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INTRODUCTION

HOLD ON TO THE OLD WAYS BUT LEAD A NEW LIFE

We kept in mind this Merician phrase when we planned the international meeting of the Federation for the bicentenary of St. Angela Merici's canonisation.

This is a précis of what has been written in our Constitutions (2.2) about our foundress: "*In obedience to the Spirit and for God's glory, she brought about, in an entirely new institution, the blossoming of that admirable way of life that our Saviour lived, and with Him, our Lady, the Apostles, the Virgins and many Christians of the early church.*"

However, even when we want to summarise, we still need words to help us express better the contents and the messages and so here is the second issue of the IN THE SAME CHARISM with responsibility.

HOLD ON TO THE OLD WAYS Those of the Saints, of the Church, of the Holy Eucharist, of our Mother the forerunner, of the Rules and of prayer.

HOLD ON TO THE OLD WAYS that of a farsighted and courageous holiness, that of a pilgrim mother.

HOLD ON TO THE OLD WAYS those of 2000 years ago remind us of our Redeemer; those of 500 years ago bring to mind St. Angela; those of 200 years ago make us remember her canonisation and those of 60 years ago remind us of the time when the Church recognised the importance of Secular Institutes.

BUT LEAD A NEW LIFE always accompanied by the Angels and the souls of our dear departed.

BUT LEAD A NEW LIFE in the countries and different continents where St. Angela led the way for us, in Companies always strongly united.

BUT LEAD A NEW LIFE in new suggestions, in new attempts to spread the Merician message, in receiving and propagating suggestions, signs and communications.

The **old way** and the **new life** is obedience to the Holy Spirit and the inspirations which He increasingly sends into our hearts and whose voice we shall hear all the more clearly as our conscience becomes more purified and clean.

IN THE SAME CHARISM with responsibility helps us pray to the Holy Spirit so that our ways and lives may blossom to give glory to God.

May you blossom and enjoy reading this issue.

Caterina Dalmasso

A THOUGHT FROM THE PRESIDENT

... a rose garden in spring ...

The holiness of Angela Merici is the result of the precise way she modelled her life on the Gospel. The only way of becoming holy in Christian life comes from being one with Jesus Christ and from no other rule.

Since childhood, Angela knew Jesus Christ and got to know him well through the lives of Saints and by following the example given by her parents. She chose Christ and loved Him deeply; she was always very close to Him through prayer and by receiving the Holy Eucharist. Later, she described him as ‘The Lover’, the ‘*only good being*’ for her daughters.

I would like to quote a few expressions from the Papal Bull of the canonisation by which the Holy See, by the approval of Pope Pius VII, clearly and publicly proclaims the holiness of Angela Merici and presents her to the whole world as a model of holiness.

“This is the truth; one cannot love one’s neighbour freely unless one is enkindled with an ardent divine desire to love God with all of one’s mind, soul and heart” (Bull, 1st Paragraph)

The “*...Ven. Angela Merici, was especially called by the Lord to work for her fellow brethren and for their eternal well being*” (2nd paragraph)

Only a “*Divine flame*” could enkindle the strength on our “*Holy Mother*” to approach her “*fellow brethren*”, heal their internal wounds, settle their differences and bring peace to their hearts!

God wanted that these “*wonderful works*” towards our neighbours would not come to an end when she passed away but “*urged (.....) her specifically to set up a Company of Virgins that, like a rose garden in spring, blossoms and fills the Church with its sweet and virtuous perfume*” (2nd paragraph).

The Church gives us a beautiful picture of the Company; that of a rose garden which brings peace and inner joy with its fragrance and beauty.

“Therefore, we rule and proclaim that She must be prayed to and worshipped (.....) until all the faithful are inspired to imitate her virtues, especially the worthy offspring of such a Mother” (2nd paragraph)

“The Saints” says Divo Barsotti, *“are the friends who accompany us on our way”* and the Church elevates them so that they become the models to inspire us but, above all, so that every one of us realises that, while still being human beings, their human frailty is transformed by God’s grace.

We are all urged to imitate the holiness of Angela Merici, especially *“her offspring”*; that is, all those who, through her, have been reborn in Christ and who look up to her as their guide and teacher in following Christ, their bridegroom, the only and universal Lover.

The saintly mother, already recognised as a saint in her life, therefore proposes to her daughters to belong to God *“for ever by offering their virginity”* (3rd paragraph) *“by longing to lead a austere life”* (3rd paragraph) living *“at home”* the *“desert“* *“yet happy to lack everything but always captivated in meditating eternal life”* (5th paragraph) obedient in leading the way of life chosen by God for her; *“believing that hers was a heavenly call”* (6th paragraph).

The way Angela Merici lived her life on earth was a perfect example of the meaning of allowing God to take full control of one’s life. This could be seen especially during the time of suffering when she was traumatically separated from her loved ones; when living in poverty, seeing this as the only means of consenting to God’s will; when obeying the will of the Father, welcoming this as a means of cleaning and purifying her conscience.

When we meditate on the holiness of Angela Merici, we feel that Pope John Paul II was addressing us when he commended to all Christians of the 3rd millennium “***It is the time to propose to all with conviction this <soaring dimension > of everyday Christian life***” (NMI no. 27) which we emphasise quoting the words of Angela Merici: “***Therefore, faithfully and joyfully persevere in the work you have begun***” (Testament Ch XI, 22).

It is the basis of our sanctification.

Maria Razza

FOOTNOTE

N.B. The citations were taken from the Papal Bull of the canonisation of the Ven. Angela Merici, foundress of the Company of St. Ursula in the Latin version by Fr. Pietro Dell’Acqua 16th November 1924

**A THOUGHTS FROM THE ECCLESIASTICAL
ASSISTANT
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION**

March 22, 2007

The Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation by the Holy Father BENEDICT XVI, titled **“SACRAMENT OF CHARITY,”** on the Eucharist as the **“source and summit of the Church’s life and mission”** (subtitle) is dated a month ago, February 22, 2007. We do not pretend to illustrate the whole papal exhortation, but to invite you to harvest some aspects that touch upon the faith and the lives of all those to whom the exhortation is addressed: bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful.

SACRAMENT OF CHARITY

The Pope writes in #2 that **“In the sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus shows us in particular the truth about the love which is the very essence of God. It is this evangelical truth which challenges each of us and our whole being. For this reason, the Church ... finds in the Eucharist the very center of her life.”**

The Pope presents the Eucharist as the greatest sacrament, because when, in it, we “render thanks,” we celebrate the mystery of faith, that is the very work of God.

The first of the three parts of the apostolic exhortation is, in fact, titled **“THE EUCHARIST, A MYSTERY TO BE BELIEVED.”** The other sacraments offer us the benefits of salvation; the Eucharist, instead, gives us the Lord himself who is the source of salvation. With the Eucharist Christ becomes present in his Church. The Pope writes again in #8: **There the Deus Trinitas, who is essentially love, becomes fully a part**

of our human condition. In the bread and wine under whose appearances Christ gives himself to us in the paschal meal, God's whole life encounters us and is sacramentally shared with us.... The 'mystery of faith' is thus a mystery of trinitarian love, a mystery in which we are called by grace to participate." To eat the bread and drink of the chalice, therefore, signifies entering into communion with Jesus who offers himself to us, and through Him, with Him and in Him we enter into communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit.

Spontaneously there comes to mind what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman he encountered at the well of Sichem: "If you only knew the gift of God..." (Jn 4:10).

At the end of the first part, in relation to the theme of faith in #33, the Holy Father presents Mary as **"the great Believer who places herself confidently in God's hands, ... 'advanced in her pilgrimage of faith'.... Mary of Nazareth, icon of the nascent Church, is the model for each of us, called to receive the gift that Jesus makes of himself in the Eucharist."**

The second part of the papal document is titled **"THE EUCHARIST, A MYSTERY TO BE CELEBRATED."**

From this part I would like to highlight principally the Pope's reflection on "active participation" that he calls "authentic participation" (#52-58). **"It should be made clear that the word 'participation' does not refer to mere external activity during the celebration. In fact, the active participation called for by the Council must be understood in more substantial terms, on the basis of a greater awareness of the mystery being celebrated and its relationship to daily life."** The different moments of the eucharistic celebration manifest to us the meaning. We participate actively when each eucharistic celebration is

understood and lived as making present again the Pasch of the Lord, who gives himself in sacrifice for us, in the realization that He makes himself present for us, to deliver us from sin and from death, to make of us a community of brothers and sisters who recognize ourselves as such, who allow our selves to be converted by the Word, who restore peaceful relationships, who live Communion as a gift and as an anticipation of future life. In #57-58 the Pope reminds us that **“While it is most praiseworthy that the elderly and the sick participate in Sunday Mass through radio and television,”** but he calls **“the attention of the whole Church community to the pastoral importance of providing spiritual assistance to the sick, both those living at home and those in hospital. Their situation was often mentioned during the Synod of Bishops. These brothers and sisters of ours should have the opportunity to receive sacramental communion frequently.”**

Finally the third part pays attention to **“THE EUCHARIST, A MYSTERY TO BE LIVED.”** The Pope affirms that **“the mystery ‘believed’ and ‘celebrated’ contains an innate power making it the principle of new life within us and the form of our Christian existence.”** In this third part the Pope especially explains and applies the expression used in the subtitle: **“The Eucharist as Source and Summit of the Church’s life and mission,”** appropriate as it is the spring of new life in the Church in accordance with the Spirit who brings love into being day by day. **“Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman. Hence the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, must**

be translated into spirituality, into a life lived ‘according to the Spirit.’”

