

PRIORY SCHOOL

THE HERITAGE ON WHICH IT IS BUILT



CORNELIA CONNELLY AND THE BEGINNINGS OF
THE SOCIETY

SCHOOLS

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

ORIGINS

Cornelia Connelly
1809 -1879



American woman

Originally an Episcopalian, her husband, Pierce, an Episcopalian minister.

They had 5 children, 3 of whom lived beyond childhood.

They both decided that they wanted to become Catholics, which they duly did.

Later, Pierce decided that he wanted to also be a Catholic priest.

So began a long saga because the Church would only allow this if Cornelia agreed to take a vow of chastity. (And would certainly NOT agree to this today!)

Much against her will, Cornelia eventually agreed, and entered
a Sacred Heart Convent in Rome.

She was then asked by the Pope Gregory XVI
to start a new congregation of nuns in England
whose work would be the education of girls

The congregation began in

October 1846

called the **Society of the Holy Child Jesus**

And so began the establishment of a network of

HOLY CHILD SCHOOLS

The Society began life in Derby, England
but not long before the few nuns moved south to
St Leonards on Sea, Sussex

From there, the nuns were trained, their numbers
steadily increased,
and Cornelia sent them out across England to open
different types of schools for girls.

Some boarding, some day schools, some both.
And in some cases the nuns were headteachers of
the local parish primary schools.

Notable places to mention

Mayfield, Sussex

Preston, Lancashire

Blackpool, Lancashire

Expansion continued after Cornelia's death in 1879 and into the 20th century and there are or have been Holy Child Schools in Europe, the USA, and West Africa

A Holy Child School in Birmingham came into existence in **1936.**

On this site, purchased from Hallfield School

And remained in the hands of the Society through into the 1980s

Diminishing numbers in the Society led to the establishment of a new trust, the community moved out and the first non-SHCJ headteacher was appointed.

BUT

Priory School

(name changed by Jonathan's predecessor)

remains part of the

Holy Child Network of Schools

A voluntary group of about 7 former Holy Child

Schools in England, Ireland and France

They meet annually

with some of the Holy Child Sisters

to strengthen ties and to look deeper into the

ethos of their origins.

**SO --- WHAT WAS THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION
ON WHICH HOLY CHILD SCHOOLS WERE FOUNDED?**

Holy Child Schools share in the
mission of the Society which is
expressed as

“to help others to believe that God
lives and acts in them
and in our world
and to rejoice in God’s presence”.

Cornelia wanted to promote an educational system which was

based on trust and reverence for the dignity of every human being

responding to the wants of the age in which they lived

and enabling students to grow strong in faith and lead fully human lives.

HOLY CHILD EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY EXPRESSED IN A SET OF GOALS FOR SCHOOLS

To foster a faith commitment that engenders a joyous personal relationship with God in addressing the challenges of the world

To live, learn and worship as a dynamic Christian community

To offer an intellectually challenging and creative programme of studies that develops a love of learning and academic excellence

To work for Christian principles of justice, peace and compassion in every facet of life

To create a learning climate based on trust and reverence for the dignity and uniqueness of each person

To promote the personal growth and development of all who participate in the life of the school

SOME WORDS OF ADVICE FROM CORNELIA TO TEACHERS

Cornelia wanted the children in our schools to be happy and to enjoy being at school.

“Let them generally lead their pupils by love not fear.”

“Trust the children and never let your confidence in them be shaken. Confidence begets confidence.”

“Difficulties exist only to be overcome.”