

IN THE SAME CHARISM

with responsibility



n. 1 - 2016

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

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TO THE READERS

Seekers of happiness...

I read in *Contemplate*, the third letter published by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life for the Year of Consecrated Life, this appealing statement: “...yearning for fullness and seeking for happiness, full of passion and never having enough joy.”

What better good wishes could we exchange for continuing to live as consecrated women in this new Year of Mercy? But how do we transform this wish into reality? The answer can be found in the same letter: “*The task entrusted to consecrated life is bearing witness that God is happiness. Fixing our gaze and our hearts on him allows us to live in fullness.*”

Yearning for fullness...

At times life is too full of anxiety, of things to do, of duties to carry out, of deadlines, of worries... But very often life leaves us unsatisfied, always waiting for a tomorrow that we hope will be better. Only a life lived in fullness can be called a full life... and fullness comes to us by living in the heart of the *Lover of us all*. Let us fix our gaze and our hearts on Jesus as our Constitutions recommend: “*Our life as consecrated seculars will have its center of unity in Christ Jesus*” (3.3).

Seeking for happiness...

We yearn for happiness, but we do not find it cheaply on our streets: a happiness that is true, deep, lasting... People continually search for it, like the pearl of great price, willing to do anything to possess it. I can only think of what Saint Angela tells us in her Rule: I cannot look for happiness *in possessions, in food, in relatives and friends, in myself, in any attributes and knowledge... But in God alone, and in the kind and ineffable providence that is his alone... in God, he has all his wealth and outside of God he sees himself impoverished of everything, being a total nothing, and with God possessing everything*” (cf. Chapter X About Poverty).

Never enough joy...

The human heart is made for the infinite and will never have enough joy until it fully possesses the Author of life. “*You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you,*” wrote St. Augustine.

In this Year of Mercy, let us allow ourselves to be wrapped in God’s tenderness and repose in him. He will satisfy us with joy, because *God is happiness...* Have a good year ... in good company!

Caterina Dalmasso

A THOUGHT FROM THE PRESIDENT

To Know and to Show...



The Year of Consecrated Life is now finished. The objectives set out by Pope Francis and the results expected were perhaps not fully achieved, but we are immensely grateful to the Lord for this opportunity which was given to us.

The closing of the Year of Consecrated Life does not exhaust our commitment; rather, it makes us even more intent on “embracing the future with hope”: our compelling desire remains, as well as our commitment to cultivate and spread esteem for this form of life *“that our Savior lived, and with*

Him, our Lady, the Apostles, the Virgins and many Christians of the early Church” (Constitutions 2:2).

Our vocation to live totally for the Lord, to *“know and show that God is able to fill our hearts to the brim with happiness; that we need not seek our happiness elsewhere...”* (Francis, Apostolic Letter for the Year of Consecrated Life), constantly remains the destination toward which to orient our days.

Our daily life is made up of happy moments and, even more, of difficult moments, of trials and sufferings, but we have our Holy Madre’s guarantee: *“... thorny and rocky roads we will find flower-strewn for us, paved with finest gold”* (Rule, Prologue 27).

While we are stretching toward the future, living the present fully, as time goes by we are being drawn bit by bit into a great new event: the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

In the document announcing the Year, Pope Francis again comes to our aid: *“We want to live this Jubilee Year in light of the Lord’s words: Merciful like the Father.... In order to be capable of*

mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us” (Misericordiae Vultus, 13).

This year, 2016, we will be able to harmonize a constant deepening with reflection on our particular guiding texts of holiness, Saint Angela’s Writings and our Constitutions, inserting these in this “frame” that the Jubilee Year invites us to contemplate: *“Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy.”*

Our holy Madre reaches out to us with her thoughts, seeking, *“... mercy and time for penitence”* (Rule, Chapter V, 22).

There are expressions of hers that we consider too strong, exaggerated, such as her need for mercy and time for penitence, or the “shadow” with which she depicts herself: she sees in herself *“so many errors, so much ugliness and blame...”*

We probably express our need in “lighter” terms: but the need to recognize it in our depths remains unaltered: The need for a renewed radicality in following the Lord Jesus; the need for a renewed concreteness of love for those around us, for a renewed sisterly attention to our sisters, *“esteeming each other, helping each other, bearing with each other in Jesus Christ”* (Ninth Counsel, 2).

By God’s grace always given to us, the Jubilee Year of Mercy makes us capable of mercy, because ... *“Day after day, touched by his compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others”* (Misericordiae Vultus, 14).

Maria Razza



A THOUGHT FROM THE ECCLESIASTICAL ASSISTANT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION



The Jubilee of Mercy and the Gospel of Luke

According to the suggestions of Pope Francis for the Jubilee of Mercy, I would like to recall an invitation that the Pope addresses to all and that we read in numbers 13 and 16 of “The Face of the Father’s Mercy” (MV), the document with which he announced the extraordinary Jubilee. He invites us to learn from God’s Word, especially this year in the school of Luke’s Gospel that is being set before us in the Sunday liturgy.

N° 13. *“We want to live this Jubilee Year in light of the Lord’s words: Merciful like the Father. The Evangelist reminds us of the teaching of Jesus who says, “Be merciful just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). It is a programme of life as demanding as it is rich with joy and peace. Jesus’s command is directed to anyone willing to listen to his voice (cf. Lk 6:27). In order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God’s mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle.*

16. *“In the Gospel of Luke, we find another important element that will help us live the Jubilee with faith. Luke writes that Jesus, on the Sabbath, went back to Nazareth and, as was his custom, entered the synagogue. They called upon him to read the Scripture and to comment on it. The passage was from the Book of Isaiah where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to those in captivity; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” (Is 61:1-2). A “year of the Lord’s favour” or “mercy”: this is what the Lord proclaimed and this is what we wish to live **now.**”*

In four other numbers of MV (8, 9, 14, 24), the Pope cites passages from the Gospel to invite us to walk with this Gospel, with particular attention to the theme of mercy. We will be able to prepare ourselves, personally or in a group, for the Sunday reading of the Gospel or return to it after Sunday, taking time for study and personal prayer on this word.

What better way is there to learn, welcome, and announce God's mercy than to draw directly upon the Word of God through the Gospel of Luke, "the scribe of Christ's mercy," in this liturgical year? To help us on this journey I propose some of the emphases on mercy typical of Luke's Gospel.

1. In his first preaching at Nazareth (Lk 4:16-30), Jesus announces that the awaited salvation is fulfilled in him. Therefore his mission was recognized as "a year of the Lord's grace" in which God offered the deliverance and pardon announced by his prophetic word, which was accompanied by deeds that were just as prophetic. Luke wishes to draw the readers' attention to that word and to those prophetic deeds of Jesus, words and deeds of grace. Today this word and these deeds are entrusted to the Church, which continues to "bear the joyful message" and to proclaim the time of the Lord's grace. In Christ's coming and in his passing among and encountering the people of every time, the Lord's salvation becomes present: "*Today, in the city of David, is born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord*" (2:11), announced the angel at Bethlehem; "*Today is this salvation fulfilled*" (4:21), said Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth; "*Today salvation has come to this house*" (19:9), Jesus said to Zaccheus; "*Today you will be with me in paradise*" (23:43), Jesus announced to the thief who called upon him. In these proclamations the gift precedes the request and calls forth conversion. This is how Jesus proclaimed a God who is merciful to all. The Gospel is therefore the gratuitous and salvific gift that comes from God before anyone merits it. Mercy calls forth our conversion, and our good deeds are the consequence and the fruit of the salvation that has been given and received.

