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INTRODUCTION

IN THE SAME CHARISM, with responsibility.

We start this new longed for link with joy and trepidation; fully aware of the responsibility and co-responsibility we are undertaking in making this” our own project” because we feel it is absolutely necessary, to give us strength and *keep us united*.

In the same charism sisters and Companies in the whole world, faithful to the *Common Beloved* and to Saint Angela, *Mother and Teacher*.

In the same charism which unites us, continually urges us, questions us, expects us to answer, needs confrontation and division.

In the same charism we inform and reform ourselves, we build and use this link as a precious tool to help us become *more holy* and *obtain grace*.

With responsibility in harmony with Elisa Tarolli, who has accompanied us for many years, let us now as mature persons, in “good company” accept our turn of doing the thinking, acting, writing and reading so that our evidence will be strongly felt in the church and in the world.

With responsibility We accept this issue which gives us new stimuli, the logo of the Federation, the encouragement of the Holy Sea, the ideas of the Directress, the closeness of our Guardian Angel, the ideas for meditation by Fr. Bellini, the greetings of the new Assistant, the ideas of St. Angela, the news of the Companies.... and other things.

With responsibility we heartily thank all those who have accepted to work for this issue and others that are to follow: those who compile the articles, the translators, Jacqueline, Gianna, Cabrini, Cardona; Maria Marlat for the printing and posting and all the readers who will affectionately sustain us by being comprehensive and with their prayers.

We need everybody’s help; so let every one of us do her part with responsibility in order to give a new light to the old charism, it is only in this way that the great gifts we were given, can be shared by the Company in all the parts of the world, in which we have to lead *a watchful life and full of heavenly desire*.

I would like to think of wishing every one well in undertaking this binding task and for our issue I would like to borrow a few words from the letter which the Secretary of the Congregation for the Consecrated Life, Mons. Gianfranco A. Gardin, O.F.M. Conv. , sent to the Directress:” *it is your mandate to go deeper and sustain the Rules and the Constitution, firmly believing in the charism which faces and lives the realities, yet accepts the challenges of the world today*.

Best wishes, and may you lead *a saintly life*
With responsibilityin the same charism.

Caterina Dalmasso

A THOUGHT FROM THE PRESIDENT

“UNITED AND IN CONCORD TOGETHER”” is a hallmark of Angela, who speaks this way to the colonnelle in the Fifth Counsel, line 20. Also in the last Counsel there is an almost identical expression: *“Live in harmony, united together, all of one heart and one will.”*

With this desire for unity of heart we follow our road as Companies and Federated Groups, giving life to this “newborn” bulletin for bonding, coordinated with the periodical *Responsabilità* and always aiming to form bonds of sisterhood.

This instrument of bonding, as proposed by the Assembly of July 2006, is intended as a means, a precise “instrument” to circulate news, initiatives of different sorts, reflections and studies for continuing formation and... whatever can be useful to bring about the proposed objective, that is to increase the awareness and the deepening of our charism, to communicate among ourselves the modes and styles with which we incarnate it today to render it alive and real!

Since it is “ours,” that is, something belonging to all the Companies and Groups and every single sister, we must all make it our charge, so that it may be truly an expression of our vital participation in the Company of St. Ursula!

The bulletin, which the Council has decided to call ***“IN THE SAME CHARISM ...WITH RESPONSABILITA”*** awaits the contribution and the collaboration of all.

It is not necessary to be a “journalist”; good will is enough, the good will of someone who, feeling corresponsibile for a project, decides to devote a little of her time and energy to write, to communicate her experience to all.

In the ecclesial gathering at Verona (Italy), one of the recurrent categories pointed to connections and relationships in which “telling one’s story” is a decisive act of living out one’s belonging: telling one’s story not to put oneself on show, but to say what moves us interiorly and to share with one’s brothers and sisters one’s experience of faith, hope and charity.

I believe that this may be fundamental for us too!

And, in this sense, the presence and stories of the non-Italian Groups and Companies will have an even greater significance. Thus the worldwide scale, which we have seen as increasingly the challenge by which to measure our charism in recent times, will become increasingly an opening and enrichment for the whole Federation.

To all and to each, then, get to work!

Sarà una fatica bella e buona, in cui riponiamo desideri di bene e da cui speriamo frutti succosi, pur nella nostra semplicità (..e anche povertà!) di persone e di mezzi: ma sappiamo bene che Dio è “specialista” nell’usare in bene strumenti “inadeguati”!

It will be a good and beautiful task, in which we place our desires for good and from which we hope for juicy fruit. Despite our simplicity (and also our poverty!) of personnel and of means, we know well that God is a “specialist” in using inadequate instruments well.

Maria Razza

THE LOGO OF THE FEDERATION

We asked Rosanna Scapin from Padova, to think of producing a logo for the Federation. After much thought and in collaboration with David and Marta, she brought her ideas to the council... These are the results:

We will be launching it in printing our first issue of **IN THE SAME CHARISM. WITH RESPONSIBILITY**. David and Martha have given us the logo and in return, ask us to remember them in our prayers. We, the sisters of the Company, in all the parts of the world, gratefully pray for them and for Rosanna.

We leave the logo of the Federation to your meditation and interpretation, but we would like to present you with a few comments.

