

# IN THE SAME CHARISM

*with responsibility*



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

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# International meeting of the Federation

*Formation*  
*A Journey of Faith, Never Finished*



**Rome, *Casa fra noi*, July 27 – 31, 2014**

# ACTS

## *CONTENTS*

<b>To the Readers</b>	<b>p. 5</b>
<b>The President's Introduction</b>	<b>p. 7</b>
<b>Christian Experience:     "Pilgrimage of faith         and interior journey"</b>	<b>p. 10</b>
<b>Interior Journey Saint Angela Merici</b>	<b>p. 19</b>
<b>How Can Someone Old Be Born Again?</b>	<b>p. 24</b>
<b>The Best Wine</b>	<b>p. 31</b>
<b>Points from the Homilies...</b>	<b>p. 41</b>
<b>Homily of Cardinal Pietro Parolin</b>	<b>p. 46</b>
<b>A New Vice-Assistant</b>	<b>p. 53</b>
<b>Year of Consecrated Life 480<sup>th</sup> anniversary     of the Foundation of the Company</b>	<b>p. 55</b>

## TO THE READERS

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*All of you be attentive,  
with great and longing hearts (Rule, Prologue 32)*

We have celebrated another meeting on formation.

We have learned to read the stages of life and to make of them a formative experience.

Formation requires care and responsibility... It requires attention and desire... as Saint Angela invites us: *All of you be attentive, with great and longing hearts.*

Let us be attentive as our presenters urged us in the Federation's last meeting. We will again give our attention to the texts reported here, as resources for our continuing formation.

Meanwhile let us meditate on the thinking of Saint Angela.

### ***Be attentive:***

Saint Angela speaks to us about attentiveness from the beginning of her writings, particularly in the prologue to the Rule.

The attentiveness that Saint Angela asks for is vocational attentiveness and, in fact, is linked with beautiful things that could be said about our calling, about *our marvelous dignity*...

- ***Be attentive...*** to recognize the gift of the vocation... *united together to serve his divine Majesty...*
- ***Be attentive...*** to give infinite thanks for having granted such a singular gift especially to us ...
- ***Be attentive...*** to be able to be true and virginal spouses of the Son of God...
- ***Be attentive...*** to recognize what such a thing means and what a new and wondrous dignity this is...
- ***Be attentive...*** with all your might to keep yourselves as you have been called by God...
- ***Be attentive...*** in seeking out and desiring all those means and ways that are necessary to persevere and prosper till the end...

- ***Be attentive...*** to be vigilant, and so much more so, as the undertaking is of such importance that there could be no greater, in which lie our life and salvation...
- ***Be attentive...*** to be careful and prudent, for greater labors and dangers may be involved when the undertaking is of greater value...
- ***Be attentive...*** to be spouses of the Son of God
- ***Be attentive...*** to observe the Rule and Constitutions as the road for us to walk by ... for our own good...

***All of you be attentive...***

***Now to the task, with courage!***

***Let us all embrace this holy Rule***

***that God through his grace has offered to us...***

***With a great and longing heart***

This attentiveness comes from the heart... and our heart should be great, open, welcoming... should desire the Lord's marvelous deeds for us and for all humanity.

***With a great and longing heart...*** we will be attentive to our vocation, our formation, to our *journey of faith, which is never finished...*

***With a great and longing heart...*** we will take care of our global and continuing formation, appreciating with a sense of responsibility all the means and traversing all highways to reach the goal, as our Constitutions rightly invite us (7.2):

***The consecrated member***



***will continue all her life to care for her human, spiritual, intellectual, professional and apostolic formation, with a sense of responsibility making use of the means offered by the Company, the Church and society, in order to strive toward an ever more radical self-gift to Christ in history.***

*Caterina Dalmasso*

## THE PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION AT THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING 2014

Maria Razza



Welcome! I warmly welcome you all: you who happily accepted the Council's invitation to take part in this International Meeting. It is *"a time of grace for the Company, during which we will be able: to share the same ideal; to communicate to each other the joy of being together; to experience more intensely among us the intercessory presence of*

*our Foundress"* (Constitutions 15).

I greet the Assistant of the Council of the Federation, Mons Adriano Tessarollo, the reverend ecclesiastical assistants and our presenter, Fr. Flavio Lorenzo Marchesini.

We will start our international meeting with a prayer to the Lord Jesus and our mother Saint Angela asking them to help us live these days as the gift which we have accepted because we have an ardent desire to live to the full the charism that was given to us.

We are here today to update or better still to keep up our commitment to pursue a constant renewal of fidelity to our origins.

It is perhaps by a "strange coincidence" if we may call it so, that I happened to come



across a few issues of the booklet “Responsibility” from 1977. At that time I knew about neither Saint Angela nor the Company. I read with a certain emotion some letters by the President, Lina Moser, and I realized that her reflections on the theme “renewal and faithfulness” are enlightening and contemporary.



Lina Moser said, “*Renewal and faithfulness are two inseparable words upon which the Company must base its spiritual journey in order to fulfill the Holy Mother’s wishes. In the Eleventh Legacy she affirms ‘And if, according to times*

*and circumstances, the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice.’”*

Rereading Lina’s words, I felt a strengthened desire to continue the journey of renewal, according to the wishes of the Council of the Federation and every single Company.



Let us not be discouraged by the difficulties we are meeting at present or by the complex social economic problems; not even by our limitations and personal limitations and those of our Companies. Our only wish is to move forward and do our very best “*...progress and persevere to the very end.*”

Let us all love The Company and commit ourselves so that, today, the Company may be according to the wishes of Saint Angela.

In his first speech to the Secular Institute, Pope Francis recommended that we be “*... in the heart of the world with the heart of God.*”

He mentioned the Samaritan “... *who walked by, saw and had compassion*”.

We constantly need to educate our hearts because formation is foremost “a matter of the heart” ...

That is why our International Meeting is called: **“Formation ... a journey of faith, never finished.”**



personal experiences.

The presentations of our Assistant, Mons. Adriano Tessarollo, and of Fr. Flavio Lorenzo Marchesini will help us to reflect more deeply on the themes “Pilgrimage of Faith and Interior Journey,” integrated with one another.

Kate, on the other hand, will help us to reflect on some aspects of Saint Angela’s interior journey.

I am sure that their important and meaningful reports will be of a great help to each and every one of us, regarding the personal journey of faith that each one of us is called to fulfill.

Our “journey of formation,” completed daily amid the stress of our commitments, sustained by God’s grace, will surely reverberate in our “vocational community,” that is, in our Companies, because they will become a place of sisterly love, where one can live “united together,” as Saint Angela advised, “to the extent of shedding blood.”

It was the intention of the Council of the Federation to plan the program of this meeting as a continuation of the previous year. In this way we will have a better opportunity to reflect on continuous formation, based especially on



# THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE: PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH AND INTERIOR JOURNEY

**"When I was a child, I spoke like a child,  
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child."**

**Mons. Adriano Tessarollo**  
**Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Council of the Federation**



**1 Cor 13:11-12:** *"Here is an example. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, my thoughts too grew, and I put aside what is typical of children. This example has value for us believers: Now we can see and understand only a very*

*little about God, as though we were looking into a blurry mirror. But one day we shall see him face to face, and we will know him completely. Now all that we know is confused and dim, but then we will see all clearly, even as the Lord sees into my heart at this moment."*

## **Introduction**

Even adults need to remain aware that the process of maturation is never concluded. Through this process a person reaches the capacity for living independently and for responsibly exercising freedom and good judgment in choices about her life situation and social relationships.

It's the same in the spiritual life. We can say that we receive a basic "formal" formation in the institutions and courses designated for this, but there remains the whole course of maturation, the fruit of valuing all the experiences offered by life. Through this growth the

adult reaches the capacity for an orientation of life in the world with her own strengths, motivations, and orientations, with the capacity to develop in herself creative interpersonal social relationships, and with practical dedication to others and awareness and sense of having a contribution to make to the community's life.

