

*In the same charism*

*In the* **with responsibility**



**n. 2 - 2022**

**COMPANY OF SAINT URSULA  
SECULAR INSTITUTE OF SAINT ANGELA MERICI  
FEDERATION**

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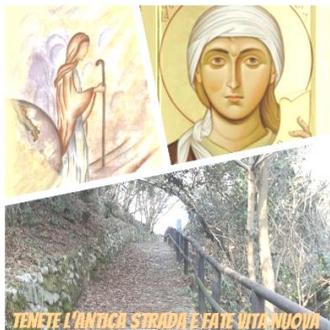
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## TO THE READERS

*Keep to the ancient way & live a new life...*

(10<sup>th</sup> Counsel 22)



We are approaching the celebration of the Federation's convention, a Merician convention, which invites us to live fidelity and renewal. Invoking the Holy Spirit, we want to prepare ourselves, united together always, for this meeting that marks an important moment of reflection in the year of the 485<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first assembly of the Company of Saint Angela in Brescia (1537- 2022).

### *Keep to the ancient way... Which one?*

The way of God's Word, the way of the Church, the way of Saint Angela, the way of the Constitutions: *"In the life of the Foundress, in the Rule, the Counsels and the Testament, inserted into the current historical context by the present Constitutions, we find the fundamental guide of our life and the way for carrying out the purpose of the Institute"* (Constitutions 1.5).

& This connecting "and" between the two commands, *keep* and *live*, expresses and combines well the old, sure, proven way...with living a new life. Without leaving that way (that road), without traveling another, it will still be a matter of finding again that same way and continuing the journey – in newness of life.

### *Live a new life... Here's the renewal!*

*"...referring to one's origins preserves and nourishes the spiritual energies capable of always paving the way for an authentic renewal"* (Constitutions 37.1).

Perhaps, as St. Angela informed us, our roads have become a bit thorny and stony. Sometimes we struggle to travel them; they do not always

seem so linear to us now; we glimpse more curves than horizons, more thorns than roses. They would need – those same roads – a new blossoming. We will be able to rediscover that familiar path to be green again and blossoming through *authentic renewal*.

Yes, we desire renewal, we want it. We are not museum pieces. The Company brings with it a beautiful and ever new charism. But it is up to each one of us to think about how to revive this charism, how to live today an *authentic renewal*, not cosmetic, but incisive and profound.

And here again for us today are other Merician *and's*:

*& We will find the thorny and stony roads flowering for us and covered with paving of finest gold* (Rule, Prologue 27).

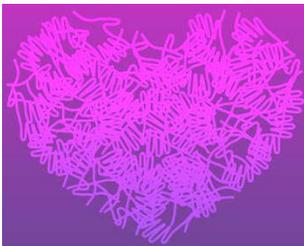
Let us make Merician roads flourish again in our own little place and in the Company worldwide.



**Let us live time and history and let us act... with courage, without fears, *prudently and with good advice...***

*& “If, according to times and circumstances, the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice”* (Last Legacy 2).

**Let us act! United together...**



***“See then how important is this union and concord. So, long for it, pursue it, embrace it, hold on to it with all your strength.”***

(9th Counsel 10-14)

*Caterina Dalmasso*

## ***FIDELITY AND JOY***

**Valeria Broll**  
**President of the Federation**

**“Persevere faithfully and joyfully in the work you have begun”**

These two attitudes (fidelity and joy) are Gospel-based, Christian, and Merician, but we certainly do not easily encounter them while walking the streets of the world, looking at the faces of the many people we meet, going about in our environments or listening to the daily news on television, with its abundant words and images.

St. Angela speaks to us, her daughters, and as a mother hands on to us the truest and most beautiful reality that she discovered, welcomed, loved and lived. What? That life-project *“recently begun under the name Company of St. Ursula,”* where God granted to her and to us the grace *“of separating [ourselves] apart from the darkness of this miserable world and of uniting [us] together to serve his divine Majesty”* (Rule, Prologue 2, 4).

Fidelity and joy were how she experienced life and wisdom of heart. Hers was a joyful life because she knew where she had placed her hope: *“in infinite divine goodness [by which] not only shall we easily overcome all dangers and adversities, but also, to our great glory and jubilation, we shall defeat them. We shall even spend this very short life of ours in consolation, and our every sorrow and sadness will be turned into joy and gladness, and we shall find the thorny and stony paths blossoming for us, and covered with paving of finest gold”* (Rule, Prologue 25-27).

Saint Angela's heart was a heart in love and given totally to God. The call to holiness was a grace for her, a grace that came before her, that fascinated her, that shaped and formed her. As a result, she fascinated the women and men of her time, shaped as she was by the gifts of the Spirit and formed to the Word of God so as to become counselor, peacemaker, pilgrim, mother and sister to all.

**What do her witness, her words, her holiness suggest to us?**

What Pope Francis too, echoing the testimony of the founders, says to us consecrated persons: "*Return to the first love to tell your story again, to keep your identity alive, and to strengthen family unity and a sense of belonging.*"

St. Angela makes us return "to the first love" (*the work begun*) to declare who we are and whose we are: *spouses of the Son of God and called to become queens in heaven* (Rule, Prologue 17) and to declare this with fidelity to life and with the joy and gladness that shine through our deeds, words and faces.

Our vocation asks us to offer "*Christian animation of the secular city, to contribute with the renewing energy of the Gospel to changing the world from within*" (from the Pope's message for our 2018 Assembly).

Let us animate ourselves to animate our environment in a Christian way. The vitality of the Company is promoted to the extent that we put all our efforts into animating the surroundings where we live, and to do it in a Christian way. The world changes not by slogans, laws or whatever, not to the extent that we do this rather than that, but to the extent that we allow ourselves to be renewed by the power of the Gospel. Change consists of our own continuous conversion and docility to this power of the Gospel.



St. Ursula, virgin and martyr and patroness of our Company, tells us precisely this: if we allow ourselves to be totally conquered by Jesus Christ, if we bind ourselves with heart, mind, will to the one Word of Salvation, the power of the Gospel can make us bold, courageous, determined, strong, able to enliven our surroundings in a Christian way.

She, she was a leader, able to enliven others and lead them to fall in love with Jesus, to follow him and choose him as their only treasure and lifelong Spouse. We, following her example, want to be witnesses of love, able to make ourselves as small as grains of salt, a pinch of yeast, small lamps, tiny seeds, but with the inner strength of

life, which certainly is not given by us, but by the Author of Life: He is the one who makes us grow, and he deserves the glory. Our works do not.

In entrusting our family (Company) to St. Ursula, St. Angela desired, dreamed, believed this “Mission Possible”: that with our life given and offered to *the most handsome of men* (Psalm 45:2) we would enliven our environment in a Christian way.

Every day we want to enhance one another’s lives with prayer and with joyful fidelity to our everyday life, offering that Christian spirit in every one of our relationships, work, environment, family, Church, world... Age does not hold anyone back, because it is not a matter of doing, but of being, it is a matter of heart, of love... lovers of Jesus Christ, lovers of life, lovers of the world. We do not seek to lose ourselves and fragment ourselves in the world, but united in Jesus Christ and among ourselves, we seek to unify, bind, join Heaven and earth. In short, we seek to make concrete the vision of St. Angela's ladder.

This is our mission: to allow the power of the Gospel to penetrate us and change the world. The Risen One is the protagonist of our life.

**But is he really the protagonist of our life?** Or do death, disappointment, scarcity, confusion, loneliness, bitterness, sadness, or laziness take over and extinguish our fidelity and joy?

If we go through the Gospel accounts of appearances of the Risen One, we find his gifts: peace, forgiveness, closeness, listening, encounter, and the gift of glimpsing from afar or near the presence of the Lord who always goes before us. **Do these gifts of the Risen One inhabit our very being?** Let us allow our hearts to be warmed by his presence, and then "let us go forth" to be a sign of that presence among our brothers and sisters on the roads of the world. **Are these gifts of the Risen One present in my Company?**

Perhaps we do not even realize that we are within the mystery and power of Resurrection. We too are among the risen. We are alive in him who is alive. Because we are alive, we are fruitful.

