

IN THE SAME CHARISM...

with responsibility



n. 3 - 2020

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

www.istitutosecolareangelamerici.org

www.angelamerici.it

Email: fed.comp_2016@libero.it

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------|
| To the Readers | p. 4 |
| Letter from the President | p. 6 |
| L' <i>insieme</i> comunionale | p. 9 |
| Angela's Story | p. 14 |
| Worldwide Identity: Brazilian Culture, Part 2 | p. 21 |
| Meeting with Italian Sisters in Initial Formation | p. 26 |
| Living for the Lord, Right Where We Are | p. 28 |
| The Lord's Desire for Us | p. 29 |
| Ring the Bell | p. 32 |
| Special Year of Laudato Si' | p. 34 |
| Surveying Integral Ecology | p. 35 |
| An Invitation from One of Our Canadian Sisters | p. 36 |
| Martha: Example of a Secular Vocation | p. 37 |

FROM THE COMPANIES AND GROUPS

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| ❖ 120 Years of the Company of Bergamo | p. 41 |
| ❖ Group of Eritrea | p. 45 |
| ❖ Group of Nigeria | p. 46 |
| ❖ Company of Burundi | p. 47 |
| ❖ Company of Congo | p. 48 |

TO THE READERS

The Sands of the Sea, the Drops of the Waters, the Multitude of Stars

A year dedicated to ecology, announced by Pope Francis!

Does it concern us? Does it require something from a secular
consecrated woman?



I do not think that at the time of St. Angela it would have been necessary to talk about ecology with the concern we have today. Back then, people lived with little, they took care of everything, they did not waste, they did not pollute, they were respectful of nature, they

adapted to the seasons and its needs. Yet Angela Merici, as a good farmer, as a true contemplative, close to her Lake Garda... pointed us in an ecological direction that we can even find in one of the most important chapters of her short Rule, the one about prayer:

*...your holy name: may it be blessed beyond the ocean's grains of
sand,
beyond the drops of the waters,
beyond the multitude of stars.*

These words of Angela find their place in the context of a heartfelt prayer *for forgiveness for the darkness in her heart, for many infidelities, for her sins and for those of her relatives and friends...*

We find in these expressions a true, complete, theological ecology: everything exists, it is beautiful and good, but there is a key to the whole. I would say that **above everything there is one above all: the name of God.**

Everything remains in its place; it has its precise place. But **above everything and for everything, the name of God is to be blessed.**

As if to say, *"What you are seeing, what you are contemplating, what you are experiencing must make you leap toward the Creator, towards the Savior, towards the great Lord. Everything belongs to you, it was given to you for free, but remember to give thanks, know how to bless the most high Lord of heaven and earth."*

St. Angela seems almost to lend her praise to all of creation as she asks for *mercy and time to do penance* for herself and her loved ones.

Angela, a biblical woman, would certainly have had in mind the Word of God: *"So it was that there came forth from one man, himself as good as dead, descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sands on the seashore"* (Heb 11:12).

The good and merciful God must be blessed always and infinitely. Who can count the sand of the sea, the drops of water, the multitude of stars? It is a blessing that can never end.

Perhaps it is precisely this **"everything"** connected, interdependent, interconnected, placed in the right place and at the right time, that has been lost in this age of ours, where we all thought of ourselves as self-sufficient and invincible, omnipotent.

Let us therefore mediate on St. Angela's words, in harmony with St. Paul's: *"...everything belongs to you ... the world or life or death, or the present or the future: all belong to you, and you to Christ, and Christ to God"* (1 Cor 3:21-23). *And so:*

beyond the ocean's grains of sand ... to keep the ocean untouched and pure

beyond the drops of water ... to preserve the water from any contamination

beyond the multitude of stars...that must keep shining...