And I want to conclude by adding how the Pope sees the relationship between THE EUCHARIST AND THE CONSECRATED LIFE in #81.

- **The relationship of the Eucharist to the various ecclesial vocations is seen in a particularly vivid way in ‘the prophetic witness of consecrated men and women, who find in the celebration of the Eucharist and in eucharistic adoration the strength necessary for the radical following of Christ, obedient, poor and chaste.’ Though they provide many services ... they know that the principal purpose of their lives is ‘the contemplation of things divine and constant union with God in prayer.’ The essential contribution that the Church expects from consecrated persons is much more in the order of being than of doing.**
- **In the Eucharist, consecrated virginity finds inspiration and nourishment for its complete dedication to Christ. From the Eucharist, moreover, it draws encouragement and strength to be a sign, in our own times too, of God's gracious and fruitful love for humanity.**
- **Finally, by its specific witness, consecrated life becomes an objective sign and foreshadowing of the ‘wedding feast of the Lamb’ which is the goal of all salvation history.**

In this papal document we find again many points to foster our life as Christians and as consecrated persons in harmony with the spirituality of Saint Angela who points to the Eucharist as the sacrament in which we become participants in the action and grace of Christ, saying that in it “*are found all*

the merits of the passion of our Lord.” Likewise Saint Angela also places virginity in relationship with that “*ardent charity*” that has its wellspring in the Eucharist. Also the Pope’s invitation to consecrated persons to be the reminder and the anticipation of the wedding feast of the Lamb, in which is the goal of all salvation history, finds its confirmation in the invitation of Saint Angela, “*Let them place their hopes above, and not on earth.*”

With these thoughts we can truly celebrate, both the Paschal Mystery and the bicentennial of the canonization of your Saint Angela.

Don Adriano Tessarollo

At Brescia for the feast of Saint Angel 2007

We remembered sisters and Companies of the whole world

It is part of our “permanent formation “ programme to go to Brescia to our mother Angela to give our consecrated life a revival, where the Merician Institution started and where one feels stronger at the presence of the foundress and the “Common Lover”.

In this way many of us were lucky enough to find themselves once more near our mother on her feastday in the bicentenary of her canonisation. Let us try to give you all a taste of our experience.

This is the programme

The Eve of the Feast:

During the vocational vigil of prayer the theme was: *“Holiness” Let us share in the holiness of Saint Angela and our saints.*

During the prayers and vespers we celebrated the holiness of Saint Angela Merici, during the jubilee year of the bicentenary of her canonisation. Together with her, a true lover of the Lord, and so obedient to her call, we also remembered the various saints of the different diocese of Brescia.

In honour of these saints, we went from the crypt to the sanctuary in the form of a procession, with candles in hand. This was a symbol of our earthly walk towards heaven, our “definite goal”, where the saints have preceded us.

Once in the sanctuary, we carried on with the prayers and the adoration of the Lord of our lives, who is the source of

all holiness, trusting Him with our vocation and that of many young persons who seek Him.

The 27th January: A solemn concelebration in the Sanctuary of Saint Angela, presided by Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi. We will be giving part of his homily further on.

After the Eucharistic Concelebration we moved on to the picture gallery Tosio Martinengo for the **opening of the exhibition “Angela Merici”, paintings and devotions during the centenary of the canonisation**”, where paintings of Saint Angela by Pompeo Ghitti were on show, with the aim of spreading further and propagating the veneration of the Brescian Saint.

Sunday 28th January Holy Mass in the Duomo Vecchio, celebrated by Mons. Giulio Sanguineti, Bishop of Brescia, which was transmitted by Rai Uno. We will also give you parts of this homily.

Saint Angela Merici
Model of Farsighted and Courageous Love

Eucharistic Celebration – Brescia, January 27th 2007 – Cardinal
Dionigi Tettamanzi, Archbishop of Milan

Excerpts from the homily by the Cardinal;

My dears,

Once again I greet each and everyone of you with affection in the name of Our Lord, Jesus, I invite you all to thank the Lord for the spiritual joy He is giving us today in this solemn Eucharistic Celebration.

Let us together, remember the bicentenary of the canonisation of Angela Merici, who died on the 27th January 1540, a date far removed yet we must admit so close to us, so very close that it is capable of involving us totally. We find ourselves in fact involved in the history of the church, therefore in "our" history; because we who are baptised form an active part of the church and form also part of its history. Certainly that of the church is a very long history which spreads over the centuries but along all these years each one of us fits in his proper place.

We turn especially to you Angela Merici and ask you to be near us, to involve us deeply. I would like to remind you here of what Pope John Paul II said "It is typical of the Saints to remain mysteriously contemporary with every generation. This is the result of their deep bonding with the eternal presence of God" (Operosam diem, n.3).

Everyone must live according to the graces bestowed on him

Let us fix our gaze on Saint Angela Merici's face, she who is the foundress of the Ursuline Sisters- Indeed we look through the very eyes of the Church, in whose prayers we find a spiritual meditation of the face of this saint, which brings out

two aspects of her love which are farsighted and courageous. These adjectives are really prophetic, and with extreme simplicity they present us with two fundamental characteristics, two strong original traits of the spirituality and hard work of this great saint.

Here we find God's marvellous plan for us members of His Church. He invites us all to become holy, a holiness which can only be obtained from perfect love, He calls each and every one of us in His particular ways according to the graces, favours and responsibilities which He bestows on us...

It is impossible not to be surprised by the life of Saint Angela Merici and by her message of far sighted and courageous love. This message is the result of the Saint's inner life and is reflected in all she did during her life and which can be briefly read in her "memoires". Turning to her Ursoline sisters then, and also addressing us now, she says "Be faithful to the old ways and traditions of the church which the saints by the intercession of the Holy Spirit have made more functionable and stable. And lead a new way of life, but pray and make others pray so that God will not abandon His Church, but reshape it according to his will, as He sees fitting for us and for His honour and glory"....

These words give us a clear picture of Angela Merici, making her a very wise lady who was able to understand the realities of her times and interpret them according to the will of God. She allowed herself to be led and enlightened by the Spirit of the Lord, by that Spirit that is always present in the church and works through the Saints and those who answer His call and submit to His will. Our Saint always referred to the Traditions of the Church, knowing that they are stable and life giving and would help her when confronted with the many problems which cropped up at that time, she was not interested in following the traditions of men which often are inconsistent and last for a short time, but she went deep and had great

respect for the Traditions of the Church, which she found to be much alive and actual because they were bathed by the strength of the Holy Spirit, a creative Spirit by whose powers all things take shape and is therefore the beginning of new applications and new energies.

This is the insight she had of the marks left by the changing times and which our saint lived and asked her spiritual daughters to live, the same insight referred to by the “Council”. In fact in her Rule after pledging obedience to the church who is the trustee and guarantee of the Evangelic truth, she pledges obedience to the Holy Spirit to adjust to the needs of humanity but not be hindered by the traditions of men.

How can one be blind to the precious teaching for all of us, for our personal life, our pastoral and missionary life and actions to be taken upon, in our Christian communities. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the church.” (Rev. 2,7)..

A courageous novelty: The “Company of the submissive members of St. Ursola”

To the wisdom which is given by the Spirit we add courage. Angela Merici is a woman of great courage. “Live a new life” she told her Ursoline sisters, the reason being that she was convinced that “God would not abandon His Church”, but He would re shape it, that is to renovate it to become more holy according to the high and liberating requirements of the Gospels. The Spirit would ask for nothing more than that the Church be a witness of the new and surprising way of life which is given to all by means of Christ in the New Testament.