The maturation of an adult is tied to the capacity to develop one's interior and exterior experiences, taking up the reality of one's past and personally reworking it. This means knowing how to learn from the combination of opportunities and experiences that allows for a reflective interior life, understood as an interaction between experiences and the evaluation and discernment about them.

### Interior journey

With the expression "interior journey" referring to the Christian experience, I wish to draw attention to a way of understanding life: it is not a matter of standing still, waiting for time to pass, totally occupied in what is happening inside us or around us. No, it is a journey that has a goal (pilgrimage), a goal that has already been pointed out (faith) and that gradually becomes clearer and clearer bit by bit as we get closer (interior journey). I think about the words of 2 Cor 4:16-18: *"Therefore, we are not discouraged; rather, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal."*

But what is interiority, and what does it contribute to our being alive? I have found some useful reflections of Luciano Manicardi, *The interior life today* (Quiqajon, Bose 1999): "Interiority contributes to the capacity for engaging in interior dialogue and for reflecting on one's life by integrating things from the outside. This process establishes a fundamental value system that gives deep meaning to one's life. An interior life is a human necessity, a vocation, a call, like the call to Abram: "Go forth..." (Gen 12:1). We are invited to listen to this heartfelt interior necessity. Our need to stop, to think, to withdraw a bit

into solitude, to “take a break” expresses this very necessity that arises from deep within us.

“Interior life” is not in opposition to exterior life. Rather, its opposites are dissipation, dispersion, meaninglessness, and disorder. Interior life is the road to becoming authentic in who we really are, to realizing our uniqueness. The road to self-knowledge goes along with knowledge of God. St. Augustine would say “God and the soul, that is what I desire to know” (Soliloquies I, 2:7), and he prays in this way: “God, always the same, let me know myself, let me know Thee!” (Soliloquies II, 1:1).

Interior life in the Christian sense means believing, entrusting oneself to Someone, assenting to the call that invites one to place one’s life in the hands of Another as the Lord alone. “Believe the one who allows himself to become a prisoner of the invisible God, the one who agrees to be possessed by Him in obedient listening and in docility at the deepest level of the self. Belief [I would add: faith, the interior life] is surrender, handing over, abandonment, and the acceptance of God who first of all seeks us and gives himself. Belief means standing at the edge of the dark abyss and hearing a voice that cries, ‘Leap, I will catch you in my arms!’” (Kierkegaard).

But belief also means being willing to stand among the disturbing questions and bear their weight, without pretending that there are signs, but offering signs of love to the invisible lover who calls.

Among the numerous offerings of spirituality suggested by today’s cultural context, “interiority” seems attractive as never before even if often in an undefined, generic way. Is there a need today to search for meanings and orientations that lead beyond being merely self-referential? If we are pilgrims, what is our destination? If we are vagabonds, what are we seeking?

Christian living is not a matter of always going in search of novelty, but of “going into the depth,” to a place of encounter: “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (John 14:23).

But how does this “going into the depth,” this “going beyond” happen? How are we called or pushed toward this interior road? Our point of reference is faith, that is, the recognition that it is God who calls us through “deeds and words having an inner unity” (*Dei Verbum* n.2). Experiences that “come to meet us” and the Word or “voice of God” that helps us understand and accept them – or even precede the experiences – these become the instrument of our “interior journey.”

### **Biblical persons and texts**



### **Mary of Nazareth**

*“Mary, for her part, kept all these things, meditating on them in her heart.”*

Mary is ever the personification of the believer facing the Lord’s manifestations: “She kept all these things, meditating on them in her heart.” The term “things” can mean either events or words. The verb “kept” is found in Mt 9:17, at the conclusion of the discourse on the wineskins and the wine: “both are kept” and in Mark 6:20, where it is said that Herod “kept [John the Baptist] in custody.” In Daniel 7:28 (LXX 4:28) “Kept in the heart” indicates the prophet’s attitude after the vision of the “Son of Man”: he “keeps” it for the future, awaiting its revelation. Luke continues his portrait of Mary, face with a revelation: she is amazed by the shepherds’ message, but she welcomes it, penetrates it in faith, meditates on it, and compares it with the facts, awaiting its fulfillment. Mary believes in the fulfillment of the Lord’s word, compares it with the facts, and awaits its realization. She does not understand everything from the beginning!

We think of Mary’s words, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). These are expressed at the annunciation, in the public life of Jesus, during the

passion, at the moment of the crucifixion, at the removal from the cross, at the burial, and at Pentecost.

### **Mary of Magdala**

John 19:25: *“Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.”*



20:1-2,11-18: *“On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, ‘They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.’ ... But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken my Lord, and I don’t know where they laid him.’ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?’ She thought it was the gardener and said to him, ‘Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni,’ which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, ‘Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, “I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”’ Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord,’ and what he told her.”*

## What do we know about her?

In John's Gospel Mary of Magdala appears only in the passion and is never referred to earlier. It is helpful to refer to the synoptic Gospels. This woman freed from seven demons was commonly considered a sinner, even though there is no trace of bad conduct in any of the Gospels. She is a woman whom Jesus has saved, for whose life the Teacher has opened a horizon of meaning. As a result of her encounter with Jesus, she follows and serves him.

In fact we find her with the apostles and the other women who accompanied him. Being with Jesus became the meaning of her life, or perhaps even her very life itself. Through this lens we can read her presence, speechless with sorrow, at the foot of the cross and her running to the tomb early in the morning and staying outside it weeping, so great was her attachment to Jesus. And the fact that in John the first apparition

of the Risen One was to her, can this not make us think that she was



fully present to her Teacher?

Mary runs to the disciples (1:2), more preoccupied by the loss of the missing body than by any hope of resurrection: "They have taken the Lord," she says. In Jesus' mortal body, she was seeking the ultimate sign and memory of his presence. On her return she did not enter; she wept because she had seen the tomb empty. What else was there to think? Certainly she was seeking that Jesus whom she had loved and continued to love, and whom she had followed as her "Lord," welcoming his word. But what faith did she have in Jesus? She was so overcome by sorrow as not to recognize the presence of the two persons who were questioning her despite bending over into the tomb to see it one more time. The question from the two persons, as John recounts it

here, certainly insinuates a question about the meaning of that weeping. Why weep? What does she think about Jesus now?

Magdalene explains, “They have taken my Lord,” an expression that indicates a strong sense of attachment to the person of Jesus. But she is still thinking about the dead body of that human and earthly Jesus that she had known, followed, and loved.

John continues his account in such a way as to let us understand that it is nearly impossible for Magdalene to recognize Jesus.

If it is true that there is continuity but also diversity between Jesus in his human condition and his risen state, in any case the thoughts of Magdalene, entrenched in the previous reality, are so far from this perspective that the recognition of the Risen One happens only by a revelation from Jesus himself. Magdalene’s experience of following Jesus was full of both faith and affection: the man Jesus, his deeds, his words, and his company, had opened her life to a new perspective, in the school of Jesus, walking behind him (the Way), welcoming him and his words as the Truth, in order to find in Jesus the true Life.

She, like the other women, expressed this faith in him by taking care of Jesus, in a true and appropriate familiarity with him. First she experienced Jesus’ care for others; then she expressed the same care for him.

Jesus’ appearance to Magdalene can also be seen within this profound relationship as a gratuitous action and a testimony to the friendship that bound them. He calls her by name, thus manifesting the bond that had existed and reestablishing the lost intimacy by reviving



Mary’s emotion and the faith that again calls him “Rabbuni” and embraces him. This embrace is what Jesus refers to in saying, “Stop holding on to me....” Although Magdalene intends to retrieve the relationship in the previous mode, Jesus invites her: “But go

to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am going....’

Jesus is indicating to Magdalene that the fulfillment of his mission has already happened, and his passage from this world to the Father has already been realized. His presence is already “other”; he is already present in a new way. Therefore Magdalene should stop holding onto him, should take a further step, recognize him in this new condition and presence, and run to announce him to the others who had not known, loved, and followed him.

