his 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 his presence.

Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News... Mk 16:16

To fulfill this mission Cornelia developed an educational apostolate based on trust and reverence for the dignity of every human being. Her choice of apostolates continues to direct our service in the church as we undertake various forms of education and related pastoral and spiritual ministries. 5

The guiding principles for our apostolic service in each succeeding age are rooted in Cornelia's understanding of the Incarnation. In Christ we unite ourselves to the whole of humanity, especially to the poor and suffering. We accept our share of responsibility for the sin of the world and so live that his love may prevail. After reflecting as Cornelia did upon 'the wants of the age and the means of spiritual mercy to be exercised,' [3] we strive to act with the same courageous zeal she taught us. Whatever our ministry, we try with perseverance to help others grow strong in faith and lead fully human lives. Fidelity to those ideals requires 'an almost unlimited elasticity and simplicity of spirit among us.' [4] 6

As Christ accepting the limitations of his humanity came to do the will of his Father, so we, within the limits of our resources, place ourselves in his service through the church. Though we are a small Society, our common mission 7

[3] CC 1:70

[4] CC 16:51

is enriched by a diversity of persons and cultures. We inherit from Cornelia a spirit of concern for the whole world. Through our incorporation in a community of faith and service, God continues to enter our history to establish 'his dominion in a peace that has no end.' [5]

As a Society we are committed to christian education. We work for the integral human development of children, young people and adults through education and related ministries. 8

In our lives and in every apostolic endeavor we work for christian principles of justice, peace and compassion. 9

In the light of our mission, the requirements of the times and the call of the church, we commit ourselves to apostolic planning, coordinated at general, provincial[6] and local levels. 10

In whatever part of the world we serve, we respect the cultural expression of Christ incarnate in the local church. We can be enriched by our openness to the human values in each culture. 11

As communication is an essential part of mission, we recognize our responsibility to develop this process for the purpose of uniting the Society and strengthening our ministry. 12

[5] Is 9:7

[6] Whenever the words province, provincial are used, understand also vice-province, vice provincial, unless otherwise noted.

CONSECRATION IN COMMUNITY

Unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Jn 12:24

We rely in faith on our Lord's word alone when we vow evangelical chastity, poverty and obedience in the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. This public profession in the church marks a new phase in living out our baptismal covenant. Freely and irrevocably we surrender ourselves into the hands of God who consecrates us in community for the sake of the kingdom. By this consecration we join those in the church who press toward uncompromising acceptance of the gospel. The Father's will becomes for us 'the only happiness and the only thing worth living for.' [7] 13

As a congregation of pontifical right, we are immediately linked to the Holy Father by ties of obedience. 14

As religious women we give public witness to Christ and his values. The religious dress of the Society consists of simple attire appropriate to the expression of our consecration in the cultural and geographic setting of our apostolate. 15

Our Society emblem given at temporary profession and our crucifix ring given at perpetual profession, together with our religious dress, appearance and bearing, make us known to the world as those who are consecrated in this Society and sent in his name. 16

[7] D 75:629

Through the public profession of evangelical chastity, poverty and obedience, by the grace of God we commit ourselves forever to bear witness to the gospel according to the spirit and constitutions of the Society. 17

For authentic witness it is essential that our way of life give credibility to the choice we have made by our vows. 18

CHASTITY

Remain in my love. Jn 15:9

Love of Christ leads us to give him our hearts and lives as he gave his, without reserve and without recall. Through our vow of chastity, God consecrates us to himself in the whole of our human nature. 19

The love that takes the form of consecrated chastity must constantly grow until we reach our full maturity in Christ. He himself shows us the way of genuine love and friendship. True friendship in community strengthens our love of God, sustains and supports us and teaches us to go out to others with the very love of Christ. 20

Like Cornelia we bring a capacity for human love and affection to our mission and to our life together. With her, also, we bring a radical attachment to God alone and to his purposes. The renunciation demanded by a life of chosen celibacy leads to a solitude of heart which unites us with Christ's sacrifice. God is faithful, and if we keep faith with him we become a sign of the fruitfulness of the Spirit at work in the world: it is possible to live in joy and to die in hope because the Lord is true to his word. 21

We vow perpetual chastity as religious in answer to the call to love God in all, above all and for the whole of our lives. By choosing celibacy for the sake of the kingdom, we fix our hope in God and call attention to fullness of life in the world to come. 22

We should reflect on our relationships with others in the light of our commitment to a love that is unpossessive and universal. 23

POVERTY

He was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty.
2 Co 8:9-10

We are called to share the poverty of Christ who claimed nothing as his own and was poor throughout his whole life from the crib to the cross. If we cling to anything it becomes our master; we want to hold fast to Christ alone. We entrust our personal and material resources to the Society for its mission in the church. Through our dependence upon the community we both express, and are helped to grow in, our dependence upon God. 24

Our real needs are few. If we keep them so by simplicity of life, we free ourselves to share all that we have and are. This we seek to do with Christ who took on the poverty of our humanity. God's grace enables us to leave all things for his sake, yet to use them for him, to be willing to have or not to have as our work requires, to be always at the service of others. 25

In union with Christ and the church we strive to make our poverty a challenge to materialism. Fidelity to God's call requires 26

courage and generosity as we seek to promote his reign of justice and peace in the world.