This is the way that our Saint was a woman of farsighted and courageous love. She lived in a century, the 16th which can be described as a heavily trouble period of time yet an extraordinarily productive one during which the church

went through times of suffering and glory. It is the Renaissance Period which is torn between uprisings and wars which were destroying Europe, disagreements between Catholics and Protestants, and on the other hand, a sincere and deep longing for internal reform urged by the Council of Trent (1545 – 1565). As a result of this reform, many religious congregations sprung up and flourished who were involved in the educational and spiritual needs of the people. I am thinking of the orders of the Jesuits, the “Fatebenefratelli”, the order founded by Saint Girome “I Somaschi, and that by Saint Philip Neri, “I Filippini”. However these orders educated only boys.

Here is where St. Angela intervenes. With the wisdom and courage given to her by the Holy Spirit she gives life to something new and innovative...

It was correctly written about her: “ If today a woman can make herself heard, and is treated at par with men, this is also thanks to women like Angela Merici”. We can add that the female character is deeply marked by the foresightedness and courage already mentioned...

The Secret; in love with Jesus Christ

This is the last point that we must touch, the most important, what is the “secret” of the driving force and the spirituality of St. Angel Merici, this woman of heroic farsighted and courageous love?

The answer is easy, through faith we get the strength to understand the source of life, which draws us to holiness, this is the only, real, uncontradictable person – Jesus Christ, “Il Solus Sanctus”, He who was made flesh but is at the same time God and full of Holiness. Yes, Jesus has captured the heart of this woman, and won her over with His strength and charm and through Him she has experienced a love that is unique, full and an abounding source of intimate feeling and life.

And she, Angela , out of her own free will, in all humility and generosity corresponded to an increasing act of “falling in love” with Christ, which was expressed in the virginal consecration, sealing the steadfast bond which was given to her by the Holy Spirit during the Baptism and now by offering the gift of her virginity she was re confirming her love in a new and special way.

In all that Angela Merici did, in her thoughts, her desires, her moods, in whatever she chose to do in life, whether significant or insignificant, we always find Jesus Christ as the centre and most important being, all she did was for His love. We are correct in saying that this woman heard repeatedly what the Lord said through the prophet Hosea. “Behold I will allure her and will head her into the wilderness and I will speak to her heart. And I will espouse thee to me forever and I will espouse thee to me in justice and judgement and in mercy and commiseration. I will espouse thee to me in faith and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.” (Hosea 2,14.19 – 20).

St. Angela listened to these words as though they were addressed to her. And at the same time she made others listen to them, above all she was a witness herself of these words, to the other women who were inspired by her and followed her in consecrating themselves completely to the Lord. They consecrated themselves while leading a normal life like any other person in the world, showing to all the meaning of perfect love – which comes from holiness – and that it can be experienced by everybody because God calls everybody to holiness, no one is excluded.

Immediately we understand the message, which appears to be simple but in reality is very involving and radical, which is portrayed in the figure of St. Angela Merici. We are all called to be holy, to be intimately in love with Christ. This is the distinctive trait of our Christian life, the life giving source which urges us to strive in the progress of the pastoral and

missionary Church, we will receive the strength to be witness of the scriptures, to the people in the world where we live, showing them that it is possible to live in the most difficult and trouble situations if we put our trust in God, fill our hearts with the joy that comes from the presence of God and His fatherly love.

For all this let us once again pray using the words of the prayer of the Church : “O God, Merciful Father, who in St. Angela has given to the church a model of farsighted and courageous love, help us by her example and intercession to understand and witness the reviving strength of the Gospel”.

ANGELA MERICI FORERUNNER

28th January 2007 Eucharistic Celebration by the Bishop of Brescia, His Excellency Mons. Giulio Sanguineti, in the Duomo Vecchio in a direct transmission by Rai Uno.

A few points from the homily by Bishop Giulio Sanguineti;

“ .. The direct transmission of the Eucharistic celebration in this cathedral on the occasion of the bicentenary of the canonisation of Saint Angela Merici, brings to mind the thought that Saint Angela Merici is remembered with devotion much further than Brescia, by a great number of people and communities.

The spirituality of this saint has passed on not only to her spiritual daughters but to the whole world and especially to every woman who would like to model her Christian and spiritual life on the scriptures, thus being an example and witness of Christ by her way of living and speaking and in this way making the face of “Christ Spouse” ever present in the church.

Because of this Saint Angela is the forerunner of a way of consecrated life which the church today recognises as realised in secular institutes, a way of life which Saint Angela foresaw 400 years ago; a family of consecrated ladies leading a normal life in the world, away from convents.

Besides, she also foresaw the acceptance of the participation of lay people in the church.

Saint Angela urges us to study the forms of a new missionary life, she who was able to single out new ways of caring for the faithful and who during her time, made away with stale, repetitive issues in the church administration; and was daring enough to push the church towards an informal

progress, suggested by a far seeing, courageous, Evangelic wisdom.

Her choice showed active participation and initiative even in collaborating with public institutions and urging them to work free of charge. She was not afraid to face the problems in the world.

By acting in this manner, her life as a consecrated lay person, became a testimony to the whole world and even to the present day, she invites us, Christians, to lead such a life so as to be witnesses of hope to our times.

We would like to have imprinted in our hearts her saintly image, greatly influenced by the love of Christ and His redeeming mission, in answering in fervent, humble obedience to her missionary call”.

SAINT ANGELA A PILGRIM MOTHER

When you look back at the 16th century, you will surely not dream of going on long voyages: in fact, at that time, it was very dangerous even to walk along the streets, not only because public transport was not available but because of the dangers one could come across with, like meeting thieves and so on.

So, had I been living during those times, it would have been very logical and advisable to stay indoors and avoid such risks.

As it seems however, logic had very little meaning for Saint Angela because when one reads about her life, she surely did travel far.

Nothing could stop her: she would go wherever the Lord sent her.

Therefore she was not afraid to leave the security of familiar households and move to new unknown places, all she needed to know was that her presence was needed.

What can then be said of the real pilgrims who went to the Holy Land and to the Holy Mount in Varallo?

What a strong quality in such a frail looking woman!

What a challenge it was for that time, when being a woman was already a problem: we have to keep in mind that in the 16th century a man was considered the head of the family and a woman depended in everything on the head of the family she belonged to.

Saint Angela taught us to be women able to “move freely”, her pilgrimage in the world opened new horizons which at that time were unthinkable.

She knew that being “a pilgrim of God” in the world was not simply travelling around, but to be always ready in any circumstance, with luggage in hand, to go where the Lord thought fitting to send you.

Therefore, for us ladies of the 21st century there is no excuse to say no when the Lord asks us to be pilgrims in the world. We have the means to travel, trains, cars, planes at times we only lack the will and the awareness that we can learn and do so much if we move around. Moving around, however, can also mean taking a challenge; so it is not necessary to walk far, at times a telephone call is enough or a visit to a person who lives by himself, perhaps forgetting our needs and putting those of others first makes us pilgrims, like Saint Angela was, for all those she met.

Then let us encourage each other and together let us leave on the pilgrimage for life; Saint Angela will be with us as she promised.

Carla Alberti – Cuneo

THE ANGELS WILL BE WITH US

“The angles, who live an eternal life will be with us according to the way in which we participate in the angelic life.” (Saint Angela, Proemio).

These words of our mother Angela struck me so much a few months ago, dear sisters, that I found myself thinking. What is the meaning of Saint Angela’s message to me? She, who being called Angela, was already protected by them and formed part of their lives....

I know that I am blabbing but even if I stammer, when talking to my sisters, I am confident, that I will glorify the Father and the Son, by the intercession of the Holy Spirit who shows His strength through the “*mouths of children and babes*”. (Psalm 8).

Firstly I ask: Who are the angels? According to the teaching of the church I see them created by the power of the Father, by means of the Son “*through Him all things come into being*” (Jn 1,3”); created as free pure spirits.....

I do not know by whose authority they were divided in nine categories, but I like to think that God does not create disorder, so I am taking the liberty of presenting the nine choirs of Angels (3x3) starting by the “lowest” in rank: Angels, Archangels, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Thrones, Cherubims, Seraphims. At this point I stop and reflect: the Lord created the angels and decided on their number. How many are there?

Knowing that the exact number be known by God alone, the verse from the book of Revelation “*ten thousand times ten thousand of them and thousands upon thousands*” (Rev. 5,11) urges me to allow myself to sink in the infinity of God. I see hosts of angels gathered around the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for us and not for them.