*Above all, I bless the Lord and let myself be blessed,
I commit myself, I feel part of an ecological spirituality that is healthy,
respectful, serious, essential, attentive, aware...*

**Thank you,
my Lord, my only life and hope!**

Caterina Dalmasso



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION

*Seek out and desire all those means and
ways that are necessary to persevere and
prosper to the end.*

(Prologue to the Rule)

In these months, the media (TV, radio, newspapers) are hammering our brains with "good behavior" for our own good and for the safety of others. They are asking us, or rather, forcing us to distance ourselves and threatening isolation. Uncertainty and fear of the present and the future is the master. Anger and disappointment grows. The suffering and death caused by the pandemic turns into protest and search for a culprit. Hope gives way to sadness. Faith is threatened, charity languishes...

This heavy air, which we breathe (despite the masks) makes us feel the need for fresh air, oxygen, to breathe with full lungs. Or do we adapt ourselves instead to this climate and let ourselves gradually die?

With St. Paul we ask ourselves: *"Who will deliver me from this mortal body?"*

We experience all the fatigue of walking in this fog that prevents us from seeing broad horizons and we are short of breath because of this pollution of ideas or even lack of ideas and projects ... who will free us, who will heal us?

We are creatures, therefore fragile and vulnerable, but we are sons/daughters and therefore loved by the Father who in his work as Creator continually repeats to us: *"You are very good. You are precious in my eyes. I have loved you with an eternal love. Your name is written in heaven. I have chosen you. Come and follow me. Do not be afraid. I have conquered the world."*

This is the Word that saves, this is our God, this is God's Son Jesus, our Brother, Teacher, Shepherd, Lover, Spouse.

This is the Spirit of truth that gives life, rekindles hope and sustains faith!

We have bound our lives to that of Jesus. In St. Angela we have seen the way to love him, to know him better and better and to serve him faithfully in our brothers and sisters on the roads of the world. In the Company we have identified the means and the way to progress and persevere until the end, the place where we are improved in relationship with God, with our sisters, with the world, with everything we come into contact with, both exterior and interior.

The charism of secular consecration recognized by the Church as "Company of St. Ursula," founded by St. Angela, is a great and immense grace that freely reached us, warmed our hearts and opened horizons and spaces for us to pass through life with a joyful soul always full of charity, faith and hope in God. The vocation: a mystery of hope, of joy, of God's fidelity that makes us stable and credible if we welcome it fully.

"This sort of person will undoubtedly be able to take care of herself: one who will want to embrace the means and ways necessary to such an end.... we must be vigilant, and so much more so, as the undertaking is of such importance that there could be no greater, in which lie our life and salvation."

In St. Angela and in the multitude of daughters who have followed her throughout the centuries (in the 485 years of history since the foundation of the Company) we see the goal toward which we set out: to be *"spouses of the Son of God and become queens in heaven."*



This is our future. Everything and every important appointment, however, must always be prepared with care and passion, and in detail, so let's get started, let's get to work. How? *"Now to the task, with courage! Therefore let us all embrace this holy Rule that God through his grace has offered to us."*

I trust your firm will to follow the Lord, I trust your great desire to serve Him and I trust your heart always thirsting for love, to leaf through the pages of the Rule and find in it that word which is unique and vital for you

and written only for you, so that you may find there your joy, peace and blessing.

Courage! The Merician charism is for today. Today there is a need for humanity, affability, comfort, consolation, vigilance and attention, discernment and trust, respect and dignity, light and truth, seriousness and humility. This is the way. Let us walk it in small steps and "united together."

Only in this way is our hope rekindled and our faith cleansed in terms of emotions and the power of suggestion to becomes more beautiful and deep, only in this way does charity become a warming flame and, despite distance and isolation, relationships become salt and yeast that give flavor and satisfy the hunger of many.



Dear young sister with your great desires; dear old sister, tired but faithful to God and life; dear sister leading the Company as guardian and mother of other sisters: *"Seek out and desire all those means and ways that are necessary to persevere and prosper to the end"* and ... joy, peace and blessing will dwell in your heart.

Valeria Broll

**“L’INSIEME COMUNIONALE”
THINGS NEW AND OLD FROM THE TREASURY
FOR A LIFE OF COMMUNION**

**Don Raymond Nkindji Samuangala,
Vice-assistant of the Council of the Federation**



(Translator’s note: The Italian phrase “L’Insieme Comunionale” has no parallel in English. “Insieme” means “together.” “L’Insieme” is translated as “being together” and “comunionale” as being a source of communion.)

