

**IN THE SAME CHARISM...**

**with responsibility**



**n. 3 - 2018**

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

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**COMPANY OF SAINT URSULA**  
*Secular Institute of Saint Angela Merici*



*Jesus Christ  
Our only  
Treasure!*

*Called  
by grace...*

# Assembly of the Federation

## Acts

**Roma 7-11 luglio 2018**

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## TO THE READERS

### *Christian animation of the secular city...*

*the neighborhoods feel comforted, the city is ennobled.*

Among the many gifts of the Assembly of the Federation that we celebrated in July, we received some thoughts and a blessing from the Holy Father, delivered by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State (from a text sent in advance).

In presenting the Acts of this Assembly, I linger over these thoughts and blessing, particularly dear to us and for which we are very grateful.

The Holy Father's message speaks of a *“particular commitment to Christian animation of the secular city”* meaning that all have this commitment, which becomes particular for each one. For us it becomes particular within our charism, our vocational calling.

### *Christian animation of the secular city... how?*

We find the answer in the Holy Father's message itself.

We will know how to offer Christian animation to the secular city if we return to *“Saint Angela Merici's teachings, which constitute a renewed occasion of fidelity to Christ”* (Pope's message to the Assembly). The Assembly's motto was Saint Angela's own guideline: *Let them have Jesus Christ as their only Treasure...* Then let us, all together and each one, return with a renewed sense of responsible commitment, to Saint Angela Merici's teachings, to her charism, to her wishes: *“Now to the task, with courage! Therefore let us all embrace this holy Rule that God through his grace has offered to us”* (Rule, Prologue, 29).

### *Christian animation of the secular city... with what style?*

With the style of a *“joyful witness of the universal call to holiness”* (Pope's message to the Assembly). With Saint Angela, *“be happy, rejoice over this new and wondrous dignity.”*

### *Christian animation of the secular city... to...?*

*“To contribute with the renewing power of the Gospel to changing the world from within”* (Pope's message to the Assembly).

We will change the world from within if we are committed “*to being witnesses of charity, faith and hope in the heart of the world*” (Constitutions 4.2). Since “*We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves*” (Rejoice and Be Glad 14).

We make a spontaneous connection between this invitation from Pope Francis to us and the words of Cozzano's *Dedication to the Readers*, which present a precise style of animation of the secular city.

*To bring the joy of holiness to the secular city...*

Saint Angela's daughters “*do not disturb or inconvenience any creature, their fathers and mothers are not afflicted by separation from their daughters, they are sure of their chastity, they take joy in their holiness, they are encouraged by their good example.*”

*Consoling the neighborhoods, ennobling the city*

Saint Angela's daughters “*are not worried about dowry or other similar things, they do not build monasteries; the neighborhoods feel consoled, the city is ennobled. They are quick to do good to all, they respect every wish and every creature, as long as it is not contrary to the honor of God.*”

*Shining the light of divine love*

Saint Angela's daughters “*take pleasure in everything reasonable and scorn everything dishonest, and they are not unwilling to offer their lives for the common good. They have no intention of renovating anything, intending only to renew themselves and others with their example, with encouragement about values and morality. The Holy Spirit works in their hearts. They desire everything good, they are strong and happy, and blazing with divine love*” (cf. Cozzano, *Dedication to the Readers*).

This is how we begin the Federation's new six-year term, taking up again with engagement and responsibility these Acts of the Assembly, committing ourselves right away to *animate and give light to the secular city* in our lanes, on our roads, in our neighborhoods, in our countryside and our metropolises, on the five continents of our planet.

**Do good work and have a good six years!**

Caterina Dalmasso

## THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION WRITES

*Dear sisters,*

*“May the eternal benediction be on you all,  
granted by Almighty God in the name of  
the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”*

*(Prologue to the Testament)*



It is Saint Angela who gives us this blessing. It is Saint Angela who is here with us and tells us that God, faithful to his promises, merciful in his deeds, always grants us his blessing.

God has thought about us from all eternity, has woven us into a motherly embrace, has shaped us and given us life. Forever we have belonged to him. From eternity. This benevolence, this attention, this patience, have stirred up in each of us the desire to know him, to listen to him, to love him, to be with him and talk with him. This is how the seed of our vocation came to life, the yearning to meet and the desire to respond to such great benevolence.

With her motherly words and with her witness of prayerful listening to the Word and of trust in the Holy Spirit, “*who teaches us all truth.*” Saint Angela has pointed out for us the road to fulfilling the dream that God the Creator and Father has dreamed for each one of us: *to be true and chaste spouses of the Most High... to be women who are always happy and full of faith and hope and charity... to be mothers, sisters, and daughters united together in the name of the blessed and indivisible Trinity.*

Women who give consolation and peace. Women of communion. Women free to love God and neighbor unconditionally.

*“Saint Angela Merici, docile to the Spirit, welcomed the mystery of Christ, sent by the Father into the world.... She lived this mystery in*

*the common and ordinary conditions of human existence, united in a spousal stance to the Son of God, her “Lover”* (Constitutions 2.1).

This plan for life is ***“a marvelous form of life that the Savior lived and with him the Madonna, the apostles, the virgins and so many Christians of the primitive Church”*** (Constitutions 2.2).

*“We, her daughters, welcome the charism which the Holy Spirit continually renews in fidelity to its origins and the expectations of the Church”* (Constitutions 2.3).

The ordinary Assembly of the Federation (which represents the entire Secular Institute of Saint Angela Merici in the world) reunited, prayed, listened to one another. It reflected on its identity and on its mandate in the Church and in the world today.

It specified needs and desires for renewal, discerned, and drafted proposals for increased and renewed fidelity in our vocation.

The proposals - regarding our identity, vocation, formation, our worldwide nature, the Companies/Groups and the Federation itself - emerged from the work of small groups. These will be the subject of work, commitment, and prayer for the new Council of the Federation, so that it may be transformed into good bread for the growth of each and all.

But this work and this hope are good for nothing if not accompanied, heard, and taken up by you for yourself and by each sister for herself, and by each Company or Group that you belong to.

We must take care of our vocation.

Let us preserve and bear witness to the ever ***new and stupendous dignity*** that the Lord has revealed to us and given us through Saint Angela.

Both among us and beyond us we are circulating the "cash" of charity and faith. The human and spiritual "capital" will grow and will become life-giving nourishment for the hunger of many.



*“Persevere faithfully and joyfully in the work you have begun”* (Last Legacy). In obedience to the Spirit, let us all participate actively and responsibly on this journey of goodness and holiness.

At the Assembly's opening Mass, Archbishop J. R. Carballo said that it is our duty *to reproduce courageously the holiness and the creativity of our founder.*



Courage, sister! Holiness and creativity are in your life and in the life of your Company or Group. Holiness and creativity.

Three suggestions to make this course of action do-able:

- always keep the Gospel in your hands and in your heart
- live the charism of consecrated secularity
- read the signs of the times in the light of the Word and of Saint Angela's experience.



All will be blessing, all will be grace, all will be gift. You will be a blessing for many, you will be a grace and consolation for so many, you will be a gift for all.

*“If you faithfully carry out these and other similar things, as the Holy Spirit suggests to you ... rejoice, go forward willingly”* (Last Legacy).

With this certainty and love in him who is our *Only Treasure*, I greet you and I carry you in my heart.

In this new service that has been asked of me and given to me at this time, I desire to meet you and to embrace you and, anchored deeply in life and history, to exchange light and consolation with you.