At the same time, while reading the letter to the Hebrews, I become aware of the kind of meeting I attend when I take part in the Holy Eucharist: *“You have come to Mount Zion, and the city of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem where the millions of angels have gathered for the festival.”* (Heb. 12. 22 – 24)

O Holy Eucharist, you always remind me of the Heavenly orders, when the priest invites the congregation saying, *“let us lift our hearts to the Lord”* and we then unite our humble voices to their: *“Holy, Holy, Holy “!* And this is only the beginning of the Divine Spectacle which reaches its height at the congregation which precedes the union of God with us in the Holy Communion.

How does one describe or imagine in simple words how these Holy Spirits behave in our churches/ Allow me dear sisters in Saint Angela to share with you my near, fanciful thoughts, yet they are full of respect and devotion.

When Jesus Christ, our only treasure, in obedience to the words spoken by the priests, is present on the altar, I imagine a host of angels who move closer to the Host in adoration, ready to accomplish the task they were given since eternity, to help the person on every particular day, to receive Christ present in the Host. Since these thoughts have crossed my mind, I ask “the angel who is present at this Holy Communion£ to help me at that particular moment of my life, which is special both to me and the angel.

To have a better idea of the multitude of the Hosts of Angels, I imagine that every angel is given the task only once, so, every day I am accompanied by a different angel who in turn is accompanied by all the angels of my Holy Communion, starting with my First Holy Communion, up to the present day...

My Guardian Angel is certainly by my side, as well as the Mother of His and My Jesus, the Communion of Saints and

the Angels of the souls of the departed who are still on their way towards the beatific vision. Limited as I am, I cannot have everyone present but the angel who accompanied me in today's Holy Communion, makes up for my weaknesses and adores the Lord for me and asks Him to grant my known and unknown wishes.

Our Rule, which Saint Angela started with the words "In the name of the Holy Trinity", foresees the participation of her daughters' lives with that of the angels while still on earth. This participation will not be as weak as my stammering, but strong and manifold as the number of her daughters.

All this is by the grace and glory of the Trinity in one God. Amen!

Teresa Hofle

THIS IS THE TIME FOR US

The Secular Institutes
60 years after the “Provida Mater”

The title of the symposium held on the 3rd and 4th February 2007 in Rome in the hall used by the Bishops for their synods was very stimulating. This symposium was organised by the World Conference for Secular Institutes and I was lucky to attend together with the President and Esther.

The outcome of the symposium was as stimulating as the title and, as far as I am able, I will try to recount the occasion and to help you participate.

We started our work on the 3rd February by a reading from the Gospel and a celebration of the “*Word*” of God followed by the welcoming speech of the President of the World Secular Institutes, Dr. Eva Kusz. She told us that there were 215 persons present from 113 Secular Institutes of 26 different countries and, while introducing us, she reminded us that “*every minute, every hour, every day was a special time for us to give testimony of our way of living to the world*”. She added that the realities of the world around us had changed, but the significance of our vocation had not altered. She also urged us to strengthen our identity and sense of belonging and to be fully aware of the realities of the world around us.

The three main speakers, experts in the matter, were of great help in enabling us to understand the meaning of “**our identity**” better.

Cardinal Georges Cottier, Pro Theologian Emeritus of the Casa Pontificia, discussed the “*Theological Aspects of the Secular Congregation*” with references to the writings of St. John about the meaning of living in the world without belonging to it. He also gave a lot of importance to Pope Paul

VI's various speeches to members of the Secular Institutes, which he described as our precious legacy.

The second speaker was Professor Franco Pizzolato from the Department of Religious Studies of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart. He helped us reflect on our way of life and our existence quoting from the document "*Reflection on the document 'A Diogneto'*".

Sr. Sharon Holland, the officer in charge of the Congregation of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Companies of Apostolic Life, was the third speaker. Her speech dealt with "*Reflections on the Canon Law code*". She reminded us that Canon Law is a summary of the Gospels and, thus, concerns us. She went on to explain the meaning of Secular Institutes starting with the "*Provida Mater*" and ending with the meaning found in the current code.

These three reports, which will soon be published in the periodical, Dialogue of the World Conference for Secular Institutes, merit careful and in-depth scrutiny in order to allow every one of us to strengthen our "*identity*", to help us follow styles of life as well as make our presence felt according to that identity.

Every speech was followed by a debate that brought to light common problems, worries, aspirations and wishes that I am going to describe briefly.

Because of the complexity of the time in which we are living, we tend to look at the world in a "*diffident and negative manner*". As a result, it is not always easy to discern and judge optimistically "*with a rose in hand*"; that is, with that healthy optimism that comes from believing and "*Hoping in the Crucified and Risen Christ*".

Common concerns were the lack of vocations and the fact that many members are not young any more. The President of the World Conference for Secular Institutes urged us to keep on mind that to be "*operative*" in the world for the world has

nothing to do with numbers and age. ”*An Institute made up of five eighty year olds is not less important than an Institute made up of young members*”. It is necessary to learn to be operative members both when young and in old age. One can be “*salt*”, “*light*” and “*yeast*” at any age!

Other questions which arose and which we are called to reflect upon are:

- ❖ How can one lead a lay consecrated life among the “*single*” persons who are increasing in number in every country in the world?
- ❖ What is the meaning of secular consecration with regards to other religious societies who lead our same ways of life?
- ❖ How can we be operative in an experimental manner where the Church is experimental in its relationships with the world today?
- ❖ What is the meaning of being a lay consecrated person when today being a layperson means being anti religious?

The need for a more precise and theologically correct terminology for “*secular consecrated*” and “*lay consecrated*” was highlighted together with the rousing provocative thought of whether the Church is interested in “*our invisible existence*”.

In his speech, Mons. Gianfranco Gardin, Secretary of the Congregation for Consecrated Life, assured us that the Church was very much interested in our way of life. This, because we are “*an unquantifiable source of virtue and holiness placed in a difficult reality, where our total belonging to the Lord and our generous dedication to our brethren can be of a reasonable testimony to others.*” He then encouraged us to be always aware that “*This is time for us*”. A time to live fully and, at the same time, live in a tangible and privileged manner our being consecrated and secular, our consecration and our mission.

It is also however a very favourable time, the Kairos, for us and for our Institutes; a time to become more learned and qualified to live according to our answer to the Lord's Call, trying to change the world from the inside relying on the strength we attain from the Beatitudes.

But the best and most important event was the private **meeting with Pope Benedict XVI** in the Sala Clementina. The Pope greeted us with much warmth and joy, the same kind of warmth we felt when he entered the Hall and which was conveyed in a long applause.

It was the first time that the Pope was addressing the members of the Secular Institutes and his address was full of kindness showing us clearly that *"he was happy to be with us"* as he himself told us at the beginning of his speech.

Allow me to quote parts of the Pope's speech, which was delivered in an intense manner:

"You are here today to carry on in the path that begun 60 years ago and which makes you ardently want to bring Christ to the world. Your ardour comes from having discovered Christ and his unique way of loving, meeting, healing and comforting the world, making it a more cheerful place. This is the beauty which your lives must proclaim, because your way of living in the world is a sign of your being one in Christ, 'The mystery of the Incarnation' has the power to change your participation in the lives of other human beings into something theological. This mystery already clearly marks your way to holiness, your consent in submitting to the plan of salvation revealed in the Scriptures, your solidarity with God's plan for you and in seeking to do the will of God in all that happened to the human race thanks to His providence. At the same time, one can pick out the characteristics which mark the secular mission, that of being testimony of human virtues, that of justice, peace, joy (Rm.14:17) and the 'honourable behaviour' (1Pt. 2:12). This is the behaviour which St. Peter writes about in his first letter

and which echoes the words of the Master, 'Even so let your light shine before men, in order that they may see all your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven (Mt. 5:16). Therefore you are called in situations where there is pain, injustice, in search of truth, beauty and goodness; not because you have a solution for all the problems but because you can be living testimony of God's plan of salvation in all the circumstances in which men live and die. This is your mission 'like the leaven which is buried in 3 measures of flour until all of it is leavened.'(Mt. 13:33)This is your way of life, at times hidden and silent but always pertinent and encouraging, capable of rekindling hope.' Following Christ's example, obey the ways of love; be men and women who are gentle and merciful, capable of travelling through the streets of the world, doing only good deeds. The Beatitudes must be the centre of your way of life, contradicting what seems logical to men and expressing an unconditional faith in God who wants man to be happy. The Church needs you too, to fulfil her mission. May you be the fruitful seeds of holiness sown in the furrows of history.." The Pope then asked the Lord to bless us. It was a beautiful, moving and enriching experience.