2. Luke's "infancy narratives" (Lk 1-2) are also centered on the proclamation of mercy, of God's grace and fidelity. Beginning with Mary, who first "*found favor with God*" (1:31) and who sings that "*his mercy*" is for all generations (1:50), and thanks to "*his mercy*" God has helped his people (1:54). The birth of the Baptist, too, is a manifestation of his "*great mercy*" (1:58) and in the name of mercy (John indicates that "*God is or produces grace*") is contained his mission of preparing the people to accept the Messiah, the gift of "*God's mercy and fidelity to the covenant*" (1:72). The Messiah was given to us for "*the forgiveness of sins*" (1:77), the gift of the "*tenderness and mercy of our God who will come to visit us like the rising sun*" (1:78). In all these passages the word "*mercy*" translates the Greek *eléos*, which with some other words in the New Testament express the compassion that God uses in interactions with humanity, supported and accompanied by sentiments of compassion, love, tenderness, sympathy, and kindness. A love of God that speaks to all without letting itself be changed by the behavior and responses of human beings.

3. But if we want to go directly **to the heart of Luke's Gospel**, in Chapter 15 Jesus manifests in his deeds and in his words the merciful love of God. This chapter is considered one of the doctrinal peaks of Jesus' revelation of God, with the three parables with which Jesus responded to religious people who criticized him because "*Tax collectors and sisters were all drawing near to listen to him.*" In contrast to their attitude of judgment and exclusion, Jesus adopted kindness and acceptance, actually of searching. Each of the three parables poses a different question that we can make our own.

- Do I recognize, first and foremost, the merciful love with which the Lord comes in search of me, awaits me, and welcomes me?

- Am I learning from Jesus how to live with the same merciful love toward others?

- Do I judge, or do I seek and welcome everyone to guide him/her to the joy of God's love, the love that is given to all, extended even to the lost and to those far off?

- Must someone be “pure” to be close to the Lord or does closeness to the Lord make one “pure”?

4. Again and again, the accusations against Jesus returned, level by the Pharisees, people who were considered so religious: “*He was accustomed to welcome sinners and eat with them.*” What scandalized them was Jesus’ and his disciples’ closeness to those who were considered **sinners**, therefore unworthy to be close both to them and to Jesus, a good Jew, who probably grew up in the same religious environment as they. But instead, Jesus’ originality was precisely this closeness that was expressed by participating in meals with them: in that nearness of his Jesus revealed God’s love, which seeks out sinners, which takes the initiative in discussions with them, taking the first step and offering them pardon and salvation, in this way eliciting their conversion: “*It is not the well who need the physician, but the sick do; I have not come to call the just, but sinners to conversion*” (5:31). This is what he did when he called Levi/Matthew, a tax-collector, to follow him and when he invited himself to the house of Zaccheus, another tax-collector, both considered sinners. At another meal Jesus revealed mercy by forgiving. One day he was invited to lunch in the house of a certain Simon, a Pharisee (7:36-50). Unexpectedly “*a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee [brought] an alabaster flask of ointment....*” Simon, seeing that Jesus let his feet be touched and kissed by the woman, made a quick judgment on the unworthiness of the woman to get close to Jesus: “*She is a sinner!*” Instead, Jesus looks at the woman’s heart and accepts her desire for love and forgiveness expressed in approaching him, and he concludes, “*...her many sins are forgiven on account of her great love....*” Next he says to her, “*Your sins are forgiven*” and then adds to her, “*Your faith has saved you; go in peace!*”

In the parable of those invited to the “*great dinner*” (15:15-24), the “*poor, lame, blind, and crippled*” enter, a list of people typical in Luke’s Gospel, that is, people who were considered “impure” and “sinners.” The just Pharisees would never sit at table together with

these people. And while in Matthew's parallel account (22:1-10) the host has people without a wedding garment cast outside (the wedding garment probably representing works of faith, which Matthew requires as a prerequisite for entering the banquet), Luke eliminates this detail to emphasize that those who refuse the invitation are the ones excluded. In Luke's account of the "disciples of Emmaus" (24:13-35), the Risen Jesus even becomes a merciful traveler who walks with the two sad-faced and confused travelers. His accompaniment calls forth their invitation to share a meal with them. There he will reveal himself to their eyes by breaking bread, thus renewing in their hearts faith in him and hope in his promises.



5. Let us think then about Jesus' saying, reported only in Luke's Gospel: **"Be merciful, as your Father is merciful"** (6:35), chosen by Pope Francis as the "motto" for the Jubilee of Mercy. Many other deeds and teachings of Jesus on mercy appear in the Gospel of Luke, plus the Lucan-style account that we read in John 8:1-11, that is, the episode of the adulterous woman who was presented to Jesus for stoning. It ends with these words of Jesus: *"Neither will I condemn you; go now and sin*

no more."

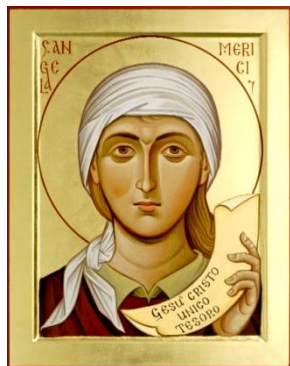
Mercy is certainly one of the principal – if not the principal – keys for reading the Gospel of Luke. This Gospel proclaims the Lord's gratuitous initiative, through which forgiveness and salvation are offered to us. In our time too it invites us to take the initiative in offering forgiveness and salvation to our brothers and sisters, not motivated by self-interest but by hope for their conversion. The recompense will come from God. Christian love is an imitation of the Father, whose mercy toward us is the foundation of our mercy toward others.

Ecclesiastical Assistant, +Bishop Adriano Tessarollo

ON THE RULE OF SAINT ANGELA MERICI

Some points for reflection...

Rule, Chapter IX About *Virginity* (verses 1-10)



Safeguarding virginity...

¹*“Let each one want to preserve sacred virginity.”*

Saint Angela assumes that even virginity is a gift coming from God; thus, it is *sacred*.

If virginity is *sacred* it must not only be physical and human; it is certainly not sexuality; on the contrary, it is love received from and given by God.

It is a gift granted and never paid for, a gift given to be preserved jealously; a precious gift that requires a response, another gift; the offering of the heart to the Beloved One.

It deals with *preserving* and helping to preserve.... this gift, as the Foundress reminds those responsible: *“And you must be especially solicitous and careful that they keep themselves intact and chaste, and that in every action and gesture they behave with modesty and prudence”* (4th Legacy 4-5).

Amedeo Cencini makes another analogous observation, when he notes that: *“virginity for the Kingdom is a hidden treasure in the field of our life, and it is continually being sought and discovered; we shall never fully understand the beauty of this precious treasure. To be a virgin does not mean to remain in it but, yes, to become it. Becoming a virgin happens throughout all the stages one’s existence, until we reach our final goal, the meeting of the One for whom we have waited all our life...”*

Virginity begins with love and requires love; it must not remain sterile; it must become a vibrant gift.