Pope Francis says to consecrated people, *"I wish you fruitfulness.... I wish that you may be fruitful."*

We, who are by vocation spouses and mothers, let us ask ourselves: how is our fruitfulness? Are we open to life or are we afraid of life? Our fruitfulness should not take into account our age, our small numbers, being scattered, or perhaps alone. Instead it should leverage our living and faithful relationship with the Lord and with him bring life everywhere.

Let us renew our vocation as spouses and mothers. Brides who want to follow the Bridegroom wherever He goes. Mothers who know how to be like Mary in every situation: on our feet, that is, present and supportive, welcoming, hopeful, invoking the gift of the Holy Spirit and believing in the Resurrection.

If the Gospel is life-giving for us as it was for St. Angela, our life is and will be prophecy. That is, we are called to live and to proclaim what the Lord tells us; nothing else, everything else is just self-centered. To eradicate our self-centeredness and to elevate our willingness to do instead what the Lord asks of us in fidelity to our vocation, let us often ask ourselves: **What would St. Angela do here and now?**

It is useful to ask ourselves this question because it spurs us to live today and not to repeat things or attitudes out of mere habit or tradition. What is the Lord asking of me today? There is no single, precise answer that is the same for all. The answer is personal and daily.

Only if we consider the Rule and Constitutions on a daily basis are we able to remain open and give an answer. Only if we help each other in dialogue and conversation are we able to respond. Only if we are available personally and as a Company can we find answers that are adequate for today. Otherwise, little by little, we die.

In one of his presentations, Msgr. A. Tessarollo tells us, "*What can we do today, in this time, to make the **Merician charism** meaningful to the Church and the world: what choices of formation and life in the Company do we make and implement so that they are a real support to the Gospel form of life?*" Let us take in hand the Rule and Constitutions, read them and especially pray them.

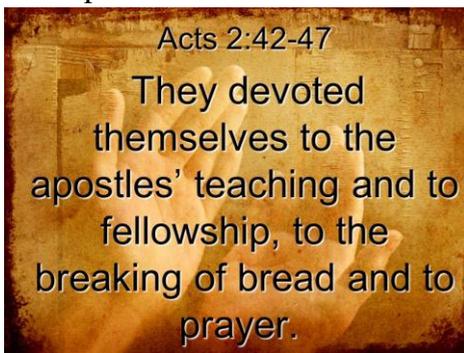
Let us entrust ourselves, our hearts, our wills, and our minds to prayer; then let us respond willingly, tenaciously, courageously.

To assume the right attitude, let us listen and do what St. Angela tells us. She was not afraid of changes; indeed she suggested and promoted them: *"Act, move, believe, strive, hope, cry out to him with all your heart, for without doubt you will see marvelous things"* (Counsels, Prologue 17-18).

Each of us can, for example, take one of these verbs suggested by St. Angela and try to give it form with our lives. The Constitutions tell us, *"with docility we will let ourselves be led by the Spirit in the following of Christ, obedient, chaste and poor, so that our being may assume the form of faith, hope and charity"* (Article 3.2). This is how we grow, and this is how the Company grows: it certainly grows in holiness, it grows in truth, it grows in witness, it grows ... regardless of numbers because it is inhabited by the spirit of the foundress, by that same Spirit that she listened to and followed in founding the Company of St. Ursula.

Let us ask daily for the grace to **know how to let go** for love of the Lord: *"to leave behind wealth, leave behind the yearning for status and power, leave behind structures that are no longer adequate for proclaiming the Gospel, those weights that slow down our mission, the strings that tie us to the world. Without a leap forward in love, our life and our Church (and our Companies) become sick from complacency and self-indulgence"* (Pope Francis).

Let us always return to our first Love and we will be able to tell our **story**, our **identity** will be alive, our **unity** will be firm and our **belonging** will give meaning and significance to our lives, love, belief, and hope.



***"Persevere faithfully  
and joyfully  
in the work  
you have begun"***  
(Last Legacy)

## The Optimism of the Rule of Angela Merici

### Msgr. Rino La Delfa Vice-Assistant to the Council of the Federation



The optimistic and uninterruptedly confident tone of the Rule prepared by Angela Merici when she established her Company is surprising. In the very rich *Prologue*, where she directly exhorts the sisters to observe the *Rule*, she speaks of it as "the way along

which to walk" to attain the ultimate good, passing through "all dangers and adversities" with "firm and unquestioning faith and hope in infinite divine goodness" with the certainty that "we will also overcome [the dangers and adversities] ... to our great glory and jubilation." Faithful to the very end on the confident walk that makes her proposal unique, and remaining on the metaphorical "way" – traveling by the *Rule's* guidance, she declares that "all our sorrow and sadness will be turned into joy and gladness; and we shall find the thorny and stony paths blossoming for us, and covered with paving of finest gold" (*Prologue to the Rule*, 24-27).

Visiting Jerusalem for the first time some years ago, on a pilgrimage along the sites of the Passion, I was surprised to see that the Via Dolorosa, the journey Jesus made to Calvary (dramatized by art in the traditional, devotional fourteen Stations on the walls of every church as an object of pious contemplation) apparently took place not on the slopes of a hill outside the city gates; it passed right through its beating heart, the narrow, disjointed streets of its marketplace. All this reminded me that the Cross is not just a static reality, a symbol of ritual, the supreme



culmination of a terrible religious affair that was consummated far from history, and whose sacrifice has meaning only in liturgical memory at the altar.



The story of the cross, the Way of the Cross, begins earlier in human history, on those "thorny and stony paths" that Angela must have been thinking of when she invited her sisters to live the rule as a pathway, leading step by step to where Christ leads: to the Father. Unlike Paul, who would urge believers to experience a mystical crucifixion, Jesus' personal invitation to the disciples was really to take up the cross and follow him. Walking the Way of the Cross together with

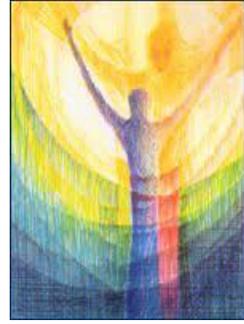
Christ shows an often underestimated aspect of the Cross: progressing, growing, and becoming capable of the gift of self that the Cross will ultimately demand. This is why the Way of the Cross is different from the Cross by itself, just as everyday life is different from Sunday. The "way" prepares us to give ourselves; this way teaches us how to overcome, a kind of winning that is the optimism of Merician faith.

In his work *The Water and the Fire* (1954), Dominican Gerald Vann suggests, "Perhaps the deepest mystery of redemption and divine love is precisely that we are redeemed not so much *from* our squalor, but rather, in a sense, *within* our squalor." The Way of the Cross is how God unites suffering with love. If it were only suffering, the Cross would be in vain. There is no inherent virtue in it.

Edward Ingram Watkin, an English convert to Catholicism and friend of Luigi Sturzo, points out in his work *The Catholic Centre* (1939), "The Cross is the way; the Resurrection the goal. The Cross belongs to time; the Resurrection to eternity. And the Cross itself is not primarily submission to death, but the victorious battle of Life over death and through death."

It is as if in the Cross, formed by two axes, symbolically two wills meet, the divine will and my will. Placed side by side with each other, there would be no Cross, only acquiescence. It is only when the divine will crosses mine that in pain and suffering (in the Merician

perspective ) "We will find the thorny and stony paths blossoming for us and covered with paving of finest gold." The Way of the Cross, traveled by observing the Rule, can rightly be called the way of redemption precisely because redemption is not the result of a magical act that took place outside of human time and freedom, but rather the restoration of time and freedom.



For me, the parable of the good seed and the weeds (Mt 13:24-30) is a metaphor for the Cross in its most essential aspects, suffering and sin, thorns and stones: "Do not pull up the weeds, lest it happen that in pulling up the weeds you also uproot the wheat with them." Seeing the Cross as the way of redemption implies accepting the fact that God, while not involved in sin, is nevertheless fully present within human suffering. I believe it is precisely this thought that gives breath to Angela Merici's invincible optimism.