Another important event was the "Round Table" presided by Archbishop Stanislaw Ryklo, President of the Pontifical Council of Lay Persons. During this event, members of the Secular Institutes from Asia, Europe, Africa and America shared their experiences in "*Reading of the prophetic answer and of the lay undertaking in the Church in comparison with the challenges of the contemporary world*".

These testimonials showed that it is truly possible, even though it is not easy, to recognise and realise our common identity in different parts of the world in different ways according to the needs and characteristics of the people of different nations and continents.

The symposium ended on the 4th February 2007 with the Eucharistic celebration on the main altar of St. Peter's Basilica presided by Cardinal Cottier. We were sent back to the world assured that truly "*This is time for us*". Before leaving, we three again stopped in front of the statue of our Mother and thanked her for giving life to the Company by putting "*plants of virginity among the thorns of the world*", a necessity in today's world and which was reaffirmed to us during these days.

We entrusted you to Her so that she will be able to help every one of us to be always aware that "*This is time for us*" and for the Company.

Luciella

FROM THE RULE OF SAINT ANGELA MERICI
A few points for reflection...

Prologue 9 – 17

It is necessary that you remain faithful to your call:

“That you may strive with all your might to remain as you are called by God”

After thanking God for the gift of consecration, after considering what is expected of you and recognising what a new and astonishing dignity it is.....Saint Angela says that it is imperative that we remain faithful in our call and in what is asked of us ...

In order to remain faithful to the Lord we must strive with all our might. Our effort must be big as the gift we received and compared to God’s gift our effort will never be enough.

The success of being faithful in our efforts depends on the ways and means that will help us to make progress and reach our goal:

“And to seek and desire all the ways and means necessary to preserve and make progress to the very end”

Responsibility suggests and sustains these ways and means but all the sisters in the Company must make good use of them; personal undertaking is imperative.

Unless I look for and really want these ways and means, they will not be of a help to me; they might help others, but I will not be involved so I will move along on my own without the Company.

In order to look and long for these ways we must keep renewing our promise and our faith, always keeping in mind the quality of our choice.

I seek, I desire, I strive, I know it is worth the effort. One must be very humble in wanting and seeking these ways and means, in reality it means believing firmly in things that seem of little importance, one has to persevere, to strive, to become adequately better... one must be obedient but with serenity and responsibility. When one easily does away with lesser things, one has to be on guard, because if one gets into the habit of easily doing away with little things, it will be even more difficult to strive in things of more importance.

If I will not manage to strive and give value to little things ...it will be very difficult to be continually innovative with serenity.

The ways and the means therefore are necessary ... one cannot do without them. They are important because they lead to

1. **perseverance**, in our rough and tough undertaking among stones and thorns ... knowing however that at the end of the way this will shine like *pure gold*.
2. **progress**, in becoming better, more mature and alike, to be of one accord with the "Son of God."

For Saint Angela to strive to the very end was not enough, she wanted her daughters to progress with love, ...not to stop but to persevere and make progress to the very end.

Salvation is also a means of perseverance:

"It is not enough to begin, if one does not also persevere. That is why Truth says: "Qui perseveraverit usque in fine, hic salvus erit": the one who has persevered to the end, that one will be saved.

And again: "Beati qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt illud" that is, blessed are those into whoses hearts God has breathed the light of truth and to whom He has given the will to yearn ardently for their

heavenly home; and who seek to preserve within themselves the voice of truth and holy desire”.

“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your Master”. (Mt. 25,21)

It is easy for all of us to begin... both in material and in spiritual undertakings but few persevere every day, for many days and many years.

It is impossible to reach the end to the extent of enjoying the enthusiasm we had in the past and stop at the present; we are asked every day to revive and to strive on as though it was the first day and the last.

God calls, admonishes, educates, leads... He gives us freedom in our will and desire to proceed towards the Celestial Jerusalem. But then we are asked something in return, that of trusting fully in God’s will and His lovable plans for us.

We want to follow God and the way that leads to Him;

“Undoubtedly only that person will be able to remain faithful who is also willing to embrace the ways and means necessary to this end, for there is little or no difference between the saying outright: I will no longer serve God and the not wanting the ways and rules necessary to be able to remain in His service”.

The way of consecrated life is not made up of abstract ideals that are unreachable; it is not made up of good intentions and just words... that cannot bear roots in our daily life, in our faith and perseverance.

Saint Angela is explicit: there is no difference in refusing to serve God and not wanting the ways and means necessary to be able to remain in His service.

So it is important to reflect on the ways and means indicated by the Rule and we will be able to remain faithful to the end.

We must be vigilant!

“And all the more, my sisters, must be vigilant as our undertaking is of such importance that could not be greater.”

“In being vigilant means caring... The Bridegroom comes at midnight; faith is the light which must never be put out”. (Catechism 2849 – 2730)

“I slept but my heart was awake. Hark! My beloved is knocking. Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.” (The Song of Songs 5:2)

Being diligent and vigilant are closely connected. Here Saint Angela binds herself to us using “we” instead of “you”, as if to show us that she is walking with us all the way until we reach the Bridegroom.

Being vigilant is again connected to the greatness and dignity of all our call and how important it is to progress to the very end. There is nothing greater or more important ..so **above all else** we must be vigilant.

It is a matter of life and salvation:

“For our life and salvation are at stake”.

If it were a matter of little importance, or that which concerns others,... we could take things easy. But no: this is a matter of **our** life and **our** salvation. Here we cannot delegate to others we must involve ourselves personally. We have to welcome, live and offer ourselves to this precious gift of consecrated life. It is similar to the gift of life and salvation and equal to faith.

What we are called to:

“We are called to so glorious a life as to be spouses of the Son of God and to become queens in heaven”.

Here Saint Angela goes back to the gift or our call and shows us our ultimate aim.

If we were asked to use the means, to run along the ways, to be vigilant, we were also clearly shown the meaning of our call and our ultimate aim to be spouses of the Son of God. From now on it is going to be an extraordinary life and new and astonishing dignity!

To become *queens in heaven*.. because this is the way the Bridegroom “crowns” his faithful persevering spouses.. and the wedding banquet will never end...

Kate

FROM THE COMPANIES AND THE GROUPS

In Bangladesh from the 8th - 17th January 2007

For the third time in Bangladesh. Why all this movement, what is the reason that justifies travelling to such far places?

It was not an organised tour, or aimed at places of interest which tourists look for.. yet something of importance awaited us. Somebody is leading the way for us, guiding us where to go, where to stay and when to return.

This “Somebody” has a facial expression, a face, the face of three girls in Bangladesh; Magdalene, Nilu, Mery Jhunu, daughters of Saint Angela, the small group of the Company in that land which is far away only to us (depending on our position on the globe), the face least seen, but certainly full of Saint Angela and with the Common Lover, is leading the way in Bangladesh.

The face of Father Arturo Speziale has taken to Bangladesh the charism and spirituality of Saint Angela Merici, the group turns to Father Francesco Rapacioli, who is the superior of PIME in that territory, for advice. This small group of new mericians is followed sympathetically by the Bishop, other missionaries and other members of lay secular institutes.

On my other two journeys to Bangladesh I was accompanied by Luciella who was commissioned by the Council of the Federation to see to the formation guide of this small group.

This time I was in the company of the Directress, for whom it was the first time to experience the life of the Company outside Europe.

It was a smooth journey, we were greeted with joy and affection and we were given garlands of flowers, an expression of the happiness which could also be seen on their radiant faces.

We were mostly concerned with the formation of the group during our week's stay, we were accompanied by our accomplished translators; Father Francis and Father Arthur. Our hands were full and our time short, we had prayers, visits on work sites and in homes, meetings, personal interviews and workshops.

On Sunday 14th January on the 2nd anniversary of their first consecration, Magdalene, Nilu, Mery Jhunu, renewed their consecration vows in front of the Directress in an Eucharistic Concelebration presided by the Bishop, with Father Arthur and Father Francis. A small group of friends was also present in the little church belonging to the members of the house with whom we were staying.

It was a very simple function but no detail was missed; flowers, incense, candles and saris, a moving and special wedding feast in a true Bengal fashion. The affirmation of our sisters with such conviction and responsibility filled us with joy and has filled us with hopes in material things yet yearns so much for new hope.