For Saint Angela, virginity is a condition for entering the Company (see Chapter 1 of the Rule: *ought to be a virgin ...*) and for

living the life of the Company, a virginity that has to be lived as a consecrated lay person:

*“Saint Angela Merici gave the name ‘Company of Saint Ursula’ to the institute of consecrated **virgins in the world**, which she founded at Brescia on November 25, 1535” (Constitutions 1.1).* Being virgins, our life will be a life spent for the Lord and our brothers and sisters in harmony with the invitation of Saint Angela: *“That they should do honor to Jesus Christ, to whom they have promised their virginity and their very self” (5th Counsel 21).*

To give one’s heart as a gift to the Lord...

²“Not on account of making a vow through any human urging, but voluntarily making a sacrifice to God of her own heart.”

Here we must underline what was preoccupying Saint Angela; to guarantee the freedom of those who intend to consecrate themselves to the Lord. It was already underlined in the chapter regarding the manner of receiving: *“Enter joyfully and of her own will.”*

The bond with the Lord and in the Company must be free, beautiful and voluntary: *“With our response, through taking up the evangelical counsels, we express the firm and absolute will to give ourselves unconditionally to God and to our sisters and brothers and to be faithful for all of our life” (Constitutions 18.1).* It is a bond of the heart, a bond of love.

Even in the response, the characteristics of the gift must be maintained; it must be a joyful offering to the Lord. Every gift, something which one deprives oneself of in order to give it to another, is, undoubtedly, also a sacrifice. Nevertheless, sacrifice is the result of the gift of love.

Pope John Paul II explains this in one of his catecheses: *“Chastity is a gift of God, which not everybody understands. On the part of man, it requires a deliberate act of the will, matured intimately within the person, conscious of the commitment and of the privilege of consecrated celibacy.*

“It does not mean simply abstaining from matrimony, nor does it mean an unmotivated and almost passive observance of the rules

imposed by chastity. The act of renunciation has its positive aspect in the more full dedication for the Kingdom, which comprises an absolute attachment to God, loved above all, and to the service of His Kingdom.”

Virginity which is a gift and an offering stems from a vocation and from grace; it is given to us to consent through obedience, an act of faith.... letting go with faith: *“All of this I offer before the feet of your divine Majesty. And I pray that you deign to receive them, although they be unworthy. Amen”* (Rule Chapter 5, 42-44).

Virginity.... a great good

³“Since virginity (as, again, the canonists say) is the sister of all the angels, ⁴ victory over the appetites, queen of the virtues, ⁵ possessing all good things” (Rule Chapter 9, 3-5).

Virginity is such a great good because it enables us to participate in the mystery of the virginity of Christ: *“Embracing chastity for the Kingdom of Heaven, we participate in the Church and with the Church in the mystery of the virginity of Christ, who loved men and women so much that He gave Himself for their salvation”* (Constitutions 20.1).

• **It makes us like the angels...** completely at God’s disposal, almost a foreshadowing of the Resurrection of the body: *“At the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven”* (Matthew 22:30).

The angels will be with us: *“because the angels of eternal life will be with us insofar as we will partake of the angelic life”* (Rule, Prologue 28).

• **It allows us to conquer concupiscence...** over passionate desires, because love is stronger than any passion... *“The reply of the consecrated life is above all in the joyful living of perfect chastity, as a witness to the power of God’s love manifested in the weakness of the human condition. The consecrated person attests that what many have believed impossible becomes, with the Lord’s grace, possible and truly liberating.... Precisely because they are immersed in this mystery, consecrated persons feel themselves capable of a radical and universal love, which gives them the strength for the self-mastery and discipline*

necessary in order not to fall under the domination of the senses and instincts” (*Consecrated Life* 88). Saint Angela also suggests the means to overcome desire, *to keep in check the senses and appetites and lustful desires*: fasting.

• **Virginity is the queen of the virtues...** because it prepares us for a *new crown of glory and joy....*

• **With virginity, we are also offered every good thing...** because we have chosen Christ for our *only Treasure, our only life and hope.*

Living the consequences of being spouses....

“In every situation each one ought to conduct herself in such a manner that she not commit either against herself or in the sight of others anything at all that may be unworthy of spouses of the Most High.”

This love will never end: *“In union with Christ and in imitation of Him we will respond to the love of the Father with a continuous act of love, keeping alive in ourselves the expectation of the ultimate encounter with our Lover”* (Constitutions 20.2).

To show what we may or may not do, Saint Angela suggests behaviors and attitudes; but above all these are based on being spouses of the Most High... *my Lover, rather our Lover....* It is necessary to live what follows from this reality.

We do not merit to be chosen in this way.... To be spouses of the Most High is not in proportion to our goodness and holiness.... it is a free choice, made with complete gratuitousness by the Lover.

Therefore I must decide to please the Spouse as St. Paul suggests: *“An unmarried person is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord.... An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit... I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction”* (1Corinthians 7: 32-35).

It is beautiful and sweet to love God... She who is a virgin must believe and show with her eyes, words, action, her love.... it is beautiful enough to fill a heart and a life.

A pure heart and a clear conscience...

⁷“Above all let her keep her heart pure and her conscience clean of every evil thought ⁸of every shadow of envy and ill will, ⁹of every discord and evil suspicion, ¹⁰and of every other bad appetite and wish”(Rule Chapter 9, 7-10.)

Saint Angela always begins from the heart, our most intimate part, and then she is also concerned with the witness given to our neighbor, so that everything must be in harmony with the call and response in love.

It seems to recall the evangelical beatitude: *“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God”* (Matthew 5:8) and still another of Jesus’ expressions: *“What comes out of a person, that is what defiles. From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile”* (Mark 7:20-23).

Biblically, the heart signifies not only emotions and affections, but also reasoning, thoughts, intelligence.

The beatitude is not a moral condition for entering the Kingdom, but it is rather a way of being one who already belongs to the Kingdom of God; only Jesus is totally pure of heart; he shares with others his own divine transparency.

Virginity means the capacity to live with total charity... and charity always exceeds everything else; it goes beyond common sense, reason, the pre-established ways. In this way, it becomes a proclamation, good news which especially amazes whoever practices it.

The heart, conscience, thoughts, desires, will.... everything has to be lived and offered in virginity: *“Those who have been given the priceless gift of following the Lord Jesus more closely consider it obvious that he can and must be loved with an undivided heart, that one can devote to him one’s whole life, and not merely certain actions or occasional moments or activities”* (Consecrated Life 104).

Kate

INSTRUMENTS OF MERCY

Looking at what is essential...

And the essential is merciful love... *“This is not the time to be distracted; on the contrary, we need to be vigilant and to reawaken in ourselves the capacity to see what is essential. This is a time for the Church to rediscover the meaning of the mission entrusted to her by the Lord on the day of Easter: to be a sign and an instrument of the Father’s mercy. ... We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace.”*¹

- **What do I understand mercy to be?**
- **What does mercy mean to me?**
- **What part of me needs mercy the most?**

Merciful like the Father...

I want the Jubilee to be a deep experience of the Father’s closeness, almost one of actually touching his tenderness, so that the faith of every believer may be reinvigorated and in this way the witness may be ever more effective. ... For this reason, the Holy Year must keep alive the desire to know how to welcome the numerous signs of the tenderness which God offers to the whole world and, above all, to those who suffer, who are alone and abandoned, without hope of being pardoned or feeling the Father’s love. ...