*Valeria Broll*

S. Orsola Terme, 10 agosto 2018

**Blessing of Pope Francis  
for the Assembly of the Federation**

*Ms. Maria Razza, President of the Federation of  
Companies of Saint Ursula*

*On the occasion of the ordinary assembly  
of the Federation  
of this Secular Institute, on the theme:  
Jesus Christ our only Treasure, Called by grace,  
in the sixtieth anniversary year  
of its pontifical approval,*

*the Holy Father Pope Francis  
sends his cordial good wishes.*

*He prays for the assistance of the divine Spirit  
for a fruitful discernment,  
and he hopes that the teachings  
of Saint Angela Merici  
may represent an occasion  
of renewed fidelity to Christ  
and of joyful witness  
to the universal call to holiness,  
and may stir up in each daughter of Saint Ursula  
a particular commitment to Christian animation  
of the secular city,*

*to contribute with the renewing energy of the Gospel  
to changing the world from within.*

*His Holiness invokes the heavenly protection  
of the virgin Mary, of Saint Ursula,  
and of Saint Angela Merici  
for a productive journey with the Church.  
Asking you to persevere in prayer  
in support of his universal ministry  
as the successor of the Apostle Peter,*

*he sincerely imparts to you and to the sisters  
present at the assembly  
the apostolic blessing you requested,  
praying for grace and for spiritual fervor,  
gladly extending his blessing to the entire institute.*

*From the Vatican, July 8, 2018*

*Cardinal Pietro Parolín  
Secretary of State  
of His Holiness*



## Participation in the Assembly



**From Archbishop Aldo Giordano, Apostolic Nuncio in Venezuela**

Dear president Maria, dear Caterina, and all sisters of the Company of Saint Ursula, Secular Institute.

With great regret I must confirm that I am unable to be in Rome next July 7-11 for your ordinary Assembly. It would be a great joy to meet you again and to renew the experience of 13 years ago! How the years pass! Thank you for your union with and prayer for my service in Venezuela, which is suffering so much. I am a witness of how the charism of Saint Angela Merici is at work and bears fruit even here in Venezuela in education and also among the poor in the barrios. I have had the joy of visiting the works born of Saint Angela's charism and have been edified by them. Through the bulletin that you kindly send me, I follow your life around the world. I assure you of my prayers and communion, that the Risen One may be the guiding figure of your Assembly.

A special blessing,

Affectionately,

+ Aldo Giordano

P.S. I ask the Holy Spirit and Saint Angela for a secular Merician presence soon here in Venezuela! Heartfelt thanks for remaining united. Again - a good Assembly to all.

### **After the Assembly:**

.... Thanks, Caterina, for the encouraging news about your Assembly. A blessing for your new President Valeria and a grateful hug for Maria and you.  
+Aldo

**Greeting of the President Maria Razza  
at the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration  
for the opening of the Assembly, presided over by  
His Excellency Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo,  
OFM, Secretary of CICLSAL**

July 8, 2018



**Your Excellency,**

Our heartfelt thanks for having accepted with concern and affection our invitation to preside at the Eucharistic celebration that opens the ordinary Assembly of our Federation.

This year we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the approval of the Federation on May 28, 1958, with the decree "Venerable and Illustrious Institute." This Federation unites the Companies and Groups that are

forming on different continents into a single secular institute of pontifical right.

The members by right of this Assembly, participating here, are the Directresses of the Companies and the elected delegates, as well as the delegates of Groups that have not yet been constituted as autonomous Companies.

Also present are some other sisters, not Italians, whom the Council decided to include in this special occasion of our institute's concrete "visibility" to allow for acquaintance, conversation, and unity in our single Merician charism.

As our Constitutions prescribe, our Assembly has been convoked *to check on the life of the Federation, for its future programming, and for the election of the Federation Council.*

This Assembly was also called, as you well know, to approve the integration into our Constitutions of two articles, which the Congregation over which you preside has kindly suggested, to meet the concrete needs of Companies reduced in number and encountering difficulties in managing property.

In a desire of the Council of the Federation, which has long been confronted with this matter, even with the help of experts, and which has then arrived at the definitive formulation, the proposed integrations seek to safeguard the autonomy of the Company, at the same time permitting the Federation to be able to intervene in clearly identified situations of need.

The Council of the Federation wishes to support the Companies, with a broad look at the Federation's worldwide nature and at the needs of charism and of formation, convinced as we are that the presence of the Company in a local Church is not to be identified with visible works; that our being consecrated seculars is a value that extends well beyond the management of houses and works...

Now we prepare for the Eucharistic celebration that is always a source of thanks and praise: we have infinite motives for thanking the Lord who, through the charism of Saint Angela Merici, has chosen us to live totally and exclusively for him in this singular and stupendous new way.



Thank you again for your presence, and thanks, through you, to the people who work together in the Congregation for Consecrated Life.

## **Homily for the Eucharistic Celebration of the Opening of the Assembly:**

**His Excellency Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo,  
O.F.M., Secretary of the CICLSAL**

**(Ez 2:2-5; Ps 122;**

**2Cor 12:7-10; Mk 6:1-6)**

Holy Scripture.

Brothers and sisters,  
behold the mission of the  
word that we have heard.  
This word is meant to  
become for you and for me a  
lamp and a light for our  
journey. If we do not want

the word to be dead or sterile, but want it to bear fruit, we must welcome it as a lamp, a light. For this we must listen to it, that is, we must welcome it into our hearts, so that we too may be able to become an interpretation of the Gospel, as Benedict XVI asked us some years ago in his very beautiful apostolic exhortation "Word of God": to become a living interpretation and exegesis of the Gospel.

This is the mission that unites all. Our rules may separate or at least differentiate us, but the Gospel unites us, the word unites us. This is, says the Council, the absolute rule of the consecrated life.

Pope Francis says that it is the supreme rule of the consecrated life, and so we must turn to the Gospel, we must welcome the word that is the light for our life.

In this word that we have heard I would like to emphasize three aspects or, if I could put it this way, I would like to deliver three





aspects:



**1<sup>st</sup> aspect: We are sent.**

*I am sending you*, the Lord said to Ezekiel.

Mary, Anthony, Peter, John.... I am sending you: This is the mandate that the Lord gives each one of us who have heard this today. Like Jesus in the Gospel, we too are sent

to go from village to village, along the world's roads, and especially you, a secular institute.

Be careful not to close yourselves up in the sacristy; we do not need you in the sacristy. Be careful not to be a photocopy of us religious; the Church does not need photocopies that vanish after a few years. Sixty years ago the Church recognized your form of life as consecrated women in the world, consecrated seculars, in the secular environment. Do not give this up; if you do, you should vanish. You know what I am talking about. I am not someone who sweetens the fatal poison. Be eager about your vocation and be consistent with your consecration as consecrated seculars, consecrated in the world.

Like Jesus, then, we are sent. Sent for what? Like him, to teach. To make beautiful speeches? No!

The world is overflowing with beautiful speeches and does not need any more words. What the world needs above all is the word, the word that becomes witness. When the Gospel says that Jesus taught with authority, it means this: he was not making small talk, he was not making slogans. What, then, are we sent to say?



What we have heard. Watch Jesus: he does only what he has seen the Father do, he says only what he has heard from the Father.

But who are we? Do we think that we will save the world? No! Absolutely not! We can say only what we have heard, do only what we have seen, act as does the prophet. We too are called to teach, to live, to proclaim what the Lord is saying; nothing else, all the rest is only seeking for attention: me, me, me.

The Lord called the disciples to be with him, and he has sent them.

We are certainly called as consecrated persons, you as spouses according to your spirituality derived from Saint Angela; we are called to full communion with the Lord. We are called to be able to say what the Lord says: that communion is fundamental.

The contemplative dimension is also for you who live in the world; if you do not want to be of the world, you must be contemplatives. Communion with the Lord is vital, essential; it is fundamental.

But be careful not to deceive yourselves. Jesus calls us to be sent immediately, and so he puts us on the world's roadways. He calls his disciples to be with him, but at the same time to be sent.