Finally, Jesus helps Magdalene progress in faith through this new relationship, this new event and this new word. Now Mary and his other disciples are called and led to a different way of drawing near to him, characterized by a still greater freedom and gratuitousness. The search for Jesus is concluded only by welcoming him in this newness of life: Living because he has risen victorious over death and Glorious because he participates in the Father’s life.

Again a meeting between Jesus and Magdalene, which leads her to believe in a different way: faith in the Risen One. A faith which Magdalene has reached not through her personal capacity but through events and words that Jesus has set in motion and from which Mary is allowing herself to be led all the way to the fullness of faith. So now she will be the one to say to the other disciples, “I have seen the Lord.” But now the word “see” has a new significance: seeing according to faith. This is the “interior journey” on which Jesus has led Magdalene, a destination that in turn opens the way for an interior spiritual journey looking forward to the encounter and the final, total, firm possession.

The experience of affections, the world of relationships, becomes the setting for real encounter with the Risen One (together with the sacramental sphere), and the laws that govern it will be the same that governed the encounter between the Risen One and Mary: great desire to meet and just as much readiness to receive the presence of the Other as gift.

### **Points for personal reflection**

1. What ways and times does a similar relationship of faith require?

2. Is the sphere of relationships and of human affection a “decisive” place for faith, that is, where faith belongs, given that we must live not only charity; and does the development of human relationships in a gospel style permit or on the contrary block the encounter with the Risen One?

3. In what measure can the weaving of a fabric of relationships with strong evangelical energy be a true missionary work that fosters encounters with the Risen One?

### **Saint Angela**

What was the origin of Saint Angela’s interior journey? (Vision at Brudazzo) What regular features prepared her for it? (Living in a family, personal life, prayer, personal inclinations...) Through what events and words did St. Angela progress in her interior life? (Living as a citizen, the needs and conditions of women in her time, personal relationships, personal prayer)

### **For us**

Have knowing and listening to Saint Angela’s experience oriented and sustained our “spiritual journey”? Do we grow in an ever deeper personal and communal understanding of the message of her Writings, including through comparison with our reality, our relationships, and our prayer?



# INTERIOR JOURNEY OF SAINT ANGELA MERICI

Caterina Dalmasso  
Vice President of the Federation

## Experience

If it is true that the road of interior maturation is the fruit of appreciating all the experiences and relationships that life bestows, I would say that in Saint Angela Merici we find true integration and deep



discernment that made her capable of courageous choices for herself and for the spiritual family that she began.

**Early experiences:** A faith-filled family, her suffering on account of the loss of family members, being welcomed at her relatives' home, reading (It seems that she read a great deal!), the Word of God, good works, prayer, a serious life of work, liturgical and sacramental life, penance....

**Later experiences:** Country life and city life, looking for lodgings and being welcomed, ever wider horizons, awareness of ecclesial and civil situations which were dramatic even for those times. The energy involved in travel and pilgrimage (not like our time)....

## Relationships

**Relationships in the Church and the world...** Angela knew and spent time with many: common folk and nobles, the humble and the cultivated.... She was a woman capable of spiritual direction and human encounter at the same time. Listening to the Word, to the men and women of her time, to the profound needs of the Church.

Angela became a point of reference for many people who sought her advice, comfort, and prayer for their civil, social, and charitable responsibilities. She brought about peace among individuals and between rival families.

Preachers and theologians turned to her seeking explanations about the interpretation of Sacred Scripture.... She carried out the service of the word, a word of peace and of truth: *"She was like a throne of God, teaching all"* (Cozzano).

**Relationships in the Company:** Important relationships had prepared her for her mission and accompanied her up to November 25, 1535, the date of the foundation of the Company: simple and noble friendships... with virgins and widows.... Profound and affectionate relationships with her new spiritual family.

Reflect on her, left at such a young age without the family affection so dear to her, wanting to call her foundation a *Company* ...

And she sought for this Company to be a family with specific roles of *mothers, daughters, sisters, all spouses of the Lover of us all.*



## Call and Mission

The interior life is a necessity for everyone, and a summons, a call, like the call addressed

to Abram: *“Go to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing”* (Genesis 12:1-2).

How could we not think about the call, about the intuition of Angela in the vision of the staircase?

Like Abram, Angela accepted the Lord's direction and advanced toward a foundation that was bold for her time and tradition, and the Lord made of her a great foundress and source of inspiration for total consecration to God in the world. Blessed is



she and blessed are we, or better, happy are we, to use a Merician expression, because still today, we *take care of the Company*.

**A vision in the ordinary...** It was a day like so many others, summertime... harvest time, the hour remembered (as Jesus' first disciples also recalled the hour... *four in the afternoon*)... the hour of siesta... between work and rest... Angela's life and that of her followers would continue normally, in the *marvelous synthesis of action and contemplation*.

**A vision in contemplation...** In the midst of ordinary life Angela found the time for union with God, going aside to pray during siesta time: *One needs to pray always with spirit and mind on account of the constant need for God's help ...*

**A vision that carries a message...** As she contemplated God, the heavens opened... she saw a staircase, virgins, angels, her sister, and heard a song... an intuition permeated her, a vision, and she understood the mission: she would be the foundress of a Company of virgins...

who would fulfill the vision of that staircase that united earth with heaven in a continuing exchange of climbing and descending in the Communion of Saints.

Angela herself would recognize this mission: *[The Lord] being pleased, in his infinite goodness, to use me as his instrument for this great work of his.*

## Interiority

If among the numerous offerings of spirituality proposed by today's cultural context, "interiority" seems more attractive than ever... how could we not probe all that Angela Merici's interiority and depth have to offer?

If we go back through her writings, we find the essence of a life totally accepted and given: the consideration for the grace of vocation, the

means and the ways to persevere and progress: the evangelical counsels, a life of prayer and a sacramental life, the theological, cardinal, and human virtues... we find interiority and humanity... *affable and human...*



## The journey

The interior spiritual journey follows a daily path with the Lord, *the Lover*, awaiting an encounter with him and ultimate possession. Every journey has its own roads.

**Our roads...** in themselves are, Saint Angela said, *thorny and rocky*, but those same roads will become *flower-strewn for us, and paved with finest gold.*

And along these roads continuing formation becomes more true, more wise, more grateful.

**The goal...** will be full communion with the Spouse... *let them set their hopes on high... Let them have Jesus Christ as their only treasure...*

*They have to exult and rejoice, for in heaven a new crown of glory and joy is prepared for all of them, one by one ...*

Faith and hope set on high sketch out a style of joy for life down here.

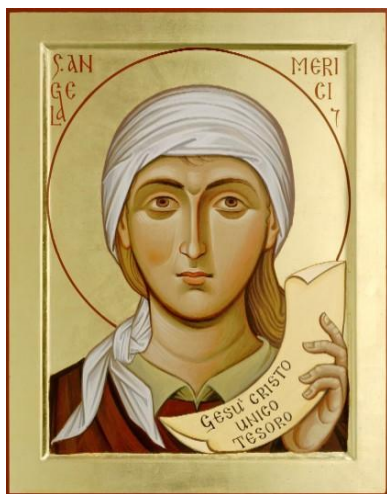
**The assignment ...** from the one who departs to the ones who remain... *Now I am going, and you, in the meantime, do what has to be done. Act, move, believe, strive, hope... direct everything to the praise and glory of his majesty and the good of souls.*

She moves us to act and to act well... with right intention, on the right path, in the right direction.

**A task is entrusted to us:** She moves us to undertake a commitment *as the undertaking is of such importance that there could be no greater, in which lie our life and well-being.*

Thinking about the style, the spirituality, the Merician charism, I would like to conclude with a phrase that my formation director suggested to me when I was young: *"The more is called for; the least is not enough...."*

And with Saint Angela: *Kindly be attentive, with great and longing hearts.*



## HOW CAN SOMEONE OLD BE BORN AGAIN?

Father Flavio Lorenzo Marchesini  
Priest of the Diocese of Vicenza, Psychologist



I thank you sincerely for the invitation to share with you a reflection on the journey of faith that is never finished. This will give us a way, as Saint Paul declares in Romans 1:12, “that you and I may be mutually encouraged by one another’s faith, yours and mine” to give us courage, to pass along the hope that strengthens us, the passion that never has enough, that is never

fully satisfied. I shall try to propose to you an experiential reflection, therefore something more limited but also more personal.