Human responses to suffering, that is, to the Cross, are always partial, just as partial as the solution that the servants in the parable were seeking: to uproot the bad seed that had been sown. There is a misunderstanding behind human beings' partial choices: the willingness to reject suffering, but with no intention to repudiate sin. Here is the paradox: by denying sin and fleeing suffering, people dispense with God. Tearing up the weeds can mean losing the good wheat.

The Way of the Cross is a profoundly divine and at the same time human teaching about redemption as a path of growth. Without this path, it will be hard for people to perceive the limits of their goodness. Without this path they will hardly understand the arrogance of their demands.

Perhaps the first *way of the cross* is foreshadowed in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32), whose journey of suffering away from home and back toward it manifests the Father's merciful love. The

young man's flight is conscious rejection of being a son; his return is a freely given and unexpected rebirth as a son. "In the Cross of Christ," Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggested, "God confronts the successful person with the challenge of sanctifying pain, suffering, humility, failure, poverty, loneliness and despair" (*Ethics* 1937).

I was talking about the 'shortcuts' that human beings choose as a solution to pain and an escape from a guilty conscience. A first shortcut, perhaps the most philosophical one, is *Stoicism*. The Stoic intends to control pain. By practicing a long, toughing asceticism, he believes he can become the master of himself under all circumstances. It is as if he anesthetizes himself, as if he desensitizes himself. We all dreamed as children of becoming one of those noble and imperturbable tragic heroes, for whom suffering was just a word. But becoming numb to

Although  
the world  
is full of  
suffering,  
it is full  
also of the  
overcoming  
of it.



Helen Keller  
*Optimism* (1903)

one's own pain inevitably makes one numb to the pain of others. Of course, a certain asceticism is certainly good. There are problems that must be dealt with harshly. Voluntarily exposing oneself to hardship and suffering can educate a person to someday accept inescapable suffering without sinking. But such moral, mental or physical prevention certainly cannot be mistaken for 'religious.'

No one should convince herself that God can be pleased to know that we choose to suffer through any kind of renunciations and sacrifices, for greater than sacrifice is the love that alone can inspire such acts and consequently make the Lord happy, and help others.

In the Fourth Chapter of the *Rule*, dedicated to the practice of fasting, Angela warns that "to afflict one's body indiscreetly, 'Esset offerre holocaustum de rapina,' that is, would be to offer in sacrifice something stolen" (20). Being a gift, love has difficulty in penetrating hearts that have been hardened by discipline, even the best. Education should therefore not tend to harden people, to make them unfeeling. Educating in love involves teaching people to be open to suffering.

The modern response to pain is *rebellion* against it. For nearly two centuries rebellion has been talked about and practiced as the way of self-realization. Since evil and suffering have been considered proof that God does not exist, the only thing left is human liberation. Interestingly, rebellion, as a theory, coincides with a marked sense of human solidarity. On the other hand, the technical progress that should have solved poverty and created a broad global understanding has



instead generated the atomic threat and widespread terrorism. And that is just the latest evidence of a long series of tragedies that afflicted the planet in the last century and that still seem to cast their threatening and destructive shadow over our European reality. Pèguy wrote in 1902, "A single misery is enough to condemn a society. If a single person is be kept in need, or consciously left in need, that is enough for the whole civil contract to be considered null and

void. As long as a person remains outside, the door that is closed on his/her face shuts off a city of injustice and hatred."

I was a boy when the shouts of the 1968 youth protest movement reverberated. I am an adult, and I watch in puzzlement the youth of today, the children and grandchildren of that generation of disillusioned optimists who had made disobedience their banner.

Angela's lesson on obedience at the heart of her Rule notes what is most genuine and essential about the Way of the Cross: "**Melius est obedire, quam sacrificare**"; that is: **It is better to obey than to sacrifice**" (*Rule*, Ch. VIII, 5). There is something in every rebellion against the times that smacks of the artificial, if the result is just the opposite of what is desired. The intense and driving social energy has been replaced by an irreversible narcissistic and individualistic turning inward, leading to an absolute relativism (pardon the oxymoron). The path of the Cross, pursued through obedience, gives meaning to self-sacrifice.

While revolting against suffering may be considered an impulsive, sentimental and immature reaction, it is nevertheless to be considered infinitely healthier than *resignation*. Listening to people who are resigned, one gets the impression that everything in life and in

the world is inevitable, and that everything can be easily explained. They consider the ability to suffer and the ability to rejoice as canceling each other out: it's either one or the other. In such a mental system, the unhappiness of one person could be interpreted as the happiness of another. The current cultural and social context has canonized this view (better to call it a system), granting each person and group the thoughtless use of freedom to prevail over weaker people and groups in all areas of life. This fits into the survival model that we see in practical life, where the instinct of preservation is stronger than the motivation for meaning. In reality, resignation generates more severe suffering and often endorses situations of excess evil, which end up brutalizing, annihilating and degrading. After all, as Angela paradoxically notes in Chapter 5 of the *Rule* devoted to prayer, "Every adversity has been hard for me because of the littleness of my love for you." Some occasions of resignation reveal the little love with which someone walks a path of fidelity but endures and experiences it as harsh.



In all three situations of suffering (Stoic, rebellion, and resignation) the suffering to be escaped can be traced back to the idea of punishment. Self-infliction, rebellion, and resignation all imply an erroneous relationship with pain. The underlying belief is that suffering exists because God willed and created

it.

On the other hand, the Way of the Cross reflected in the spirit of the Merician *Rule* tracks humanity's relationship with suffering. It makes one grasp suffering as a trial and not as punishment. Meditating on the Way of the Cross in fidelity to the path laid out in the *Rule* shows how Jesus himself did not come to suppress suffering all at once, nor to explain or justify it. Rather, he came to take it on and transform it. Bearing suffering with infinite love, he taught us how to lift others from theirs and how to patiently endure inevitable suffering, together with him and for him.

Faithful, trusting, abandoned in the Father even in death, he taught us that it is possible to be happy amid unhappiness. Speaking of the fullness of his joy just before his Passion, he revealed to us that the two, joy and suffering, are not mutually exclusive. "The world must know that I love the Father and do what the Father has commanded me" (Jn 14:31). Therefore, one should avoid even thinking that suffering comes from God. God does not punish us; he does not send catastrophes and chastisements, epidemics and wars. Human malice is sufficient to explain evil. The present experience of warfare in Europe convinces us that it cannot be otherwise. Far from wanting to take vengeance on us, God weeps over our crimes and their consequences (cf. Lk 19:44-45). There is thus no divine origin of evil.

Questions about the origin of suffering, such as "But what have I done to God that he should send me these trials?" should rather be replaced by phrases about how God can use suffering: "How can I make of this suffering an act of faith and love?"



Angela Merici thought of the *Rule* as a "way along which to walk." Following Christ to reach the ultimate

good strongly suggests that the very way of the Church is the Way of the Cross. For the Church is distinguished not only by the cross on the top of her bell towers, but because in the innermost roots of her life and history she still makes the climb that only the power of love can help complete. The Cross of Christ does not condemn us to suffering; it "condemns" us to being holy. So does the *Rule* "drawn up for your benefit" (*Prologue to the Rule*, no. 24). Its destination is holiness.





Lancashire are Cumbria and the magnificent Lake District National Park, which is acclaimed for its beautiful lakes and hill country. We are surrounded by green countryside with farming, both agricultural and livestock, being a feature of our area.



We have the Bowland Forest nearby and a network of canals,



originally built before the railways were introduced to transport goods to the ports. It is now mainly used for leisure activities and wildlife conservation.

*the historic castle and the canal of Lancaster*

*The historic*

**There are three universities** in our area, which provide employment for local people and also bring many students from overseas to our area. Many students attend our Parish Masses and often stay for many years. This gives the cities of Lancaster and Preston a very cosmopolitan atmosphere, with many diverse cultural influences.

