



Society of the Holy Child Jesus
AMERICAN PROVINCE

460 Shadeland Avenue
Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania 19026
610.626.1400 phone / 610.626.0451 fax
www.shcj.org

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For more information:

Theresa Katalinas
215.884.6499 / theresa@comsolutionsgroup.com

Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus Use Internet Technology to Expand Mission, Reach More People

Drexel Hill, Pa. — Today's nuns are taking their message to the public through Internet blogging, uploading video to the Web, and communicating on Facebook and Twitter.

Religious orders like the Society of the Holy Child Jesus are using ever-changing communication tools to expand their international religious community even further, while keeping pace with the rest of the world. Mary Ann Buckley, a Sister of the Holy Child, has produced videos of the Sisters and volunteers who are carrying out the Holy Child mission. The Society has established a YouTube page which they use to post and share the videos. Sister Mary Ann has also experimented with blogging and is teaching some of the other Sisters how to do it.

“Communication has changed,” Sister Mary Ann said. “That’s not a religious thing. That’s life. The back-and-forth relationships are shaped by access to e-mail in many cases.”

Communicating abroad

Sometimes e-mail communications aren't enough. In those instances, Sister Mary Ann, who lives in Chile, stays well-connected to the Society's American Province – which is headquartered in suburban Philadelphia – through monthly meetings via Skype, an Internet service that provides free phone and video calls anywhere in the world.

“Here I am in Chile and I'm part of three committees in our American Province,” she said. “In the last few years, the most dramatic development has been the explosion of possibilities for communication.”

Those increased communication possibilities translate to greater savings on long-distance phone calls and travel expenses previously needed for the Sisters to meet in-person. Instead of spending \$17 on a five-minute international phone call, Sister Mary Ann can make an hour-long call using Skype and pay less than a dollar.

And, besides communicating with Sisters across the globe, the Sisters are using the Internet to spread the Society's message to Spanish-speaking women through the creation of www.vocations.shcj.org and
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For this is our mission: to help others to believe that God lives and acts in them and in our world, and to rejoice in God's presence



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www.santoninohesus.org. “We’ve had several responses, one of which has led to an ongoing relationship. She’s not somebody who would become a Holy Child Sister, but she’s attracted to the spirituality of the Society,” Sister Mary Ann said. “She’s from Peru and visited us and went back to Peru with copies of the biography of our founder, Cornelia Connelly. Young men and women in their 20s are reading Cornelia’s biography and it’s because of the internet that they’re learning about her.”

Staying connected within the Society ... and beyond

While reaching outside the international religious order is important, Sister Margaret Mary Bell has made it her goal to use technology to keep the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus connected to each other, regardless of distance. Through video conferencing capabilities, Sisters can share presentations, spiritual retreats, and much more.

“It’s been tremendous,” Sister Margaret Mary said. “The Sisters of the Holy Child live and serve throughout the world. So if we have celebrations or meetings in one area where we serve, people who don’t live close by or who can’t come are still able to be part of it.”

One such instance was the Society’s recent Awards Dinner in the Philadelphia area, which came in the midst of a yearlong bicentennial celebration for Cornelia Connelly. Sisters, alums, and others—both nationally and internationally—were able to watch it live on their computers via video streaming.

Connecting alums

The Society is also using technology to connect with alums of schools they taught in. Many of these individuals, who are now parents and grandparents, are catching on. In a matter of weeks, more than 190 have signed on as “fans” of the Society on its new Facebook page. A few of those have waged friendly competitions with respective schools to see which school could garner the most “fans” for the Society.

And still others, like Marianne Bacon, of Palo Alto, Calif., use Facebook to reconnect with beloved Sisters. “I would like to be in contact with my dear first grade teacher from Pasadena Assumption School, Sister Rosemary Hayes,” Bacon wrote on the Society’s Facebook wall. “I would like to tell her a memory I have of her from our picnic at Griffith Park, where a little boy was temporarily lost from the group. I have never forgotten the image of her carrying him back to us all, as we sat waiting on the ground. At least that is the way I remember the scene. What a lovely image to keep.”

According to Sister Margaret Mary, the expanded reach made possible through new technology is something that Philadelphia native Cornelia Connelly, who founded the Society in England in 1846, would wholeheartedly support. One of Cornelia’s goals, which today continues as a Society focus is to “meet the wants of the age,” meaning that we always need to be adapting and responding to the needs that exist in the world today. “We are a people who have no borders in terms of communication,” Sister Margaret Mary said. “Cornelia would’ve embraced it and enjoyed it.”

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About the Society of the Holy Child Jesus

The Society of the Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ) is an international community of Roman Catholic Sisters founded by Cornelia Connelly. The Society is composed of three Provinces (American, African, and European). In addition to the United States, the American Province includes Chile and the Dominican Republic. Since the Society's founding in 1846, education has been at the heart of its mission. Today, the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus continue to serve as educators in the broadest sense of the word through their ministries in teaching, spiritual direction, social work, legal work, health care, parish administration, and pastoral care. Throughout the world, the Sisters of the Holy Child serve in schools, colleges and universities, parishes, health care organizations, social service and legal centers, and more. The Society also sponsors 14 schools, Rosemont College, and several social service programs. For more information, visit <http://www.holychild200.org>.

Editor's note: For more information or to schedule an interview with a Sister of the Holy Child Jesus, contact Theresa Katalinas at 215-884-6499 or theresa@comsolutionsgroup.com.

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