In the logo, one can find the necessary ingredients of our charism, as a Federated Company,

- *To be spouses of Jesus Christ, crucified and arisen from the death; the cross which radiates the light of the resurrection.*
- *To be a sign of the nuptial vow with which God has bound every man unconditionally to Him; the terrestrial globe.*
- *To form an active part of the world around us and, through our unity, we are present in nearly all the parts of the world.*
- *To be united as a “solid rock” having St. Angela as a mother and guide for life, but, above all, as “a travelling companion” who will lead us to Our Beloved.*
- *Finally the daughters who represent the various Companies led by the hand and guided by St. Angela, form an ascending and descending movement similar to a stairway, which brings to mind the “stairway” from which Angela, inspired by the Holy Spirit founded the Society.*

The choice of the colours is not by chance:

- *Yellow symbolizes the light that Christ brought into the world and the life we are called to awaken forth from within us.*
- *Blue is the colour of the water, an element of vital importance, a sign of fertility, representing the depth with which we live our relationships.*
- *Brown represents our human nature, mingled with red, the colour which represents the divinity of which we are made of, in our resemblance to God.*
- *Finally, there is the orange colour that represents the fullness of our humanity, which can only be obtained if we live our consecrated life to its full dimensions, both vertically and horizontally.*

The wording: ONE IN THE SAME CHARISM

- *Suggests the purpose of the Companies and the Federation as is found in the title of the Constitution chapter five: UNITED TOGETHER: THE COMPANY and chapter six: IN THE SAME CHARISM: THE FEDERATION.*
- *Re suggests the title of unity and community.*
- *Emphasises our identity: Company of St. Ursula Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici Federation.*
- *The wording binds us together with Jesus Christ and St. Angela, but allows enough room for us to be open to the desires of the Spirit.*

**CONGREGATION
FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE
AND THE SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE**

The Vatican, 10th October 2006

Prot. N. I.s. 5816/06

Dear Ms. Razza

We are very glad to hear that you have been elected Directress of the “Company of St. Ursula, Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici” during the General Assembly held last July [which took place, last month, in July].

The high esteem and great faith that the General Assembly, on behalf of all the Institute, has shown in you and your Council confirm the article of the Constitution “The Federation Council is a Service body for the benefit of the Federated Companies” (Article 32.1 Constitutions).

It is also the detail with which you give shape to your Governing Board that makes each Company autonomous in its own diocese yet united in one Secular Institute. It is your mandate to go deeper and sustain the Rules and the Constitution, firmly believing in the charism that whilst facing and living the reality of today’s world, also reacts to its challenges.

While sending our best wishes once again, we ask the Lord to bless each and every one of you.

Gianfranco A. Gardin O.F..M. Conv.
Secretary

Ms. Maria Razza
Directress
Company of St. Ursola
Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici

CONGREGATION
FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE
AND THE SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

The Vatican 21st November 2006

Prot. n. I. s. 590/06

Dear Madam,

We have received your esteemed letter dated 2nd October, in which you asked for a new Ecclesiastical Assistant to be nominated for the Council of the Federation of the Company of St. Ursula - Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici.

On the advice of the Archbishop of Vicenza, this Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated lives and the Society of Apostolic life, nominates Rev. Mons. Adriano Tessarollo, Ecclesiastical Assistant for the Council of the Federation according to the rules of the Constitution.

On this occasion may I send the new Assistant, you and all the Institute, my best regards and wishes.

* Gianfranco A. Gardin, O.F.M. Conv.
Secretary

Ms. Maria Razza
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**THE GREETINGS OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL ASSISTANT
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION**

Dearest "Daughters of St. Angela"

A few days ago the Directress, on behalf of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated lives and the Societies of Apostolic life, sent me a copy of the "nomination" of Ecclesiastical Assistant for the Council of the Federation .

Even though I had many duties to fulfill in the diocese, during my short visit to the assembly in Rome, I next to promised to be available and this particularly because I had already been an Ecclesiastical Assistant in the past.

Seeing however that I will be working and collaborating with friends, I would like to send my personal greetings and regards to all the Companies and their members.

Until we have the opportunity to meet, we promise to remember each other in our daily prayers.

Fr. Adriano Tessarollo

For the Ecclesiastical Assistants of the Council of the Federation
A WORD OF THANKS AND A PRAYER

Thank you, **Mons. Adriano Tessarollo** for having accepted to undertake this *task* and thanks to **Fr. Arturo Bellini** who for many years has given us his service and has been like an attentive, watchful father and like a wise and kindhearted brother.

We remember you both with affection and in our prayers. May St. Angela shower you with the gift of her beatitude; *blessed are those who really take care of the Company.*

In our written message, we would also like to give our heartfelt thanks to **Mons. Cataldo Naro**, Archbishop of Monreale, who was also Vice Assistant of the Council of the Federation, who is now in communion with the saints and went to meet the Risen Lord on the 29th September 2006.

We pray to him now as his Diocese prayed: *"You have always reminded us that the Lord is compassionate, remember us now that you are with Him."*

We can also add: *"You, who have always proclaimed to be St. Angela's friend and also friend of the Company, you who have helped us to understand what we are going through, and our spirituality, do not forget us, but follow and accompany us, now, that you are in heaven."*

THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

Since childhood, I have learnt to trust in my Guardian Angel.

I always end up my daily morning and evening prayers with a prayer to the Angel of God who is “my guardian”. I pray to him when I travel. When I have to face a difficult situation or a demanding interview, I ask him to stay near me. I now practice without fail what was once suggested to me by an old priest, “I always entreat my guardian angel to say a word to the guardian angel of my interviewer so that, once our angels are of one accord, the conversation will be made easy for both of us”.