Taking as my starting point the theme of the 2020 Convention (which did not take place),

"United together to serve his Divine Majesty" (Prologue, 4), I would like to revisit a subject that is certainly already known, but always of great interest, *communion*, specifically in the context of Merician charism.

I start with the expression **"insieme" [together]** taken from the theme of the Conference, and also so prominent in the name of this Federation magazine. I will treat *"insieme"* not so much as a sociological reality of communion, but more as its theological setting.

I believe that *"insieme"* constantly calls all the daughters of St. Angela to be receptive every day to a *graced* communion rooted in the One who is their true Treasure and Source. It invites them not to neglect the *memory* of their foundation, which continues to be foundational as they return to it and re-appropriate their common Merician identity in the perspective of the Institute’s *prophetic* responsibility today and tomorrow.

1. Communion as a Grace to Be Received

Being *together* for communion presents itself first of all as something given freely, a gift or grace to be received from its source, its foundation. The invitation is to acquire the wisdom of the scribe **"who brings out from the treasure in his storeroom things new and old"** (Mt 13:52). More



precisely, in Matthew's text Jesus speaks of the head of the house, "who brings out from the treasure in his storeroom...." This is the person whom the scribe must resemble. On our topic, the most interesting insight emerges from Jesus' clarification, presenting this "wise" scribe as one "instructed in the kingdom of heaven." Therefore, this is a person who has chosen to follow the path of Jesus Christ, becoming his disciple, and guided by the Spirit of wisdom. The Spirit gives him the ability to make a wonderful synthesis between the new and the old. Commenting on the two parables of Matthew 13:47-53, Paul Curtaz sees there a self-portrait of Matthew himself, and also the face of every person who has encountered Jesus and his Gospel. "Matthew is speaking about himself when he describes the wise head of the household who brings new things and old things out of the treasure in his storeroom. Of course, Matthew was not a scribe but a tax collector. But he had received training in the faith. And the encounter with the Lord did not erase his past life or past faith. Just as the fisherman, after fishing, knows how to separate edible fish from harmful and inedible ones, so every disciple can understand what is essential in his own experience and what is useless. To discern (= to sort out) is what we are called to do, continuously...."

"To encounter Christ means to radically change one's life, letting it be illuminated by the Gospel, knowing how to choose what is worth keeping and what should be thrown away instead."

The question that intrigues me concerns that **treasure** in the store room, from which to skillfully bring out the new and the old. St.



Angela comes to my aid by telling me that the store room is not a locked safe that contains all sorts of precious objects, nor any kind of container. It is the Lord Jesus Christ himself who is our only *Treasure*. In whom else do we find the true and amazing synthesis of the new and the old, the human and the divine, if not in him? Therefore, the invitation to the daughters of St. Angela is *to live wisely in God's dwelling place in Jesus Christ, guided by the*

Spirit of wisdom, to recover a spirit of availability, which must always

be renewed. Living in Christ, they welcome the gift of building their specific identity "together." That way of being together is the foundation of communion in the Institute.

2. Communion as Memory

"Keep to the ancient way and custom of the Church, established and confirmed by so many saints under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And live a new life" (7th Counsel, 22). This recommendation seems to me to be the Merician version of the passage from Mt 13:52 above. St. Angela recovers for herself and recommends to her daughters this wisdom and this Gospel teaching about constantly combining the new and the old, always enlightened by the Holy Spirit and rooted in the tradition of the Church, where the faces of the saints shine so brightly. It could not be otherwise, for she did everything only by inspiration, as we are reminded by her secretary, Gabriele Cozzano:

"God inspired and even forced our Mother foundress to plant and found this rule of life in his name ... [and] she had never wanted to begin it [the Company] until she had been commanded by Jesus Christ, until he had shouted in her heart, until he had pushed and forced her to begin and found it.... The whole thing [the Company] came from the pure counsel of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus (Comforting Letter to the Virgins of the Company of St. Ursula).