Let us think about the parable of the father and the prodigal son, which reveals the father’s excessive love. The father does not stand in the house, waiting for the two sons, but goes out to meet them. He does not check on whether the younger one is truly penitent, he does not ask where he used up his part of the inheritance... instead he arranges a feast... God’s kindness is excessive.

Letting ourselves be found by the Good Shepherd...

“A Holy Year to experience strongly within ourselves the joy of having been found by Jesus, the Good Shepherd who has come in

¹ The texts in italic type are quotations from Pope Francis.

search of us because we were lost. A Jubilee to receive the warmth of his love when he bears us upon his shoulders and brings us back to the Father's house. A year in which to be touched by the Lord Jesus and to be transformed by his mercy, so that we may become witnesses to mercy."

Let us think about the parable of the good shepherd: on stage is a shepherd with a hundred sheep. Losing one of them, he leaves the remaining 99 and goes off to search for the lost sheep. Once he finds it, he puts it on his shoulders, goes home, and calls together his friends to rejoice with him. Finding the lost sheep is the joy of the shepherd and of God, who rejoices more over a converted sinner than over 99 good people who have no need of conversion. Conversion is the fruit not of something done by the one who is converted, but rather of the action of God, who seeks out the one who is lost.

- **How do I move toward one who has been unfaithful, yes, one who is lost?**
- **How do I experience the Father's closeness?**
- **Do I realize that God, the Good Shepherd, is seeking and finding me?**

The jubilee because...

*"Here, then, is the reason for the Jubilee: because **this is the time for mercy**. It is the favourable time to heal wounds, a time not to be weary of meeting all those who are waiting to see and to touch with their hands the signs of the closeness of God, a time to offer everyone, everyone, the way of forgiveness and reconciliation."*

Mercy... a concrete reality

a) *Making concrete the face of God, manifested in Jesus Christ: "In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child."*

b) *Pointing out what it means to be Christian: "Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining*

who his true children are. In short, we are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us.”

MERICIAN THOUGHTS

Mercy ... according to Saint Angela

- *“So am I forced, day and night, walking, standing, working, thinking, to cry out and shout to Heaven and to beg mercy and time for penitence”* (Rule, Chapter V, 22).
- *“Fasting...to ask for mercy before the throne of the Most High”* (Rule, Chapter IV About Fasting).
- *“[God] in his mercy has wanted to use you as his means for your greater good”* (First Counsel, 5).
- *“Our awareness of the inadequacy of our response to the gift of God and our infidelity to his grace will urge us to ask of our 'most kind Lord' his mercy and the time and way for repenting”* (Constitutions 13.4).
 - **What can I do to live this year of grace well?**
 - **What are my aims?**
 - **Upon whom do I particularly invoke the Lord’s mercy?**
 - **Who has most need of it?**

To set out anew...

“Let your mercy dwell in me, O my Lord. You yourself command me to practice three steps of mercy.

- First: in merciful deeds of every kind.
- Second: in speaking with mercy; what I do not succeed in doing with my actions, I should do with words.
- Third: In prayer; if I cannot conduct myself mercifully in my deeds, nor in my speech, I can always do so in prayer, stretching my prayer to reach everywhere that I cannot go physically. O my Jesus, transform me into yourself so that you can do it all.”

(St. Faustina Kowalska, 1937)

Seeking mercy...

*My Lord,
light up the darkness of my heart,
and give me grace to die rather than offend you today.
Grant that, entering into the secret places of my heart,
I may be able to recognize my errors, my sins.*

*O most benign Lord, deign
to pardon me so many offenses and my every fault
in the present and the past.
I ask you to pardon also my relatives,
friends, and the entire world.*

*My Lord,
my only life and hope,
day and night I beg pardon,
walking, standing, working, thinking...
grant me your mercy
and the time to do penance.*

*Before your brilliant face
I present this heart of mine, most vile and impure.
Burn my every affection and passion
in the blazing furnace of your divine love.
I offer everything before the feet of your divine Majesty.
and I pray that you deign to receive it,
although I be unworthy.
Amen!*

Kate

FROM THE COMPANIES AND GROUPS

The Company of Treviso

May 24, 2015, was a very important day for our Company; Bertina made her consecration for life to the Lord.

Our President was invited for this feast, and her presence made our day more memorable. Carolina Pollaco's house, the bride's residence, was adorned with strands of white tulle and flowers.



Gradually the sisters started to arrive, and as they greeted Bertina, the look in their eyes clearly showed their emotions, emotions that are the result of sharing the same joy of consecration.

The President based her speech on the Pope's invitation to consecrated persons: "Embrace the future with hope."

After an appetizing lunch, we all went to the parish church of Saint Agnes. Mons. Giuseppe Rizzo, Vicar for Consecrated Life of the Diocese of Treviso, presided at Bertina Manzato's consecration. Fr. Ado Sartor, Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Company; Mons. Mario Salvato; and Fr. Bernardo Marconato, pastor of St. Agnes Church where the private ceremony took place, concelebrated at Mass.

The sisters and her friends felt very close to Bettina as she consecrated her whole life to God, according to the Rule and Constitutions. Each one of us relived our own consecration for life. I was trembling with joy.

Thank you, Lord.

Edda

July 2015 in Brazil!

Last year, July brought me a different, lively and joyful experience; I accompanied the President, Maria R., on her trip to Brazil to meet the sisters of the Companies of the Northeast and of the South.

It was a very long flight, but the long hours made it possible for us to become aware that we were entering a new reality, which cannot be judged or understood in a European or Italian frame of reference. During these long hours our desire for this meeting grew stronger.



Our first stop was in Salvador, in the Northeast, for the Ordinary Assembly. Even the sisters who live in the Diocese of Jequié travelled 8 to 9 hours by bus or 5 to 6 hours by car to be present for this meeting. The directress Hayse, the vice-directress Ana and the Councilors were elected.

As soon as we arrived, we had a very unusual experience; Zelita passed away to enter the Father's House. (Some will remember her from the international meetings in Italy, together with Nicole.) It seemed that she was awaiting the President's arrival and had called all the sisters of the Company together for her funeral.

It was a very deeply touching time for everyone, marking the following days.

Zelita had been the first Directress of the Company of the Northeast; her charismatic character had helped both the Company and her family. We prayed for the repose of her soul and asked her to intercede for and protect all the sisters.

Maria R. and I were guests of the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union; their hospitality was enriched by a request from the junior Sisters to meet us and for us to talk to them about Saint Angela! For us this was a most welcome "surprise": what a beautiful experience it was to be able to talk about our Mother to the young sisters, for whom it

would be very difficult to come to Brescia to know the places where she lived and worked! They showed a great interest and asked many questions. It turned out that they had given us a remarkable gift!

After leaving Salvador, we travelled to the south, to Porto Alegre, on our way to New Hamburg where we were warmly greeted as well!

Here we met “as sisters” and scrutinized together some Chapters of the Constitutions. At her house, Noeli very willingly prepared lunch for everyone, including the Ecclesiastical Assistant and the priests of the parish.



We also experienced the joy of “being together.” Two of the Sisters, Ursula and Yvone, offered us hospitality in their homes.

I always enjoy sharing everyday life with others. Being in southern Brazil for the first time gave me the opportunity to learn other little “secrets” about the Brazilian way of life. Bearing in mind that Brazil is 28 times the size of Italy, it is quite understandable that there are noticeable differences among the various regions of the country. Fortunately the language everywhere is Portuguese!