The guardian angel is a very special travelling companion; he watches over us with care and protects us from danger. He encourages us to follow in the footsteps of Christ and to let go without fear of the unknown. He urges us to aim at reaching our fulfilment in the highest degree of Christian life, in holiness, and not in matters of little importance. He does his utmost to develop our familiarity with God.

The guardian angel is like a teacher and advisor in every circumstance in our life.

John XXIII was so certain of the presence of the angel besides every human being that when he thought of the crowds of pilgrims and tourists gathered in St. Peter’s Square on Sundays for the Angelus and the Pope’s benediction, he also pictured in [the thought crossed] his mind the multitudes of invisible angels also present in the square. When Pope John was still an 18-year-old seminarist, he wrote in his diary; “*A heavenly angel is always beside me and he is altogether enraptured in a loving ecstasy with his God; how delightful it is even to just think of such a situation. So, I am constantly watched by an Angel who looks at me [keeps an eye on me], prays for me and stands watch over my bed when I sleep my good angel has suggested to me, my good angel woke me up this morning*”.

Only a few know of a particular incident in Pope John XXIII’s life. He admitted in confidence to a Canadian Bishop that he attributed the convening of the Ecumenical Council to a suggestion from his guardian angel. Many a time, John XXIII publicly declared that the idea of the Council came to him while he was praying and during his conversation with the Canadian prelate, he specified that it was through the guardian angel that God had inspired him to convene the Council.

During his speech in the closing ceremony of the Council, Paul VI also refers to heavenly intervention. When asked, “*What was the outcome of the Council?*” Pope Paul VI answered, “The Council has been an immeasurable grace. The Holy Spirit has watched over the prelates thus inspiring them for the good of the Church”.

With these words, the two Popes of the Council, remind us that the ‘new issues’ that come out in the Church cannot be attributed to the experience and ability of mankind but to God who allows things to happen according to his Divine Providence.

The Guardian Angels have been at work for a long time so that all those who are called to hold a post of responsibility in the Society can do their part well keeping in mind that the work they were entrusted with is very important and “*there cannot exist a worthier work than that of watching over the brides of the Most High.*” {Rec 1,8).

Fr. Arthur Bellini

We have received from Father Arturo Bellini, Assistant of the Council of the Federation, his homily at the Eucharistic celebration on July 17, 2006, the first day of the Assembly of election held at Rocca di Papa.

As it was not possible for it to be inserted into the Acts of the Assembly, already being distributed, we willingly put it into this circular, sure that it will be of spiritual benefit to all.

“I WANT YOU, YOUR TIME FOR MYSELF...”

Mt. 10:34-42

...We are not alone. With us is the Risen One, the traveler who has assured us of his presence, always, every day of our life. With us is Angela Merici who has promised to be in our midst, helping our prayers. With us are the sisters and so many good people who, from the window of heaven, keep their loving eyes on our trip through time. With us is the Holy Spirit who speaks in us and around us and keeps deep in our hearts the joy of being with the Lord. This is the higher gift, the more gratifying reward.

That is what the good news of the “following of Christ” reminds us.... the good news of a relationship with Jesus! We are among those who have agreed to follow Jesus, to take to the road together with him, to travel with him every day. When one is loved, there are desire and eagerness... and there is no need to be commanded about what one should do.

When there is warmth in our hearts, an energy is unleashed from our whole life that springs toward the Lord and moves us to imitate him, without being forced... Angela Merici’s secretary confirms this: “True nobility and distinction,” he writes, “dwell in the heart, in the prudence of knowing how to choose the one, that, above all else, one must love: As he is, just so will be the heart and the soul of the one who loves him” (Gabriele Cozzano, “Reply” 23).

In this relationship, in the fatigue and the joy that it involves, in the plot of a beautiful story that the vocation has shaped, there is life, our life, which cannot be thought of in any other way. From the time I came to know Jesus Christ, no created thing appeared to me so beautiful and attractive as to make me look at it with desire. The relationship of the disciple with the Lord is a serious matter: it is the reason why we devote ourselves, we tire ourselves, we wear ourselves out, at times we throw in the towel... The relationship of the disciple with the Lord is decisive for our personal story, to the point that we cannot think of it in any other way. So we are what we are, because our time and space, activities, interests, thoughts, daily life, family settings, dreams, small steps... are marked by the Gospel. When the heart is open to God the view changes. God is not far away, but near. He is a God who enters our life. He is a God who is involved with, fills up and transforms our gaze and our heart.

Cardinal Miloslav Vlk of Prague, reviewing his own life, recounts in a simple way the common denominator of every vocation. We all know ourselves as interpreted in the light that one day illuminated his soul when he was living like a refugee, hiding from the police.... One day, while he was being questioned about his situation as a fugitive in his own country, his soul was spontaneously illuminated and he understood what the Lord wanted of him: “I don’t want your work, that does not interest me. I want you, your time for myself... I want you to live for me, not through your work. I understood that God holds in his hands time, history, every success.... I understood that every situation reveals to us the design of divine love for us and I cried out, I believe, Lord... I believe in your love!” (Ambrosius, 6 1990, 5872-583).

And it is a touching testimony of this cardinal that when, in January 1989, he returned to his parish, while the walls were getting ready to fall: “Only God’s Word,” he declared, “convinced me to leave the hard yet beautiful road by which the Lord had conducted me. Personally I would still be washing windows, in that situation that had not at all elevated my priesthood, but rather had brought it to maturity” (idem, 584).