The name Preston is derived from ‘Priests’ Town’, suggesting early settlement of religious origin dating back to the Anglo-Saxon period. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century Preston had become an important market town and administrative centre. Its Market Place still occupies the same location some 1,000 years later.



*Harris Museum, Art Gallery and Library, Preston*

**Blackpool** is a seaside resort made popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the railways were introduced, bringing many families for holidays. It is focused on the tourist trade, with the famous Blackpool



*Blackpool Tower and illuminations*

Tower and Ballroom and many other tourist attractions, including its Pleasure Beach and Illuminations on the promenade. Sadly, the town has been in decline with the advent of cheap foreign travel in recent decades, but recent travel restrictions due to COVID have brought a revival of visitors.

### **Ancestors, Family and Attitudes**

We British are the product of many cultures. Over the centuries we have been invaded by the Romans, the Vikings from Denmark, the Saxons and the French in 1066; each brought their own cultures which inevitably blended with ours to produce the Britain of today.

Over the past 1000 years our economic identity has changed from that of largely rural communities growing crops and tending livestock, with local trades people spinning wool and producing items in their own cottages for local consumption, and later developing to manufacture cloth for export.

Industrialization in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries brought factories and mills to our towns and the consequent migration of labour from rural areas to towns and cities. During the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, it proved more profitable to move manufacturing overseas, where goods are cheaper to produce. Sadly, this has led not only to the rapid decline of manufacturing in Britain, but also to an uncontrolled increase in consumerism in recent years, where a ‘throw-away’ culture has relied on mass-produced cheap imports, creating mountains of waste and pollution as we discard our unwanted or outdated clothes and household items.

A dark period of our history which we cannot ignore is the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century establishment of colonies in the Americas and India.

These opened new markets for sugar, tobacco and tea where British merchants regrettably relied on the slave trade to make their profits.

In the 1950s people from the former colonies of India, Pakistan and the West Indies responded to an appeal for workers to rebuild Britain following the devastation caused by World War II. Polish, Italian and Chinese migrants also settled here, bringing new customs, religions and food experiences, and thereby greatly contributing to our diverse culture.

Having experienced great poverty and struggle between the two great wars the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought recovery and renewed optimism. Post-modernism found its place in our culture, bringing changes that were not altogether positive. Consumerism, individualism and protectionism became endemic, resulting in a lack of sharing resources and a growing inequality between rich and poor in our society. Many families have struggled to feed their families, and there has been a rapid rise in the need for food banks and other charitable projects to help them. Our prison populations have grown considerably as crime levels escalate, much of which is drug and alcohol related, and mental health difficulties have also escalated.

Lack of funding and other issues in our National Health Service and Benefit System, greatly exacerbated by the recent COVID pandemic and global energy crisis, has resulted in many families experiencing great hardship, though we must acknowledge that the poverty we experience in the west is relative, and cannot be compared with the absolute poverty experienced by our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world.

Now, however, greater awareness of the issues is bringing a change of attitudes. Concern for the environment and a response to rampant consumerism are bringing a desire for simplicity across society. There is a new ethical concern for recycling clothes and household items, encouraging us to repair rather than discard and bringing concern for how food is produced. Farmers' markets are becoming more popular and artisan crafts are also moving into the mainstream of cultural consciousness, again exacerbated by lockdowns, job losses etc brought about by COVID restrictions, but bringing a real and positive move away from the negative aspects of the last century.

## Resources and Problems

In the UK **we are a Monarchy** and host two Houses of Parliament. The Lower House is the elected House of Commons and the Upper House is the unelected and advisory House of Lords, who scrutinise the work of the Commons. **We still live in an unequal, class-based society.** The aristocracy often inherit large, ancient family mansions but without the large estate incomes of the past to maintain them. The wealthy and professional middle classes mainly generate income from business and finance sectors of the economy and can access private healthcare, education and other services. The poorer sections of our society comprise the lower-paid, working classes and the unemployed, who are most vulnerable to economic down-turns, increases in energy and household bills and a loss of income through illness or environmental factors such as the recent pandemic.



The gap between rich and poor becomes wider and more evident during times of crisis, and recent times have seen a great need for assistance for lower-income families from the voluntary sector and faith groups, including many of our churches, who have

thankfully risen to the challenge and provided much-needed support by creating and enlarging our food banks and providing other essential services such as shelter, bedding and clothing to those in need.

This gap between rich and poor is most evident in large inner-city areas where poverty and poor housing conditions contribute to a gang culture promoting drug and alcohol abuse, violence involving knife and gun crime and domestic and child abuse. Debt in these areas is a hugely contributing factor, as ruthless loan sharks offer comparatively small unsecured loans at ridiculously high rates of

interest which mount up very quickly to a level impossible for their victims to repay, greatly exacerbating the above problems and adding to an ever-increasing level of child-poverty and homelessness.

There is a housing shortage throughout the UK, and although houses are being built there are insufficient affordable properties available to rent, while in the more desirable rural or southern coastal areas, second homes bought by the wealthy stand empty most of the year while local working people are unable to afford them and have to move away.

Families increasingly rely on each other for support, resulting in multi-generation households caring for elderly relatives and also their young people who are unable to support themselves independently.

The UK's wealth and resources are unevenly distributed, with most of the prosperity being found in the south-east around London, the centre of our business and finance sectors.

Since most of the manufacturing trade went overseas we have become an economy largely reliant on financial services. Efforts are being made, with little success as yet, to bring more of the country's resources north to previously manufacturing and coal-mining areas. We still have, though greatly reduced in capacity, vehicle and aerospace manufacture, ship building, steel and fishing industries (but they all rely largely on overseas investment), and our farming and agriculture. Otherwise we rely on our tourist and service industry.



Brexit has made us ever more aware of our reliance on overseas imports, especially for gas, electricity and fuel.

As political unrest and wars increasingly develop overseas, our small

nation still accommodates many asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants. Here again church and faith groups and the voluntary sector have proved invaluable in supporting them, often

lobbying Parliament on their behalf. However our infrastructure is increasingly under pressure from a growing and ageing population and the strain on our transport, education, and especially public health, welfare and benefits systems is apparent.

## Religion and Relationships

We have an increasingly secular society which does not value religious practices, beliefs and culture. Indeed, religious symbols and practices are discouraged, even banned from schools and other areas of public life, and there is pressure to conform to secular ideology in all areas of society, particularly in schools.

Though multi-cultural in general, with many different religious beliefs to be found throughout the UK, the two mainstream religions are Christianity and Islam. In general there is respect for every individual's beliefs and in times of need faith groups of different religions and denominations work alongside each other to bring relief. Like so many western countries, we have our share of extremist religious activity, but although such episodes receive much publicity they are thankfully not representative of our normal inter-faith relationships.

**St. Augustine's Vatican-sponsored mission** came to our shores in AD597, bringing Christianity to the Anglo-Saxon people. Roman Catholicism was dominant in Britain from the 6<sup>th</sup> century until the Reformation period, when King Henry VIII established the Church of England in 1534; later the church in Scotland became established as the Presbyterian Church. Wesleyan Methodists broke away from the Church of England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and became very popular with the mining communities in Wales. The Church of England in Wales became independent in 1920, and alongside these mainstream churches arose other Protestant denominations, examples being Baptists, Quakers, Plymouth Brethren and many other independent churches.

Following the Reformation, adherence to the Catholic faith continued in secret to various degrees throughout the UK, particularly among Recusants in the north of England and in Lancashire in particular. We can still find homes from the period which boast 'priest holes' where priests and incriminating evidence could be hidden from

soldiers sent to arrest and bring to their deaths those convicted of illegal celebration of the Sacraments in Mass.

On 7<sup>th</sup> August each year we still honour those faithful priests, on this the date of their executions in Lancaster, by retracing their steps and praying the Rosary in the place they were executed.