By the vow of poverty we give up the right to make independent use of money and material goods of monetary value. We retain the right of owning personal property which we may already have or may later receive as patrimony. We may not, however, administer it ourselves or derive any personal benefit from it. (cf. 65, 71) 27

A sister who has been perpetually professed for at least ten years may renounce her patrimony and her right to own property in the future in accordance with what is stated in implementation norm 28.1. 28

All money we receive through earnings, pensions, recompense for services or gifts, except inheritances and those gifts designated for patrimony, belongs to the Society, and is administered by the appropriate authority. 29

We hold all things in common, receiving from the community everything we need. When what seems necessary cannot be provided we are content. 30

We strive to witness to the evangelical values of service, sparingness, and a responsible stewardship that enriches others. 31

General and province leadership teams, in consultation with their respective treasurers, will allocate, even when this involves hardship, a stated percentage of our ordinary income to efforts in favor of the economically poor and oppressed. 32

Each sister tries to live in freedom of heart, ready to leave people and places whenever the Lord calls her to a new ministry. 33

OBEDIENCE

My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work. Jn 4:34

To share fully in the mission of Christ we must enter into the mystery of his obedience. Through our vow of obedience each of us freely offers her life with the Son to the Father, that his will may be done through us in the church. The practice of obedience demands from all of us inner freedom, personal responsibility and living faith. Throughout our lives we seek this will of the Father, listening to his word wherever he speaks it. We express our readiness to act on his word when we respond to it day by day: in ourselves, in the needs of others, in the community gathered together and in those who are entrusted with the service of authority. 34

Conscious of the action of the Spirit and alert to the signs of the times, we share the responsibility for the development and carrying out of the mission of the Society. We are ready to go wherever we are missioned. Our evident willingness to surrender independent decision-making to further our common mission is a sign of God's unifying purpose at work in the world. Through the bond of obedience we are united in an enduring act of faith in God's providence working through our human judgments. 35

By the vow of obedience we undertake to do God's will as mediated to us through legitimate superiors and 36

expressed in our constitutions. We give ourselves to God through the Society in order to be dedicated to the mission of the church.

We give obedience to general chapter decisions, implementing them in a spirit of faith. 37

Our obedience places us in a vital union with all members of the Society. We accept responsibility to promote the spirit, apostolic life and government of the Society as an integral part of our obedience. 38

It is part of our obedience to engage in the search for God's will. Prior to being missioned we have the responsibility to make known to the province leader our abilities and aptitudes as well as the direction in which we feel that the Lord is leading us. 39

PRAYER

In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus. Phil 2:5

We grow in the knowledge and love of Christ and learn to find him in all things by spending time with him. 40
We listen attentively to the Spirit in the stillness of a quiet heart and learn to recognize and respond to him in every person and situation. God's grace will lead us to experience him in activity no less than in prayer. We return again and again to the life-giving word of scripture learning from Mary to ponder the mystery of God's redeeming love. Mindful of Christ's promise to those who are gathered in his name we frequently pray together in community.

We draw strength from the celebration of the Eucharist by which we enter more fully into the paschal mystery. This bread of life is the sacrament of unity and the center of our life as an apostolic community, impelling us to mutual love and opening our hearts to the needs of the world. In the celebration of penance and in communal forms of reconciliation we find the strength to respond to human weakness -- our own and others'-- with love and trust. 41

Each of us will strive to grow in union with the Lord and in the apostolic spirit of the Society. The basic and essential means to this growth are: daily personal prayer and examen; daily participation in the Eucharist where possible; regular spiritual reading; an annual retreat of six to eight days; and a triduum and periodic days of recollection during the year. 42

The community has the responsibility to safeguard each sister's right to time for personal prayer and the conditions necessary to foster the life of prayer. 43

We come together in community for the celebration of the Eucharist as frequently as possible. Each community also makes arrangements for regular communal prayer suited to its schedule and needs as an apostolic group. 44

We celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation frequently and the sacrament of the anointing of the sick whenever appropriate. 45

We value the Liturgy of the Hours as an important resource for private and communal prayer. 46

LIFELONG FORMATION

'All ought to form themselves according to their vocation and *thence* to the spirit of the Society. The ways of God are many, and he knows how to lead to the same end by diverse means.' [8]

Until Christ is formed in you. Ga 4:19-20

Throughout our lives God continues to call and form us to the image of his Son. By the unceasing action of the Holy Spirit we are conformed to the pattern of his life as it is seen in the gospel and reflected in the life of Cornelia Connelly. Desiring to 'grow in all ways into Christ' [9] we learn to recognize and respond freely to the inspirations of the Spirit. Fidelity to his work in us is the starting point and goal of our apostolic formation in the church. 47

In the midst of human weakness we strive to remain open to the conversion of heart that makes us apostolic to the end of our lives. Our gradual transformation is the result of choices influenced by grace and repeated over a lifetime. 'Endeavoring always to advance in the way of God's service,'[10] we walk humbly with the Lord. Every call, from first to last, is a promise of closer union with him in his saving work. This continuing personal call is at the heart of the Society's on-going life and mission. 48

---

[8] Customal ca. 1860
[9] Ep 4:16.
[10] Rule 1850:20 to Rule 1954:218.