Participation with Jesus is determinative and, to be able to strengthen it, pay attention to the teaching of Jesus. In today’s Gospel Jesus speaks in a clear and frank way to his disciples.

Nine verses are enough to make this clear.

In the first three he says, *“Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s enemies will be those of his household.”*

In the second group it says, *“Anyone who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it. And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”*

And finally the three verses on reward: *“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever receives a righteous person because he is righteous will receive a righteous person’s reward. And whoever give only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, because he is my disciple, amen I say to you, he will not lose his reward.”*

The key to all of this lies in the central verse: *“Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.”* The verse on the cross is the climax of the structure. Eight verses turn on this, just like the hub of a wheel, around which the rest turns.

When we were small we were taught that the cross of Jesus has saved us... that suffering is redemptive, salvific, life-giving. Our teachers taught us that only acceptance of suffering becomes productive of life. Just as Jesus has done. When in our turn we unload it on others and throw it on top of others, then it happens that everything becomes more difficult and everyone’s life gets heavier. Jesus came to save us with the foolishness of the cross. To be worthy of Jesus we must only put our shoulders to the cross. *“Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.”* This is the hub around which everything turns: the relationship with Jesus is liberating, changes our life... Saint Paul expresses it well, he who was once thrown from a horse and saw new and unexpected horizons open for him: *“forgetting what lies behind, but straining forward to what lies ahead: so what was gain, has become as loss.”*

The same dynamic is expressed by Angela Merici. In her writings she cries out, *“Blessed are those in whose hearts God breathes the light of truth and gives the will to desire their heavenly homeland”* and she assures us that following Jesus *“we will cross through this life with consolation, and our every pain and sadness will turn into joy and gladness; and thorny and rocky roads we will find flower-strewn for us and paved with finest gold.”*

With these thoughts let us dispose ourselves to renew our faith and to live with hearts open and available to the opportunity for grace that is offered to us.

Father Arturo Bellini

FROM THE RULE OF ST. ANGELA MERICI **a few points for reflection**

Prologue 1 - 8

We draw closer to the Prologue of the Rule following Our Lady's attitude; with joy and humility acknowledge the great gift of the call: *"My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid, for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His name.*(Lc 1, 46-49).

We draw closer to the Prologue with the attitude of gratitude for our mother and foundress St. Angela. *"In obedience to the Spirit, she brought about for God's glory, the flowering, in an entirely new institution of that admirable for of life that our Saviour lived and, with Him, our Lady, the Apostles, the Virgins and many Christians of the early Church".* (Cost. 2.2)

The Trinity

"In the name of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity".

A rule is started in the name of the Holy Trinity [and] which becomes a standard way of living. It] is the important phrase which gives meaning to all. It was God who founded the Society and he continues to provide for it. Our vocation, our consecration, our service can only start and must continue in the name of the Holy Trinity. The holy and undivided Trinity become the model of the unity among us which St. Angela so recommended and which she donated as gift, an inheritance to the Society..... a gift which is still always donated and lived.

The Life of the Virgins:

"Prologue about the life of the virgins which was recently founded and given the name of Society of St. Ursula"

This is the focal point of the letter. It is very important in our preparation for meditation. This has to do with our life, with our consecrated life in the Society and merits every attention and commitment. Our foundress has suggested the way of life we should lead to please our Spouse and has also given us St Ursula as a patron saint to imitate, at least in her unreserved love and in giving herself to the Lord.

A mother's letter

"To the beloved daughters and sisters of the Society of St. Ursula"

This is the way the letter was addressed. We know that St. Angela is and will remain a mother to the Society that belongs to God.

Let us therefore receive this letter like daughters of the same mother and us live like sisters, be faithful to one another and pledge to help one another understand and live the same message.

The grace of the congregation

"Since you are the most beloved daughters and sisters, Gof has given you the grace to move away from the darkness of this miserable world and to unity to serve his Divine Majesty."

This is the beginning of the letter that immediately explains the meaning of consecrating oneself.

A grace is therefore a gift, completely free, granted through the bountiful mercy of the Lord.

A separation which is to be lived even when taking the plunge; to be in the world but away from it, in the world but free from evil and all it brings with it, in the mercy of the Lord.

A grace that is a gift of community and unity; united in serving his Divine Majesty.

To live in community among us is to be able to unite and give ourselves unconditionally in a loving service to our only Lord.

A unique gift

“You must always thank the Lord for having given you this unique gift”

The gift of consecration is a unique gift, special, uncommon and In reality, it is us who have been granted this extraordinary favour.

In astonishment, in gratitude at the Lord’s goodness towards us, all that is left is for us to be eternally thankful to Him. A lifelong gratitude that is transformed in our life as a daily thanksgiving prayer.

We have been “priveleged”

“In fact, how many important persons and others from different walks of life do not have and can never have a similar grace”

“A similar grace” was only granted to us. It is futile to say others would have been more worthy, more fitting, better ... The Lord has chosen us, and this choice is again a mystery of Love. Let us receive this grace with humility and joy.

We have been chosen to be the brides of the Son of God.

“So, my sisters, I ask you, I beg you, I implore you all; since you have been chosen to be true and unblemished brides of the son of God ...”

It is first through baptism and later through any form of special consecration which helps to lead a life of unity with the Lord.

This life long union gains for us a particular colour and radiance ... the colour and radiance of a bride. This means living a nuptial life with the Divine Spouse.

Let us look conscientiously at this choice:

“First of all you must be aware of the responsibility that follows such a choice and what a new and marvellous dignity it is in itself.”