Look then at the reason for our full communion with the Lord. Everything else is just a self-deception, especially for you who are consecrated in the world.

The Pope insists so much on a Church on a journey, going out, and consecrated life goes out. We demolish it by contemplating – excuse my language, but I feel that



I'm with family – by contemplating our own belly button.

In his letter to consecrated persons, the Pope says: Do not be victims of your own littleness. Or, I would add, of big changes, squabbles and problems... we all have them. If we contemplate only our own problem, we finally smother ourselves. Young people prophesy, old people dream. May none of us be deprived of dreams, because as long as we're dreaming we're alive, we're young. The day when we lose the capacity to dream, old age has taken over. The first aspect, then: sending – we are sent.

**2nd aspect: We are sent into a field where sowing seeds is not at all easy.**

We see this in the Word of God: Ezekiel must preach to a rebellious people, to a hard-hearted people, to a stubborn people. The prophet's mission has always been difficult. We consecrated persons can give up many things, but we cannot forget, says the Pope in his letter to consecrated persons, Prophecy. Either we are prophets or it is better to disappear from consecrated life.



Even Paul does not feel himself at the height of the ministry to which he has been called. He speaks of a thorn in the flesh. Scripture scholars would like to know more about what Paul was saying, and they construct various hypotheses. He was probably talking about some obstacle to feeling at the height of the ministry entrusted to him. At the same time, Paul (like all the apostles) had to taste the sour wine of persecution, insults, privations, and so many other difficulties that he encountered in his proclamation of the Gospel.

Finally, in today's Gospel, Jesus is rejected by his own people. Here is the fulfillment of John's words in the prologue to his Gospel: "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*" His own people said, in effect, "We don't need you. Maybe when our hungry stomachs need to be filled or our sick people need to be cured, but your preaching does not interest us. Tomorrow we will listen, when we have nothing else to do." This is the lot of the prophets, this was the lot of Jesus, this is the lot of anyone who prophesies. There is no other road. We see that Jesus had to feel a little frustrated; he was human. I think that this may be the only situation where it is said that Jesus could not do anything; Jesus was powerless before his own people.



**3<sup>rd</sup> aspect: Many difficulties, but we are not alone.**

The Lord is with us, in the mission that he has entrusted to us, and when we feel the weight of our weakness, like Paul, the Lord tells us, "*My grace is enough for you.*" But here we must overcome another temptation.

We prefer to act without needing grace, because the ego, the attention-seeker, would be out. But the Lord makes us understand that our chariots and horses bring us nothing,

that only in weakness can we be great, because that is where we can experience that the Lord's power is manifested even in our weakness.

If nothing is impossible for God, as Luke says in his Gospel, we can say with Saint Paul, "*I can do everything in him who strengthens*

*me.*” Be careful, though, not to seek “everything” in buildings, in our chariots and horses, so that we sink as Pharaoh’s chariots and horses sank.

I am well aware that some of your Companies are going through difficulties, perhaps especially because of lack of new vocations, and I know that there is a danger that buildings may suffocate your charism.



Be careful about buildings; there are three types:

1<sup>st</sup> The ones that we must maintain in order to manifest our charism.

2<sup>nd</sup> The ones that we must renovate in order to manifest it.

3<sup>rd</sup> The ones that we must let go of.

A general chapter, a general assembly like yours, can do no less than make serious discernment, even about buildings.

In his letter to consecrated persons, the Pope gives us criteria, posing a question: Do our buildings serve the mission, or is the mission functioning in view of the buildings? Do our buildings manifest that we are (in your case) consecrated spouses of Christ? Do you continue what you can and as you can, maybe letting go of fundamental elements of full communion with your Spouse, just to maintain buildings that are here today and will be gone tomorrow? Please be courageous and do not wait for tomorrow, when it could be too late. Do what you should do, remembering that we are never alone, and that we must not fear weakness. In his homily for February 2, 2013 – which I consider a bit of a last testament to consecrated life, delivered a few days before he left the chair of Peter – Pope Benedict invited us all to accept our littleness joyfully and, keeping faith alive, we too will

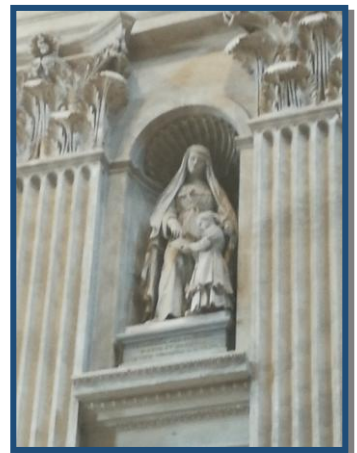
get to the point where we can boast, with Paul, in our weakness.

Dear sisters, we are sent into an environment of disbelief, distrust, indifference... this is the most serious problem facing the Church, when not even our own people listen to us, those we think of as neighbors. His own people came to take Jesus away, saying he was out of his mind. If they treated the teacher this way, what can we expect? This is certainly not an easy reality; it calls for trust, trust in the Lord.

Dear sisters, I wish you a federation assembly with much dialogue, not chit-chat. There is no dialogue without listening; listen to each other. Then I wish that you may let the Holy Spirit work, which must not be taken for granted. May you be able to say, "The Holy Spirit and we have decided," not changing the language to "We and perhaps the Holy Spirit have decided it." For this purpose, may the assembly make its decisions in a climate of prayer, in a climate of discernment. In consecrated life, this is the fundamental word for living the present with passion and the future with hope. Discernment on a personal level: Lord, what do you want me to do? Discernment at the level of the assembly: Sisters, what should we do? The three elements in discernment that can never be lacking:

1) The Gospel, with the Gospel in hand and heart, because only with this can our life be justified.

2) The charism, your own charism: Be secular, remain secular, not religious in a second or third category. I see a problem for consecrated life, how many times we religious are becoming secular and you seculars are becoming religious. This doesn't work. Let each one remain with her



own vocation to which she was called, and let each one rekindle the gift she received from God.

So, discern in the light of your charism as consecrated seculars, then in the light of your charism as spouses, and be united. Holy unity, your foundress would say, which is a fundamental element for you, unity that we will be able to translate into communion too, not uniformity. Each one of you should live the charism in your own culture, thus not uniformity, but always unity. If in the name of charism this unity, this communion would get broken... you will know that there is no charism there, nor is the Lord there, because the only thing that divides is the devil, the one who separates.

3) The third element which must be present in our discernment as an assembly is, or are, the signs of the times. I often say that the fundamental question is not what our founders did; the question is **what would our founders do here and now?**

This is why John Paul II in his exhortation “Consecrated Life” invites us to reproduce with courage the holiness and the creativity of our founders, their holiness and creativity.

Sisters, have a good assembly and may the Lord bless you, bless your families, your journey. You know that our Congregation is always open to help as we can.

Have courage! Forward! Forward! Forward!

Let no one rob you of the joy of following Christ. Let no one rob you of the Gospel. If they steal the rest, let it go and don't waste your energy or strength to get it back.

Never let them rob you of Jesus. Otherwise we would have to go to the ends of the world to regain him.

Have a good assembly!

(transcribed from a recording, not reviewed by the author)

## FROM THE OUT-GOING PRESIDENT'S GREETING TO THE ASSEMBLY

Monday, July 8, 2018



***"Jesus Christ, our only Treasure"  
"Called by grace"***

We are here to celebrate our Assembly, a particularly grace-filled event for each one of us and an occasion of communion for our institute.

An Assembly that we want to celebrate in that stretch toward the holiness that Pope Francis has recently urged with his apostolic exhortation "Rejoice and Be Glad."

We are confident of Saint Angela Merici's presence among us as our Mother and Foundress, as she assured us: *"I am continually*

*among them with my Lover, or rather the Lover of us all ..."* (Fifth Counsel, 38).