Each member enriches the Society with her gifts and affects its future as she makes its spirit and heritage her own. Professed members have a major responsibility for the incorporation of new members. They play an essential part in the work of formation through their openness to growth, their willingness to share their experience of the vowed life and their effort to live the apostolic ideals of the Society. To those who join us we offer the security and insecurity of a life of faith and the certainty that God calls us to be holy and to be his messengers. 49

INITIAL FORMATION

Prospective and new members experience a period of initial formation, a time of gradual integration into religious life, leading to consecration by vows. During the whole period of initial formation each sister, with the director of each stage, continues to discern her call to the Society. She receives guidance and communal support as she grows in an understanding of her vocation and seeks to learn the ideals and obligations of life in the Society. 50

Each province leader assumes responsibility for the development of a comprehensive plan for initial formation which includes the pre-novitiate, novitiate and period of temporary profession. This plan is submitted to the Society leader and her leadership team for approval. 51

For the various stages of formation the province leader appoints directors who have an understanding of the Society's spirit and mission and sufficient breadth of experience for this work. They collaborate closely among themselves and are accountable to her. 52

The director of novices is appointed by the province leader with the approval of the Society leader for an indefinite period of time. She must be perpetually professed and thoroughly grounded in the charism of the Society. 53

PRE-NOVITIATE

During the pre-novitiate period the candidate is given opportunity to become familiar with the Society's mission and spirit through a variety of experiences. She is in regular contact with a director who helps her in discerning God's will. 54

The length of the pre-novitiate period and the program planned for the candidate are determined by her previous experience and her need. Ordinarily the pre-novitiate period is not to be extended beyond two years. 55

During the pre-novitiate period it is necessary for the director of candidates to ascertain as far as possible whether the candidate has the depth of faith, basic maturity and health needed to assume the obligations of life in the Society, as well as an aptitude for its mission. 56

Requirements for admission of candidates to the novitiate are those stated in the common law of the church and in the province plans. 57

The province leader in consultation with her leadership team accepts candidates into the novitiate on the recommendation of the director of candidates and director of novices. 58

NOVITIATE

They left everything and followed him. Lk 5:11

59 For love of Christ the novice learns to make him and his way the pattern of her choices. The novitiate is the time of initiation into the life and spirituality of the Society. The study of scripture, liturgy, the vows, our heritage, history and constitutions, and the life and writings of Cornelia Connelly are integral parts of the novitiate program. The novices form and are formed by community. The novice's study and experience of various aspects of ministry and community in the Society prepare her to share in the mission of Christ.

60 During the novitiate the novice with the guidance of the director of novices assumes the responsibility of living according to the constitutions. The director 'must *study* the manner in which grace tends to sanctify each one and she must act accordingly.'[11] Together the novice and director discern the desire and capability of the novice to live in the Society. The director encourages her to trust in God as she tries to understand her vocation.

61 The novitiate extends over a period of two years and includes twelve months of intensive spiritual training. Novitiate structures provide experiences which will demonstrate the novice's capacity to live the vows in our Society and which will give scope for personal choice and creativity.

[11] CC: Customal ca. 1860

62 During the novitiate there will be periods of formative activity to promote the progressive integration of the contemplative with the more active dimension of the novice's life. The length and distribution of these periods during the novitiate will be according to the needs of the novice and within the norms of common law.

63 The director of novices assumes responsibility for the guidance of the individual novices and for the novitiate program. Other members of the Society may be appointed by the province leader to assist her.

64 Ordinarily a novice will make the **Spiritual Exercises** in full. Before temporary profession there will be a retreat of at least five days.

65 Before making her temporary profession each novice cedes the administration of the property she possesses or may subsequently possess to whomever she wishes even to the Society, if the latter accepts, and she must determine the disposition of its revenues. This act of cession may be changed with the permission of the Society leader, or if she has delegated the faculty, of the province leader.

66 The novice is admitted to temporary profession by the province leader with the consent of her leadership team. At the ceremony of temporary profession the province leader or her delegate receives the vows of those making temporary profession in the Society.

The following is the formula for temporary profession of vows: 67

> God, I..., in the presence of Sister (province leader)..., vow to you for five years (in the case of renewal, one, two or three years) chastity, poverty and obedience according to the constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. Relying on your grace, I intend to do all things according to these constitutions under the authority of the church and of our Society leader...
>
> Sisters may add an introduction and/or conclusion according to their devotion and this is to be approved by the province leader or her delegate.

TEMPORARY PROFESSION LEADING TO PERPETUAL PROFESSION

At the end of the novitiate the novice makes temporary profession of vows for five years according to the constitutions of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus and in preparation for perpetual profession of vows. After three years of temporary profession a sister may request perpetual profession. Upon completion of five years a sister may request an extension of temporary profession for one year. In particular cases an additional extension of three years may be granted by the province leader. 68

During temporary profession the sister has all the rights and responsibilities of a perpetually professed sister except for limited passive voice (cf. 85). 69

When she is ready, the sister requests of the Society leader admission to perpetual profession. The Society leader makes a decision having reviewed the recommendation of the province leader and her leadership team and having consulted her own leadership team. She or her delegate receives the vows of those making perpetual profession. 70

Before perpetual profession the sister must, by a will valid in civil law, dispose freely of all the property she actually possesses or may subsequently possess. After perpetual profession a sister may not alter her will without permission of the Society leader, or of the province leader if the Society leader with the consent of her leadership team has delegated the faculty to her. 71

The two months of immediate preparation for perpetual vows will include a retreat of six to eight days. 72

The following is the formula of profession of perpetual vows: 73

> God, ..., I, ..., in the presence of Sister ..., (Society leader or delegate), vow to you perpetual chastity, poverty, and obedience in the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, and I promise to live and die in it. Relying on your grace, I intend to do all things according to the constitutions of this Society under the authority of the church and of our Society leader....