### **The Presence of St. Angela in England**

In 1862 Sisters from the Ursuline religious order were invited from the Tildonk Community in Holland and were established in Forest Gate in the East End of London. During the persecution of Religious Orders in France, more came from Brittany and Boulogne-sur-Mer, some returning when it was safe, but many joining the Roman Union Sisters.

Later some Sisters came from Germany, escaping Bismarck, and also stayed.

At the peak there were some 300 Sisters, strictly enclosed pre Vatican II, who established schools as the girls could attend within the cloister walls. Some German Sisters established the Order in Australia, and Marie of the Incarnation took it to Canada. There are now only approximately 30 Sisters left here.

Being aware of the decline of Ursulines in this country, Sister Zela Proctor prayed fervently and set about establishing the Company of St. Ursula in this country to follow the Rule of St Angela.

Sue, Marie  
W, Yvonne, Marie  
R, Pauline, and Sr.  
Zela in 2019

Sr Zela  
was Prioress of  
the Ursulines in  
the sister church  
of our Parish,  
the Cathedral



Church of St Peter the Apostle in Lancaster. Yvonne and Marie W. had attended many spirituality sessions given by Sr Zela over 20 years when they heard her speak on the topic of CSU spirituality.

After some months of discernment in 2007 Marie W. and Marie R began the two year preliminary period and made their first Consecration in 2009, later followed by Yvonne in 2011, whose first Consecration was in 2013. The new Group of Lancaster became affiliated with the Company of Slovakia, mentored by Maja D.

In 2015 Sue joined our group, and she is due to make her final Consecration in June 2022. Pauline joined us in 2020 and made her first Consecration on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022.

Marie R and Marie W both belong to the Cathedral Parish in Lancaster, Sue to St Clare's in Preston, and Pauline belongs to Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in Blackpool. We have all been well established in our Parishes and Diocesan work until the pandemic hit in 2020 when everything stopped, but thankfully we are beginning to restart activities this year.

Contact with our Bishop has continued throughout, and he has had Zoom meetings with the Diocesan Vocations Group, with which Sue is our representative, and also the National Conference of Secular Institutes, where Marie W is our representative.

Marie R is our representative on the Council in Slovakia, to which our Group belongs. Sadly, after a long and painful illness Yvonne died in 2020, but not before she was able to witness her eldest son's ordination to the priesthood in 2019. She will, along with St Angela, be able to help us with intercessions in heaven.



Sr. Zela, Marie W, Canon Luiz Ruscillo, Mary R, and Maya (Slovakia).

Among us, our Church work includes working with the homeless; the elderly; the sick and dying and the bereaved; the travelling community; the lonely and vulnerable; and Eucharistic ministry; Readers at Church; hospitality; Sacristans and Prayer leaders.

We are a relatively young, small group but we hope to encourage vocations in our area. We are in the process of setting up a website and are hoping to be included in the Diocesan blog as well as the Cathedral blog. We get great support from our Priests and our Bishop, and Canon Luiz Ruscillo (see picture above) has been our support and guide from the beginning. He has celebrated all the Masses of Consecration since 2009. We pray to Jesus and St Angela for vocations to ensure the continuation of the Company in England.

*“Hold this for certain: that this Company has been planted directly by his holy hand, and he will never abandon this Company as long as the world lasts.”*

(Last Legacy, 6-8)



Marie W (back, 2nd from left) in Brescia, on pilgrimage with sisters from several continents.

## Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart *The Holy Spirit* *Holy Obedience*

We are continuing here the articles drawn from *Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart: The Rule, the Way* by Mary-Cabrini Durkin, published in English in 2005.

### Alight with the Spirit

Their faces glow. Their simple black and white clothing allows the painter to focus

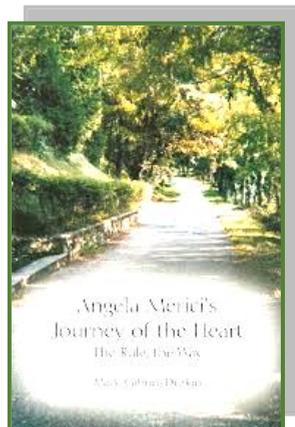


our attention on delicate skin tones that hold an inner light. Inward attentiveness marks their expressions. Young though they are, these women seem self-contained, serene. Each holds a book, the Rule of the Company of Saint Ursula. At their circle's center, Angela Merici teaches them the essence of Ursuline life, which the Rule describes. Her gesture

indicates the Rule's source, the Holy Spirit symbolized by the dove overhead.

The unknown sixteenth-century artist may suggest that Angela's Rule flowed from divine inspiration; she is open to the Spirit's guidance. The composition pictures her faith that the Spirit presides over the Company and continues to inspire a faithful living out of the Rule.

Throughout the Rule and her Counsels and Testament, Angela's words demonstrate that her trust in the Holy Spirit's guidance is completely foundational to the Company, to Ursuline life.



Nowhere is that more evident than in the Rule's Chapter VIII, "**About Obedience.**" Here she expresses her confidence that the Holy Spirit is the primary guide, who sends a voice of counsel and inspiration *continually...into the heart.* Her trust both in the Spirit and in each woman's ability to hear that voice underlies the freedom that so characterizes Angela's way of life.

Angela discusses obedience in guiding Ursulines toward living by the Spirit's counsel, according to God's will. She describes obedience as a process of listening, discernment and decision-making. Her words presuppose the material of two earlier chapters of her Rule....

"**About Confession**" explains the spiritual practices which cultivate interior freedom. Thus equipped, the woman is ready to listen well and discern authentic obedience to God.

"**On the Manner of Receiving**" guarantees the personal freedom of each Ursuline in choosing this life. It also puts in place a support system to sustain her freedom.



determination....

Some of the first Ursulines were household servants. Living outside their paternal homes, they may have had some slight independence, depending on their employers' dispositions. However, their future security depended almost completely on marriage, which would consolidate their position within a man's control. Middle-class women lived in the familial home in a very dependent position. Other people chose their path in life, usually the men in their families. The



## The Context

Obedience...was the norm for women in sixteenth-century Italy. If the Renaissance brought new freedoms to men, it had little meaning in the domestic sphere. Women, especially single women, were at the bottom of society's tiers. They had little power for self-

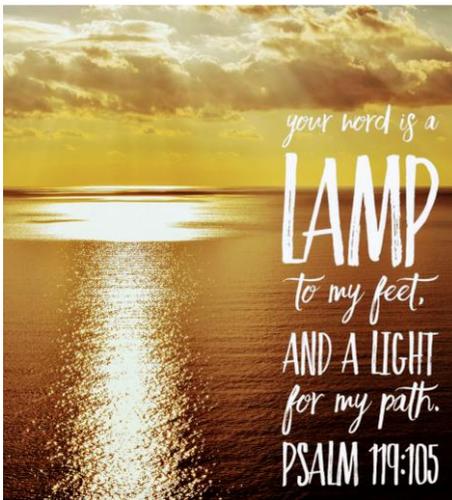
higher the class, the greater the pressure to marry for position, and the earlier the arrangements were made. Engagements were often planned in childhood....

Philosophers (male, of course) commonly taught that women are weak-minded and morally inferior, more physical and more lustful than men and more vulnerable to demonic influence, and that men are more spiritual. Men assumed that they had moral authority, from their vantage point of superior spirituality and wisdom. They were more like God and had closer access to the divine. Women were to be guided, to obey.

One of the worst injustices of any oppressive system is the self-hatred it so often induces in the oppressed. Self-hatred is both a tool and a result of the system. Amazingly, Angela Merici could emerge within this historic milieu with a radical new understanding of obedience grounded in a woman's *own integrity!*

## The Rule

Did Angela Merici really say *We call upon each one to observe holy obedience*? Angela who, as a headstrong teenager, resisted her guardians' plans for her? Angela who declined to follow the Pope's wishes? Angela who helped other women to make life-choices outside the patriarchal family, even contrary to it? Angela who created a support system for women to control their own lives?



What could she mean by *holy obedience*, when she seemed to show so little conformity to authorities and systems? Yet she devotes a full chapter (VIII) of the Rule to obedience. To understand her meaning, we can explore how Angela's insights and practice grew from her own experience....