With the indispensable assistance of Ursula, we then flew to São Paulo to visit Nivalda, who warmly welcomed us and also had many questions for us about the Rule and the Constitutions. It is good to see such great thirst to learn about our Mother Saint Angela and her charism.

The following day we moved on to Suzano and had a very touching meeting with Nicole Jeandot. As usual, Nicole was very courteous and well informed about what was happening in the Company all over the world. She has spent her life for it. We are really grateful to this Frenchwoman who made the Company known and was directly responsible for establishing it in Brazil. During the several hours of our visit, she related to us a few episodes of her early days which revealed the courage she had showed in every difficult situation, especially during the war.



From Suzano we flew to the last stop in our itinerary, Rio de Janeiro. Here, we met the two sisters who are still in the period of initial formation and whose progress is diligently and passionately attended to by Ursula. (Thank you, Ursula: you are exceptional.)

Finally a short pause... a day of rest in Rio that enabled me to meet my Brazilian friends, whom I had come to know during my two-years' stay as a lay volunteer, and with whom I keep in touch through the modern means of communication.

This was the right occasion for Maria R. and Ursula to go to Corcovado to visit the statue of Christ



the Redeemer, symbol of the city of Rio.

I would have liked to mention all the sisters by name, but it is not possible. Each and every one did her best to make us feel welcome and at the same time make us aware of their realities, so rich and at times so different from ours.

It was so interesting, for example, to take part in a celebration where the priest was not present because it is impossible for him to be present on Sunday in the eight to ten and, at times, fifteen to twenty chapels under his care. Instead one finds the Eucharistic ministers and the ministers of the Word. I assure you that their reflections during the homily were as incisive as those of the priest!

Special mention should be given to our meetings with the bishops of the dioceses where “*Angelines*” are present. Luckily they all understood Italian, so there was no need for me to translate! All were very attentive and familiar with the Secular Institute of St. Angela (even the pastors of the various parishes and most of the assistants). One of them committed himself to celebrate a monthly Mass with the sisters and the aspirants in order to make known the value of the secular vocation (and still does so).



I came back home full of joy from the experience and from the wealth I had acquired. My eyes reflected the joy of the persons I had met and the beauty of nature I had seen, from the flowers to the starry sky....

Thanks to all!

Maria Rocca

P.S. If, like me, you like to travel, learn a language.... Portuguese is not at all difficult and not many of our sisters know it! I can give you all the necessary pointers!

Eritrea Annual Retreat - July 2015



The Group of Eritrea is made up of eleven sisters who live in three dioceses: Asmara, Keren, and Saganèiti.

Minnia, whom we all know, was present for the international meeting of the Federation in 2015. She began the Group and is still its incomparable and charismatic



spiritual guide.

We must pray for her delicate health and for the current difficult situation in Eritrea, where there is a shortage of everything: food, water and electricity....

Still Minnia and the sisters of the Company are very grateful and give thanks for their vocation and for the help and support they receive from the Federation.

They are an example for us; let us remember them in our thoughts and prayers.



C.D.

MADAGASCAR – AUGUST, 2015

Act, move, believe, strive, hope...

“Act, move, believe, strive, hope, cry out to him with all your heart, for without doubt you will see marvelous things...” wrote Saint Angela in the Counsels.

This Merician saying perfectly describes our experience in Madagascar.

In August 2015, Maria Rosa Bernasconi and I visited the Group of Madagascar for a formation session.

During the night of August 12 we arrived in the capital, Antananarivo, where we were welcomed by Voahangy, a sister of the group, whom we met after having travelled from the capital for a day by car.

I was struck by the degree of poverty found in Madagascar; it is



not exactly universal poverty; there are very rich people and very poor ones. There are people who, even though they have a very good job, still cannot get health care, because so many medicines – like aspirin – are not available or, if they are, cost so much. Even these people with good jobs cannot afford to have a car, because it costs as much as building a house.

In southern Madagascar many have become rich, but because their cultural background is very poor and their educational level very low, they cannot improve their standards of living.

Sisters of the Group arrived from different parts of the country to gather for a retreat in Fianaratsua (a city in central Madagascar), where they were waiting for us at the center of the Vincentian Fathers.

We spent ten days together and shared times of formation and sisterly love and various encounters.

We paid a visit to the bishop of Fianaratsoa to acquaint him with the Institute and the Group. We also invited him to preside at Rolland's ceremony of consecration for life.

Rollande made her consecration to God for life and was welcomed into the Company by Maria Rosa Bernasconi, the President's delegate.

It was a very special ceremony with beautiful hymns and dances; at the beginning of the rite of consecration, Rollande was blessed by her aunt, acting in place of her mother. Many priests concelebrated the Mass, including a retired French bishop; Fr. Beretta, Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Group; Fr. Mombelli; and all the Vincentians Fathers present in the house.

After the ceremony, we left for Ihosy, the diocese where the Group began, together with Fr. Mombelli, Fr. Beretta and Voahangy.



At Ihosy we were guests in Voahangy's house and visited the dental and ophthalmic health centre, where many Italian, foreign and local doctors work.

We also had a meeting with Bishop Fulgenzio.

On the first Sunday at Ihosy, together with Fr. Visca, a Vincentian missionary, we went to Mass at the Church of Saint Angela, a parish outside the city. The faithful were emerging from the bushes, but, as far as we could see, there weren't any houses, only red earth. The people participated with great devotion. At the end of the Mass a group of boys came up to Fr. Visca to ask for his blessing because in September they would be attending the National JMJ at Fianaratsoa.

It took us two days by car to return to the capital, where we arrived a little tired. After a night's rest, we managed to meet Voahangy's relatives and to meet an aspirant for the second time, because she wanted to talk to us.



This was a very important experience for me because I got the opportunity to come face to face with a new reality where faith is lived profoundly.

I thank the President of the Federation, Maria Rosa Razza, and Maria Rosa Bernasconi for giving

me the opportunity to make this trip.

Edda

August in a missionary land

As always, Africa at first frightens you, but then you are won over by the enthusiasm, the joy, the surprised smiles and the shining, wide-open eyes of the children, notwithstanding the poverty they live in. It is very true that joy does not come from possessing, from having many things, but from knowing how to experience as a gift what we are given.

We did not see prams or strollers, but many happy children carried on their mothers' backs... Many children are happy to play with balls made from pieces of cloth and plastic bags, and they manage to make toys out of cans, strips of wood and pieces of string...

There are children who, at a very tender age, have to care for their younger siblings and others who, for only a helping of rice, work all day breaking blocks of stone...



During my stay, I took part in Rollande's consecration for life to God while she leads a normal life in the world and serves others, thus being a witness of the beauty of living according to the evangelical counsels of obedience, chastity and poverty.

The three-hour celebration was richly meaningful. It was presided over by the bishop of the diocese of Fianarantsoa and six other priests and missionaries. The bishop emphasized that "in the missions, as in any other part of the world, we need people who accept God's invitation to follow him through their consecration, persons who do not separate themselves from the world but rather, by leading their life in the world, find the renewing strength of the Gospel!"



It was inspiring to see all the Christians participating in functions that are so significant for the Church: priests, missionaries, religious sisters, lay people... all took part as one body, no matter which institute they belonged to. During the first ten days we were guests at the seminary of the Fathers of the Mission, where we shared beautiful experiences with the seminarians while preparing for the "feast." For a full week in the evenings we rehearsed by singing litanies, learning gestures, and getting the church ready for the function. The sisters of the Daughters of Charity prepared a huge cake!