### A) FAITH AS A JOURNEY

As a wise father, Pope Benedict, inviting us to enter into the Year of Faith (2012-2013), asked us: What is faith for us? Is it possible to be people of faith today? Is it possible to form people for faith? Is it possible to educate ourselves (priests, sisters, ministers, catechists...) to be “pilgrims of faith” like Mary?

**“Door of Faith” 1:** *“The ‘door of faith’ (Acts 14:27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church.... To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime.”*

## B) THE RATIONALE FOR (self) EDUCATION

❖ **VC 69:** “*Initial* formation, then, should be closely connected with *continuing* formation, thereby creating a readiness [on the part of all] to let themselves be formed every day of their lives.... None are exempt from the obligation to grow humanly and as Religious; by the same token, no one can be over-confident and live in self-sufficient isolation. At no stage of life can people feel so secure and committed that they do not need to give careful attention to ensuring perseverance in faithfulness; just as there is no age at which a person has completely achieved maturity.”

❖ **VC 19:** "By allowing themselves to be guided by the Spirit on an **endless journey of purification**, they become, day after day, **conformed to Christ**, the prolongation in history of a special presence of the Risen Lord." (Cf. Gal 2:20).

## C) A “NICODEMUS” PICTURE

Our life is a combination of novelty and otherness that spur us on, enrich us, or frighten us. Before this novelty, which comes unlooked for, we can assume two different attitudes: We can **welcome** it affirmatively (adequately) or we can **resist** (not wanting to change or lose control of the situation we have created for ourselves. Why leave the

known for the unknown?). Nicodemus is a character in the Fourth Gospel who represents each one of us. He is usually pictured as an old man, but we can imagine him as a gentleman sure of himself, a respected teacher and member of the Sanhedrin, apparently successful,




but substantially unsatisfied on his journey of faith. He is still committed with all his strength to observing the Law, but he recognizes that he still does not know the Father.

✓ Nicodemus wants the people to experience a spiritual reform, but always from the starting point of his own frame of mind, from the Law, from the good will that we can observe in him. Nicodemus thinks that Jesus is the best of all, the most sincere, the most committed, and for this reason he goes to Jesus, though “**at night**” (John 3:1). Nicodemus comes at night, that is, when his faith is in the dark. He is walking blind. Nicodemus’s night might also be merely the fact that he did not want to be seen, not wanting to expose himself too much, as he was not a disciple who loved Jesus. In any case, *night* signifies resistance to being enlightened by Jesus: Nicodemus has not yet understood anything about God’s plan and method. He knows nothing about the logic of the cross to which he will be referred (3:14). But he is convinced that he “knows” (3:2).

✓ Jesus speaks unconditionally: “*Amen, amen, I say to you, **no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above***” (3:3).

✓ Nicodemus says, “***How can a person once grown old be born again?** Surely he cannot reenter his mother’s womb and be born again, can he?*” (John 3:4). His resistance is that of a person who has “arrived,” someone proud of his personal history, his success, his position. The journey can be continued, but not start over from zero! For Nicodemus, the man and his history, not even God can intervene with a creative deed. There is no novelty; there is only a linear progression. On the contrary, Jesus affirms freedom: it is possible to break with the past, because it is possible to expect from God the gift of a new life. Nicodemus relies totally on his own power as a man; Jesus relies totally on the new reality that God can bring about and that the human being is called to welcome (John 1:12-13).

 **We are all Nicodemus, sisters!** We are Nicodemus when we are certain of our personal sureness. **We know:** It is one of the weaknesses of our closeness to the Lord. We know, we know

everything!!! We may not be reborn. We do not place ourselves before God in total freedom.

✚ Again, we are Nicodemus when we believe that it is **impossible to start anew**. Nicodemus does not wish to be reborn; being reborn threatens him because being reborn means “starting from the beginning,” and for this one would have to “die”!

## **D) THE STAGES OF MY JOURNEY**

“Set up road markers, put up guideposts; turn your attention to the highway, the road by which you went” (Jer 31:21).

### **a) FIRST STAGE: FROM BIRTH TO EIGHTEEN YEARS**

I was born into a family environment of practicing Catholics. The presence of the pastor and of other priests was meaningful. The question put to me at the age of six, “Would you like to become a priest?” was emblematic of how, in a pastoral vocation, we may put the cart before the horse! However... I said yes!

In the summer I was seventeen, I was called on to assist in a camp with young seminarians. It was a time of great simplicity and of great happiness, and I threw myself into it very enthusiastically. Still today it shines in my memory like a bright light. A little later, I learned to speak the scriptural words **“There is more joy in giving than in receiving”** (Acts 20:35). This was my motivation for entering the major seminary.

### **b) FROM EIGHTEEN TO TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS**

In this stage there appeared an element that remains with me: the presence of spiritual teachers and witnesses. I could not walk alone. Even today, on account of a certain emotionalism, I remain incapable of being lucid, rational, detached. Occasionally I need to consult other brothers who help me to see more clearly. Without this interaction, it would be impossible to “see, understand, and believe” (cf. John 20:8).

In following Jesus, we need **witnesses**. We also need to be able to see the ideal that attracts us incarnate in real people. Their presence tells us that it is possible to get there: *“If they, why not I?”*

- These were years of **intense study**, both to learn better the mentality of contemporary culture and to understand the experience of faith at its foundation. I recognize that I wanted to learn as much as possible, with an emphasis on my own wish, not so much to know Christ, but to fulfill the vows better.

### c) THIRD STAGE: THE “ROMAN” PERIOD

After a brief stint in a parish, I was sent to Rome to study at the Institute of Psychology.

God’s visitation has its own times and its own methods. In those four years in Rome, there were important realities, but the most important was accompaniment. Pope Francis recommends this “**art of accompaniment**” (EG 169) to all, so that they may learn always to

remove their sandals on the holy ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5).

That accompaniment was very difficult, on account of my **illusions** and my relative **resistance**. Even on the most sincere and committed journey of discipleship there are resistances and dark



nights of faith. No one reaches mature love without a struggle, without effort, without suffering, even when we can count on grace. Our life is full of **what seems good**.

**The journey of integration: from psychological struggle to spiritual struggle.** The process of conversion also includes the process of slow and gradual **integration** of natural desires or needs into the values of the Kingdom.

#### **d) THE “VICENZA” PERIOD**

In September 1988 it was time to come down from Mt. Tabor and start again on the journey to Jerusalem, in this case the Theological Seminary of Vicenza.

This was the first service for which I was fully responsible. I felt solid on account of my titles, studies, and the struggles I had been through – and scared as a chicken. (What if I failed? What if I was not up to the task...?) These words of Saint Augustine had always kept me company: “Teaching is the best way to learn.” Abraham Lincoln used to say, “If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my axe.” I was and am convinced, in fact, that people are not so much seeking a lesson as a personal encounter, a solid fraternal relationship, a welcome.

#### **e) THE “BRAZILIAN” PERIOD**

This was my experience of being the actual “pastor” of a community. This time of experiencing my smallness and my fragility amid the life of marginalized immigrants enabled me to understand Jesus’ words “*Without me you can do nothing!*” (John 15:5). Through those thirteen years, I came to appreciate some central aspects of Christian living as never before, I would say especially through the



journey of the Church and of the “community of communities” that I was offered.