Building this "*insieme*" for communion cannot happen for the daughters of St. Angela unless they continually remember the Madre's teaching. By constantly going back to her, one learns to embrace again that common identity expressed "in the same charism," in the same Rule, in the Madre's Writings and thoughts, in the same spirituality, and which must be lived responsibly today, as the Constitutions indicate. Here too, all are invited *to dwell in the space of Madre Angela Merici*.

3. Communion as Prophecy: Responsibility Today

I do not intend to analyze or comment on the Constitutions, which has already been done by those who have more competence. I just want to note how they represent the translation of what is "old" and authentically Merician into the life of the Institute today, without



betraying it. (Otherwise the Church would not have approved these Constitutions.) They are completely in line with that evangelical, ecclesial dynamic and with St. Angela's dynamic of keeping to "the ancient way" for "a new life." The Decree of Approval from the Apostolic See (August 8, 1994) recognizes the new Constitutions as a text that, "attentive to the present historical context and always open to the future, would reflect its beginnings and traditions."

The Constitutions therefore represent at the same time an anchor, a prophetic reading of the Merician charism, and a call to live it responsibly in two directions.

The first, primary direction is continuous, responsible building up a way of being "*insieme*" for communion *within*, in a choral movement of the Companies in order to revitalize the Company more and more. This means *inhabiting the space of the "sisters"* without invading it, in sisterhood and synodality.

The second direction is a movement *outward*, that missionary movement that makes the Company a secular institute always "going out." It is called to build a way of being "*insieme*" for communion, everywhere inhabiting the space of humanity by fully sharing "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the [people] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted" in our society (Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1). There consecrated Ursuline secular women live, proclaim, witness to and serve Christ in every person.

Conclusion

It can be said that the prophecy expressed in the present invites the whole Institute to raise its eyes toward the future, already present in today, living an *insieme* that is also a responsibility to build *communion* within the Institute's global diversity.

Certainly, the "new" that St. Angela speaks of does not refer to the race for fashion or for every senseless and constant change. Rather, it is a theological dynamic of the "new life" that the saint asks us to live, that same "new life" in which St. Paul invites us to "walk" (cf. Rom 6:4; Gal 5:16). For Paul, baptism, by inserting us into the Paschal Mystery of Christ, allows those who have met the Lord Jesus to



"walk in the new life," life in the Spirit. For St. Angela, the baptized woman who has met and embraced the Merician charism is helped in a unique way to live the same "new life," life in the Spirit, ultimately a life of holiness. She lives in profound communion with the one *Treasure and Lover* of all, in whom every harmonious synthesis and fullness resides.

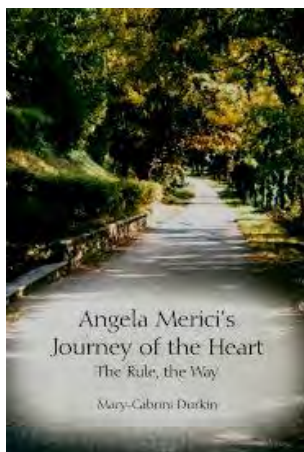
It should be noted that both "walking" and "living" express a reality that is not static but dynamic, not passive but constantly active, a movement, a continuous "taking off." For both St. Angela and St. Paul, the theological fact is never disembodied. It translates into concrete existence in all its human situations, makes them its own and constantly presents them to the Lord in a life offered daily.

Therefore, the Merician charism, like all the Tradition of the Church, does not represent a static reality, something precious to be jealously guarded in a safe or in a museum. It is a river that flows, crossing different times, spaces, peoples, cultures and languages, bringing fruitfulness and life everywhere. Pope Francis would say that it is "the root of a constantly growing tree... and 'is called to keep the flame alive rather than to guard its ashes'" (Querida Amazonia, n. 66).

Consequently, seeking, building and living "*insieme*" for communion in the diverse realities appropriate to the Institute's worldwide nature is an interesting and stimulating challenge. A challenge not to be avoided under any circumstances! In fact, "Cultural challenges invite the Church [and therefore also the Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici] to maintain 'a watchful and critical attitude,' while at the same time showing 'confident attention'...