We can ever say that we have finally understood what our vocation really is, what a wonderful gift ... we need to meditate again, study and further our studies more....

It is a question of discovering a way of understanding and bringing up to date; study, confrontation, reflection, prayer ... these are daily means of knowing better and understanding our call.

Then, it is a question of understanding what is expected of each one of us after being called not only for us but for the Society. What are then the consequences of being a chosen one?

We will discover what it entails by listening to the Word of the Spouse and following this Rule that has been prepared for our good.

It is a question again of opening our hearts to joy and hope, recognising humbly and with gratitude that it is a question of a new and wonderful dignity. Let us be happy!

Kate

On the 25th and 26th November, many of us were luck enough to be in Brescia to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the canonization of Angela Merici, and the birth of the Company. Important events in this celebration were:

- *The celebration of the Eucharist of the festive year on the 25th in the Sanctuary of St. Angela Merici, presided by the Bishop of Brescia Mons. Giulio Sanguinetti:*
- *A theatrical performance by "Scena Sintetica" at the Paul VI centre called: "Angela Merici reads the Song of Songs. Since we cannot recall the whole performance we are at least giving you Kate's introduction.*
- *the reports of the talks of the 26th : Themes and spiritual figures during the era "Veneta-Lombarda" of the beginning the 15th century by Fr. Ezion Bolis. "The Holy Spirit calls now. The holiness of Angela: a proposal for the Christians of the 3rd millennium" by Fr. Diego Facchetti.*
- *A visit to the diocesan museum, where the writings and documents about the lives of some saints, including those of St. Angela are kept.*
- *The concluding Mass, celebrated by Mons. Vigilio Mario Olmi.*

We all found ourselves united with our mother..... this experience was the most precious gift of the two beautiful days in Brescia.

ANGELA MERICI READS THE SONG OF SONGS

A theatrical presentation produced by Scena Sintetica

November 25, 2006 – Brescia Pastoral Center Paul VI

INTRODUCTION

The Song of Songs... is the song par excellence... the most beautiful song. Its theme is the most fascinating of all... the theme of love.

If the song can be read as the passionate love of God for humanity, this evening we will want to hear it as Saint Angela might hear it... a poem of the Bridegroom and the Bride, the poem of a God forever in love with his creature.

In this way let us recognize the primacy of love. And let us realize that love reaches perfection in wedded union, in the deep connection of lover with beloved.

In this bicentenary of the canonization of Saint Angela Merici, let us allow ourselves, like her, to understand through this profound relationship with a God of love, let us also hear the whisper: ***You are the bride...*** and we too dare to repeat: ***You are the Lover....***

In the anxious waiting of the Lover...

"Hark! My lover—here he comes, springing across the mountains, leaping across the hills" (Song 2:8).

At Desenzano and later at Brescia, Angela heard his voice, caught sight of his coming, and here she found him in this land of mountains and hills, of lakes and countryside, of nobles and simple folks, and by a stairway that joins heaven and earth...she heard the desire of the beloved: *You must find a Company of virgins....*

So the Lover...arrives

"I was sleeping, but my heart kept vigil. I heard my lover knocking. "Open to me, my sister, my beloved, my dove, my perfect one..." (Song 5:2).

Angela opened her heart and her mind and heard the *Lover*, her and our *Savior, the Most High, Jesus Christ our only Treasure, our only life and hope....*

Day and night in prayer Angela's heart kept vigil for the heart of the Spouse and was found perfect, and was beloved, desired.

The Lover makes himself known... brings forth a new season, a new blooming

"My lover speaks; he says to me, 'Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come! For see, the winter is past, the rains are over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth... and the song of the dove is heard in our land (Song 2:10-12).

So Saint Angela, *in obedience to the Spirit and for the glory of God, brought an entirely new institute into bloom, that marvelous form of life that the Saviour had lived and with him the Madonna, the Apostles, the virgins and so many Christians of the primitive Church.*

And the beautiful season continues even 500 years later, the flowering remains, the song of love continues to echo... and we continue to find *"thorny and rocky roads flower-strewn for us, paved with finest gold" (Rule, Prologue, 27).*

Love's communion is reciprocal...

"My lover belongs to me and I to him" (Song 2:16; 6:3).

"I, but no longer I": This was a firm declaration of Benedict XVI pronounced at the meeting in Verona October 19. This is the formula of Christian existence that proclaims faith in the resurrection; it is the logic of love, which renews and transfigures.

To the virgins of the Company Saint Angela suggested *"Live as true spouses of the Most High" (Rule, Prologue, 23).*

To everyone the Song and Saint Angela would suggest, *"The Lord is your beloved, is the 'All' of your life, which is pledged to him because he is for you...."*

The lover stands observing the beloved....

"Who is this that comes forth like the dawn, as beautiful as the moon, as resplendant as the sun?... (Song 6:10).

This evening the Creator continues to find Angela Merici beautiful, and she is still a new dawn for us, a night of full moon, a day of sun with no sunset. Cozzano, her faithful secretary, described Angela Merici this way: *"She was like a sun that gave light to all the others. She was like a fire, a conflagration of love that set them alight..." (Declaration on the Bull).*

To the eyes of the Bridegroom, the bride is very beautiful....

"Ah you are beautiful, my beloved, ah you are beautiful!" (Song 4:1). "You are all beautiful, my beloved, and there is no blemish in you" (Song 4:7).

"You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one bead of your necklace" (Songs 4:9).