With them we too renewed our unconditional confirmation to our Lover.. for whom life is worth living, we said our experiences at the risk of being misunderstood, and we renewed our vocational vows with a feeling of extraordinary novelty.

We asked Saint Angela to guide all our ways, very often full of thorns and stones but for us they blossomed and glistened with shining gold.

We are grateful to all those who work hard for vocational lives and who pray for them. We wish our sisters in Bangladesh the sisterly love of the Company in the world.

Kate

The Merician Year in Eritrea

We are happily enjoying the Jubilee Year of the Bicentenary Anniversary of the Canonization of Angela Merici. During the nine days preceding the feast of St. Angela 2007, we have prayed together with the members of our group “Sant’Angela Amiche”. Our “amiche” are witnesses of the graces they have received by the intercession of St. Angela.

On the 27th January, together with our “Amiche di Sant’Angela”, we were invited to the Eucharistic Celebration and afterwards for lunch by the Ursuline nuns of Asmara “Ursoline di Gandano”. We spent a joyful day sharing with them not only our happiness but the graces we received being daughters of one mother, Saint Angela.

We were honoured by the presence of His Excellency Bishop Mengheseab, for the Eucharistic Celebration in the cathedral of the diocese of Asmara on the 11th February 2007 for the postponed feast day of Saint Angela (because the bishop could not attend earlier). In preparation for this Eucharistic Celebration the Bishop advised us to invite all the faithful to pray together. Therefore Sister Amleset Haggi, the Mother Superior of the Ursuline Sisters, and I organised a programme of prayers for the three days before the Mass and invited all the parishioners of the Asmara parishes together with all the religious institutes and their students.

The programme for the 8th, 9th and 10th February, from 17.30 to 19.30 which was organised by the Company, the Ursuline Sisters and the “Amiche di Sant’Angela”, consisted of prayers, reading from the writings of Saint Angela and hymns. The themes covered : the life of Saint Angela, the spirituality and the aim of the foundation of the Company and the actual message of Merician spirituality.

During the homily the Bishop thanked God for these new gifts and explained that these secular institutes are special

gifts for the church today. He added “recognise these gifts and encourage them, because these institutions are a new way of life; and in giving life they become “the light and the yeast” for the community and for the families who live in societies, often confused by fast renovations and politics”.

At last we have received a good sign for the recognition of the Company, a baby girl was brought to be baptised during the same mass and at the parents’ request, the bishop baptised her and named her Angela. We were all very happy and the parents promised to visit us with their baby.

Minnia Ammar

**Guastalla... The Quintessential Secular Ursuline Has
Joined the Company of Heaven
- a memorial from her pastor -**

GILDA ORLANDINI

*“Those who hope in You, O Lord,
will not be put to shame.”
(Psalm 24/25)*

At dawn on Sunday, June 18, 2006, the feast of Corpus Christi, GILDA ORLANDINI, 88 years old, passed from this earthly life to the eternal life in which she had always believed.

She died so serenely, as if with a smile on her lips, conscious to the last moment; as if she were looking upon the doorway to Paradise, aware of the nearness of her Spouse, Christ the Lord; as if she had called with great simplicity to him, to Holy Mary whom she had invoked every day in reciting the holy rosary, and to Saint Angela Merici. (For more than fifty years she had been part of the “Company” which received its name from this saint.)

During her earthly life she spent herself, always and only for others: for her family, her parish, the priests to whom she rendered multiple services with such generosity and complete unselfishness. Daily Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, the pious practice of prayers for the dead, created the rhythm of her work-filled days. She lived with me in sisterly collaboration, humble and precious, for thirty years. She asked me to let her close her earthly life in the parish house and, after her death, to remain as long as possible in “her church.” The Lord heard her prayer. And on the day of her funeral, “her church” was packed; six priests celebrated with me.

Don Bruno Sessi, Pastor of Codisotto-

Mons. Salvatore Gozzo who started the Company in Syracuse

Mons. Salvatore Gozzo, an exceptional personality, who was nearly a hundred years old, passed away on the feast of Saint Angela Merici. He dedicated all his life to the spirituality of this Saint.

This is how the directress of the company remembers him and prays for him:

Mons. Salvatore has ended his earthly journey.

Lord Jesus Christ we thank you for the long life you have given to our venerated Monsignor.

Many of us members of the Company of St. Angela Merici, were familiar with Mons. Gozzo who started the Company in the diocese and in others close by and for 57 years always helped and cared for the Company. A gentle person who by being always available and by his good advice, accompanied us through the difficult times of our spiritual development and encouraged us to live our vocation. A discrete person, but when he passed away, we could not help but feel how important he was to us. We cannot help but thank You for this. Actions, very often are more important than words and Mons. Gozzo did not have to explain to us the meaning of “faithful servants”, he set the example. He served in each and every way.

He helped us to understand that to be of service to others means to smile, to work, to be gentle, to welcome someone, to speak to someone and very often, being of service, means being silent and most of all, to be of service means prayer.

If Monsignor were to speak at this moment, he would tell us that he did nothing, it was all the good work of the Lord. And it is true. By looking at his transparent face, we could see

You, Lord! He allowed You, Lord, to use him and through him, the breath of Your Spirit, has passed on to us.

And You Lord, have made him so happy that he would tell us that happiness is only found in real love. Now he has met You during this new feast and he will certainly find a way of serving You and us.

It is for this reason that while thanking You for this dear person, we beg You to allow his death on the feast day of Saint Angela to be of service to us in helping us reflect and understand what You ask of us as did Monsignor Gozzo.

We did not manage to express our deep sentiments of gratitude to Monsignor. Please Lord, do it for us. Thank You.

Santina Gozzo

Marie-Angèle Crequer of the French Company

Marie-Angèle Crequer of the French Company, who was born on the 1st May, 1920, passed away, on the 4th February 2007, at the age of 87, to meet Our Saviour Jesus Christ in whom she had put all her trust and hope.

Marie-Angèle loved Saint Angela very much, she was familiar with her writings and based her life on them. She had joined the Company of Saint Ursola in Desenzano in 1968. Later, she joined the French Company, the moment the small Company of Lyons joined the Federation. Many of the Daughters of Saint Angela, in many countries in the world knew her and she was very happy to form part of this big family.

Marie-Angèle immediately started to learn Italian and the sisters of the French Company made use of this, her joyful collaboration with “Responsibility”. For many years, she sent her hand written translations and later as soon as she could, she sent her translations via e mail.

Marie-Angèle’s faith was as strong as the rock of Bretagne. Her love for the Lord Jesus Christ was obvious in the happiness she felt in consecrating her life to Him.

She was fond of making everyone welcome at her house by the Ocean and enjoyed visiting the region so dear to her. She was open to the call of the Holy Spirit and followed the advice given by Saint Angela, as can be seen from the interest she took in spreading the “Company” to Africa (In Cameroon and in the Democratic Republic of Congo).

She accompanied Jeanne and Father Joneau twice in Cameroon: in 2003 and in 2004, then, 83 years old and was ready to return... She also wished to go to Congo.

She had been feeling very tired for about a year and could not regain her strength. While suffering towards the end of her life, she told Jeanne “I am praying”. Praying, had

become part of her and she gave witness of this in praying while dying. This testimony can be found in the article she had prepared for the conference, in which she clearly explained the meaning of prayer in her life.

“The Company of Saint Angela, binds me to be a sign of God’s love, by my way of living, by my faith and my hope – to be bound to others in endless love”, in being in perfect harmony with my companies and in brotherly love with all, and “to allow God to lead me”. In brief, I say to myself, that it is not I who spread the word but Christ who uses me to evangelise. Therefore, I am first of all and above all, a “woman of prayer”, who allows the Holy Spirit to work in me and through me.

I am pleased when I am told “I am an example with the life I lead” or “with what they receive from me”. Certainly, this has nothing to do with me but it is the Lord working through me. Only to Him do I attribute the glory!”

On the 7th February, Father Victor Jouneau celebrated the Mass of the final offering “to God” in the little church of Locmariaquer, her parish. All the sisters of the French Company, who could make it were present and showered her with affection, according to her wishes, they sang the Magnificat at the end of the celebration.

The sisters of the African Company shared in our sorrow. At the same time that we were celebrating mass in Locmariaquer, a mass for the repose of her soul, was celebrated in the Democratic Republic of Congo, by Abbot Ignace. In Mbujimayi Father Célestin, said a mass of thanksgiving, for all the members during which he thanked God for her who had loved Africa with all her heart.

The French Company would like to thank all those who were present for the funeral mass, who sent messages of condolences and who have joined us in the prayers of thanksgiving.