**1. Relationship with time:** *“Without a discipline about time, that is, a true ‘sanctification of time,’ there is no possibility for a Christian spiritual life.”*

**2. Relationship with the Word:** *“I commend you to God and to that gracious word of his”* (Acts 20:32).

**3. Relationship with the liturgy:** *“I often have the impression of a solid line between ministry and liturgy.... Yes, today’s dominant tendency is to separate liturgy from life.”*

**4. Ministry and human life:** Pope Francis exhorts us to give due attention to the virtues, not the theological but the human virtues. And this is what people want to encounter in all pastors, who are called to embody these human virtues so as to have “the smell of the sheep” (EG 24).

## f) AND NOW?



*“You have come to a turning point in your life. Abandon yourself to God the merciful Father who wants what is good for you.” “The time has come to return to Galilee.” “Today, each one of us can ask ourselves, what is my Galilee? Where is my Galilee? Do I remember*

*it? Have I forgotten it? Have I gone off on roads and paths that made me forget it? Lord, help me: tell me what my Galilee is; you know that I want to return there to encounter you and to let myself be embraced by your mercy”* (Pope Francis).

# THE BEST WINE

Father Flavio Lorenzo Marchesini  
Priest of the Diocese of Vicenza, Psychologist

*“The Gospel joy which enlivens the community of disciples is a missionary joy. The seventy-two disciples felt it as they returned from their mission (cf. Lk 10:17).... This joy is a sign that the Gospel has been proclaimed and is bearing fruit. Yet the drive to go forth and give, to go out from ourselves, to keep pressing forward in our sowing of the*

*good seed, remains ever present” (EG 21).*

We

encounter so many interesting pointers for our journey of faith in the first of the signs accomplished by Jesus, the prototype of what he wants to do for us and with us



(John 2:1-12). Once more, let me affirm that the life of faith is a matter of **spousal relationship**: it is an encounter between spouses. At times even in this spousal encounter, the wine, the celebration, and the joy seem to be running out (vv.3-5). This is really our story, which, as the Song of Songs teaches, is a continual sequence of searching, encountering, losing, suffering, and searching again. With her motherly heart, Mary participates on this pathway and leaves us her unique, irreplaceable advice: “***Do whatever he tells you.***”

On the other hand, we admit that “***the wine is running short,***” that a relationship that is not cultivated, not kept vital, finally dries up

amid routine and forgetfulness. It is like a path that is no longer traveled and winds up weedy and ruined. **What kind of attentiveness is needed for the relationship to continue growing?**

## 1. REALIZING THAT WE ARE IN CONTINUING FORMATION

“Beginning well is a grace from God. Persevering on the right path is a greater grace. But the grace of graces is never to stop” (Dom Helder Camara).

I have asked myself at different times: “*What about us, who educate others in the faith, or at least try to introduce them to the following of Christ: are we disposed to grow in faith?*” What stimulation, what challenges, what opportunities for our own journey of faith are provided by the service which has been entrusted to us?

Paul’s words to Timothy come to mind: “*Stir into flame the gift of God that you have*” (1Tm 4:14; 2Tm 1:6-8). The gift of the Spirit that Timothy had received seems suffocated in the ashes and no long strongly desired. It seems more like a burden than a grace. Three reasons for this situation are discernible in Paul’s advice: a) the weight of habit and of decisions that must be made all alone, the fatigue of responsibility, the lack of help and counsel; b) feelings of insecurity: on account of lack of formation, on account of the criticism, reproaches, mistakes, and misunderstandings that go with community life; c) negligence in the spiritual life, lack of prayer and of contact with the Word and the Eucharist.

## 2. THE JOY AND THE BEAUTY OF THE GOSPEL

What is the light in which Pope Francis rereads the situation of the Church in this historical-cultural moment? It is the light of faith, as *Lumen Fidei* says. “Faith is born of **an encounter with the living God** who calls us and reveals his love, a love which precedes us and upon which we can lean for security and for building our lives. Transformed by this love, we gain fresh vision, new eyes to see; we realize that it

contains a great promise of fulfillment, and that a vision of the future opens up before us. Faith, received from God as a supernatural gift, becomes a light for our way, guiding our journey through time” (LF 4).

Faith is a loving struggle with God, with whom one has fallen in love. The joy of faith is not an emotion, not sentimentalism; even less is it a matter of self-will or of legalities. It is the experience of the merciful Love of the Father that makes us his children. It is the gift of encounter with God. Let us ask ourselves: Have I really experienced being loved by God? Am I happy about it? Do I give thanks every day? Do I guard this gift every day? What in me resists allowing myself to be loved by God?

The cure prescribed by Pope Francis consists in “a renewed **personal encounter with Jesus Christ...every day**” (EG 3). “*Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a*



**person**, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction” (EG 7, quoting Pope Benedict DCE 1). First of all, we are “**disciples**”!

This encounter makes us missionaries: we must take this joy to others. Goodness always seeks to share itself. “*Life gains strength from giving itself and weakens in isolation and comfort. In fact, those who leave the safe shore and are impassioned for the mission of communicating life to others gain more advantage from life’s possibilities*” (Document of Aparecida 360).

### 3. DOCILITY TO THE SPIRIT

This awareness is expressed first of all in living with complete docility to the Spirit: this requires a commitment to allow oneself to be shaped interiorly by the Spirit, to become ever more conformed to Christ. As in the time of the Apostles, so today prayer

is necessary, as well as the understanding that comes particularly from listening to the Word and from discerning spirits, because God gives us the gift of boldness in proclaiming the Gospel (*Redemptoris Missio* 87). We recognize how easy is it to diminish the quality of our personal and liturgical prayer when we reduce it to a duty to be carried out, a habitual practice, instead of an expression of a faith conviction: “*Without me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5). The “missionary disciple should be a “contemplative in action.” She finds answers to her problems in the light of God’s word and in personal and communal prayer (RM 90).

#### 4. TREASURING THE TEMPTATIONS WE ENCOUNTER

Temptations are part of us, as are desires, needs that belong to us and still are not well integrated into a combination oriented to a purpose: Christ in me (Gal 2:20).



To accomplish this integration we need to overcome many temptations that try to wrest away from us the very gift of who we are, the gifts of belonging to the community, of service, of encounter with the physical presence of others (EG 88). These temptations include:

- the “world” inside us
- an exaggerated preoccupation with autonomous **personal**

**space** and relaxation, which leads us to experience our daily jobs as outside our own identity. Here we can observe an **emphasis on individualism, an identity crisis and a loss of fervor**, three ills that feed one another (EG 78).

- a practical relativism that consists of acting as though God did not exist, making decisions as though the poor did not exist, setting goals as

though others did not exist, working as though people who have not received the Gospel did not exist.... **Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary enthusiasm!**

- bad experiences of activity and effort

- a sense of discomfort that transforms us into discontented and disenchanting pessimists with gloomy faces

- spiritual “desertification,” the result of social planning constructed without God or demolishing its Christian roots. **Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of hope!**

- a certain fear of direct encounter with others, with pain, with poverty, with their urgent demands

- search for a “spirituality of well-being” without community, for a “theology of prosperity: without fraternal commitments, or for faceless subjective experiences, reduced to an **interior search for what is inside us.**

- **EG 100.** “It always pains me greatly to discover how some Christian communities, and even consecrated persons, can tolerate different forms of enmity, division, calumny, defamation, vendetta, jealousy and the desire to impose certain ideas at all costs, even to persecutions which appear as veritable witch hunts. **Whom are we going to evangelize if this is the way we act??**

Mark the ascetic says: “*Pray not to enter into temptation. But, if temptation comes, accept it not as something from outside, but as something that is part of you,*” something that speaks of you, of your needs, still alive. How can we grow? By identifying the hidden trickery in temptation. The trickery consists of trusting in our own works and our own good intentions, which wind up producing an “illusion of justice and pride, not a relish for God.” The heart will then become free and happy, liberated from the great temptation of self-importance, of the search for success and affirmation that devour us and block us from a relationship with God and with others. How conquer the trickery of temptation? Say the prayer of Saint Ephraim of Syria:

*O Lord and Master of my life! Take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and*



*King! Grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother. For Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.*

## **5. “YOU SHALL NOT MAKE IDOLS FOR YOURSELVES” (Ex 20: 4)**

Making images of God is inevitable; therefore the problem can be stated in different terms: what image of God do we have? What is the source of that image that we carry inside ourselves? How do we improve the image of God so as to improve our own witness?