I am so very pleased to welcome and greet one and all. Thank you for being here, thank you to all those following us from home, thank you to all those participating with affection and prayer.

Following the order proposed in the Constitutions for this assembly, I wish to greet:

- The directresses of the diocesan and interdiocesan Companies or their delegates. They are the ones who qualify to participate in this Assembly, called by the Constitutions *"to be an instrument of unity and communion, of dialogue, animation and guidance. . ."* (Const. 23.3).
- The delegates of each Company elected by the respective members. These delegates are the expression of the 'grassroots' and are now called to a task of great responsibility and co-responsibility for the vitality of the entire Institute.

- The delegates elected by the isolated groups assisted by the Federation Council and by those who, delegated by the President and her Council, are entrusted with a task of responsibility and guidance for the nascent groups, to whom we wish swift flowering so they may soon become Companies.
- The vice-president and the Councilors of the Federation now in office, toward whom I am personally grateful for this beautiful ‘company’ of service and ever-ready willingness for the good of the Federation at large.
- The Assistant of the Federation Council, Msgr. Adriano Tessarollo, who, together with the Vice-Assistants, Msgr. Gaetano Zito and Rev. Raymond Samuangala...have accompanied us with competence and great readiness during these years. We thank them for everything, also for being here with us during these days.
- The Assistants of the Companies, who continue to believe in this ecclesial charism and *nourish in the Companies the sense of communion and the sense of the Church, spreading knowledge of and esteem for secular consecration.*
- Those persons who, although not being part of the Assembly officially, are here as observers and also come from different countries and cultures.
- The interpreters working in English and French, who are deploying their skills for this Assembly, and whom we thank for this service.
- I greet and thank those who have worked and continue to work on all the practical aspects of this Assembly.
- Lastly, a word and a thought of gratitude for the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life for its closeness and accompaniment during these years.

### **The motto of the Assembly**

Taking the words of Saint Angela as the Assembly motto, “Jesus Christ as our only treasure” is intended to be a summons to root our call and our response more and more in a lofty horizon of Christian life: only by



having and continuing to have Jesus Christ as our “only treasure” may we cultivate the hope that he, the Lord Jesus, will never abandon this Company as long as the world will last.

It is the wish to take Saint Angela’s inspiration as ever new and live it in the present, without letting ourselves be disheartened by difficulties, but, as Pope Francis says, “*...look upon our past with gratitude, live the present with passion, and embrace the future with hope*”.

A new thrust is needed, renewed fervor, in the certainty that “*...every promise that I make to you will be fulfilled for you beyond measure*” (Last Legacy, 24).

### Who we are and where we come from



We are here representing Companies and groups assisted by the Federation Council and by Companies, for a total of approximately 90 persons.

We come from: France, Slovakia, Poland, England, D. R. Congo, Cameroon, Ethiopia,

Eritrea, Burundi, Madagascar, Brazil, Canada, the United States, Indonesia, Singapore, Australia, and Italy.

The institute’s worldwide reality is present in this Assembly, but there is still time and space to enlarge borders and horizons.

Therefore, to all and to each one, my personal welcome, along with that of the outgoing Council of the Federation and with Saint Angela’s wish for us: “*So now, all of you kindly be attentive, with great and longing heart*” (Rule, Prologue 32).

## ASSEMBLY and DISCERNMENT

*“Obey the counsels and inspirations that the Holy Spirit continually sends into the heart....”*

**Adriano Tessarollo, Bishop of Chioggia**  
**Assistant to the Council of the Federation**



### 1. What is discernment?

Discernment consists in a believer's judgment made in faith. Judging in faith means that a spiritual person (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:15) makes a judgment about concrete situations in his or her personal life, in the life of the group, and in the life of the Companies of the Federation in order to distinguish (discern) God's pathways and to orient her own actions in that direction, precisely because in those choices and motives we recognize God's presence and how to obey God's will. (The words "motives" or "emotions" in the Ignatian sense refer to the "inspirations" that push one toward good and come from the Spirit, or the "temptations" that push one toward evil and come from the Evil One. Thus, discerning means evaluating well, distinguishing what comes from the Spirit from what comes from the Evil One.)

Openness and sensitivity to discernment are very important in the life of each Christian, because discernment allows us to detect a choice, a proposition, or an act as God's guidance in us and for us.

It signifies recognizing the action of grace, distinguishing it from impulses or choices coming from other motivations (envy, laziness, fear, attachment to belongings or to habits, egoism, or others),

all of which are deceptions that present themselves under the appearance of good. *"Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1John 4:1).

Without the Spirit of discernment one cannot understand and cannot fulfill God's will, which is not always clearly perceived through general principles and rules or even through a simple, spontaneous judgment. In fact, this is not a natural capacity, but a capacity bestowed by the Spirit for sensing God's presence and catching hold of the impulses of grace.

## 2. A 'spiritual' attitude for experiencing the Assembly



In the spirit of St. Angela and of the Constitutions, you are preparing to experience the Assembly. In fact, St. Angela writes that *"if, according to times and circumstances, the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice. And always let your principal recourse be to gather at the feet of Jesus Christ, and there ... to offer most fervent prayers. For ... Jesus Christ will be in your midst, and ... will enlighten you..."* (Last Legacy, 2-5). What you are called to live in the Assembly, then, is to *"obey the counsels and inspirations that the Holy Spirit continually sends into the heart"* (Rule, VIII, 14; cf Last Legacy, 14).

Among the tasks of the Assembly, the Constitutions point out these: *"make provisions and decisions of great importance for the life of the Company; make or renew its own Regulations when opportune ... promote the vitality of the Company."*

Among the very important decisions is that of considering the choice of the President of the Assembly and of her Council, to whom will be entrusted the charge and the service of guiding the Federation's

journey for the next six-year term. St. Angela advises that *“among the good and necessary means that God has granted me, you are one of the most important ... true mothers of so noble a family ... have for them the same care and guardianship ... and put all your zeal and strength into carrying out your duty...”* (Prologue to the Testament, 10-21).

Furthermore, the Assembly is called once again to specify areas for committed effort and to offer recommendations for the six years ahead, in light of the directives of the Church, expressed through papal teaching and that of the appropriate Congregations and Departments.

Then too there is “renewing regulations.” All these elements require a serene but demanding work of discernment on the part of the Assembly and invite you to consider the importance of this work and of the responsibility of the Assembly itself and the importance of the attitude and openness required of each member, called with her own viewpoint and vote to exercise discernment for the good of the Company and of the entire Federation.



### **3. Some of the many “directives of the Church”**

Since the Second Vatican Council, “consecrated life,” including life consecrated in secularity, has been stressed by many directions and even challenges, many of which are still open.

Apropos of this topic, I have in mind the volume *“New Wine in New Wineskins”* by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, published by the Vatican Publishing House (LEV), 2017. It contains reflections that emerged

in the course of the plenary meeting of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life held November 27-30, 2014, on the theme “New Wine in New Wineskins.”

It turns attention to the journey completed by consecrated life in the post-Conciliar period, in search of understanding, in a nutshell, challenges that still remain open. This journey is presented as an exercise in evangelical discernment, a search to recognize – in the light of the Spirit – the call that God makes resound in a historical situation through the one who is called there.

### **The Company and discernment of its vocational path**

*“No one pours new wine into old wineskins, or the wine will burst the wineskins and the wine and the wineskins will be lost, but new wine goes in new wineskins”* (Mark 2:22). The **“new wine”** is Christ, to be proclaimed and testified to according to the renewal suggested by Pope Francis.



In “The Joy of the Gospel” the Pope proposes the proclamation of the Gospel by living a holy life, addressing all who are called in their own life situations. The same idea re-echoes in his most recent apostolic exhortation, “Rejoice and Be Glad,” precisely in regard to the person called to live Gospel holiness in the contemporary world. In this way he also understands religious and consecrated life with a new mentality.