Sisters may add an introduction and/or conclusion according to their devotion.

At perpetual profession each sister assumes the full rights and responsibilities of membership in the Society. 74

PROFESSION AND APOSTOLIC LIFE IN COMMUNITY

'I belong all to God.' [12]

Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection ... Heb 12:2

75 At perpetual profession, relying on God's faithful love, we make our vows to him forever. At the same time we enter into a life-long covenant with one another in the Society. The Lord makes us one in heart and spirit, strengthens our generosity, and enables our ministry through life in community. We support and encourage one another from day to day, in times of hardship and in times of joy. We are ready to forgive and to be forgiven again and again. Prayer, companionship and celebration in community express our union for mission.

76 Through the purifying events of life welcomed in faith and love, God accomplishes his purpose in us. Each succeeding stage of life brings a new invitation to leave all, to follow him and to find the place where he dwells. We take a firmer grasp of the hope his call holds for us.

77 In our retirement years we let go of some activities to discover new forms of ministry enriched by our long experience of God. As our physical powers diminish and we suffer the loss of persons and things we cherish, the Lord trims his vine. Our relationships take on a deeper apostolic quality. We can now witness in a new way to our trust in God's promises and our anticipation of glory. When finally we lay down our lives in

[12] CC 21:34

love we profess our faith in the Son of God, who became man, grew up loving the Father's will, died and rose to save us all.

'Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen.' [13]

[13] Ep 3:20-21

UNION FOR MISSION: GOVERNMENT

MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT

May they all be one...so that the world may believe. *Jn 17:21*

We give our apostolic service not simply as individuals but as members of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus which received its mission from Christ through the church. United in the Spirit we constitute a strong apostolic community, ready to move forward through decision and action in the service of others. To maintain unity and direct the apostolic impetus generated by our union in Christ, we need the ministry of government. We are responsible to join in the discernment of God's will for the Society, and thus contribute to the final decisions made by our superiors. 78

Those to whom the task of government is entrusted derive their authority from the constitutions as approved by the church. Faith in the loving providence of God enables us to exercise authority and to respond to it in obedience. This faith-inspired obedience is expressed in fidelity to principles and practices which can keep the government of the Society true to the gospel and to our spirit and constitutions. 79

We recognize that government in the Society is a pastoral ministry of love and service, combining spiritual leadership and administration. It fosters unity, promotes the common good, and enables us to fulfill 'the end and aim of this 80

little Society'[14] according to the variety of our gifts and the needs of the apostolate.

We also recognize that the quality of our personal relationships directly affects government. These relationships are strengthened by good communication and by mutual trust and accountability. Since we are covenanted together for the sake of the Society's mission, we accept our individual share of responsibility for the well-being of the whole body. 81

[14] CC: Foundation Text 4.

STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT

People must think of us as Christ's servants - stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God. 1 Co 4:1

To preserve the dynamic unity in diversity which she desired for her congregation, Cornelia Connelly established from the very beginning a centralized structure of government. 82

Authority in our Society is vested in major and local leaders, assisted by leadership teams, and in the general chapter of the whole Society. Each sister shares in providing for the ministry of government through her right to vote, her eligibility for office by election or appointment, and through her responsibility to join in discernment at the appropriate level.

Legislative authority belongs solely to the general chapter of the Society. 83

The Society leader, province leader and vice-province leader are major superiors according to the common law of the church. 84

The sister who has made her temporary profession has active voice and limited passive voice (i.e. she can be elected to the provincial chapter, but not to the general chapter). 85

The sister who has made perpetual profession of vows has active and passive voice. 86

To hold the office of local leader a sister must have made perpetual profession of vows for at least one year. 87

To hold office at the provincial and general levels a sister must have been perpetually professed at least five years; in the case of the Society leader she must also be at least thirty-five years of age. 88

LOCAL LEVEL

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind. Ph 2:2

Ordinarily every sister is missioned by her province leader to a local community. Each one brings to the community the gift of her insights, experience and talents, enriching the life of the community, and contributing to 'the works of zeal and charity undertaken by its members.' [15] 89

Every sister and every community relates to a leader, communicates with her and accepts her authority. 90

The local leadership team may be composed of either the entire community or a number of members determined and elected by the community. 91

During the year the community meets at regular intervals, according to local arrangement, to reflect together on the quality of its community life and its apostolic witness. 92

[15] Cotel: Foundation Text 15.

Decisions of importance in the life of the community are made when consensus has been reached and been confirmed by the local leader. When consensus is not reached, or cannot be confirmed for good reasons, the local leader has the responsibility to make a decision. 93

THE LOCAL LEADER

Give encouragement to each other, and keep strengthening one another... 1 Th 5:11

The local leader is missioned by the province leader to exercise the service of authority on the local level. Her principal care is to facilitate the growth of the sisters individually, and as a community in fidelity to their vocation in the Society. 94

The local leader is appointed for a three-year term and should not hold this office for more than two consecutive terms in the same community. She may be appointed for one further term in another community, after which she must remain out of office for at least one year before again becoming eligible for appointment as local leader. 95

In fidelity to the spirit and constitutions of the Society, the local leader offers the kind of leadership that will best serve the needs of the particular group of sisters entrusted to her. 96

She makes herself available for consultation in all community concerns, and with individual sisters. 97

She is responsible for the sound financial administration of the community, in accordance with the Society's 98

current financial manual and is assisted by a treasurer who is accountable to her.