*“In conformity with the theological principle ‘grace builds on nature and perfects it,’ we start from the supposition that one’s religious experiences and history of faith are profoundly rooted in natural situations, that is, in life’s daily, physical, and social events. At the same time, grace – God’s gift and kindly treatment – works efficaciously with human nature from the very beginning of life. Key ‘natural’ experiences – biological, physical, and social – have repercussions from the beginning of life on, even on the religious development of a personality, for example, shaping an image of God, basic attitudes toward life, and values ” (Frielingsdorf, 1991, p. 55).*

*“Even if one continues trying to ignore life’s painful and deadly wounds, one will continue to react to them by adopting familiar destructive survival strategies. Such ‘adaptation efficiency, activism, and sense of guilt’ – exactly as happened in childhood – lead to avoiding every painful return to life itself” (pp. 91-29). This attitude does not eliminate or reduce the primary and preventive action of grace, which can heal in many ways that are real even if they are not apparent. “What phrases and words return to me most often, in times of tiredness, anger, or loneliness?”*

## 6. EDUCATING AFFECTIVITY

In general terms we can say that feelings, emotions, and affections are the music, the color, that give our lives vitality. However, feelings can become the principal cause of difficulties in interpersonal relationships. In our culture we are accustomed for education to ignore or deny them. “Controlling” one’s feelings, “channeling” them, is not “ignoring” or “repressing” them. On this topic, the first step of difficulty comes when one wants to be aware of them; the second when one desires to accept them; the third when one unlocks the psychological defense mechanism – albeit unconscious – of repression; the fourth when one considers how to express what one is feeling and yet may be denying.

\* Here is a possible outline of the four stages:

1. Through reflection exercises, it is possible to reach greater **awareness**. It is important that the reflection be precise, concrete, and specific in naming the emotions accurately.

2. Awareness of their presence is the precondition for **accepting** them. Accepting feelings is the first step to not having to be under their control.

3. After acceptance comes **understanding** of why we feel this way, both in reference to the present situation and in reference to our personal history, for example, why we feel uneasy with people who are very secure, or with authority figures.

4. Finally, it is possible to describe the **expression** of feelings in three general ways:

\* **Repression** is the denial that specific feelings, desires, and such are being experienced. One says, “It’s better not to think about ourselves; those are all trifles; I feel nothing....” Then we get sad and stressed without understanding why.

\* **Uncontrolled expression** means that the feelings, left to themselves, are determining our behavior, both in the “active” and in the “passive” sense: for example, anger can be expressed just as much by isolating oneself in silence or by turning a cold shoulder as by

breaking a plate on someone's head. Stamping one's feet, maintaining a rigid posture, raising one's voice, or looking for payback are other ways.

\* **Controlled expression, in view of a good to be gained,** means to be clear about what one is experiencing and to face it with the values that one wants to live by. For example, one feels the desire to be pampered and to receive attention; the desire is recognized; and one accepts that this may not always be possible. One also accepts that the other person may love you according to his limits, in the way he is able, and one expresses thanks. The most demanding situation and the most successful is deep forgiveness.

## 7. GROWING IN THE CAPACITY TO LOVE

It is not easy, nor is it automatic, to love maturely, generously, in a way that is capable of both strength and renunciation. To know how to establish authentic and deep relationships, begin with your sisters. The requirements for a relationship of mature love:

- the capacity for total love; my "whole" self is committed in loving and giving myself in consecration.
- solicitude: the interests, desires, sentiments, defects of the other have the same importance as my own; the ability to "be concerned," to take care of the other and of every other;
- the capacity to tolerate ambivalence: some traits of the other person inspire joy and attract me, but others can evoke antipathy, hatred or anger.
- renewing the surrender of other possibilities.
- openness to the value, the plan of living together, as Church.

From our relationship with Christ, in the Spirit, as from a sparkling fountain, flows **apostolic charity**, which inspires in me Christ's own charity ("The charity of Christ urges me" 1 Cor 5:14), marked by attention, tenderness, compassion, acceptance, availability, and interest in people's problems (RM 89).

## 8. MANAGING CONFLICTS

It gets harder and harder to manage anxiety and aggressiveness, which cause rupture and division (divorce becoming easier and easier, in a few months...).

**Experiencing conflicts** in a constructive, intelligent way, with a healthy sense of humor. As a result of “creative tension,” people can learn many new things through conflict and can achieve new and more mature ways of relating. Two danger signs:

- a) Consumption of tranquilizers is continually growing: too many, and often loosely managed or self-prescribed. It is true that we “liberate” ourselves from anxiety and from sleep problems, but what other side-



effects are we setting off in ourselves? Shouldn't we perhaps recover the interior strength and motivation to accept “life's struggle”?

- b) Too many separations are caused by anger and the inability to overcome the normal crises in relationships. And the “divorce express,” always faster and cheaper, facilitates separations, precipitously decided under

the pressure of anger or of a crisis that a minimum of commitment would be able to resolve.

## 9. FIDELITY

Fidelity is an aspect of the fuller and continuous “**exodus**” from **I to thou**, to form a new *we*. It is a form of de-centering, of conversion. Here we may note the urgency of prayer, of the Word, of the Eucharist, because the gift of self, death to oneself in order to rise for others, is possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit.

- It relies not only on being together at all cost, but on the quality of the relationship, rediscovering its motivations. More than a matter of regulations, we must insist on continuing formation in true love, which expresses itself in fidelity and indissolubility. Not to mention celebrating gratitude and wonder!

- Humor, good sense, and great patience in this fourfold fidelity: *“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers”* (Acts 2:42).

- John 21:15-19: In reality, the faithful One is He who continues to call us.

*“The night was so dark, without any point of light,  
such a night that I was gripped by anguish,  
despite the deep love that I have always had for the nighttime.  
Then you told me in secret: the darker the night,  
the brighter will be the dawn in your heart!”*  
(Dom Helder Camara).

Reflections of Father Flavio Marchesini



## POINTS FROM THE HOMILIES AT THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATIONS

Sunday, July 27, 2014

### *The kingdom of heaven is like...*

*The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.... The kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind.... Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old (cf. Mt 13:44-52).*

Jesus is not comparing the Kingdom of Heaven to the things he names, the hidden treasure, the precious pearl, and the fishnet, but rather to the actions that develop in the parable. Let's listen. There is an ancient treasure buried underground for many years. (Think of an artistic treasure hidden for centuries or even millennia underground, until someone discovers it there and digs it out.) A farm worker who works the owner's land casually displaces a stone with his plow or spade and realizes that there, underneath it, is a hidden city. His heart fills up with joy because the prospect of a new life opens up for him, no longer as a poor servant.

What does he do? He closes up the hole again, runs home to sell everything he has to get together the money he will need to buy from the landowner this small field where he has worked for so many years. The key words are "he finds a treasure," "the joy of discovery," and "he sells all that he has and buys that field." The same thing happens in the parable about the person who searches for precious pearls. Jesus means that the Kingdom of Heaven is fulfilled each time someone discovers what truly matters in life and is disposed to risk everything for that. In that risk one experiences true joy. The Christian lives life full of joy because of having discovered what truly matters and risks everything for it: This is what the Kingdom of God consists of. The Christian is

the one who has discovered that what counts, what is truly precious, is Jesus Christ, his love and his promises: here one may risk one's whole life.

The last parable speaks of a net that someone tosses out to catch fish, fish of all species and sizes. But the fisherman, having thrown out the net once, looks discerningly and draws in only "good" fish of the right quality and size. In all these actions Jesus sees the Kingdom of God and recalls that there are conditions to make us worthy of being gathered in by the fisherman (God), so as not to be excluded from his company. That would be true sadness and a true suffering! With his parables Jesus invites us too, today, not to lose the opportunities that the Lord God offers us to encounter him (the treasure found by chance), to set about searching for what truly matters (like the one who searches for the precious pearl) to be able to experience and enjoy the joy of his love and salvation. Jesus alerts us, then, to the danger of being excluded for his friendship, joy, and salvation.