Saint Angela was surely beautiful to the eyes of the Lord. Just so, Saint Angela wanted her daughters to be beautiful spouses of the Lord: *"that more and more they may please Jesus Christ, their Spouse" (Testament 4:3).*

The bride belongs to the Bridegroom

“You are an enclosed garden, my sister, my bride, an enclosed garden, a fountain sealed” (Song 4:12).

Love does not make an uproar, is not ostentatious; love is deep, jealous, personal...love is mysterious, and Saint Angela invites us to live it: *“Let them have Jesus Christ for their only treasure, for there also will be their love” (Counsels 5:43).*

Saint Angela is sure that in this love we will find all, we will have all, as she affirms in her writings, *“And in God she has all her wealth, and outside of God she sees herself impoverished, being a total nothing and with God possessing everything” (Rule 10:6).*

However, Saint Angela knew that traveling the paths of love can never be taken for granted, that it is possible to stray far from the road, as this prayer suggests: *“Keep my affections and my senses safe so that they may not lead me astray, neither to the right nor to the left, nor turn me away from your brilliant face, which soothes every afflicted heart” (Rule 5:18, 19).*

The love of the Bridegroom is a living love

“You are a garden fountain, a well of water flowing fresh...” (Song 4:15).

Angela Merici who founded the Company of Saint Ursula, right here in Brescia on November 25, 1535, would certainly never have imagined that her love for her Lover would be flow so far...capable of irrigating new gardens in Italy, in Europe and in the whole world. Her life, her writings have become wells of water ever fresh, streams that are still gushing on different continents. Today she still repeats to her daughters, *“having been thus chosen to be true and virginal spouses of the Son of God” (Rule, Prologue, 7).* ... *“We are called to a life of such glory that we are spouses of the Son of God and will become queens in heaven” (Rule, Prologue, 17).*

Love is great, love is exclusive, love is strong

*“...I am faint with love” (Song 5:8), repeats the bride of the Song of Songs.
“Deep waters cannot quench love, nor floods sweep it away” (Songs 8:7).*

“Nothing will separate us from the love of Christ,” says the Word of God.

Angela Merici, *faint with love of the one who is her only treasure* ... has given life to the Company of Jesus Christ and *the deep waters, the floods* of the ages have not succeeded in overwhelming this marvelous charism that will endure *as long as the world will last.*

Love has done and will do marvels...

“Let us go early to the vineyards, and see if the vines are in bloom, if the buds have opened, if the pomegranates have blossomed” (Song 7:13).

So many blooms appear, so many marvelous buds flower in the Company, and we too will see the marvels of love, as Saint Angela assures us: *“Act,, move, believe, strive, hope, cry out to him with all your heart, for without doubt you will see marvelous things...” (Counsels, Prologue, 17, 18).*

Let us renew our commitment of love... let us fix upon our own lives the seal of love

“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal on your arm, for stern as death is love, relentless as the netheer world is devotion...” (Song 8:6).

Let this be our prayer too:

*Put me as a seal upon your heart,
Lord,*

*And since your love for me is as strong as death,
Strong until death let my love be for you ...
Let it be!*

Caterina Dalmaso

FROM THE COMPANIES

Antonietta Bassu, former directress of the Company of Sassari, has concluded her earthly journey

Antonietta Bassu (1921-2006) has concluded her earthly journey and has joined her beloved Spouse, to whom she had dedicated her whole being. She was consecrated to the Lord from her youth, setting in motion a moving history, certainly willed by Providence.

Monsignor Salvatore Porqueddu wanted the Company at Porto Torres from 1944.

On February 7, Antonietta, with a friend, left her family and in a very poor setting inaugurated the marvelous project that brought to life the spirituality of Saint Angela Merici in a work of love, of charity at the service of others, immersed in the context of daily life.

That very poor house, a place for welcoming “angelines” for their formation meetings and for prayer, quickly became the site of a project of the active life. To respond to the needs of the terrible post-war poverty was the objective of a small group of “angelines” who lovingly opened their house to welcome the first two orphan girls left without families. And, miraculously, the city of Porto Torres became providence. Later, other little girls found in the house of Saint Angela a loving family. Thus was a house of welcome for orphans and little girls born in a situation of privation, of necessity. Another two hundred girls have been welcomed in over sixty years of activity.

Prayer was at the basis of the work developed by Antonietta, who directed the “family” with the strength of her indestructible faith, her determination, and the serenity of one who knew that she would never be abandoned.

Now Antonietta will continue to live in God and in us and also the projects she guided will continue to live, perfected and adapted for the needs of contemporary society.

To Antonietta and to her witness of faith go our deeply felt thoughts and our gratitude for what she has done and will still wish to do.

Gilda Usai Cervelli

SICILY WELCOMES THE NEW PRESIDENT WITH JOY

A true encounter of sisters who treasure in their hearts their sharing in the family of Saint Angela, a festive and joyous gathering “together,” the annual Regional Gathering that the Daughters of Saint Angela of Sicily have been putting together for some years, manifested itself as an occasion not to be missed, with experiences of great spiritual and human value.

This year it was scheduled for Ragusa, and the President of the Federation was present among us, brand new, for her first appearance.

The meeting took place on October 14 and 15, 2006, at the international spirituality center “Cor Jesu,” a place apart from the disturbing tumult of the city, welcoming and pleasant, fostering relaxation and spiritual centering.

The challenging theme, along the lines of the ecclesial gathering of Verona (Italy), “TO BE WITNESSES OF FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD,” led us to encourage one another to be witnesses of authenticity in our very being, to be able to make a mark, in a Christian, Gospel manner, in the social fabric in which our identity as consecrated lay women positions us and finds us at work.