She contributes to the coordination and unity of the province by facilitating communication between the local and provincial levels. 99

PROVINCIAL AND VICE-PROVINCIAL LEVEL

A province is an intermediate unit of government within the Society, between the local and general levels. The local communities which make up the province serve the church in a particular geographical area, and are governed by a province leader. 100

THE PROVINCE LEADER

We are... fellow workers with you for your happiness. 2 Co 1:24

The province leader is appointed by the Society leader to exercise the service of authority through spiritual and apostolic leadership within her province. Because she is in a position to know and work with the members of the Society on all levels, she brings to her administration of the province a unifying breadth of vision and knowledge of the Society's personal and material resources. She so directs the apostolic planning of the province that individual sisters and communities are enabled to continue and extend the Society's mission, and participate responsibly in the life of the church. 101

She missions each sister to her apostolic work and community, and visits the communities in her province regularly 102

- calls meetings of the province leadership team and province extended leadership team, and prepares the agenda for them 103
- is responsible for initial and continuing formation in her province (cf. 112) 104
- is responsible for the sound financial administration of the province 105
- may delegate authority in particular instances and for particular purposes 106
- convokes the provincial chapter at least six months before it is due to meet 107
- represents the Society in her province in dealings with ecclesiastical and civil authorities 108
- promotes corporate unity by fostering communication within the province, by meeting with local leaders, by keeping in contact with the Society leader, and by attending meetings of the Society extended leadership team. 109

THE PROVINCE LEADERSHIP TEAM

You must all think of what is best for each other and for the community. 1 Th 5:16

In the government of the province the province leader is assisted by members of the province leadership team. They share in the decision-making by giving advice and by voting their consent in matters specified by the common law of the church and the constitutions and norms. They support the province leader in her unifying and reconciling ministry within the province, and with her they offer an effective administrative service. They bring to province government a sense of the Society's mission in the church at large, so that province resources are directed to the needs of existing works and to new forms of apostolate. 110

There is a minimum of two members of the province leadership team and the number is determined by the Society leader. 111

To broaden the base for consultation and decision-making, the province leader and her province leadership team meet with the local leaders of the province and the director of novices at least once a year, in a province extended leadership team meeting. 112

In consultation with her province leadership team the province leader:

- accepts candidates and admits them to the novitiate 113

- reviews the annual financial statements of the province and the communities 114
- provides the channels through which sisters participate in policy making 115
- after full consultation with the province draws up plans for representation, composition and method of balloting for the provincial chapter, and presents them to the Society extended leadership team for approval 116
- arranges for consultation of the members of the province regarding suggestions of names of those suitable for holding office as local leaders and formation personnel 117
- appoints a province treasurer and a province secretary who are accountable to her 118
- recommends to the Society leader the establishment and location of novitiates 119
- acts in other matters requiring consultation as determined by the common law of the church or the constitutions 120

With the consent of her leadership team the province leader:

- appoints local leaders and the director of novices, with the approval of the Society leader 121
- relieves from office any of the above after due consultation 122

- admits novices to temporary profession of vows, admits to renewal of vows and recommends to the Society leader sisters who are seeking perpetual profession 123

- extends the period of temporary profession beyond five years to a maximum of nine in individual cases 124

- approves budgets submitted by local communities, submits the province budget to the Society leadership team for approval and makes other financial decisions according to the stipulations of the general chapter, of church authorities and of the common law of the church 125

- approves plans affecting major apostolic works, the consent of the local ordinary having been obtained where necessary 126

- submits to the Society leadership team proposals for opening houses, written permission from the local ordinary having been obtained 127

- submits to the Society leadership team requests to close houses, the local ordinary having been consulted 128

- acts in other matters reserved to the decisions of the province leadership team by the common law of the church or the constitutions. 129

PROVINCE TREASURER AND SECRETARY

The province treasurer takes care of the ordinary financial administration of the province and prepares the annual financial statement of the province for the province leadership team. 130

The province secretary maintains records and deals with official documents. 131

THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works. Heb 10:24

The provincial chapter, which meets prior to the general chapter, is an occasion for renewal in the life of the province. The sisters meet for prayerful reflection and discernment on matters which concern the province itself and the Society as a whole. The chapter provides an opportunity for us to evaluate together the apostolic vitality and the resources of the province, to plan for the future, and to encourage a deepening of that 'interior spirit which is the life and soul of our vocation.'[16] 132

The provincial chapter is a non-legislative, consultative body. 133

It is composed of the province leader ex officio, and other members according to the province plan approved by the Society extended leadership team; it requires for the validity of its acts the presence of at least two-thirds of the chapter members. 134

---

[16] Rule 1880:51

It receives a report on the state of the province presented by the province leader, discusses proposals submitted by the sisters of the province, and formulates proposals to submit to the general chapter. 135

From among its professed members the provincial chapter elects delegates to the general chapter by the method of balloting approved in the province plan. 136