Solomon's prayer is beautiful: "Lord, give me a wise heart," that is, a docile heart, that knows how to listen and be guided by your Word.

*Mons. Adriano Tessarollo*

## **Monday, July 28, 2014**

### ***The kingdom of heaven is like...***

*The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field.... The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened (cf. Mt 13:31-33).*

Jesus tells another two parables (of seven) to speak about the "mystery" of the Kingdom of God. Again the topic is an activity that sees God and man in action and that matures over time. As in the parables of *the hidden treasure* and of *the precious pearl found and sold*, the Kingdom of heaven refers not only to the seed or the yeast, but

more to the action that is described in each of the two parables: the little seed, the planting, the growth, the great tree: the little seed has within it the necessary strength to become that great tree, but the planting and the time of growth are necessary. The same thing could be said of the handful of yeast: it requires the woman's work, a quantity of flour, and the water and time for fermenting the whole. God puts the strength in us, but his Kingdom grows among men and women, to be fulfilled in the course of time. A passage from the prophet Jeremiah (cf. Jeremiah 13:1-11) tells us about a symbolic action requested of the same prophet, an action that then became a message for all. "*Go buy yourself a linen loincloth....*" The prophet is told to carry out a series of actions: to buy, to soak, to hide, to let it rot... so that the loincloth, once new and presentable, is no longer usable. And now the sentence that explains the meaning of that symbolic action: so it will be for his people, now so grand and glorious, because they have not listened and are so obstinate as not to listen and not to cling to the Lord or obey his Word!

Let us pray to the Lord: Speak again, O Lord, and touch our hearts, so that we may listen to your voice today.

*Mons. Adriano Tessarollo*

## **Tuesday, July 29, 2014 – Memorial of Saint Martha**

### **The house in Bethany**

In today's liturgy the Church celebrates the memory of Saint Martha, a disciple of Jesus, with her sister Mary and brother Lazarus (cf. 1 John 4:7-16; John 11:19-27).

This Gospel woman offers us an opportunity for some brief considerations about our spiritual life and about the Merician charism that we are exploring during these days. The Gospels always present Saint Martha to us in the setting of her house in Bethany: a house of welcome and of service, a house of suffering and of friendship. Here we can already see something important: for Martha the spiritual life is a domestic experience; the home is her place of faith, of encounter with Jesus, of love for her brother and sister. This was also the case for Jesus himself; for thirty years the domestic setting in Nazareth was his place

for experiencing the Father and for service to others. The same thing was true for Saint Angela Merici, who invented, one might say, a “domestic” way of being consecrated to the Lord, while remaining at home. The home is the first place of faith, of the spiritual path to holiness.

**1. *A house of service*** In the famous Gospel passage of Luke 10:48, Martha is presented as the lady of the house in Bethany, where she lives with Lazarus and Mary. Here she generously welcomes Jesus and puts herself at his service, with so much to do, with such haste, that she even risks overlooking the Guest on account of having too many things to prepare in his honor. Martha is invited by Jesus to reflect on her motivation for giving herself so much to do. That sweet reproof poses crucial questions to us too: what is the sense in upsetting ourselves? Why and for whom are we working? Under the pretext that we have too much to do, aren’t we also running the risk of overlooking people, of not valuing them, of not having time to listen to them?

**2. *A house of suffering*** The Gospel episode that we just heard tells of the death of Lazarus, Martha’s brother. She had sent a message for Jesus to come, and she went out to meet the Master and said to him, “If you had only been here....” Jesus asked her to believe. In Martha’s house there were suffering, pain, illness, death, and a crisis of faith. Here too we can find ourselves: how many times in our own homes, and from our relatives and neighbors, we hear questions addressed to us, like “Why did this happen to us?” “Where is God?” “Why didn’t he answer me when I prayed in my time of need?” Precisely in these circumstances, Jesus asks us too: “Do you believe in me?” He is the resurrection and the life not only after death, but already at this moment. To live with Jesus in Martha’s house means to learn to stand with people who suffer, to share hardships, to dry tears, to comfort and give reasons for hope.

**3. *A house of friendship*** Jesus came to Bethany to pass some time of intimate friendship with his friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. He even did this just before the time of his Passion. He loved that house where he felt welcomed, loved, responded to. How lovely if our houses

too might more and more become circles of true friendship! In this too Saint Angela is our teacher. We know how people sought out her company and how she desired to make the Company of Saint Ursula a place of true friendship and of reciprocal help on the path toward holiness. For Saint Angela's daughters one could almost speak of an apostolate of friendship.

May the Lord help each one of us to live in our own homes in the spirit of Saint Martha and of Saint Angela!

*Fr. Ezio Bolis*

### **Thursday, July 31, 2014 – St. Ignatius**

Before departure, just one thought in this celebration in honor of Saint Ignatius. We are reminded of him by Saint Paul's invitation to the members of the Church of Corinth: *Become imitators of me as I am of Christ....* One becomes a disciple and a Christian through having Jesus Christ as a model to imitate. The Church proposes the saints to us because of the fullness of Christ present in their individual lives. In the Preface of today's Mass we are reminded that the saints give us an example. Saint Angela does this for you. The Gospel recalls to us that if Christ is the goal of our lives, we should plan on surrendering every obstacle to union with him. Choosing Christ also means letting go of one good thing for the sake of another which is greater, specifically a closer union with and imitation of Christ. It involves a daily following and an invitation to constantly treasure this vocation.

***Mons. Adriano Tessarollo***

**Wednesday, July 30 - Eucharistic Celebration**  
**Homily of Cardinal Pietro Parolin**



Dear sisters,

I am happy to be able to meet you on the occasion of your annual meeting, which this year has the theme: *“Formation ... a journey of faith, never finished.”*

I bring you greetings and good wishes from the Holy Father Francis, who encourages you to follow serenely and trustingly the path of fidelity to Christ, to the Church, and to your specific vocation of bearing witness to the renewing power of the Gospel in daily life. The Pope urges you to be courageous and credible witnesses of Christian hope in the particular secular environments where you are engaged, to be close to the wounds, the questions, the waiting, and the needs of your neighbors, to reveal God's tenderness and saving love.

The Christian experience consists of encountering Christ or, as Saint Angela Merici affirms, encountering “your Lover,” and through

this encounter to start a relationship with Him, a relationship which grows along a journey that brings it to life and develops it to full human and spiritual maturity.

This spiritual journey, this trip toward the source of life, is

daily nourished by the ever-fresh Word of God and by the Eucharist.

In today's first reading we heard the Prophet Jeremiah affirm that the Word of God is "the heart's joy and happiness." The Word is the fountain of hope because it gives us God's way of seeing reality and draws us into intimacy with Him. We all need to nourish ourselves constantly on the Word of God, to savor it and let it be the source of life for us. It teaches us to distinguish effectively between the precious and the worthless and to remain in the Lord's presence, where we may find comfort and enlightenment.

Therefore, dear sisters, I invite you to imitate the Prophet Jeremiah, who demonstrates the radiant happiness that the treasury of God's Word can uncover for us, as we enjoy its beauty and wisdom.

Learn and teach the Word of God; make known its depth. It is a precious pearl; its splendor is increased insofar as it becomes available to all and insofar as it is well tended to. It will increase in you while you learn it and teach it, because by giving it you understand it ever better.



Our world, often disoriented, needs lights that orient, encourage, and help the traveler. God's Word is this light, and it is the task of all the baptized to uncover its inexhaustible richness and to give it joyfully to people near and far, because in every heart lodges a secret hope of encountering truth.