The **“new wineskins”** can be considered institutions and structures and a renewed way of understanding and living in them. There is always something to ask oneself in the search to understand how the Companies can live the Merician charism better today and what further changes the Church requires of life consecrated in secularity in the world’s various realities today.



Admittedly, doubt arises in many people about the usefulness of renewal and change, seeing that consecrated life seems to be diminishing more and more. But what matters is not abandoning Jesus' standard for having confidence: **“new wine in new wineskins”!**

Pope Francis continually urges attentive ecclesial discernment, through which the Company/Institute can take on those styles of life by which each “daughter” and each Company will be inspired.

It is necessary to present fearlessly the ideals that help people face the challenges of our time with determination and a long view.

It is necessary to discern how to make the Merician charism meaningful to people, to the Church, and to the world today through choices about formation and about life in the Company that are a real support for Gospel living. It is also necessary to try to let go of whatever is not suitable for this purpose, but rather blocks it. Anyway, not to decide anything or to decide too late is no help. Instead, that only makes things more difficult.

To revitalize the charism as a gift of the Spirit, it is necessary to act in such a way that the Institute boosts more and more whatever will express and manifest the beauty of your charism, laying aside whatever makes it confusing or invisible. After all, conversion is the law of life for a disciple of Christ; so we are always humbly searching for the identity of our vocation and mission.

The Merician charism is not diminished if buildings are less grand – maybe abandoned or almost so – because the charism takes its life from the centrality of the Gospel in the following of Christ, and the charism is incarnated in the enduring rediscovery of its nature: consecration to him in prophetic witness in the Church and before the world, according to the style of Saint Angela.

Our “vows of consecration” do not always matter to people, but they do observe and appreciate a serious and solid lifestyle consistent with the Gospel. Forward, then, with courage, because the consecrated life lives from faith and not from fear; it lives from the humility of that continuing formation that expands the mind and opens the heart to an ever stronger fidelity to the Gospel.

May the Lord's Word and St. Angela's wisdom help you discern, continually reviewing how the Company is living the Gospel. In this way you may be leaven inserted into the dough of the Church and the world, able according to your charism to be the yeast of a life of faith among the people, yeast often silent and humble. In this way, too, you may be participants in the joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of humanity, freed from all that might block your witness to your charism. This is how Jesus was, this is what St. Angela taught.

I conclude with a final reflection, inspired by the fact that this Assembly has also been asked to approve a choice in matters of real estate. On this theme, last March the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life issued a document offering directions on economy ("Economy at the Service of Charism and Mission" published by the Vatican Publishing House – LEV).

Given that in recent years many institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life have had to face economic problems (also including some Companies in the Federation), and taking note of such situations, the Congregation has asked institutes to be more aware about the relevance of economic matters, furnishing criteria and practical directions for managing property. Following two international symposia about the management of property, *Guidelines for the Management of Property in Institutes of Consecrated Life and in Societies of Apostolic Life* and the document "*Economy at the Service of Charism and Mission*" were developed.

These texts are offered to continue the journey of ecclesial reflection on properties and their management, recalling and explaining some aspects of canonical norms about temporal goods. This last document suggests some planning tools and organization linked to the





management of works and urges institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life to rethink their economic situation in fidelity to their charism to be *“still, today ... for the Church and for the world, the outposts of care for all of the poor and for all material, moral and spiritual poverty, and examples in overcoming every form of egoism through the logic of the Gospel, which teaches us to trust in the Providence of God”* (Pope Francis, *Message to participants attending the International Symposium on the theme “The management of the ecclesiastical goods of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, at the service of the humanum and of mission in the Church,”* March 8, 2014).

From the document *“Economy at the Service of the Charism and of Mission,”* I quote some lines from paragraph 15: *“Fidelity to the charism and to the mission remains, above all, the fundamental criterion for evaluating works.... A rethinking of the economy should proceed through an attentive discernment: listening to God’s Word and to history.”* And quoting Pope Francis again, the text reports: *“Consequently, I would hope that structures can be streamlined, large religious houses repurposed for works which better respond to the present demands of evangelization and charity, and apostolates adjusted to new needs.”*



In this area too, you are encouraged to practice your discernment in discussing service to the Federation and to so many Companies in difficulty from these problems and make yourselves messengers of direction and choices in your own Companies.

We entrust to the Spirit the choices that this Assembly is called to make, with the certainty that, where there are openness and listening, as St. Angela writes, *“charity and the Holy Spirit will enlighten and inspire you, directing everything towards the good and spiritual benefit of your dear daughters”* (9<sup>th</sup> Legacy, 5-8). St. Angela accompanies you from heaven with her prayers, as she promised.





# Compagnia di Sant'Orsola

Istituto Secolare di Sant'Angela Merici - Federazione



**The Federated Companies** diocesan and inter-diocesan - total 45, 33 of which are in Italy and 12 in other nations.

**The Groups** that have not yet reached a sufficient number of members to become autonomous Companies total 12.

**The diocesan and inter-diocesan Companies** are currently:

**Europe:** Italia, Francia, Germany, Slovakia, Poland, Malta.

**America:** Canada, Brazil Northeast, Brazil South, Toronto.

**Asia:** Indonesia.

**Africa:** Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi.

**The Groups** followed by the Federation or by other Companies:

**Europe:** Italy, England.

**Africa:** Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria.

**America:** United States.

**Asia/Oceania:** Bangladesh, Philippines, Asia - Pacific.

# UNITED TOGETHER THE FEDERATED COMPANIES

Several passages from the report of the President, Maria Razza...



All the sisters, in all the Companies and Groups, were involved in preparing for the Assembly through a personal questionnaire: "*I am, we are the Federation,*" synthesized and submitted by the leaders.

The hope was that the questionnaire would be an important occasion for reflection and study, becoming a formative experience for each one.

The other objective of the questionnaire was to reveal how much the Federation is perceived to be -as it really is - our secular institute.

Thirty-eight summaries were received from Companies and Groups. They were rich in their reflection and suggestions, for which we are deeply grateful.

These responses are already the first sign that we feel we belong, responsible and co-responsible in the Federation.

Therefore, we consider it opportune to return to you the great quantity that has emerged from this wide involvement, so that it may become the shared patrimony of our worldwide reality.

I am following the same sequence of topics in this synthesis of the responses.

## • *Identity*

In reference to the "identity" of our vocation, several reflections emerged:



### **Who we are:**

✚ We give thanks for the gift of life, first of all considering ourselves women called to live our womanhood as Saint Angela wished in founding an institute of consecrated secular life for women;

✚ We are baptized Christian women,  
✚ daughters of God, believers, whose baptismal consecration remains

primary and foundational;

✚ We are secular women consecrated in accord with the charism of Saint Angela Merici, aware of belonging to a secular institute recognized by the Church.

✚ We are living in the world, but separated from "the darkness of the world"; this permits us to be and to act as salt and leaven in our own environments.

✚ We feel that we are loved by the Lord, that we live for Him...

✚ We feel ourselves to be honored by and thankful for our existence and for the calling we have received.

✚ Our style of life is the one lived by Jesus Christ through his incarnation; the world is our "place" where we can recognize the call of the Holy Spirit.

- ✚ "We are called to such a grace and such dignity" of being "true and chaste spouses of the Most High."
- ✚ We know how to be at the service of the Kingdom of God in secularity, continually asking ourselves how to bring it about in concrete circumstances.
- ✚ We are aware of being fragile and weak, but trusting in the Lord's grace and mercy, we seek to sow hope.