In the first presentation on Saturday afternoon, the 14th, Father Biagio Aprile, OFM, a teacher of Patristics on the theology faculty of Palermo, Sicily, and in the theology department of Catania, in an illuminating look at our Constitutions (Ch. 1, 3.4, 4.2), afterwards tossed out briefly some views for reflection on:

- How the witness of consecrated life is situated within great changes as they happen.
- When a life of consecration continues to be meaningful and therefore remains a motive for hope.
- What language about consecration is necessary today to express a sense of hope.

He traced out a brief analysis of the contemporary socio-cultural context from which has emerged the enclosure of today’s person in a circle of individual existence, inhabited by fear rather than hope.

The absurdity of life that makes people today like Sisyphus, condemned to push a rock uphill, finds its only possible path in the acceptance of non-sense.

In a world of little hope, upon the believer falls the burden of rediscovering reasons for hope and of rendering it plausible, coming from a mature relationship with others and with God, inspired by a respect for otherness, letting others be truly “other than oneself,” committed to the hard work of authentic relationships with God, with oneself and with others. It is worth citing this passage from “Utopia and disillusionment” by C. Magris: *“Every generation and every individual must undergo again, and not just one time, the traumatic but salvific experience of the first Christians, who awaited faithfully—at least many of them—the Parousia, the return of the Savior that was promised, that would come during their lifetime. The Parousia did not arrive, and it must not have been easy to withstand the disillusionment and to understand that it was not to be treated as a refutation, but as a delay of salvation and perhaps not even a postponement, but a revelation that salvation does not arrive once and for all, but is always in progress until the end of time.”*

In the second presentation, on the theme “**A bicentennial of faith and renewal**,” on Sunday morning the 15th, our new President of the Federation, dearest Maria Rosa, guided us through the writings of Saint Angela to acquire ever more awareness of being heirs and carriers of an ancient charism that has been given to us and that we are responsible to bring alive and bear witness to through our lives. To remain faithful to the original inspiration, without betraying the expectations of today, can be done only in an active and consistent discipleship sustained by prayer, by listening to the Word, by the sacramental life, but also by a “quality” presence in the Church and in the world.

The homilies at the Eucharistic celebrations, also in line with the theme of the Gathering, pertaining directly to the Word, faithful to the liturgy, furnished precious reflections for recovering that fidelity that takes joy in being consecrated women today.

Sisterly sharing concluded the work and, in the exchange of ideas and experiences, in our festive togetherness, we harvested the joy of the meeting of sisters who live in unity of intention and who care about each other.

It may be my obsession, but the coucillors do not at all undervalue the positive effect of such meetings, of seeking them, wanting them, and bringing them into being as often as possible.

Thus Saint Angela exhorts us in her last Counsel: *“See then how important is this union and concord. So, long for it, pursue it, embrace it, hold onto it with all your strength; for I tell you, living all together thus united in heart, you will be like a mighty fortress, or a tower impregnable.”*

Maria Zisa

FROM CANADA, THANKS AND REMEMBRANCE

*TO ALL OF YOU,
FAMILY, COMPANIONS, URSULINES, FRIENDS*

Here I am, at last, thanking you and giving you the latest news. Thanks to God and to your prayers, the news is very good and allows me to hope to retrieve enough strength, while practicing prudence, to envision carrying on with my work in the Company as long as God wills it.

As the good that comes with something unfortunate, the trial that I underwent this summer made me experience how I am surrounded by affection and compassion. First of all is the incomparable help that I received from our dear directress, Therese Bolduc; then the messages that came from around the world; nor can I forget the unceasing prayer that accompanied me throughout my hospitalisation and convalescence, nor the visits and gifts I received. All of these contributed to my rapid healing and return to my ordinary life. For the last forty years, I have poured myself out for the Company which constitutes my life and my happiness, without ever thinking of any return, because what I was doing was natural for me. But the Lord has allowed me to receive the hundredfold while I am still in this world. And surely even this is nothing in comparison to what our Spouse and Saint Angela have promised will be in heaven.

I am living in continual thanksgiving, then, and am trying by my work and my prayers to return to you a little of the generosity which you have demonstrated toward me. The fact that all this has developed in the Merician Year in preparation for the bicentennial of the canonisation of our foundress and while we are looking forward to the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the Company of Canada, which we will also celebrate in 2007, seems to me an act of the divine Providence to which I have always abandoned myself.

Again, thank you. Please join in my hymn of thanksgiving toward our dear Lord and Master. I send you all the kiss of peace in union with Angela, our Mother.

Jacqueline Morin

THE CHARISM OF ST. ANGELA; IN BURUNDI FOR THE PAST 50 YEARS

My Dears,

I am writing to you from Burundi; I am here with Lina C, Maria T and Janne from the French Branch of the company to visit and celebrate with those who, like us, have chosen to live the admirable quality of St. Angela.

The lord always precedes us and, here, I can say for certain that he has preceded us for a long time through the intercession of St. Angela.

I am not sure whether it is correct to define what was set up in Burundi on the 13th December 1956 as a Company. Today, there are nearly 300 members spread in various dioceses and, at that time of the year, more than 200 were gathered for the annual spiritual exercises. We were with them for 36 hours but even before we arrived, some of them with their Assistant, were waiting at the airport to greet us.

During our visit, we constantly felt amazed and astonished at these poor ladies who came to us in all simplicity and humility yet full of dignity, serenity and joy, wishing only that we confirm their decision to answer the call as the right choice and hoping only to improve and progress. It struck me that all they asked for was advice.