VICE-PROVINCE

A vice-province is an intermediate unit of government within the Society, between the local and general levels, consisting of a number of communities serving the church in a particular geographical area. It is dependent on the Society, through the general government, for personnel and/or financial resources, but gives promise of future stability and the possibility of providing for its own personnel and financial needs. 137

A vice-province is governed by a vice-province leader who has ordinary power which is the same as that of a province leader. 138

For the appointment and responsibilities of the vice-province leader and vice-province leadership teams and for the composition and functions of the vice-provincial chapter see the corresponding offices and structures under province. 139

GENERAL LEVEL

THE SOCIETY LEADER

Let everything you do be done in love.
1 Co 16:14

The Society leader is elected by the general chapter to offer a unifying service of authority and leadership to the whole Society. She directs us along the way of fidelity to the spirit of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, and to its special mission in the church. Mindful of that mission, she listens attentively to the Spirit speaking in the Society, in the church and in the world. She encourages all the members of the Society to grow in liberty of spirit and generosity of heart, so that we may better serve God's purposes. 140

The Society leader is elected by the general chapter for one six-year term. She may be re-elected for another consecutive six-year term. 141

She promulgates the decrees of the general chapter 142

- visits personally or through a delegate, every community of the Society during her term of office 143
- may send sisters, after appropriate consultation, to any part of the world 144
- receives the vows of those making perpetual profession or delegates this function to the province leader 145
- approves the appointment of local leaders and directors of novices 146

- has ultimate responsibility for formation throughout the Society 147

- is the official representative of the Society in dealings with ecclesiastical and civil authorities 148

- is responsible for the sound financial administration of the Society 149

- calls meetings of the Society leadership team and Society extended leadership team, and prepares the agenda for them 150

- convokes the ordinary general chapter at least twelve months before it is due to meet 151

- delegates authority in particular instances and for particular purposes. 152

THE SOCIETY LEADERSHIP TEAM

There are all sorts of service to be done but always to the same Lord.
1 Co 12:5

The Society leader is assisted by members of the Society leadership team. They help her in the task of animating and administering the Society by giving advice, by exercising a deliberative vote in matters specified by the constitutions, and by accepting responsibility for any delegated authority she may give them. By personal contacts throughout the Society, the members of the Society leadership team bring to their work an understanding of the concerns and actual conditions within each area. This 153

enables them to help each part of the Society to be aware of the wider needs of the church and the world.

There is a minimum of two members of the Society leadership team who are elected by the general chapter for one six-year term. They may be re-elected for another consecutive six-year term. The number of members of the Society leadership team is determined by the general chapter. (cf. 204) 154

If the office of Society leader becomes vacant for any reason the member of the Society leadership team who was so designated by election at the general chapter will have ordinary powers for the administration of the Society, and as soon as possible she must convoke a general chapter of elections to be held within six months. 155

In consultation with her leadership team the Society leader:

- is responsible for the practical interpretation and implementation of the constitutions and the decrees of the general chapter. Authoritative interpretation of the constitutions is reserved to the Holy See 156

- determines the number of members of province and vice-province leadership teams after consulting the province and vice-province leaders 157

- admits sisters to perpetual profession of vows 158

- allows a sister to renounce her patrimony in accordance with Art. 28 of the constitutions 159

- prepares the report to the general chapter on the Society during her term of administration 160
- reviews financial statements submitted by the provinces and vice -province 161
- submits an annual generalate financial statement to the Society 162
- appoints a Society archivist 163
- acts in other matters requiring consultation as determined by the common law of the church or the constitutions. 164

With the consent of her leadership team the Society leader:

- appoints the province and vice-province leaders and their leadership team members, after consideration of the suggestions submitted and consultation with the sisters concerned 165
- erects or suppresses provinces of the Society or modifies boundaries of existing provinces, after consultation with the provinces concerned 166
- approves the opening and closing of houses 167
- establishes novitiates and determines their location after consultation with the province leaders concerned 168
- approves plans for initial formation 169

- may change the location of the generalate after consultation with the province and vice-province leaders 170
- approves the annual generalate budget 171
- approves budgets submitted by the provinces and vice-province, and makes other financial decisions according to the stipulations of the general chapter, of church authorities, and of the common law of the church 172
- chooses a sister to complete the term of office of a member of the Society leadership team if a vacancy occurs 173
- appoints a Society secretary and a Society treasurer 174
- releases from temporary profession those sisters who, for grave reasons, request dispensation 175
- may grant an indult of exclaustration for a period not exceeding three years. A request for an extension beyond three years is made to the Holy See 176
- submits to the Holy See the request of a perpetually professed sister for dispensation from vows 177
- accepts sisters who transfer into the Society from other congregations, having followed the common law of the church and the norms of implementation 178

- acts in other matters reserved to the decisions of the Society leadership team by the common law of the church or the constitutions 179

- meets unforeseen needs between chapters and reports on the action taken to the next general chapter 180

- may after consulting the province leaders convoke an extraordinary general chapter of affairs. 181

SOCIETY TREASURER AND SECRETARY

The Society treasurer administers the generalate fund under the direction of the Society leader; reviews the annual financial statements submitted by the provinces and informs the Society leadership team of the financial situation of the Society. 182

The Society secretary keeps records of the Society up to date and deals with official documents. 183

THE SOCIETY EXTENDED LEADERSHIP TEAM

To broaden the base for consultation and decision-making, the Society leader calls regular meetings of the Society extended leadership team. 184