### **How we see ourselves**

- ✚ Someone knows about our consecration; someone picks up on it without fully understanding; they often admire the lifestyle.
- ✚ Many recognize that Jesus is the polestar of our life... that "*we have found the Messiah*"; we are happy people because we have met God and belong to Him.
- ✚ They identify us as people of faith, on a path of holiness, belonging to and faithful to the Catholic Church.
- ✚ They consider us serene, welcoming, trustworthy, available, offering safety; they are willing to trust us.
- ✚ The better they know us the more likely they are to ask themselves questions about their own lives.
- ✚ In some cases, we find that we're thought of as "sisters": this motivates us to re-understand and live our secularity, without any mentality or attitudes of being "religious and conventual."

### **In the world with the heart of God**

- ✚ Living in the world for the Lord, consecrated to him totally and forever.
- ✚ Living in the manner of Jesus in the house at Nazareth: as God became incarnate and pitched his tent amid humanity, so we remain in God in the world, not fleeing it, in the midst of daily affairs.
- ✚ Following Christ and committing ourselves for His sake by professing the evangelical counsels according to the charism of Saint Angela.

- ✚ Remaining in God, we are also in the heart of humanity and collaborate in the evangelization of the world.
- ✚ It means living in the world, simply and discretely, where the Lord has placed us: it involves an active, dynamic way of life.
- ✚ Seeking God in everything and orienting everything to God, combining action and contemplation as Saint Angela suggested: being contemplative in our "doings," being simultaneously Anna daughter of Phanuel and Judith the courageous woman.
- ✚ For us, consecrated secularity is what Angela intuited in the vision of the ladder that unites earth and heaven, where activity is not an obstacle to the relish of "heavenly" things.
- ✚ Living consecrated secularity is a special grace, a choice of great responsibility that requires constant discernment.



✚ In our secular Merician consecration, there is an emphasis on rediscovering and putting into practice our proper identity, continually drawing from its origins the essential element to put it into practice concretely in the history that we inhabit today.

- ✚ It is necessary to combine consecration and secularity in ordinary life, in the continual stretching toward holiness: this does not mean modifying or adding something to our existence, as much as it means renewing ourselves through example, through encouragement to let ourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit, who is at work in our hearts. In this way, as Cozzano says, "...neighborhoods will be consoled, the city ennobled."

## • *Vocations*

### **Fostering and passing on one's vocation**

- ✚ *"My beloved is mine, and I am his... I am my beloved's, and he is mine"* (Canticle 2:16; 6:3).
- ✚ *"Called to be true and chaste spouses..."* (Rule pro, 7).
- ✚ A vocation is like a plant that cannot be left without care, or it will dry out and die; it must be guarded, renewed, and lived as a mystery continually evoking awe and gratitude, and as an ever-expanding horizon, richly promising. It involves traveling a path of constant and renewed intimacy with the Lord, tailoring into our days times for prayer and contemplation in our homes. The passing years increase one's appreciation and thanksgiving for the gift of vocation and make us more mature and free in our self-offering.
- ✚ With deep emotion, joy, and enthusiasm, I relive my first encounter with our "Lover."
- ✚ Seeking to protect the gift received, also with reserve.
- ✚ It is important to remember the starting point of one's own vocation, and to be able to overcome life's inevitable difficulties or delusions. Every day one's life is offered to bring to fulfillment the plan that God has for each one of us and for all of us together.
- ✚ Encounters with other sisters strengthen me in our choice; an important result of these meetings is that we cultivate positive relationships, also outside the Company.
- ✚ Experiences of weakness, limitations, and poverty sometimes mar the beauty of the gift of vocation, but it is all recovered through fidelity and perseverance.
- ✚ Preserving and renewing one's vocation requires nothing beyond what the Constitutions propose: a life of personal and community prayer, liturgy, the sacraments, meetings of the Company, spiritual exercises, verification with one's leader.

- ✚ Our particular vocation to be consecrated in the world also requires an attentive reading of the reality we live in, and universal prayer.
- ✚ *"Only one who embraces the ways and the means can keep herself faithful to her call."*
- ✚ The results of the questionnaires indicate that the Companies typically offer ways to care for one's vocation; the will and the energy to be faithful should correspond to these ways.
- ✚ The Merician charism is an ecclesial charism, a gift and a road of holiness that should be known and spread. The majority of questionnaires reveal that the charism can be communicated if it is lived and thus is passed on through witness.
- ✚ It is always necessary to be ready to give reason for the hope that is in us, to offer one's own witness, as Saint Angela urges us: *"Let them always be happy, full of charity, faith, and hope in God ... giving good example by teaching and edifying."*
- ✚ Witnessing our joy and vocational fidelity, beginning with our own Company; simply and serenely helping the sisters who may be in difficulty.
- ✚ Praying to the Master of the harvest for fidelity and for new vocations.
- ✚ Identifying how to propose the vocation of secular consecration and the Merician charism, and to whom to propose it.
- ✚ Spreading the charism of Saint Angela, while respecting reserve, using suitable material: website, booklets, printed materials, CDs....

The vocational problem is particularly acute especially in the Companies that have not had any new admissions for years. It is a situation shared with all institutes of consecrated life, one to accept without losing hope, as Pope Francis invites us: "I wish you fruitfulness. One never knows the ways through which fruitfulness passes, but if you pray, if you are poor, if you are patient, you are sure to be fruitful. How? The Lord will show you 'on the other side'; but it is the recipe for bearing fruit. You will be fathers; you will be mothers:



fruitfulness. That is what I hope for your religious life, that you may bear fruit.”

(From the address to the audience of participants in the international conference sponsored by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, May 4, 2018)



## • Formation

### Continuing formation: Care and Commitment

*Our Constitutions say, “The consecrated member will continue all her life to care for her human, spiritual, intellectual, professional and apostolic formation, with a sense of responsibility making use of the means offered by the Company, the Church and society, in order to strive toward an ever-more-*

*radical donation to Christ in history” (Const.7.2).*

The questionnaire indicates an awareness of the importance of formation.

In fact, the Groups and the Companies emphasize that:

- ✚ Formation must be personal, integral, continuing, and communal.
- ✚ They are convinced of the need to care for initial formation, continuing formation, and the formation of the leaders.
- ✚ Companies’ meetings are well prepared.
- ✚ It is not enough merely to participate; it is necessary to interiorize, reflect, be





open to the Spirit; it is considered important to pick up and meditate on the circulars and/or bulletins of the Federation and of one's Company.

- ✚ Insofar as regards the specifics of our consecration, the questionnaire responses show how much Saint Angela's writings and the Constitutions are consulted and studied.
- ✚ The bulletin "In the same charism" is considered just as important for formation: the materials from international meetings and the days for leaders.
- ✚ The substance offered by the Federation is also put to use as a way of checking on how formation proceeds at the personal level and for the Company, to remain anchored to the Merician charism.
- ✚ Subjects put forward by the World Conference of Secular Institutes and by the Italian Conference are also valuable and can be integrated into formation.
- ✚ Putting the Word of God at the center, integrating our particular formation with that offered by the universal and local Church: papal teaching, ecclesial documents, and in particular what deals with consecrated life and secular institutes.
- ✚ Studying lay spirituality and allowing oneself to be formed by daily events, learning and reading them through the lens of faith, of a God present in history, who saves and redeems.
- ✚ For such a purpose, these are considered useful: choosing healthy television shows, current events, study; reading current events and consulting online sites that are interesting and instructive.
- ✚ It is necessary to be aware that it is indispensable to take time for oneself for reading, meditation, silence, life-review, spiritual direction, discernment, cultivating an interior life...