We were living in a different world!

There are no real improvements in the general conditions of life; the main roads and the only national highway across Madagascar were in a pitiful state, full of sharp bends and deep potholes in the asphalt that made our journey terribly slow. One could see many construction sites with tiled brick houses, but an open fire is still the only means of cooking, and poverty prevails. Water is still drawn at the wells, and medicines are out of the reach of most Malagasci.

The Church is alive and present through its many activities: it provides schools, education, formation, health and social assistance to many children, youths and adults.

I returned enriched by these experiences of life which bring hope and vitality in the name of the Gospel.

M. Rosa Bernasconi

I AM HAPPY

This is what Rollande said about her Consecration for Life:

“My consecration for life took place on August 22, 2015, in the Chapel of Saint Vincent de Paul at Tanantsoa. Diocese of Fianarantsoa.

The words of Pope Francis addressed to consecrated persons had a real meaning for me on that day: ‘One finds joy wherever there are consecrated persons.’

The words of Pope Francis have the same meaning as those of Saint Angela, who told us: ‘Let her be joyful and always full of charity, and faith and hope in God.’

My consecration binds me to be of service to others, to be holy and truly joyful wherever I may be; at home, at work, in church...

All my joy comes from Christ and I must share it with those around me.

I thank the Lord for calling me to serve him on this joyful journey in the Company.

I am grateful to Maria Rosa Bernasconi and Edda for their visit to Madagascar, and above all I am deeply grateful for the prayer that unites us.”

Rollande

Visiting the Democratic Republic of Congo



On August 14, 2015, Jeanne Lagrave, Michelle Langlois, and I had the joy of visiting our Congolese sisters in Lubumbashi, in the south of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

From the 15th to the 20th, we participated in spiritual exercises preached by Father Jean-Louis, who is involved with

the group of Lubumbashi. Almost all of our sisters were present, coming from Kinshasa, Kinsangani, and Mbuji-Mayi. During the closing Mass of the retreat, Astrid was admitted to the Company.

Saturday the 22nd was a festive day because Odette and Elisabeth made their first consecration, Godelieve renewed her consecration, Madeleine made her final consecration, and Marie-Bernadette solemnly thanked the Lord for her fifty years of consecrated life.

Beginning on August 24 we dedicated ourselves to reflecting on the history of the Company and of the Federation, on the challenges faced by the Company in the DRC, and on Chapter 5 of the Constitutions. On the 26th, after prayer and reflection, and in an atmosphere of celebration and joy, the Group voted to petition the Federation to become a new Company. The Congolese Group, composed of eighteen consecrated members and others in formation, is very active and full of life.

Let us praise the Lord for giving the Merician charism to the Congolese people and for our courageous companions who have the responsibility for making it blossom in their marvelous country. Let us accompany them with our affection and our friendship and entrust to the Lord and to Saint Angela the future of this dream which is becoming a reality!

Gianna Stagno

A Year of Grace

From August 14 to 28, 2015, I made my twelfth trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), along with Michelle Langlois and Gianna Stagno, who was delegated by the Federation.

This year the meeting had a somewhat exceptional character, for it was necessary to confirm through a vote the request expressed by the members of the Group of the DRC: to form within the Federation an autonomous Company independent of the Company of France. In effect this Group was born at Mbuji-Mayi on September 25, 1999, when Bishop Tharcisse Tshibangu accepted the installation of the Company of St. Ursula in his diocese. Thus Mbuji-Mayi is the foundation place of the future Congolese Company, which now counts eighteen consecrated members distributed among Mbuji-Mayi, Lubumbashi, Kinshasa and Kinsangani.

Gathered in Lubumbashi at the end of summer, on August 22 our Companies fervently celebrated the entrance of Astrid into the time of initial trial; the consecrations of Odette, Elisabeth, Godelieve, and Madeleine; as well as thanksgiving for the jubilee (fifty years of consecration) of Marie-Bernadette Mbuyi-Beya, the coordinator of all the Congolese groups. A collective joy overwhelmed the whole congregation of Christ the Savior Parish. The joy continued all day, with an excellent repast prepared by our Companies and enlivened by very African songs and dances.

May the Lord be blessed in all the marvels experienced up to today! Let us ask him for his Spirit of peace and of mercy so that **2016 may be a new time of grace** when the Congolese people may be delivered from so much suffering, and when the Group of the Daughters of Saint Angela in the DRC may be led on the path of integration within the Federation.

Jeanne



Thailand... the Land of Smiles

I left Paris on October 20 and after a short stop in Bombay arrived in Bangkok the following day at 2 a.m. As usual at Bangkok airport, a hostess accompanied me to a passport control office reserved for “people who are older than 65 years,” which meant that I had to wait only ten minutes in line instead of an hour. At times having white



hair is considered a privilege... and I did not hesitate to use it.

I was in transit for over two hours, before leaving for Chiangmai; on a flight of 55 minutes from the capital. On arrival my



friends warmly and joyfully welcomed me.

I met Urunii and Somlak in the afternoon; they both looked well. It was not possible for them to meet me at the airport since Urunii was working in an office and Somlak had to visit elderly persons, a visit which had been planned long beforehand.



We had already planned to meet three days a week, but with flexible hours so that each of them could carry on with her work; we decided to meet two to three hours in the morning and three to four hours in the afternoon and have lunch together.

Urunii was working three days a week in an association which helps the children in Birmania, and Somlak is very much involved with the Legion of Mary.

We discussed and pondered about our vocation, our secular life, our sacred bonds, our apostolate, our witness to Jesus Christ in society.



While discussing these topics we had intense sisterly exchanges of ideas, and we came to conclusions because we felt the presence of Christ in our midst... and for this we are very grateful.

On November 18 the three of us, together with Somlak's sister, went to visit Fr. Bruno in his parish, 90 kilometres from Chiangmai. As Urunii owns a car, the trip was not a problem.

Having arrived before lunch, we had ample time to talk to Fr. Bruno. He is a forty-seven-year-old priest volunteer, totally dedicated to the children who live in the mountains, offering them hospitality in the parish for the sake of their education and formation. There are three priests in the parish, very committed to their apostolic work. We left at about 4 p.m. feeling very happy and grateful for a day full of friendship and fraternal love.

I am deeply grateful to the Lord for this visit to Chiangmai and for the time spent with our sisters; I entrust to him all my wishes and prayers for them and for the Company.

Hélène De Bouregard

P.S. I conclude with a short text by Raoul Follereau

A Smile...

*It lasts only a moment,
but the memory of it can last forever.
Nobody is so rich
as to be able to discount it;
nobody is so poor as to be unable to give it.
A smile creates joy in the family,
sustains business,
and is the visible sign of friendship.
A smile brings rest to the weary soul,
renews courage amid trials,
and is medicine in sadness.
A smile cannot be bought;
it cannot be loaned or stolen,
but only given.
And if you meet someone
who no longer knows how to smile,
be generous; give him yours:
no one is more desperate for a smile
than the person who is unable to give one.*



Indonesia... Congratulations!

In Malang, East Java, the Company of Indonesia celebrated an important anniversary.

Twenty-five years ago (1990), Elisa Tarolli, who had been president and was then a Council member of the Federation, first visited the Indonesian women who had formed the nucleus of a [Company of St. Ursula](#) in 1989.