The Society extended leadership team is composed of the Society leader and her leadership team and the province leaders; it meets at least once a year. 185

The Society extended leadership team:

- carries forward initiatives within the Society in response to contemporary needs and the call of the church in fidelity to our apostolic spirit and mission 186

- coordinates planning between general and provincial levels 187

- makes preparations for the general chapter and approves plans for the provincial chapters 188

- arranges for eliciting suggestions for office on the general and provincial levels 189

- updates annually the Society's financial manual according to changing needs. 190

THE GENERAL CHAPTER

Since we have by an act of mercy been entrusted with this work of administration, there is no weakening on our part. *2 Co 4:1*

The general chapter represents all the members of the Society. Through it we acknowledge our accountability not only to each other, but also to the whole church. Through the general chapter we renew our understanding of what fidelity to the spirit and mission of the Society means in a constantly changing world. For this reason the chapter reviews both the written expression of that spirit and mission in the constitutions and norms of implementation, and the unwritten expression of them in tradition and current practices. As the members of the chapter pray and reflect together, to discern where the Spirit is leading us, they legislate and set 191

policy for the Society, to direct and strengthen its spiritual and apostolic vitality.

The general chapter meets every six years, and is the legislative body of the Society. 192

It is composed of the Society leader, the Society leadership team, and the province leaders, ex officio, and at least twice as many elected delegates; it requires for its validity the presence of at least two-thirds of those convoked. 193

Ex officio members of the general chapter continue to form part of it, even when they no longer hold the offices which admitted them. Newly elected officers, if not chapter members at the time of their election, should be called to the chapter and become chapter members. 194

If an ex officio member is prevented from attending the general chapter, the Society leader in consultation with her leadership team may choose a replacement. 195

Elected alternates replace delegates who are prevented from attending the general chapter. Once the general chapter has begun alternates do not replace elected delegates. 196

The general chapter receives the reports of the Society leader and the Society treasurer 197

- receives and acts on recommendations from the provincial chapters, and representations from individual sisters 198

- revises the constitutions as needed; constitutional changes require a two-thirds majority vote and must be submitted to the Holy See for approval 199

- enacts legislation and revises the norms of implementation as needed; in both cases a two-thirds majority vote is required 200

- re-examines the Society's life and mission, gives orientation and sets policies for the future 201

- reviews and approves the financial manual and the administration of the Society's temporal holdings 202

- elects the Society leader by a two-thirds majority vote or by an absolute majority if more than two ballots are required. If no sister obtains the required majority by the third ballot, the two sisters only who have obtained the highest number of votes will be voted for in a fourth ballot in which the two sisters themselves do not vote; the one receiving the highest number of votes will be declared elected. (cf. 203.4) 203

- determines the number of members of the Society leadership team after studying the needs of the Society and consulting the newly elected Society leader 204

- elects the members of the Society leadership team by an absolute majority and then from among them elects, by an absolute majority, the one who, if the office of Society leader becomes vacant for any reason, 205

will take her place until a chapter of elections can be convened.

The election of the members of the Society leadership team will be presided over by the newly elected Society leader. 206

TRANSFER

A sister may transfer from another congregation to our Society with the permission of the superiors general of her own institute and of our Society, acting with the consent of their respective leadership teams. The process of transfer and period of probation will be in accordance with the common law of the church and the constitutions and norms of the Society. 207

After prayerful deliberation with the province leader a sister may request to transfer from our Society to another congregation. She must seek the consent of the superiors general of both institutes. 208

SEPARATION

For serious reasons a sister may decide to ask for separation, temporary or permanent, from the Society. 209

In any process of temporary or permanent separation the procedures laid down by the common law of the church will be followed. 210

Should a sister manifest forms of behavior which are seriously inconsistent with religious life and damaging to the community, the Society must initiate the process of temporary separation, or dismissal according to the procedures and norms of the common law of the church. 211

The Society retains the abiding concern for the well-being of all former members. Assistance where necessary is provided for them at the time of departure. 212

TEMPORALITIES

The Society, on the general, provincial and local levels can acquire, possess, alienate and administer both movable and immovable property. This property must be held in the name of the Society and administered in accordance with these constitutions and norms, the general laws of the church and the civil law of the country. In cases of alienation of property the laws of the church are followed. 213

In the spirit of stewardship we should so administer our resources that we can contribute to the relief of economical poverty in the world around us and make provision for the gratuitous services undertaken in different parts of the Society. 214

The Society's temporal holdings will be administered according to the financial manual as approved by the general chapter. (cf. 202) 215

Provisions governing extraordinary expenditures at provincial and general level follow the common law of the church and are detailed in the financial manual of the Society. 216

FORCE OF CONSTITUTIONS

These constitutions, drawn up by members of the Society, accepted by the general chapter of 1980 and approved by the church, are our rule of life. They reflect our understanding of our call, hold us faithful to what we have pledged by our vows, and point the way in which we are to run. We therefore take them to ourselves as an obligation freely and seriously assumed. May God invest them for us with Spirit and Life. 217

'The Rule and the Spirit are the common property of the Society, and the most precious of all. All have these riches, and they ought to have great care, and zeal to preserve them.' CC 54:73 (Customal)

MESSAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

I am particularly happy to welcome the Sisters of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, on the occasion of their general chapter in Rome. For well over a century, your congregation has endeavoured to see Christ -- to form Christ -- in the young. This has been a great achievement of perennial value, for which the whole community of the church expresses its gratitude to you today.