- ✚ Caring for formation requires balance, flexibility, common sense, an active and self-activating process, invoking the Holy Spirit's gifts of knowledge and wisdom.
- ✚ Aware that one educates and is educated in the process, also accepting the eventual roles of service and of governance that become formative if carried out with responsibility and commitment.
- ✚ It is considered indispensable, as regards new entrants, to do careful discernment about the real motivations that support the candidate in her journey in the Company and about her capacities for balance and consistency.
- ✚ Each one can offer her own contribution to formation in her own Company, above all through participation, sharing her own life and reflections, making available her capacity for ways of relating and forms of technology: words, enthusiasm, visits, telephone calls, meetings, writing, translation, research, use of Skype, attention to associates ...

If, as repeatedly indicated in the questionnaire, formation is fundamental for each one, for all Groups and Companies, and for the Institute as a whole, priority must be given to attention and care for it. The formation program will always have to provide for study, reflection, and sharing about the Constitutions that were offered by the Holy See “to all the consecrated members of the Institute [as] a path of holiness for a more effective witness in the Church and in the world” (Decree, Const. 1994).



## *d) The Companies in the Federation*

### **We are the Federation**

The perception of our secular institute as a federation has surely grown and deepened in these last years, thanks to the service of the Council of the Federation, but especially thanks to the welcome and to the ever more lively participation of the Groups and Companies.

The questionnaire responses reveal the reality as it is perceived, in words and expressions that we summarize here:



- ✚ The Federation is our secular institute, the Company of Companies, a family of families that unite the sisters of the whole world, one single body, one single spirit.
- ✚ It is the indispensable point of reference for getting to know better and better how to safeguard and live the charism of St. Angela; it is a powerful stimulus and spiritual and formative support; it fosters unity and sisterhood.
- ✚ The Council of the Federation deserves gratitude for carrying out so much work; much is asked of it and offered by it.
- ✚ The Federation is a great flame that feeds little flames, like a vital fluid, a fountain whence flow experiences, conversations, the courage needed for fidelity, renewal, and important decisions according to the charism and the Constitutions.
- ✚ The Federation opens one to the world and fills one with awe before the communion in Christ made possible by a shared vocation, held as a great gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift has allowed us to understand better what it means to be a secular institute in the Church. Furthermore, it has facilitated the updating of the Constitutions, precisely outlining our authentic features.



✚ The Federation calls for a sense of belonging and for mutual acceptance and sharing of the same charism, which is continually being re-understood and renewed.

✚ Belonging to the Federation, Saint Angela's big family, is enriching and gives joy and mutual help, becoming encounter and sustenance for fidelity and perseverance.

✚ Belonging to the Federation is expressed through participation; through the effort to know one another; through reading (circulars, bulletin website), through being active in conventions, meetings, visits; through assisting or accepting mergers between Companies in difficulty; through closeness to members who are scattered or alone; through active and responsible interest and contributions (including economic).

✚ It involves getting to know world realities, at times the suffering of our sisters who live in poor countries or in the midst of war.

✚ Some sisters already share their gifts and abilities to serve the Federation: they prepare articles for the bulletin, they offer economic support, they do translation, they accompany and assist Groups with formation.

Joyfully we celebrate this Assembly on the sixtieth anniversary of the approval of the Federation as a secular institute of pontifical right.

We wish one another an Assembly that may be a renewing root of life-giving strength and a source of mutual help, as is predicted in the document of recognition of the Federation: "...so that the fundamental union of the family of Saint Angela may be not only the fruit of perfection, but also the life-giving root and source of mutual aid, this Sacred Congregation, [...] constitutes and approves the federation of the Companies of the Daughters of Saint Angela Merici (Decree approving the Constitutions of 1958).

## *e) Openness to Worldwide Reality*



Openness to our worldwide reality should have a central source of energy from which everything goes out and to which all returns.

The questionnaire asked what this "center" is. The replies were concise and in agreement:



The center is none other than God, creator and redeemer; it is Jesus Christ, the Lover; every place and all places are in him: family, Company, friendships, Church, country, nation, world.



We find this center in our heart and in the heart of each person who is open to love.



At times we feel like the "center" of the world, but we seek to go beyond ourselves, to de-center ourselves, to open ourselves...



Each one is expected to undertake a discernment of the true "center" in the times, places, and purposes that life's situations present, aware that anyway it is necessary to prioritize the duties of the Company, which are indispensable tools for following Christ on the road that we have freely and voluntarily chosen.



Openness to our worldwide reality also involves accepting cultures that differ from our own, something we already experience, more or less, in daily life. Not all is taken for granted: knowledge, respect, appreciation, and patience are called for. It is also a challenge not to isolate the different.



After all, it is the Lord who unites us, we are all sisters, daughters of the same Father; the Gospel is universal.



Some of our sisters live in multicultural societies where it is already easier to seek harmony among different cultures; often these are even to be found within our own extended families.



In these last years, our institute has opened itself decisively to a worldwide identity: new Groups, new Companies. This has

involved a burdensome work for the Council of the Federation in discernment, accompaniment, and formation.

✚ At this time sisters and Companies have been stimulated to openness toward a worldwide identity; all of this has made us feel that we belong to a single secular institute which extends beyond our limited horizons and involves us more and more in the single charism being incarnated on every continent.

✚ The questionnaire responses reveal how this openness to the worldwide identity is recognized as a new gift, as enrichment, a beautiful opportunity for the institute, for which it is profoundly grateful.

✚ Hope is born, because the charism of Saint Angela continues to live and to be renewed and spread throughout the whole world.

✚ However, this joy and this hope involve a commitment for all: interest, acceptance, closeness. Prayer is always the major strength of unity: for the world Company; for those who care for the Companies nearby or far away, who need accompaniment; and for those who carry the weight of this global reality more directly.

✚ Beyond the Council of the Federation, some sisters make themselves available for travel, formation, and translation.

✚ With the bulletin "In the same

charism," with the website, with the WhatsApp group, we are all more alert and united in the worldwide Company.

The Company of Saint Ursula "spread over the centuries in Italy and in the world with the rise of many Companies..." (Constitutions 1.2). This affirmation of the Constitutions is being fulfilled little by little on the various continents.



It is the style proposed by Saint Angela: *“Act, move, believe, strive, hope, cry out to him with all your heart, for without doubt you will see marvellous things”* (Prologue to the Counsels 17-18).

It is the style of holiness proposed by Pope Francis: *“Holiness ... is boldness, an impulse to evangelize and to leave a mark in this world. To allow us to do this, Jesus himself comes and tells us once more, serenely yet firmly: ‘Do not be afraid’ (Mk 6:50)”* (Rejoice and Be Glad 129). *“We need the Spirit’s prompting, lest we be paralyzed by fear and excessive caution, lest we grow used to keeping within safe bounds”* (Rejoice and Be Glad 133).

Finally, we are now called to put these exhortations into action in order to make the fulfillment of Saint Angela's promises possible: *“Hold this for certain: that this Rule has been planted directly by his holy hand, and he will never abandon this Company as long as the world lasts”* (Last Legacy 6-7).

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, let us return to the motto of this Assembly *“Let them have Jesus Christ for their only treasure, for there also will be love”* (Fifth Counsel 43).

The Lover, the only treasure, will be the center of unity of this Assembly of ours and, with him, called by grace to be true and chaste spouses of the Son of God....

May this be the program of this Assembly on the sixtieth anniversary of the recognition of the Federation: to return continually and all together to our first and only love, to our only treasure, so that once again, we may *see marvels*. To return to our first love...in choices, in plans, in formation, and in updating, in the life of our Company and of the federated Companies. To return to our first love ... for *“Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging”* (Pope Francis – Letter to Consecrated Persons).





## Greeting from Cardinal Pietro Parolin Vatican Secretary of State

Crypt of St. Peter's Basilica - Tombs of the Popes – July 11, 2018



This year the Eucharist occurs at the tomb of Saint Peter, a particularly significant place. I did not want to miss this particular encounter, and I greet all of you, who represent the Federation of Companies of Saint Ursula, Secular Institute of Saint Angela Merici, here in Rome for your ordinary Assembly.