Until 2003, she visited annually to guide their formation.

The 25th-anniversary celebration took place during the annual retreat.

Presentations, personal reflection, prayer-dance, and small-group sharing developed the theme “Remaining in Jesus’ Love.”

The Company also admitted a new member.



A trip to the zoo punctuated the program with fun that transcended language differences.

Two members of the Group of Singapore (one from Australia) and two members of the Group of the Philippines attended, making this an Asia-Pacific event.

The President of the Federation was represented through her delegate, Mary-Cabrini Durkin of the USA, councilor.

Sister Emmanuela Gunanto, OSU, who translated Elisa’s words into Indonesian from the beginning, continues to be a spiritual guide for the Company. She led this year’s retreat in both Indonesian and English.

Mary-Cabrini

BURUNDI – SEPTEMBER 2015

The spiritual retreat started on Monday, September 21, 2015, in Giheta.

The 22 young women who were preparing to renew their consecration for another three years were all present. In addition, there were another 48 who were preparing for their initial consecration.

Pauline and I, who had come back from Italy, were there together with the members of the committee; they had invited us to be with them for the time of the retreat.

Fr. Bosco WAKANA, the spiritual director for many years, and our Ecclesiastical Assistant Fr. Giuseppe BIGIRIMANA were also present.

As usual, it was Fr. Bosco who dictated the meditation prayers to the sisters in preparation for the consecration.

Every sister spent the days prior to the Consecration in perfect silence.

The archbishop of the Diocese of Giheta, Simon NTAMWANA, came for the ceremony of consecration.



All the candidates were ready and waiting outside the church together with the priests who came from the parishes of the different candidates and their spiritual directors. They entered the church

singing.

After the homily we sang the Creed and then invoked the Holy Spirit.

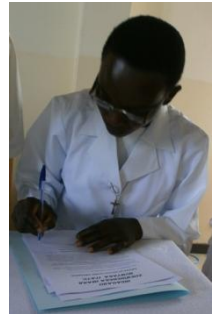
Nathalie NZINAHORA, the leader of the Group and the delegate of the President of the Federation, received all the consecrations.

Every consecrated person made her consecration, signed the document, and received a crucifix. All were overflowing with joy and gratitude.

All this was followed by a festive lunch, which went according to plan.

We are grateful for the Federation's help.

Pascaline



IN ETHIOPIA November 10-17, 2015

I returned to Ethiopia with the President to meet with the sisters of the group there, to be together, to continue seeking with one another the characteristics of our consecrated life in the Company.



We always feel at home staying with the Ursuline sisters in Addis Ababa... welcomed thoughtfully, attentively, and affectionately.

We met with the members of the Group: four consecrated for life and four in temporary consecration. They are a small Group, living far

apart, wishing to act and to organize themselves, but not without struggle and difficulty.





Every year we take a step forward in understanding the commitments, the charism, and the spirituality.

This year there was a new grace: a meeting with Father Bazazeb, prior of the Cistercian Fathers in Ethiopia, who knows Italian well and acted as interpreter. He has accepted the role of spiritual assistant for the Group. Thanks be to the Lord! Father

Bazazeb deserves Saint Angela's "beatitude": "Blessed are those who truly take care of the Company."

I must mention our customary visit to Cardinal Berhaneyesus, who has always been a friend of the Company and knows each member by name ... He received us with his usual manner, alternating between serious and joking... The cardinal's purple has not changed his serene and enthusiastic approach. He was interested, made suggestions, gave advice, and willingly agreed to pose for a photo before giving us his blessing and farewell.



With the Group we settled on this year's

program of meetings that, God willing, will conclude in October 2016 with a brief retreat and the renewal of consecration by several sisters.

The year 2016 also marks the thirtieth anniversary of the beginning of the Group of Ethiopia.

Forward, all, *with great and yearning hearts!*



Kate

PORTO TORRES – SARDINIA

Visit of the President of the Secular Institute to Saint Angela House *- lay people work among the laity for vocations-*



Between October 20 and 22, 2015, in Saint Angela House in Porto Torres, the consecrated laywomen of the Secular Institute of Saint Angela Merici (known locally as “*Angelines*”) met with other women with an affinity for Merician spirituality and charism. They came together to share a time of prayer and formation. These were very important

days for our sisters because of the visit of the President of the Federation, Maria Razza, and Caterina Dalmasso. The group met to discuss and exchange ideas regarding the experience of secular consecration in the world, lived in different situations but enlivened by the same vocation.

Consecrated lay persons do not live in community, with very few exceptions; it is usual to lead an ordinary life in one’s own family and more often alone.

This is a way of life which testifies to one’s belonging to Christ and the Church in everyday life at work and in activities among others, amid places and situations in the world.

True to the teaching of the Gospel, the followers of Saint Angela Merici feel they are not “of the world.” They live their consecration discretely, assuming commitments of chastity, poverty and obedience. They form part of a secular institute of consecrated life recognized by the church.

Fr. Salvatore Masia and Fr. Gavino Sini took turns celebrating the Eucharist in the beautiful chapel of Saint Angela House, opposite the basilica of Saint Gavin.

Leonarda Tola, journalist



The Letters of Marianna Amico Roxas

*“My most rev.
Mother,*

*Yesterday
it was not possible
for me to write to
you ... today again I express my
profound gratitude for all the good you
have done for me. ... Yes, I greatly
need to love Jesus, and to forget myself and to overcome my cowardice,
especially, Mother.... as you have told me, I will offer all to Jesus, or
rather, when I most feel bitterness in my spirit, I place my heart close to
the most sacred heart of Jesus in agony and stay there imploring him to
purify me and to make me more worthy of fulfilling the holy mission to
which I have been called, only through his mercy.”*



This letter of May 10, 1912, addressed to Giulia Vismara, Superior of the Company of St. Ursula of Milan, opens the new volume of the letters of Marianna Amico Roxas.

“Marianna’s letters,” writes Prof. Gheda in the preface to the volume he edited, *“are presented anew here in this edition which is new both in its many completely unedited inclusions (in contrast to the first edition), and in the number of the recipients. They specifically narrate a running commentary on this experience [the spread of the Merician institute], from the time when the experience of consecration and service of these young women of the interior of Sicily began around San Cataldo in the second half of the decade (1910-1919). And it is not the case that such a life began ideally precisely with participation in a retreat in Palermo, an event that – as the correspondence with the Ursulines in Milan makes clear – would cause an indisputable ‘qualitative leap’ in the vision of a religious life fostered by Amico Roxas....*

“The loftiness of Mariana’s vision,” Gheda continues, *“regarding the particular ‘quality’ of the choice of a state of life by her*

and her companions, fundamentally consisted in the development in Sicily of a new way of putting women at the center.”



Right in the heart of Sicily, at San Cataldo, Venerable Marianna’s birthplace, the volume of her letters was presented on October 26, 2015. Most Rev. Mario Russotto, bishop of Caltanissetta, was present. He concluded the evening event by highlighting the extraordinary greatness of this woman who, humble as she was, made history.

The postulator of the Cause of Canonization, Sister Rosa Graziano, emphasized the value of Marianna’s eloquent silence. The mayor of San Cataldo, Dr. Giampiero Modaffari, praised the participation of this woman of San Cataldo on behalf of the social fabric. Prof. Giancarlo Rocca brought attention to certain aspects of the volume of letters.