Michelle Langois

*Feast of Saint Angela Merici 2007 in Cameron and in Congo
(Democratic Republic)*

YAOUNDE' (Cameron)

On the 18th January we started the novena of Saint Angela in the lesser Basilica dedicated to Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles. Tarcille sang a hymn to the Holy Spirit, praying for all the daughters of Saint Angela, in the world. Afterwards she asked us to pray fervently and at length, and asked us also to pray in the following days in the different parishes.

On the 27th January, at 8.00 a.m. the 9 of us were gathered in the Chapel of The Last Supper, where we read parts from the writings of Saint Angela and sang after each reading: "Marchez dans la lumière et soyez dans la joie". This was followed by the celebration of the Mass. In his homily Father Ketteler, our Assistant, encouraged us to live according to the advice given by our foundress in her writings. The celebration came to an end with a twenty minute adoration.

The second part of the day was spent in sisterly companionship in Marie Joséphine's house. At 3.00 p.m., Abbot Ignac and a Salesian priest, our friend and parish priest of a nearby parish, celebrated another mass. Abbot Ignac's sermon helped us understand better the life of the lay consecrated persons. His sermon was that of a very learned person. Each of us present was presented with three booklets for the other meetings.

The ceremony came to an end with the sung prayer of the Magnificat, in thanks to the Lord Almighty, for the wonderful gifts our heavenly mother Saint Angela has given us as she had promised during her life.

Nathalie Thérèse Essouma.

MBUJIJAYI (Congo Democratic Republic)

On the 7th January we prepared for the celebration of the feast of Saint Angela which took place in my house. There were 5 of us and 3 “associates”. Our Assistant, Father Célestin, celebrated mass at 11.00 a.m. In his sermon he spoke to us about faith, bringing us to mind, examples from the bible. Then, while basing his words on the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans (Rm.8) he urged us to ask the Lord to increase our faith in Him, who is our strength. After lunch we ended the day at 3.00 p.m.

Mélanie Tshiyamba

Canicatti' writes about the life of the foundress and celebrates her feast

An easy pamphlet for quick reading A recollection of the story of the Company in Canicatti'.

The author, Mons. Vincenzo Restivo, who has been Assistant and Spiritual Director of the Company for over 40 years, writes vividly and with involvement, for the first time ever about the 100 year history of the Ursuline's in Canicatti', dusting as much as possible "*that golden dust*" (his own words) which is silence and which very often covers merits and clarity.

Our memories of the feast allow us to bring to mind and protect our history as did Father Massimo Naro, in the "introduction". We have to preserve it for the future so that others urged by the example are pushed to do "*remarkable things*", to work trustingly and persevere in its traces, all for the Glory of God, *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*.

We are reporting, what a group of girls, who were invited by the Company to celebrate the feast of the bicentenary of Saint Angela Merici, in Canicatti' had to say.

We were glad to have been invited and to have taken part with joy in our hearts, in the feast of Saint ANGELA Merici, organised by the Ursulines of Canicatti on the 25th, 26th, 27th January 2007.

To write our impressions of this celebration is gratifying in itself. These three days have been moments of grace and deep meditation for all those present., Everyday, has left a sign, everyday we felt cradled in the Lord's Hands, everyday the Lord wanted us united to Him, everyday He spoke to us and in a very loving manner, He patiently expected us to listen.

We all felt we formed part of the living church made up of lay and consecrated Daughters of Christ.

The day that both the “Ursulines” and all present were longing for, was a day where we all shared our charisms and this reached its height in the Eucharistic celebration of the 27th January, “the liturgical feast of Saint Angela Merici”.

At 5.00 p.m. we had the concelebrated mass with the rector of the seminary Father G. Argento and some seminarians, the spiritual directors who have been following the members of the Company in Canicatti’, Monignor V. Restivo, Father L. Giordano di Campobello and the Parish Priest of Ravanusa Father E. Casola, Father C. Ferranti of Agrigento, Father V.Sena, a Salesian and Vice Parish Priest of the Cathedral of Canicatti’ were also present.

The church dedicated to “Our Lady of the Dying” was full of priests, faithful, but most of all of Ursulines who came from Lampedusa, Agrigento, Ravanusa, Campo Bello di Licata, who, together with the sisters of Canicatti’ were thanking the Lord, for Saint Angela, Mother and Sister of many daughters, who, through their work, their friendly presence and prayer continued to be witnesses of faith in the gospel.

Saint Angela was remembered in a special way this year in Canicatti’: the publication of the book “Historic News about the Company of Saint Ursula” by Mons. V. Restivo. The author, above all, is a living witness of an unconditional love, towards his many daughters.

The present Directress, Antonietta Rizzo and her sisters felt honoured to receive this book as a gift, a book dedicated to the Company in Sicily who, for about a 100 years has been resisting and challenging unexpected changes of all natures. The “booklet” is a historical remembrance of the many consecrated ladies who have believed in and lived the Merician Spirituality.

- the young guests -

Those who would like to receive the story of the Company of Saint Ursula in Canicatti' can apply directly to the Company.

The Merician family in Catania grows bigger

The Merician family grows bigger, the Group of the Associated Faithful to the Company of Saint Ursula “Daughters of Saint Angela Merici” was born in the Diocese of Catania.

This year again the feast of Saint Angela Merici was solemnly celebrated in the Institute of Catania. The Eucharistic celebration was presided by the Archbishop, His Excellency Rev. Mons. Salvatore Gristina.

During the sermon, His Excellency the Archbishop urged the Ursulines, not only to live following the example of Saint Angela, a model of “farsighted and courageous love”, but to allow themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit to promote a renovated evangelic spirit in the church.

The Ursulines, who are consecrated lay people in the world, must be witnesses with joy, by the life they lead, of the “Common Lover”, proclaiming the Risen Christ, the hope of the world.

During the Eucharistic Celebration, the Directress Sig.na Anna Zappala, happily welcomed the first group of “Associated Faithful” members after three years of training.

They have pledged to sustain their spiritual life with the word of God, and of the church and by prayer: to take an active part in the celebration of the mass on feast days and if possible daily, to be familiar with the writings of Saint Angela in order to lead better spiritual lives: to work together with the Company, to bring the renovated strength of the Gospel to the family and wherever God asks them to be.

This year during which we are celebrating the bicentenary of the canonization of Saint Angela Merici, was blessed by the gift of the Associated Faithful. This is a new wealth for the Church, that of the presence of the qualified lay people, who pledge themselves to edify the reign of God.

His Excellency, the Archbishop, requested a member of the Associated Faithful to form part of the Diocesan Council of Lay People.

Father Alessandro Ronsisvalle

A Reflection from Casale: The fusion ... and strength of unity

Every consecrated woman is special in the Secular Institute of the Company of St. Ursola, she is an unique person because of her background, her upbringing and her surroundings.

Everyone has potentialities to develop that do not depend on her age or state of health, and which can become a world of wealth to be shared with her brothers and sisters.

In the same way the diocesan Company, when intermerged with interdiocesan Companies can be very beneficial to the Company that welcomes them both by their evidence and by talking about their background and how they managed to become part of the ecclesiastical and civil environment.

All of this is not to repeat today what happened yesterday but to make one aware that she is backed by so many sisters who are ready evermore to help her.

One cannot give in, but must trust in the future and pray and offer everything to “*OUR LOVER*” so that none is lost.

Today in many cases the sisters live far away from one another, and for some it may be even impossible to reach the head office of the Company. It is very true to say that there are many ways of communication but at times it is impossible to make use of them; but if there is a sister nearby she can meet her regularly, according to the wishes of the Foundress: *be warm and sincere, be of one accord and of the same will and Jesus Christ will be in your midst and like a good Teacher He will teach you what you should do.*

You can communicate to the Directress of the Interdiocesan Company the decisions you intend to take as a result of the joint effort of the group.

Let us keep in mind that the Lord usually works through humble, poor people to do great things, otherwise what kind of God is He?

The future of the Company is in the hands of the Lord, or better in His HEART. Who knows how many surprises He has in store for us! He asks for our humble collaboration. Let us courageously dare.

“two sisters together”

A prayer for spiritual healing.

A week after Santina Gozzo, directress of the Company in Syracuse passed away “from this life to another” we received this prayer, she left us to contemplate fully our *COMMON LOVER* on the 27th February.

We receive this prayer as the spiritual testament of a very wise person who was always ready with the lit lamp in her hand we pray for her to the Lord and for the Company who was so saddened by her sudden death.

