



“... this miserable and treacherous world, where there is never either rest or any true contentment, but only empty dreams, or bitter hardships, and every kind of misery and wretchedness..... Although at times they will have troubles or anxieties, nevertheless this will soon pass away and be turned into gladness and joy. And then, the suffering of this world is nothing in comparison with the blessings which are in Paradise. Also, let them hold this as most certain: that they will never be abandoned in their needs. God will provide for them wonderfully” (5th Counsel).

Teach us to count our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart (Psalm 90).

Dear sisters,

These are days, weeks, months, when our world, our cities, our regions, have been unexpectedly transformed into a “desert,” into places of solitude, into spaces for hiding ourselves, defending ourselves, isolating ourselves.... Fear, uncertainty, anxiety, and worry steal space and time from serenity, relationships, and encounter. Threatened by an invisible virus, we find our daily lives turned upside down.... We miss the encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist; we miss the Mass, the parish community, ordinary work.... The daily news gets more and more dramatic: contagion, illness, deaths....

Our social media are full of texts, images, and news that are sometimes useful, sometimes destabilizing, sometimes consoling because they bear messages of faith and mutual support, but are sometimes catastrophic or merely sensationalized.

It destabilizes us not to be able to plan the future, not even the immediate future.... We have only today; we do not know what tomorrow will be like, or whether we will have a tomorrow... only today, a long today, a long time and a big space. We have the desert outside and the desert inside ourselves. We have time and space to look around us: “*a world made of empty dreams, bitter hardships, troubles and anxieties, a miserable and treacherous world....*” We have time and space to look within ourselves: “*night of the senses and of the spirit.*”

Well then, let’s go to seek help.... and from whom if not from our Madre Angela! Let’s sit next to her and listen to her: “*Remain in prayer with as much strength of spirit as possible*” (Chapter IV On Fasting). “*Be solicitous about prayer, mental as well as vocal, which is coupled with fasting.... Pray always with spirit and mind on account of the constant need for God’s help....*”

Pray together with me: “*My Lord, light up the darkness of my heart. I am forced, day and night, walking, standing, working, thinking, to cry out and shout to Heaven and to beg for mercy. Deign to forgive my sins and those of the entire world. I beg this of you through your most sacred passion and your precious blood shed for love of us. My heart is wrenched. My Lord, burn my every affection and passion in the blazing furnace of your divine love. Receive everything of mine, interior*

as well as exterior, all of which I offer before the feet of your divine Majesty. Amen” (Chapter V On Prayer).

In this dark and insidious time, St. Angela is beside you and each of us and sustains us with her motherly tenderness and repeats to us: *“I have this undaunted and firm faith and hope in the infinite divine goodness, that not only will we easily overcome all dangers and adversities, but we will conquer them, and with great glory and jubilation.”* And *“He wants only what is for your good and joy”* (Chapter X On Poverty). *“Have hope and firm faith in God, for he will help you in everything.... For understand that now I am more alive than I was when I lived on earth, and I see better and hold more dear and pleasing the good things which I see you constantly doing, and now, even more, I want and am able to help you and do you good in every way* (Prologue to the Counsels).

In this desert we are accompanied by a presence, a word, a mother’s hand. St. Angela is close to us, and she weeps with us, prays with us, and consoles us so that our consolation may not diminish. Consolation is our gift and our mission. Let us offer consolation and comfort by means of prayer, by a word, by our silence, by offering to the Father this huge amount of sorrow, death, solitude, uncertainty, anxiety, fear, and suffering. St. Angela, Spouse and Mother, friendly and sympathetic woman, teach us the art of consolation. We are in extreme need, so that we may soothe the mortal wounds inflicted on the heart of the world in this pandemic!

Dearest sister, united around the Madre, let us pray for one another, and as St. Angela asks us *“even with my blood,”* may harmony be the bond that unites us around Jesus Christ, and *“Jesus Christ will be in our midst”* (Last Counsel).

Together with the whole Council of the Federation, I announce to you that **the days of formation and spirituality in Brescia May 1-3, 2020, are being suspended. The international convention of the Federation planned for July 24-28, 2020, at the Abbey of Novacella (Bolzano/Bressanone) is being suspended.** The urgency now is the physical and spiritual health of all of us and of those around us.

The medicine we have to take today is *“stop, stop.”* Not to wait passively for it all to pass, but to *“contemplate”* the world and to see in this travail not discomfort, not a sepulcher for waiting it out, but a womb where the Risen One is generating life. We believe that this life that slips through our hands is not sand but a fertile seed, if we are unshakeable in faith and hope. Our light is Jesus, died and risen, who goes before us into *“Galilee.”*

Along with the whole Council of the Federation, I greet you with the blessing of St. Angela and embrace you,

Valeria Broll – president

S.Orsola Terme, March 23, 2020