The meeting was also enriched by the presentation by Prof. Gheda; by a greeting from the publisher, Dr. Florindo Rubbettino; and by a brief musical selection on Marianna Amico Roxas titled “With Small Steps,” composed and performed by Michele Albano. With an expression of gratitude typical of Merician spirituality, our Directress, Carmelina Burgio, thanked everyone.

All of us – daughters of Saint Angela and friends of Marianna – experienced the joy of collaborating for this goal: recognition of Venerable Marianna. Many people of San Cataldo and others attended. The participation of the sisters of Piazza Armerina and of Agrigento was wonderful and much appreciated as they once again gave us the gift of their sharing and affection. Furthermore, we appreciated the presence of Marianna’s relatives.

Now the treasure of her letters is ours to open, allowing us to penetrate the heart of this great Merician woman, profoundly in love with Christ and exquisitely attentive to each person, whom she always regarded with the eyes of Christ and loved with a mother’s heart.

Sisters of the Company of Caltanissetta

ANGELA MERICI: 480th ANNIVERSARY

We participated in the meeting in Brescia organized for the occasion of the 480th anniversary of the foundation of the Company of St. Ursula. The event was carefully prepared by the International Merician Center together with the Italian Merician Conference for the member institutes and Companies and for the Federation of the Companies of St. Ursula. The celebration took place in the Sanctuary of St. Angela Merici near the Casa Sant'Angela in Brescia. On Saturday, November 21, the day began with Mass. The presider was Bishop Tessarollo of Chioggia, who then made the first presentation at the meeting.



Angiolina Pederzani, president of the Centro Mericiano, introduced and organized the activities.

The meeting drew on Pope Francis's invitation, expressed in his letter to consecrated persons in the year dedicated to their life. The program started by developing an understanding of the

contemporary reality where charism and history have a fertile relationship. Here the contribution was double: **Bishop Adriano Tessarollo** outlined the constitutive elements of the Merician charism, while **Prof. Gianpietro Belotti** presented the charism that made history in an impassioned talk, using art and the most recent studies on Saint Angela to sketch out the characteristics of Merician identity with immediate relevance.

After a lunch break, under the heading of interpreting the present, **Prof. Ivan Vitali** (introduced by **M. Paola Paganoni**) offered a socio-economic reading of the situation, presenting a reading of the civil economy that evoked very strong interest from the Assembly. Just as highly appreciated were the thoughts and the future horizons for the Merician road presented by **Kate Dalmasso** and **Giusy Pelucchi**.

The first day concluded with a **pilgrimage** to the Merician places in Brescia: an itinerary with well-prepared stages. The wind and the pouring rain affected the experience, but in any event the pilgrimage recalled the rich contents of the presentations.



After Mass presided over by Brescia's auxiliary **Bishop Emeritus Olmi**, the second day of the meeting took up the theme of interpreting the present and opening the future of the Ursuline world. A morning included meeting, conversation, and dialogue divided by congregations and Companies, where those present had a way to take up again the stimulating ideas presented and to relaunch them according to Merician sensibility.

There was another level of conversation resulting from the presence of some superiors general, members of general councils, formation personnel, and sisters from different cultural contexts, diverse experiences, and different generations. The afternoon, before the farewells, was dedicated to a sharing of what had emerged in an assembly where some ideas were gathered that they hoped to be able to act on, in order to continue traveling together with ever greater vigor.



All are deeply grateful for our shared Mother, Angela, and for the vivid awareness that her charism is alive and calls for ever-renewed forms of incarnating it, to find new ways to create “company.”

Sister Maria Grazia Piazza (linked from the site www.angelamerici.it)



INCOMING MAIL

France Remembers Geneviève Fourquet: 1915-2015



Geneviève had this to say as she awaited her passage to eternal life:

“He is waiting for me...

It's the first time in my long life that I am awaited with love, as if with the impatience of a love that is true, profound, eternal.

And this is the same God who, from the dawn of my consciousness as a very little girl, had said – ineffably – “I am.

I love you.” He is waiting for me, to

tell me again as I am on the point of departing from life, just as He had told me as a child, “I am. I love you.”

Then, finally, joy, peace, certitude. He awaits me ... I am awaited by God ... He will open his arms to me when ... I arrive. I could die of joy, the joy of feeling that I am loved, I, really ... and forever....



From Brazil:

With great joy I received the magazine *IN THE SAME CHARISM* ... with responsibility that reported the very rich presentations at the international meeting of 2015: “Along the ancient way, and a new life.”

The history of the Federation is being presented in this way.

By the end of the 16th century the Church had officially recognized *the Company* and *the Rule*.

The new life... proposed today by the Church to secular institutes takes its inspiration from the intuition of Saint *Angela Merici*, forerunner of this vocation.

The new life... was rediscovered in the Federation that united all the Companies in a single secular institute of pontifical right in 1958.

The Constitutions of the Company offer to each member "... ***a path of holiness for a more effective witness in the Church and in the world***" (Decree, Constitutions, 1994).

We must be grateful for these blessed days of the international meeting.... Grateful that the Lord has remained faithful through the centuries... Grateful to God because he has called us to belong to this international institute.

We must ask for everyone the grace of FIDELITY to the Rule and to the Constitutions, that we may continue to give witness in the world to our love for God's Kingdom.

In her Magnificat, Mary demonstrated great joy, not a superficial joy, but a theological joy that came from God.

This joy of Mary's also enters our hearts, and we too repeat: ***"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit exults in God my Savior...."***

Nicole Jeandot

From the United States ... First Steps



We celebrated a consecration and admission of two women on October 17, 2015. The ceremony took place at Mass during our annual gathering, held this year in the Franciscan convent in Kennebunkport, Maine.

Marie Chantal made her first consecration, for two years. Elena was admitted to the Company of Canada, Group of the United States.

Mary-Cabrini

From Adria:

The newspapers of Adria on November 25, 2015, the 480th anniversary of the Company's foundation, had this coverage:

The 480th anniversary was celebrated at an evening gathering held with a representative of the Angelines' association. It was an instructive meeting recalling significant times for the institute, delivered in the presence of the directress Luisa Celia and of the consecrated members Mariolina, Maria, and Luigina. The Daughters of Saint Angela Merici, commonly called "Angelines," have a discrete presence in the city, both silent and valuable.

They began in 1930 by welcoming into their house the orphanage of San Vincenzo Dé Paoli. Opened on May 8, 1930, the structure could initially accommodate twenty-five babies. Two years later it welcomed sixty of them, thanks to several benefactors. The educational aspect and discipline were in the hands of a director, always a priest, and of lay teachers in the role of assistants, who cared for the babies in all their activities. The Angelines provided the physical care of the orphans, the cooking, cleaning, clothing, and all the daily necessities other than administration.

Luigina Trapella, the eldest, has celebrated her 99th birthday. She was for many years the superior of the Company, dedicated heart and soul to the well-being of the sisters and of the community....

Today Luigina is still very clear and offers a living witness of a person appreciative and grateful for her life and her vocation.

*At 99, she has read and appreciated the 2015.3 issue of **IN THE SAME CHARISM...with responsibility**, left in awe over the history of the Federation.*

Attention! The Federation has a new email address:
fed.comp_2016@libero.it

If your correspondence to the old address has not been answered, please resend it to the new one. Thank you.