## *Angela's Path to Holy Obedience*

The young woman we meet in her teens or early twenties had a strong sense of her integrity. Her vision in the Brudazzo field, an inner experience of God's call, shaped her vision of her own future, even though she could not yet see its outlines clearly.

At Salò, after her parents' deaths, she began to learn a way of listening and following God that would ripen into *holy obedience*. Her uncle and aunt Biancosi were very kind. They were sure they knew what was best for her: marriage. In her heart, though, the Holy Spirit was whispering. To obey God, to follow this call, she had to be free. She had to listen in her heart. That was not easy. Everyone around her seemed so sure! Her own feelings clamored, too...the happiness of family life...being attracted to sons of her aunt and uncle's friends when she was introduced at weddings and dances...the flattery of compliments, especially about her blond hair—quite the fashion then!

But in the quiet of her own room, she faced honestly the truth that these attractions did not resonate with the experience of her vision at the Brudazzo, with her own inner call from God. Others' words and her own feelings could have drowned out the divine whisper. But Truth told her that the Holy Spirit was inviting her to belong to God alone. It was Truth that she chose to obey.

It was hard to stand up to the authority figures in her family. Amid stress and arguments she remained firm and loving. However, in her dramatic adolescent gestures, Angela was not always wise. To demonstrate that she did not wish to attract a husband, she rubbed ashes into that blond hair. But she and her relatives kept communication open.

Furthermore, she developed relationships with the Franciscan friars and members of the Franciscan Third Order. Their supportive understanding helped her carve out a freedom of action to follow her calling. Eventually, the family agreed.

Listening clearly. Acting freely. This is Angela's holy obedience.

Angela wanted her daughters to *observe holy obedience* mostly because she had learned how it unites us with God. It is a way of listening to the Holy Spirit and then acting. It is not “doing-as-you're-told.” That sort of compliance can be very unhealthy, even unholy. *Holy*

*obedience* is very different. It is first and foremost about obeying God. Only a very free person can practice *holy obedience*. Freedom is its foundation stone.

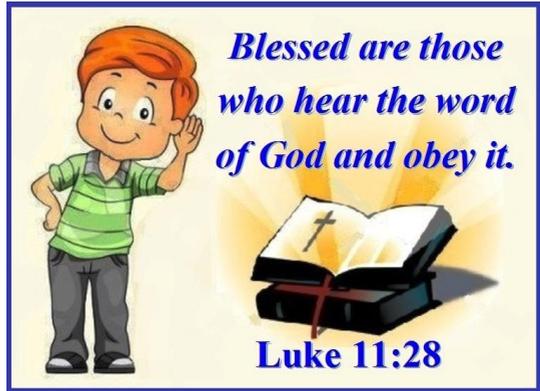
Freedom seemed remote for women whose lives were largely controlled by patriarchs in their families, in society, in the

Church. But Angela trusted that women can hear God's Spirit speaking in all the circumstances of life. She trusts that we can sort out God's voice from all the rest.

Angela's discerning heart did just that when she met the Pope.

When she and some Brescian companions made the Holy Year pilgrimage to Rome in 1525, they had the unusual honor of a private audience with Pope Clement VII. A papal chamberlain, Piero Della Puglia, arranged it; they had met in the Holy Land the year before. Apparently Messer Della Puglia had told the Pope about the charitable works of zealous women and men in Brescia. A group of men, some of them Angela's friends, had begun a Hospital for Incurables. Women in Angela's circle provided a home, called the *Carità*, for orphaned girls. Messer Della Puglia may have mentioned Angela's role of encouragement and spiritual support. The Pope began to talk in that vein, referring to the needs among the charitable works in Rome. He wanted Angela to remain there. Angela respected the Pope, yet she did not do as he wished. The situation was intricate.

She must have taken his words very seriously. No doubt she prayerfully considered them. She also reflected on her growing understanding of her mission in Brescia. More and more clearly, her work among Brescia's women was emerging as the meaning of her youthful vision in the Brudazzo field. When Angela weighed this inspiration against the needs in Rome, the answer in her heart was sure. No matter what other good was to be done in the world, her call was to Brescia. And there she returned.



Angela lived freely her obedience to God. She listened. She acted. In her Rule she shows us how.



## Freedom and Obedience

Freedom and obedience may not seem to go together. But freedom and *holy obedience* do.

God is always speaking to us, always leading us. Are we able to listen? Are we free to follow? Inner freedom

grows in a continuing process of liberation from compulsions, from false values, from feelings of guilt and from the lingering wounds of trauma and abuse. For example, shaming words uttered decades ago can hold us back from success. Or we may work as drudges to buy gadgets that advertisers convince us to “need.” Or we may dedicate ourselves to competition, trying desperately to fill the bottomless pit of damaged self-esteem. How many people live in this bondage! Perhaps all of us, in different ways. Saint Paul complained that “I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate” (Romans 7:15) and called his plight “slavery.”

Powerful forces may drive our decisions and actions, forces that enslave us to old wounds. They can speak so loudly inside us that we cannot hear more true and life-giving voices. We may turn a deaf ear to affirmation by saying, “Yes, but....” We may shut our ears to Christ’s challenging, inviting words. We may automatically reject the wisdom of a supervisor’s instructions. A co-worker’s need cries out, but we may hear only our own pain. *Holy obedience* requires freedom from such inner compulsions as these. Inner freedom opens us up. It helps us to hear authentic and healthy voices, to listen to God’s guidance.





Freedom from outer constraints is also essential to our ability to act as God directs. Cultural expectations of a “nice girl” can include passivity. Society limits our field of action and closes doors we feel called to pass through. Many churches—certainly the Catholic Church—shut women out from full ministry. Social pressures force us into repugnant situations. Economic pressures chain us in destructive relationships. With these limitations, a person may see what God asks of her but feel prevented from acting on it. Society, family, church, work, relationships...any of these can confine us. Freedom in these spheres allows us to act, to take the steps that God’s Spirit points out.

Angela’s emphasis on obedience does not mean subservience. The women reading this chapter already had a high degree of inner freedom. They had made an extraordinary life-choice. In the midst of many influences, they had listened deeply. Most joined the Company in the face of opposition. Like Angela’s aunt and uncle Biancosi, their well-intentioned and concerned relatives, employers and friends tried to dissuade these women. We can almost hear Mama: “Now Lucia, be reasonable! You’ll be an old maid. Who will take care of you?” And Papa: “Alfonso comes from a fine family. You’ll marry him, and that’s that!”

Or “We’ve decided that the monastery is the life for you.” However, since monasteries required dowers to sustain themselves, religious life was not even an alternative for women of the lower classes....

Without social or economic support for alternative choices, most women did as they were told....

*Mary-Cabrini Durkin  
Company of Canada, Group of the USA*

*To be continued....*

# “Plurality in the Federation and Unity in the Institute”

## *Fidelity: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*

Online meeting on Zoom

For Leaders of the Companies and Groups  
and Ecclesiastical Assistants

Saturday afternoon, April 30 and May 1, 2022

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For years the Federation has been arranging a meeting for leaders on these spring dates so that together we can grow, change, mature and adapt to today's needs.

In recent years the pandemic has prevented our meeting in person in Brescia, where St. Angela's remains rest. But it has opened up new possibilities, using the means and ways we have at our disposal, opening us to an online meeting that allows for greater participation, especially from Companies located outside Italy.

*"United together,"* we entered a new dimension of Company which is not static, but dynamic and open to the future, without fears but with open hearts.

In these two days we listened, we looked at each other, we prayed to the Holy Spirit for help so that, as our Mother Angela says, "The stony roads [were] covered with paving of finest gold for us."





As I looked at the faces of the connected people, I liked to think that each has her own path in life, perhaps stony, perhaps complicated...others may have a simpler path, but each has her own way to go. Each connected from her home, but each with a heart in Company.