We found it very difficult to communicate but we equally managed to tell each other many things by our facial expressions and generic body language whilst they expressed their feelings through their songs, dancing and clapping.

Being a guest in a county with such a different culture and facing a reality so different to mine, I have to be very careful and show great respect in describing this part of the world, particularly since I was there only for a few days and in such a short time, one can understand very little. I can however state that I lived moments of strong manifestations and deep emotions.

During the past months, I was reflecting on the meaning of secular life and I understood that the real meaning was not in the external matters like having a job, your own house and acting like most other people do; however, these sisters from Burundi helped me to understand a little better the real feelings of the heart.

We had a meeting with the local Bishop who treasures the presence of the Sisters of St. Angela and who feels the importance of collaborating with them so that they can be faithful to their call and are a testimony in the works and in the Church of an original and new way of living. He described these women as simple, discreet, silent but held with high esteem and trust. They have become part of the reality that surrounds them and in answer to this bare reality; they offer their maternal love, availability, generosity, sensibility, all free of charge; thus making do with what they have to make end meet. They are also women who pray constantly because their very being reflects serenity and peace. That peace which is only given by the Lord to those who trust in Him because they have found the value of the "precious pearl". Indeed, one is rich in the Lord but is poor in everything if away from Him.

Dearest Sister, accept the regards and embraces of these our new sisters. They have told us that looking into our eyes, they could see all the other sisters and for them it is very comforting to know that in other parts of the world, there are sisters who are living the same charisma and are daughters of our one common mother Angela.

Lately, I have felt very closely the presence of Angela among us and I have recited the Magnificat with extreme joy and very often I asked myself "*But in that famous vision of Brudazzo, on what level did you also see the sisters in Burundi?*".

Mirella Turri

15th August, Feast of the Assumption, 2006

The new Council of the Federation, has started to function offering a charism of service and unity. Michelina from Cuneo has presented to St. Angela her wish and pledge.

St. Angela reassures the Federation and the sisters in all the parts of thw world: "I will always be wtih them, togerher with my "Beloved" or should I say our "Beloved" common to all." (Rc 5,38)

DIALOGUE

The door was ajar.
A little push and ..
"Come, come!
for you there's a stool, sit here".

I sat overwhelmed,
because that is what I used to do with my mother,
before she smoothly passed
away to the other side.

We used to recite the rosary,
faithful to our memories
recalling strains of sacred melodies
from past seasons.

Now I turn to Anglel
my face full of emotion
and she looks at me
tender and indulgent.

"I see a question
forming on yor lips;
come little child talk!
What do you want?"

"Those who paved the way for us,
our guides
begged to have you always by their side
because you have promised:
"in life and in death
I will be the mother of the company."

Michelina Giraudo

Information

PLENARY INDULGENCE

- It is with great joy that we bring you this communication, received from the Company of St. Ursula in Brescia.

*On the 6th October 2006 the Apostolic Penitentiary,
By the authority given by His Holiness the Pope,
Willingly grants
The plenary Indulgence
To all the faithful Christians who
Have been to confession and have received Holy Communion
Pray for the Pope
And devoutly pay a visit to St. Angela Merici's Sanctuary,
During the year of the 200th anniversary of her Canonization.
(from November 25th 2006 to November 25th 2007)*

- May we remind you of:

THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF THE FEDERATION:

HOLD ON TO THE OLD WAYS BUT LEAD A NEW LIFE

which will be held at the *Salesianum - Rome* from the 22nd to the 26th May 2007.

Besides other celebrations the programme includes:

- **the Eucharistic Celebration at the main altar in St. Peter's Basilica** on the exact day of the 200th anniversary of the canonization presided by His Excellency Mons. Angelo Comastri, Vicar General to His Holiness the Pope in the Vatican City.

- **Three important meetings:**

HOLINESS AS A GIFT.

The context which helped Angela Merici's daily holiness to flourish. Fr. Ennio Apeciti, who is responsible for the canonization of saints in the diocese of Milan;

ANGELA MERICI: a holiness for the day.

Fr. Alberto Margoni Director of the weekly diocesan publication 'Verona fedele'.

THE HOLINESS OF ANGELA MERICI

Read by a member of the Secular Institute Maria Rosa Zamboni, ex president CIIS.

- **A Mass of thanksgiving,**

presided by Mons. Luciano Monari, Bishop of Piacenza - Bobbio, vice president C.E.I., at the parish of Saint Angela Merici in Rome.

For further information, contact Paola Citta'
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email : paolacitta@tiscalinet.it

References

- To scrutinize further the topics of hope, sanctity, laity visit the site of the Meeting in Verona 2006 www.convegnoverona.it with special reference to the topic by Paola Bignardi; *love generates hope. The spiritual dimension of evidence.*
- Those interested in receiving copies of the **Acts of the Assembly of the Federation of July 2006** can ask Kate.
- For all those who would like to follow accurately the theme of secular consecration, we suggest they subscribe in the CMIS magazine; **dialogue** and in the CIIS magazine; **meeting**.
- Reference to *IN THE SAME CHARISM . WITH RESPONSABILITY: MEDITATED ROSARY WITH ST. ANGELA* by the Padova Company. This will only be available in Italian and will not be translated. There are many biblical and Merician citations, and everyone can easily find their own reference in their mother language.
- We would like to thank the Interdiocesan Company of Padova – Rome – Venice for the bicentenary gift.