Cordial good wishes to the out-going leadership who arrive at this point with so much fruit

ripened in these years, and sincere good wishes also to the new leadership, that they may be able to do productive work in service to your Company.

I have read one of your magazines from 2016, devoted to presenting the history of the Federation of the Company of Saint Ursula that was edited by Prof. Gheda, to the effect that the Merician charism





substantially has four calls: the call to holiness, the call to console and to confer dignity, the call to renewal, the call to bring light into the world and into history. Yours is a beautiful vocation, a very beautiful vocation, a very beautiful call.

I would like to comment on this vocation, this call, from a practical angle, remembering the great person whom we celebrate today and whom the liturgy presents for our veneration and imitation: Saint Benedict of Nursia, the father of western monasticism, teacher of civilization, and luminous example of holiness. If we wanted to summarize his teaching, we could do it this way: Humanity has a single fundamental duty and task: to seek God, because a human being does not develop fully all alone and is not completely fulfilled all alone; a human being cannot be completely happy without God or against God.

When all is said and done, Benedict merely represents with a different variation the fundamental thought of Augustine at the beginning of his Confessions: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are ever restless until they rest in you.” This is also the source of his program of life for monks, summarized as “Put nothing ahead of the love of Christ.” And in this, dear brothers and sisters, consists that holiness that Pope Francis recalled and recommended to all Christians in his recent apostolic exhortation, “Rejoice and Be Glad.”

It is a call and a proposal valid for every Christian, more than ever in our epoch, when we feel the need to anchor life and history to solid spiritual reference points. This is the pathway of holiness that you too, dear sisters, must travel.

This is the only way that daily renewal will be possible, this is the only way you will be able to carry light to the world and to history, consolation and dignity to those deprived: by searching for God and putting nothing before the love of Christ. Now too the world needs women who belong completely to God and experiences of closeness; it needs women capable of generous service and of bringing people together; it needs women who love the Church and

are obedient but who also know how to support it and stimulate it with suggestions that have matured in conversation with Christ and in direct experience in the fields of charity and assistance to the sick, to the marginalized, and to children in difficulty.



On this point, Pope Benedict XVI said, “It is the gift of a maternity modeled after Mary. The Madonna’s heart is the cloister where the word continues to speak in silence. At the same time, it is the furnace of charity that motivates courageous deeds from a place of a persevering and hidden form of sharing.”

I close these brief reflections, hoping that they are simply an expression, an affirmation of my esteem, my

affection, closeness and encouragement.

I wish you every good thing in your personal apostolic life, and I assure you of my prayer, while I entrust myself to your prayer in this Eucharist you are about to celebrate. Have a good day and a good journey.

(Text taken from a recording, not reviewed by the author)

## SYNTHESIS OF GROUP WORK

Through the work of the groups and mutual exchange, the Assembly asks...



### Each Member:

- To live her Baptism and her consecration in her identity as woman.
- To care for her own vocation, using all the necessary “means and ways”: Merician prayer, meetings, pilgrimages, and bulletin.
- To bear witness by living; to communicate courageously if asked about her vocation.
- To be present in the lay ecclesial reality.
- To return to her first love, looking at the past and the future so that the charism may be renewed in each one and that this may speak to today’s world.
- To feel responsible for her own formation and to let herself be shaped by daily life so as to have synergy between the ideal and her life.
- To continue the journey of knowledge and awareness about belonging to the Federation and to sustain herself with prayer.
- To open herself to the world; to learn other languages; to be transformed.



### **Each Company and Group:**

- To use the resources of Merician prayer, commentaries on Saint Angela's Writings and on the Constitutions....
- To communicate the charism using new means (internet), holding its own vocational events and participating in diocesan events.
- To use available aids to make this vocation known to priests and to other people.
- To meet people; to be present at formative meetings sponsored by the Federation.
- To get to know magisterial documents (e.g. the Synod on Youth); to study the Church's social teaching.
- To accompany individuals in vocational discernment and formation and to give attention to human formation.
- To invest in formation as the Constitutions indicate (5.6, 7.2) so that there may always be attentive care for integral personal growth.
- To collaborate with other Companies, each Company making its own resources available so that there may be reciprocal support and enrichment.
- To share plans and experiences for greater exchange and shared benefit.
- To contribute economically according to its means or availability.
- To be welcoming; to listen to one another; to get to know and encounter one another; to be united and to cultivate good will.

## The Federation as a Whole

- To continue connections through the bulletin and/or other formats;
- To develop and circulate resources in various languages, for improving formation and prayer.
- To continue the formation meetings for all. To use and share the personal resources of members of the Institute (even if they are not part of the Council).
- To be open and to give importance to continuing the worldwide conversation already initiated; to find new roads; to update with new means of communication; to use and share personal resources.
- To stay alert to the essential nature of secular consecration according to our charism, so that our awareness of our own identity may be greater and greater.
- To facilitate occasions for getting to know each other and for exchange among the world's Companies, so that the richness of the charism may emerge in different aspects.
- In matters of formation for secularity and matters of Merician spirituality, the importance of the bulletin "In the same charism" is emphasized as an essential help for coordination and unity in the Institute and as a tool for getting to know the cultures of various Groups and Companies arising in various parts of the world.
- To facilitate small-group interactions during the international meetings so that we may get to know each other better, marvel at one another, and commit ourselves to learn one another's languages and cultures ...





## The Council of the Federation

✚ To facilitate knowledge of Church documents regarding our vocation.

✚ To continue formative meetings for initial formation (including in the places of St. Angela); formation meetings for directresses, councilors, and those responsible for initial

formation.

- ✚ To pursue formation meetings at a wider level.
- ✚ To care for the formation of the formation personnel, so that they may be better qualified for their service.
- ✚ To continue the formation and the care for new Groups; to increase in understanding diversity, valuing strong points.
- ✚ To help the Italian Companies have an open outlook on the journey of formation (initial and continuing) and on spiritual experiences (retreats – shared spiritual exercises); to foster exchanges among nearby Companies and with other secular institutes.
- ✚ To organize an international meeting on the topic of worldwide identity; to foster acquaintance with the cultures of countries and of our members; to visit the Companies and Groups; to make the world our “village,” where all are known to each other and want to collaborate for the good of all.

# Council of the Federation 2018-2024

<b>President:</b>	<b>Broll Valeria</b> (Company of Trent)
<b>Vice-president:</b>	<b>Razza Maria</b> (Company of Piacenza – Tortona)
<b>First Councilor:</b>	<b>Dravecká Mária</b> (Company of Slovakia)
<b>Second Councilor:</b>	<b>Durkin Mary-Cabrini</b> (Company of Canada, Group of the USA)
<b>Third Councilor:</b>	<b>Dalmasso Caterina</b> (Company of Cuneo)
<b>Fourth Councilor:</b>	<b>Caramia Aurora</b> (Company of Caltanissetta)
<b>Fifth Councilor:</b>	<b>Rocca Maria</b> (Company of Padua - Vicenza)
<b>Sixth Councilor:</b>	<b>Chambris Geneviève</b> (Company of France)
<b>Seventh Councilor:</b>	<b>Arena Vincenzo</b> (Company of Catania)
<b>Eighth Councilor:</b>	<b>Bernasconi Rosa Maria</b> (Company of Como – Switzerland)
<b>Ninth Councilor:</b>	<b>Brenna Giancarla</b> (Company of Milan - Pavia)
<b>Tenth Councilor:</b>	<b>Nshimirimana Pascaline</b> (Company of Burundi)
<b>Eleventh Councilor:</b>	<b>Osella Carla</b> (Company of Torino -Asti – Casale - Novara - Susa)



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