This online meeting opened us to new challenges: how to build the Company of the future without losing the beauty of the past and today? How to do so that the Company will be everyone's home and not remain closed in on itself, waiting for a decline that in some cases is almost inevitable, if only because of age issues?

There are no immediate answers, but we seemed to sense in the common will of these two days of online meeting, the desire to live the beauty of our charism still, united together. To do this I believe we will be called in the coming period to take steps of change, steps that will bring us to a spirit of unity that perhaps we struggle even to imagine today.

The world has changed, we have changed. These online days have really left us with a sense of peace and certainty that the choices we make together will be for our good and for the good of the whole Company. As we were reminded, let us pray to the Holy Spirit, who will know how to guide us wisely on new paths, on paths that will be suited to the times and places.

*Carla Alberti, Cuneo*

### **An Unexpected Lesson...**

I was at Sunday Mass, with a larger congregation than at weekday Masses, and with many young people and children. In front of me was a mother apparently of Filipino nationality, with an older son perhaps about 10 or 11 years old.

Despite my good intentions not to be distracted, my gaze often fell on that little boy, because he was having a hard time sitting still in his place. I didn't want to look at him, but he was in my line of sight; he

was moving around on the pew a lot, as if it was very uncomfortable for him, and as if what was going on during Mass didn't concern him.

This was beginning to get on my nerves, and I thought that if it were my son I would be even more upset. I was struck by his mother's attitude: firmly attentive to the liturgy, so much so that she seemed not to notice her son's impatience. This unnerved me even more because I thought she was restraining herself from taking hold of him. So in some way she was enduring the situation. (I was probably projecting my own feelings onto her). I kept fighting against this distraction and the nervousness that plagued me.

Then came the "sign of peace," which the priest invited us to give by exchanging a look. But the mother hugged and kissed her son with such sweetness and tenderness! Then everything went back as before. Only the little boy received Communion.

In short, I think that this mother, who was aware of her own helplessness and her child's inability to do otherwise at that moment, had the right attitude. She had patience, tolerance, understanding, confiding that child to God, trusting that only God, who knows his heart, can change him. An impatient and irritated attitude would not have changed anything but only created tension and discomfort, with all that follows in the relationship.

For me the lesson was this: nervousness, judgment, criticism, rigidity and excessive severity do not lead to anything constructive. The right attitude is to love, accept, pray, trust, and correct by example first.

I ask Mary, whose large maternal heart knows only how to love, and I ask our great mother Angela to teach me and help me to overcome negative attitudes, to be a mother who loves only with tenderness ... and never a stepmother with harshness.

*Luisa, Company of Modena/Bologna*



## Spreading Peace and Harmony

I live in Bandung, the capital of West Java province. It is also called the "Paris of Java" because of its beauty. In the past, Bandung was an agricultural area, but with urbanization it turned into a residential area and developed further into an industrial and commercial area. Bandung

is also known as a tourist city.

It is the most populous city in West Java. Most of the people belong to the Sundanese tribe. In general, Sundanese people are very polite and very friendly. They always have a kind smile. They are humble toward others, respect old people and love those who are weak. They also respect people of different beliefs, living together, side by side, without any distinction. We Catholics, who live in a predominantly Muslim neighborhood, have good relations with everyone and respect each other.

I live with my mother, my sister and my nephew, in good relations with each other and with our neighbors. My mother has always taught us to respect everyone, regardless of their status. That is why we are like brothers and sisters in our community.

To support myself, I am a baker: I receive orders every day for various cakes and special dishes. I also bake cookies to sell. Sometimes it happens that poor people cannot pay full price. Then I provide for them even more than what they want to buy, so they can provide for their family. Once a woman came with her young child. The child looked longingly at the cookies his mother could not afford to buy. How happy he was when I gave them to him. His happiness and my joy are worth more than ten times the price of those cookies! These are precious opportunities to do good. No one should lack food and go hungry.

As a daughter of St. Angela, I try to imitate my foundress in spreading peace and harmony wherever I am, trying to set a good example of love and humility in our neighborhood.

*Maria Tanumiharja, Indonesia*

## FROM THE COMPANIES AND GROUPS



### 50 Years of the Company in Poland: 1972-2022

The Company of Poland has its roots in Rybnik, in the Diocese of Katowice. In 1953 the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union began meeting with a group of six young catechists to make known the holy Scriptures and Writings of St. Angela Merici.

In 1969, through the Sisters of the Roman Union in Poland and Slovakia, this small group learned of the existence of the Company of St. Ursula, Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici.

On January 1, **1972**, nine women made their first temporary consecrations as a Group dependent on the Federation Council; in 1985 they became an autonomous company in the Federation. The Company of Slovakia has always been, and still is, a great gift to the



Company of Poland, which is very close ... not only spiritually, geographically and linguistically, but also in their shared experience as a post-Communist country. Now there are few members left in Poland, but they are very faithful to the Merician charism. On January 22, **2022**, the sisters commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their beginning with great joy and confidence.

Best wishes to the Company of Poland from all the Companies of the Federation.

*Persevere faithfully and joyfully in the work you have begun!*

## Five Years of the Company in Burundi



Our Company continues to grow, thanks to the Lord. There are a total of 276 of us.

In January, 23 new candidates were admitted and received St. Angela's medal, and there are more aspirants asking to walk together with us.



On March 10, 2022, we gathered for the Eucharist in thanksgiving for the five years since the establishment of the Company in Burundi. We wanted to praise the Lord for this great gift of the Company, and we

prayed united with all you sisters all over the world. May the Lord keep us faithful and grateful forever!

*Pascaline*

## Brazil North

*Everything in Its Own Time...*

### **“We are called to proclaim the Gospel with our lives.”**

With these words we concluded the annual retreat of the Company of Northeast Brazil, which was held at the Dom Hélder Câmara Leaders' Formation Center in the Diocese of Cruz das Almas, January 27-30.



We, the Angelines of Salvador, Jequié and Cruz das Almas, had as our speaker the diocesan bishop, Dom Antonio Tourinho Neto, who offered us beautiful meditations on the **mystical vision of St. Angela's ladder**. These offered us a profound examination of conscience based on our journey and in relation to the state

of life we are preparing to live in the Church. Climbing the heavenly ladder consists of a way, a path, a trajectory, living a specific consecration. With a special, exclusive spirituality, the Angeline soul longs to be contemplative and in love with God. The road up the mystical ladder is permeated with dark nights until union with the Bridegroom.

To climb the mystical ladder is to be willing to take the flight of the soul, a flight of responsibility, a free flight into the arms of God. The steps of St. Angela's ladder invite constant purification, and many will try to climb them, but will fail and give up along the way. It is necessary to climb, helped by our Mother Saint Angela, with the impetus of the Holy Spirit. It is necessary to climb the mystical ladder in the pedagogy of love, because in this ladder "to go up is to go down and to go down is to go up." Lay women, called to be spouses of Christ, all give themselves to him without reservation, because to be spouses is to assume the mission of the Bridegroom. Not to do her own will, but the will of the One who chose, consecrated and sent her.



The Angelina's consecration in the Church is an eternal ascent toward the ultimate encounter with Christ. By uniting with him through the sacred bonds of poverty, chastity and obedience, each becomes, in companionship, a support for the other to climb the steps of the mystical ladder.

After being immersed in this great Love, we returned to our homes and for a week we savored all the "honey" we had received and experienced during the retreat, while we waited for the following Sunday for the first consecration of Hildeni Nunes de Argôlo. She is the first to be consecrated in the Diocese of Cruz das Almas.

This was a time of grace and prayer. Bishop Antônio Tourinho Neto presided at the Mass. Fr. Antônio Rebouças Santana and Deacon Edilon Jorge were present. Maria Helena Borges de Jesus, directress of the Company of the Northeast, some Angelinas from Salvador and Jequié, and people who are on the path of formation in the Diocese of Cruz das Almas were present.