To ask for a good spiritual healing

*Lord we all are so needy of pardon,
because we are so distant from the will
of Mother Angela and Our Common LOVER
May You bring a revival in our life,
so that we may even be a new light even to others.
We long to be better
in our way of thinking and acting.
We are well disposed to follow You with joy,
teach us the way of truth and life.
We are all in need of some kind of “transplant”,
but perhaps we struggle to submit
to this Divine cure.
Perhaps we need a radical change in our life!
Only You Lord can perform this miracle...
patiently we have to start the cure
of total submission to Your will.
On our own we can achieve very little,
we have to hold hands, bind ourselves together,
not only to each other but in the Company, ...
in the way we can obtain a better result.*

*We live the same ideal and want to reach one goal.
and together we can breath healthy air,
and obtain a healthy spiritual recovery.
For this we ask You, Lord hear us.*

Santina Gozzo

INCOMING MAIL...

We have received so many contributions for our ***IN THE SAME CHARISM...with Responsibility*** and we are heartily grateful!

We are waiting for other contributions for the next issue, with a recommendation for all: **brief articles and short sentences...** to facilitate the tasks of those who translate, who put it all together, who print and also those who read.... And then we ask your patience if you do not immediately see your article printed or if you find it a little different from how you mailed it... the editing process requires a little liberty for revision. Thank you for your understanding and for your help.

Meanwhile, we share some impressions from the letters following collection #1 and others that we have received by telephone or in person. We thank all for your encouragement and for this way of communicating, which makes us feel always more united.

❖ **From Rev. Father Antonio Bartolotta – Parish of Maria SS. Del Carmine – Porto Empedocle**

I have received your In the Same Charism, which I read and appreciated throughout. Reading it made me relive the years at the beginning of my priesthood in Canicatti, where the Institute of the Ursulines was flourishing.... I owe my vocation to an Ursuline catechist, a woman with a great faith, which shone through all her attitudes.... This holy woman kept track of my steps and my seminary formation, and always, until her Spouse took her into his house.

Thank you, because with In the Same Charism you have recalled to memory the spirituality of Saint Angela Merici.

The Bishop of Como writes



Diego Coletti
Vescovo di Como

I received the news bulletin of the Institute of the Company of St. Ursula with great pleasure.

I wish you all a joyful ending of the celebrations to commemorate the bicentenary of the canonisation of At. Angela. May every member of the Institute, quickly become holier in Jesus Christ. Best regards.

+ Diego Coletti

❖ **From Sister Daniela and the Sisters of the Monastery of the Poor Clares of Lagrimone**

... We rejoice that you have brought to life to a paper of connectivity, something that seems valuable for “remaining all together in unity and concord.”

We have read with interest, page after page, the quotations from the Rule, the chronicle of treasured days celebrated in Brescia, the theatrical performance on a theme that is certainly most dear to you, the necrology of your holy sisters, the news from the Companies of Italy and of the missions. Particularly surprisingly was the scope of your charism in Burundi and the words of admiration from the bishop there. Also the rosary meditation in the light of the Word and of the Rule seemed very beautiful to us.

Through all of this and what will follow, with God’s help, we wish to lift up with you a word of praise and blessing to the Lord, for the wonders that continually work in us and around us.

❖ **From the Directress and the Company of Torino:**

The package has arrived, with the Federation’s brochure. How beautiful! How beautiful! How much sisterly

labor... how much love...thanks...to all.... May Saint Angela bless and repay you with copious graces. This tool can certainly be a means of union, of sisterly love, a sign of life and trust and of hope in the certainty that our dear Mother Saint Angela is alive and always accompanies us!

... The new bulletin continues the tradition of its predecessor (Responsibilit ), to which Elisa Tarolli dedicated her skill and her hard work and, at the same time, it expresses the newness that our Institute lives today on its pathway through the world.

The title, printed in the colors of the rainbow, has a powerful significance...

We affirm the logo, or to be precise an image that expresses the essence of our reality. The logo first of all can recall the precious pearl of the Gospel by its iridescent colors and radiant luminosity. But paying close attention, we quickly find the key words: "UNITED IN THE SAME CHARISM." Where? In the Company of Sant Ursula.

Truly beautiful, luminous, smiling on our new bulletin, the fruit of collaboration, sign of confidence. We thank those who, with such great love, have prepared it for us.

❖ **From Rosa Ferrari of the Company of Reggio Emilia, guest in the "House of Charity" of R.E. via San Girolamo:**

"...infinite thanks that you have invited me into the same charism with Responsibilit , which I have received with such aware joy."

❖ **From Anna Maria Sala of the Company of Milan, who lives in the Rest Home of St. Camillo in Besana:**

"...infinite thanks for the journal. My directress came to visit me and was very happy to see the journal which had arrive the day before. I am closely united with the sisters of

Molteno...who always keep in contact with me. United in prayer.”

❖ **From Thérèse Bolduc and the Company of Canada:**

What joy to receive IN THE SAME CHARISM...with Responsibility, and all written in French. Thank you, thank you, thank you. And many thanks too for the Acts of the Federation’s ordinary Assembly.

Through these very valuable documents, we are united with the Federation and with the other members of the Secular Institute of Saint Angela, and we are very grateful.

❖ **From the Company of France:**

“Infinite thanks for the Acts and for IN THE SAME CHARISM in French for all the sisters.

❖ **From Mother Colette Mignon, OSU, Prioress General:**

... I have read with great pleasure the first number of IN THE SAME CHARISM... with responsibility. Thank you for having sent this beautiful edition in French, my language. Turning the pages, I realized with gratitude to the Lord how much we are united in the same spirit of Saint Angela. I found the commentary on the Rule and the comparison between the Song of Songs and the words of Saint Angela most beautiful; I read with great interest the news about the celebration at Brescia and the news from different parts of the world. I wish you good success with this review, the bearer of so much powerful outreach and trust...

❖ **From Malta, from Indonesia... and from other parts of the world...** satisfaction about making the connection

understandable in their languages: Italian, French,
English....

REPORTS

- We have received the French publication *Angèle Mérici: Une Saint d'hier pour aujourd'hui*, Volume 2, by **Jacqueline Morin of the Company of Canada**.

With joy we include the words of presentation from the author herself, our dearest Jacqueline:

“The year 1985 was an important date for the Merician family. In fact, it marked the 450th anniversary of the foundation of the Ursulines by Saint Angela Merici.

“Everywhere in the world, the Companies and the Congregations were vying with each other to celebrate this anniversary with splendor. The Company of Saint Ursula of Canada, recently founded, did not have the means, nor the personnel, to imitate such displays. What should be done, then?

“One of our members, returning from Germany, told us about an Association of Friends of Saint Ursula in Cologne. Why not launch an Association of Friends of Saint Angela on this model? No sooner said than done. Since 1985, this Association has been in existence with us and brings together a large number of fervent admirers of our foundress.

*“In 1996, the thrice-yearly bulletins published over the course of ten years were gathered into a little book under the title *Angèle Mérici: Une Saint d'hier pour aujourd'hui* (Angela Merici: A Saint of yesterday for today), which has met with great success. After ten more years, this little book has grown by a second volume including the years 1996 to 2006. And this is the book that we have the joy of presenting to you today.”*

Those who wish to get it can contact the author directly:
Jacqueline Morin / Compagnie de Ste-Ursule du Canada / 340,
Chemin Ste Foy, app. 209 / Québec (Québec) Canada G1S 2J3

➤ We have also received news of two new books about Saint Angela Merici:

- 1) ***Angela's Story* by Mary-Cabrini Durkin**, soon to be available in Italian, French and Spanish, as well as in the original English, if there is hope for sufficient orders. If you are interested in these languages, please contact the author: e-mail: ursulines@fuse.net; fax: 513-961-0667.

This small and inexpensive book is in the form of a lively conversation between Saint Angela and a person of today, in which our foundress tells the story of her life and times.

- 2) ***Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart: The Rule, the Way* by Mary-Cabrini Durkin**.

This book opens up a recently rediscovered sixteenth-century manuscript.

Angela Merici (1474-1540) created for women an alternative way of life that has endured to this day. Her Rule of the Company of St. Ursula grew from her experience as a lay woman living her consecration to God in the ordinary settings of work, family and society.

Mary-Cabrini Durkin places the Rule in the context of women's history and reveals its deep penetration of the human heart.

Those who wish to get it can contact the author directly: Mary-Cabrini Durkin / 2538 Woodburn Avenue / Cincinnati, OH 45206 / USA; e-mail: ursulines@fuse.net; fax: 513-961-0667.