But your greatest contribution from the days of Cornelia Connelly is not what you do, but who you are, who you have become by the grace of God: women specially consecrated in love to Jesus Christ; women living for Christ and for his church in 'the obedience of faith'; women finding in Christ the fullness of a wisdom and justice, a sanctification and redemption to be communicated to a world in need.

Dear Sisters, may Our Blessed Mother Mary reveal her Christ to you in every human being, and by her intercession may she sustain all of you in fidelity and joy.

Wednesday 30th January 1980

INDEX

accountable, accountability, 20, 32, 36, 39, 49
apostolate, apostolic, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 26, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41,49, 50
archivist, 46
authority, 5, 15, 16, 24, 25, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 43, 44, 45, 47
ballot, balloting, 39, 42, 51
call, 11, 14, 16, 19, 20, 26, 49, 54
candidate, 21, 38
celibacy, 13, 14
chapter, general, 17, 33, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55
chapter, provincial, 33, 37, 39, 41, 42, 44, 46, 48, 49, 50
chastity, 12, 13, 14, 24, 25
Christ, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 22, 27, 31, 33, 55
church, 9, 10 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27, 31, 33, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 52, 53, 54, 55
commitment, 11, 13, 14
communication, 11, 32, 34, 36, 55
community, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 26, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43, 53, 55
compassion, 11
consecrate, consecration, 9, 12, 13, 20, 55
consensus, 35
consent of leadership team, 23, 25, 38, 39, 46, 52
consultation, consulted, 15, 21, 25, 35, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51
contemplation, contemplative, 9, 23
conversion, 19
Cornelia Connelly, 9, 10, 11, 13, 19, 22, 33, 55
discern,-ing,-ment, 20, 21, 22,31, 33, 41, 49
dismissal, 47, 53
dress, 12
education, educational, 10, 11
emblem, 12
eucharist, 18
evangelization, 12, 13, 15
examen, 18
extended leadership team, 35, 40, 44
faith, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 26, 27, 31, 55
fidelity, 10, 14, 19, 31, 35, 43, 49, 55
finances, financial, 35, 36, 37, 39, 41, 42, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 53
formation 39, 44, 46
--, lifelong, 19, 20, 26, 37
--, initial, 20, 25, 37
general, generalate 11, 15, 17, 33, 34, 36, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55

government, 17, 29, 31, 32, 33, 36, 38, 42
hid, hidden, 9
hope, 13, 14, 26
human, humanity, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 55
humility, humbly, 9, 19
Incarnation, 9, 10, 11
incorporation, 11, 20
joy, joyful, joyous, 9, 13, 26, 55
justice, 11, 15, 55
leader, local, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 43
leader, province, 17, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 33, 334, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 52
leader, Society, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45 46-48, 50, 51, 52
leadership team, 15, 20, 21, 23 25, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44-52
leadership team, Society, 15, 20, 37, 44-48, 50, 51, 52
leadership team, provincial, local, 15, 21, 23, 25, 33, 34, 36, 38-42, 48, 50
(extended) leadership team, 37, 38, 39, 41, 44, 48, 49, 50
liturgy, 22
liturgy of the hours, 18
Mary, (virgin mother), 9, 17, 55
ministry, 10, 11, 16, 22, 26, 31, 33
mission, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 43, 49, 51
obedience, 12, 13, 16, 17, 24, 25, 31, 55
paschal mystery, 18
patrimony, 15, 45
peace, 11, 15
penance, sacrament of reconciliation, 18
plan, planning, 11, 20, 21, 36, 39, 40, 41, 42, 46, 49
poor, economic poverty, 10, 14, 15, 53
poverty, 12, 13, 14, 15, 23, 24, 25, 53
prayer, 17, 18, 25, 41, 49, 52
profess, --ion, --ed, 12, 15, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31, 40, 42, 47
province, provincial, vice-province, vice-provincial, 11, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 32, 34-39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 52
retreat, triduum, days of recollection, 18, 23, 25
ring, 12
scripture, 17, 22
secretary Society, 47, 48
self-emptying, 9
separation, 52, 53
service, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 19, 31, 35, 36, 38, 43, 44, 53
simplicity, simple, 9, 10, 12, 14
Society leader, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45 46-48, 50, 51, 52

Society leadership team, 15, 20, 37, 44-48, 50, 51, 52
Spirit, 9, 13, 16, 17, 19, 31, 43, 49, 54
spirit, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 26, 31, 35, 36, 41, 43, 49, 53
Spiritual Exercises, 23
spiritual reading, 18
stewardship, 15, 53
suffering, 9, 10, 26
temporalities, 51, 53
temporary vows, 20, 22, 23, 24, 40
transfer, 47, 52
transformation, 19
treasurer, 15, 36, 39, 41
treasurer Society, 15, 39, 47, 48, 50
trust, entrust, 10, 14, 16, 18, 22, 26, 31, 32, 33, 35, 49
union, unity, unite, unify, 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 26, 31, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 43
vocation, 19, 20, 22, 35
vows, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 33, 40, 43, 45, 47, 54
witness, 12, 13, 15, 26, 34
women, 9, 12, 55
zeal, 10, 34, 54

Finito di stampare:
Aprile 1998 dalla
Tipografia Abilgraf – Roma