*Hildeni Nunes de Argôlo*

## **Brazil South**

### **Spiritual Retreat and Consecration for Life...**

*It is a divine grace beginning well.  
Grace even greater is persisting in the right walk.  
But the grace of graces is never giving up.* Dom Helder Camara

The daughters of St. Angela seek to live their mission with joy, sympathy and simplicity, being fruitful in prayer to grow and live their charism.

With the intention of strengthening and deepening their vocation, sisters from Novo Hamburgo, Luiza Bruno, Felika, Marina, Ivone, Ursula, and Maria Gatelli of Novo Hamburgo; Neura of Porto Alegre; and Hildeni of Bahia met in the diocesan seminary



from February 25 to 28, 2022. Fr. Vilson (preacher) was present and helped us reflect on the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. We also had times of reflection that led us to internalize so that we may better live our charism and mission in the Kingdom of God.

God has poured graces and blessings into every moment of our lives. At the end of the retreat we were graced and strengthened with the consecration for life of our sister Ivone (Novo Hamburgo) and then a beautiful celebration with a delicious lunch.

*Maria Gatelli*



### **See the Joy of Our Consecrated Sister**

*"I belong to the community of Our Lady of Good Health, Novo Hamburgo RS. I am a minister of the Eucharist and have been working in Caritas and Children's Ministry for many years.*

*One day Luiza Bruno invited me to reflect on consecrated life. Together with Marina Sanabria, we deepened our faith through biweekly formation, meetings and retreats. I confess that I had many doubts about professing consecration for life. However, at the right time, the call of Jesus touched me. It was the best week of my life. Everything went well and I am very happy with my response.*

*I unite myself with all the sisters of our Company of Southeast Brazil and around the world. A big hug to everyone, kisses, with much love and prayers.*

*I am very grateful to God and sisters Luiza, Ursula Ines, Marina, Felika and Maria Gatelli for their support and prayers."*

*Ivone*

## Company of Indonesia Vocational Experience...

**Sunday, March 6, 2022**

We thank God that the Company of Indonesia had an online visit from one of our sisters: Paola Cameroni. She is a family doctor, a general practitioner, who lives in



Modena, Italy. We are far away from each other, so we connected through Zoom.

We organized the meeting for new sisters and also for other women who want to learn about St. Angela's spirituality.

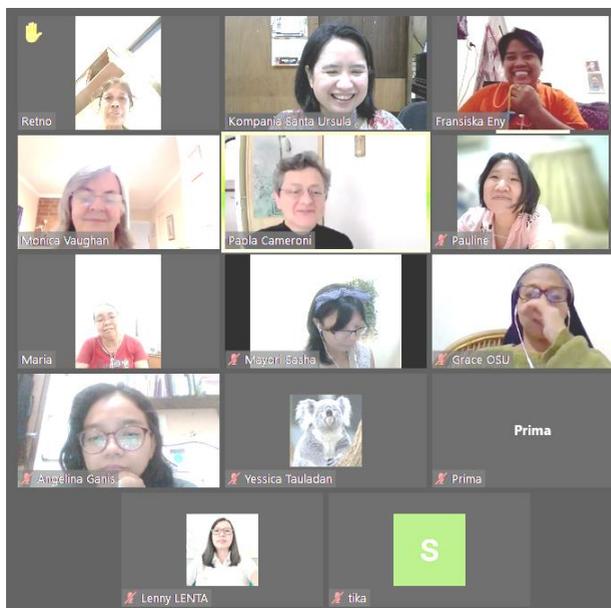
We sang and prayed together, and Paola shared with us her experience of family and

professional life in the charism of St. Angela Merici. We prayed the Angelus prayer: it was 6:00 p.m. in Indonesia and 12:00 p.m. in Italy, so unity in prayer as well!

Monica from Australia also attended the meeting. It was not a long meeting, only an hour, but engaging in our hearts and lives. Thanks to Paola. For those who were unable to attend this meeting and want to learn about St. Angela's spirituality, we will meet every fourth Sunday of the month and exchange news and experiences...

Our Company also meets online to pray together every second Thursday of the month with English-speaking sisters Monica and Ebba (Asia-Pacific Group) and Val (Group of the Philippines).

*Lydia, Company of Indonesia*



## Company of Congo DRC

### Marie Bernadette Is United with Her “Only Treasure”



Marie Bernadette was born in Sakania/Kipushi DRC on September 27, 1946. She died on March 15, 2022, and was buried on March 19, 2022, in Kiswishi Lubumbashi DRC.

She was a woman of relationship. In her life, she fought to promote African women.

Writes Jeanne Lagrave, "A teacher and trainer," she was elected director of the Institute of Religious Science of the Katanga Ecclesiastical Province between 1982 and 1985. From 1986 to 1992 she served as president of the African Women Theologians.

In 1990 Marie-Bernadette contacted Elisa Tarolli, then president of the Federation of Secular Ursulines, whom she had met during a previous trip to Brescia in 1981.



*"This return to the roots of the Merician vocation had been like a revelation," she said. "Their life and mission in the heart of the world had seduced me."*

Elisa Tarolli referred Marie-Bernadette to Jeanne Lagrave, directress of the Company of France and Councilor of the Federation.

Marie Bernadette applied to join the Company in 2002.



The Group of Congo grew rapidly, and Marie Bernadette assumed responsibility, connected to the Company of France.

The Group became an autonomous Company within the Federation in 2016. Marie Bernadette was elected directress.



serve the Institute and especially her young Congolese Company, of which she was directress.

***Marie Bernadette,***  
***we praise your perseverance,***  
***your love for the truth***  
***and your work,***  
***your sense of justice***  
***and your great learning.***  
***Lord, we thank you***  
***for giving her to us.***



***Marie Bernadette, Farewell....***

***May the Lord have mercy on you, and may you,***  
***with Saint Angela, our Mother,***  
***remain always in our midst***  
***and intercede for us***  
***before Jesus our Lord.***  
***May your soul rest in peace***  
***And may the land of our ancestors***  
***be sweet to you.***

*Vice-directress Régine and Councilor Mélanie  
of the Company DRC*





**Company of Cremona**  
**A Remembrance and Greeting for**  
**Giusy Cattaneo**

September 4, 1942 – April 18, 2022

*Dear Giusy, in your adolescence you left the beautiful mountains of Valleve and arrived in the plains, in the town of Trigolo, welcomed by the daughters of Saint Angela.*

*Here you had to learn new customs and get to know other people. You attended the parish and a spirit of love, charity and sacrifice matured in you.*

*When one fine day the Lord made himself heard in your heart and called you by name ... the answer was "**Here I am!**"*

*You consecrated yourself to the Lord among the daughters of St. Angela Merici, and we walked the whole path together in preparation for consecration.*

*In your village everyone knew you for your charity done with love, generosity and simplicity. Always attentive to help those in difficulty and, with a laugh or a playful joke, you spread joy. The Lord loves those who give joyfully.*

*Then your Spouse reserved for you a somewhat heavy assignment, being in charge of the Company of Cremona, a responsibility to which you gave love and time for so many years. Thank you, Giusy.*

*Now in heaven you have embraced Jesus Christ, Saint Angela and all the sisters already in the heavenly abode and found a new crown of glory and joy.*

*Dear Giusy, with your example you have left a trail of goodness. I hope that another will follow the path you have traced out.*

*The daughters of Saint Angela thank the community of Trigolo and all those who loved you.*

*Thank you, Giusy, for what you have done and been... and I tell you, "**Until we meet again!**"*

*Angela, Company of Cremona*

# International Convention

in person and streaming

**“Keep to the ancient way  
and live a new life”**

(10<sup>th</sup> Counsel 22)

**Tradition and reform in the spirituality  
and in the life of the Companies  
according to Saint Angela Merici**

*Our particular way of living ecclesial synodality*

**Rome July 28 – August 1, 2022**

**Istituto Maria Santissima Bambina**

**Via Paolo VI, 21 - 00120 Rome**

## **SPEAKERS:**

- **Don Rino La Delfa**
- **Don Nkindji Samuangala**
- **Alessandra Bartolomei  
Romagnoli**
- **Rosanna Virgili**



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