God's Word leads to the Eucharist, takes us to meet the Lord and to enjoy the sweetness of the encounter. Participation in the Eucharist puts us in a certain sense between heaven and earth, conducting us through a moment on Mount Tabor where, together with the prophets and the Apostles, we can contemplate the splendor of the Son of God, and then go back down through the valleys enriched by that strength and that grace that have been given to us

We need to find and to acquire this "*hidden treasure*" and this "*precious stone*." These refer not only to the Kingdom of Heaven of the future evoked by the passage from the Gospel of Matthew that we just proclaimed, but also that that Kingdom of Heaven that begins to be revealed and communicated here and now. However, this Kingdom presents thoroughly distinctive characteristics: it is a Kingdom that can be acquired only at the price of selling "*all that one has*."

In other words, it is necessary to unload the bundles of egoism and pride to be able "*to buy the Kingdom*."

One needs to unload merely human plans and visions to make room for divine plans and visions. It is as if God were saying to us, "Make a little room so that I can come to dine with you!" And it is



trusting and constant prayer that imparts the strength necessary to clean out this way, allowing the Holy Spirit to work wonders, to become our guest in our thoughts and actions.

The encounter with the Lord comes through the Church. The Church is the place par excellence for encountering Him. The Church gives birth to us as Christians, teaches us the divine Word, and instills in us a true knowledge of Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, in whom humanity also finds its own truth. The journey of faith is at once ecclesial and personal; faith requires searching, accompaniment, and support in order to grow and develop. In the Church we find that sacramental source from which we have received faith as a gift and in which we receive the sustenance of grace.

In her ‘writings,’ Saint Angela Merici has left you a wonderful testimony of her own personal journey of faith, along which she was conducted by the Spirit, with joy but not without weariness, even through “*dark*” periods. She was always sustained by the spiritual experience of her relationship with Christ, “*lover, spouse, and teacher.*”



Angela carved out a new pathway in the Church: consecration in secularity. This means living a radical choice to serve the Kingdom, linked with the Church in a particular area and interacting with one's own

living situation. It means giving priority to presence precisely where the Church encounters real humanity and real culture, so as to evangelize, bringing about growth from within, through serving God and others amid one's tasks in every area of life.

The fact of belonging to "this moment" pushes people to enlarge their perspective on events inside and outside the Church and to recognize the signs of God's Kingdom wherever they appear.

The Merician charism is marked by being called "*to unite together*" to serve the Lord. How beautiful is the witness of belonging to one's own true sisterly companionship that promotes the spirit of Gospel relationships. You are united by your commitment to live the charism of Saint Angela Merici and by your love for your foundress.

The secularity of your Merician institute does not explicitly provide for particular forms of associated or organized ways to live. Yet the provisions of your Constitutions invite you to find times to be together and to experience community in prayer and in sisterly joy and to deepen your spiritual life and participation in your institute.

Insofar as you are doing these things today, you continue to be, like Saint Angela, witnesses to a Gospel-based life.

Saint Angela began the Company with the intention of imitating in her own time Jesus' life in the midst of humanity, beginning with interior recollection, as we read in the Gospel. This perspective offers good points for understanding better the style of secularity of your Company today.

May meditation on God's Word and the Eucharist become more and more that indispensable nourishment and energy for launching anew the spiritual mission of your institute in the Church and in the world! May they be for each one of you the source of grace for progressing in your personal journey of faith!

Pope Francis, in the discourse prepared for his audience with the participants in the meeting of the Italian Conference of Secular Institutes, said, among other things: "Never lose the momentum of walking the streets of the world, aware that walking, even with an uncertain step or limping, is always better than standing still, locked within your questions or securities. The missionary passion, the joy of Christ that urges you to share with others the beauty of faith, reduces the risk of becoming stuck in individualism. The line of thought that proposes man as creator of himself, guided only by his own choices and desires, often vested in the seemingly beautiful garment of freedom and respect, threatens to undermine the foundations of consecrated life, especially of lay people. There is an urgent need to re-evaluate your

sense of belonging to your vocational community which, precisely because it is founded on community life, finds its strengths in its charisma" (Pope Francis, May 10, 2014, discourse to participants in the meeting of the Italian Conference of Secular Institutes).


In borrowing these words of the Holy Father, I hope you may discover the contemporary relevance of the Merician charism and may make it fruitful in our world, which is thirsty for authentic values, for the hope that does not disappoint, and ultimately for Christ, even it does not realize what it thirsts for.



**We have a new Vice-Assistant  
to the Council of the Federation:  
Mons. Gaetano Zito  
of the Diocese of Catania**



[Documents of approval and appointment  
by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of  
Apostolic Life]

  
CONGREGATIO  
PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSECRATAE  
ET SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE

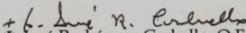
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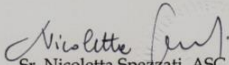
**BEATISSIMO PADRE,**

Sua Eccellenza Reverendissima mons. Adriano Tessarollo, Vescovo di Chioggia, attuale Assistente Ecclesiastico del Consiglio della Federazione della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, Istituto Secolare di Sant'Angela Merici, ha presentato alla Sede Apostolica la richiesta di confermare la nomina di mons. Gaetano Zito, sacerdote della Arcidiocesi di Catania, quale Vice - Assistente Ecclesiastico del Consiglio della Federazione della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, Istituto Secolare di Sant'Angela Merici, secondo quanto disposto dall'art. 36.5 delle Costituzioni del suddetto Istituto; per i motivi esposti.

La Congregazione per gli Istituti di vita consacrata e le Società di vita apostolica, valutata attentamente ogni cosa, visto il parere favorevole dell' Arcivescovo di Catania, concede quanto richiesto, confermando la nomina di mons. Gaetano Zito, sacerdote della Arcidiocesi di Catania, quale Vice - Assistente Ecclesiastico del Consiglio della Federazione della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, Istituto Secolare di Sant'Angela Merici.

Dato in Vaticano, il 21 giugno 2014

+   
\* José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.  
Arcivescovo Segretario

  
Sr. Nicoletta Spezzati, ASC  
Sottosegretario



CONGREGATIO  
PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSECRATAE  
ET SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE

Dal Vaticano, 21 giugno 2014

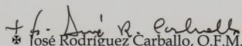
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Eccellenza Reverendissima,

allegato alla presente trova il rescritto con la conferma della nomina di mons. Gaetano Zito, sacerdote dell'Arcidiocesi di Catania, quale Vice-Assistente Ecclesiastico del Consiglio della Federazione della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, Istituto Secolare di Sant'Angela Merici.

Nel formulare i migliori auguri al Vice - Assistente per il servizio che si appresta a svolgere, rinnovo a Lei la nostra riconoscenza e gratitudine, assicurandoLe un particolare ricordo nella preghiera.

Con l'occasione La saluto cordialmente nel Signore.

  
\* José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.  
Arcivescovo Segretario

con allegato

A Sua Eccellenza Reverendissima  
Mons. Adriano TESSAROLLO  
Vescovo di CHIOGGIA

*Welcome, Bishop Gaetano!*

*God bless your work with the Company!*

## 2015 - Year of Consecrated Life

### 480th anniversary of the Foundation of the Company

#### *Rejoice and be of good will*

✱ *Be happy, and always full of charity and faith and hope in God* (Rule Chapter 9, 11) .

✱ *...thorny and rocky roads we will find flower-strewn for us, paved with finest gold* (Rule, Prologue 27).

✱ *... rejoice, because, without doubt, what I say to you will be so* (Last Counsel, 22).

✱ *... meet each other as loving sisters, and thus, talking over spiritual matters, rejoice together, and together encourage one another* (Eighth Legacy, 3-5).

✱ *How much they have to exult and rejoice, for in heaven a new crown of glory and joy is prepared for all of them, one by one, provided they stand firm and steady in their resolve* (Fifth Counsel, 25-26).

✱ *With joy and gratitude, we, her daughters, welcome the charism which the Holy Spirit continually renews in fidelity to its origins and the expectations of the Church* (Constitutions 2.3).