"Grace supposes culture, and God's gift is incarnated in the culture of those who receive it" (Querida Amazonia, 67-68).

The phrase "openness to the future" in the Constitutions is emphasized by the Decree of 1994. That openness manifests itself in efforts to build and through the process of building "*insieme*" for **communion** (efforts that must still be undertaken in the future, not avoided). This happens in a worldwide reality that can wisely combine the new and the old in a harmonious synthesis. The process recalls the Company's "origins and traditions" in view of today and tomorrow, always made fruitful by the charism of St. Angela Merici.



Angela's Story

Let us take a quick trip from the twenty-first century to the sixteenth, to an afternoon late in 1539. Sit down at the kitchen table in a small apartment next to St. Afra Church. Sipping the hot vegetable soup that Barbara Fontana has just served, we think about what we would like to ask our hostess, Angela Merici. Angela breaks the loaf of bread.

Over sixty, she seems to glow as she smiles across the table....

Childhood

I was born in Desenzano, on the Vicolo Castello, in 1474. About two years later, Papa and Mama bought the farm called Le Grezze. We grew up helping with the animals. My sister and I would drive our cows and goats to the common pasture and home again. We had fun together and learned responsibility, sometimes by our mistakes. Papa had to pay a fine when our animals trampled part of a neighbor's field or nibbled fruit from our neighbor's land.



We all worked together.

We had a book! Every evening Papa would read to the family about a special saint. That's how I learned about heroines like Saint Ursula and her companions, who were true to Christ *even to the shedding of their blood*. I wanted to be like them.

My childhood was happy, but in my late teens my world turned cold and dark. First Mama died. Then my dear sister died. I felt as though all the sunshine had left my soul. I was worried about my sister. Was she in heaven? Now I

realize that she was a good girl, and none of her mischief could separate her from God's love, but I was very young and very sad.

Feeling that I had nothing left, I leaned back on God. God was still there, even when I could not feel his presence. But in my deepest sadness, *our kind and loving God* took pity on my grief-stricken heart.

One day I was in our field at the Machet. Suddenly, there in the air above the trees, was a row of angels, *angels of eternal life!* Among them was my dear sister, smiling at me, assuring me that she was happy in *celestial glory*. Sweet peace entered my soul. Heavenly light bathed me. It still draws me heavenward.



Salò

Even Papa died! My brothers Giovanni Maria and Lodovico were trying to manage the family farm. Mama's brother Uncle Biancosi and his wife took my little brother Merico and me to live with them in Salò.

Uncle Biancosi was a prominent person in Salò, which is much more splendid than Desenzano. Life in the Biancosi home was very, very different from what my brother and I were used to on the farm. Everything in the Biancosi home was finer, the fabrics softer.

Aunt and Uncle loved me and had one goal in mind: a husband. They thought this was their most important responsibility to me and to the memory of Mama and Papa.

I grew up in a happy family, but my call was different. My heart was steady. I belonged to God alone, but I didn't know how to convince Aunt and Uncle. People used to say that my blond hair would surely attract a man. So I tried to darken my hair with ashes. I can laugh about that now, but then I was confused and impetuous.

Physical attractions didn't magically go away. But they do point



to the source of all that is desirable. The stirrings of my heart and body are like a magnet, drawing me toward a thrilling unity with Someone divine.

Many times I have held a little niece or nephew and felt a yearning for someone whose life came out of my own life and would carry it on, to have a circle of grandchildren. But yearning is not regret. All love given comes back as love.

The Franciscan friars at the church “della Disciplina,” near Aunt and Uncle’s house guided me. I also met a group of wonderful lay people, mostly married, in the Third Order of St. Francis. They followed a Rule that guided them along a spiritual path and had special opportunities to receive Holy Communion.

Around twenty, I became a secular Franciscan of the Third Order too and made a commitment to follow this spiritual path as a lay person. Members have the right to wear the Franciscan clothing made of coarse gray cloth. Not many choose to dress this way, but I have for many years.

Vision and vocation

Eventually our family came to an agreement. I would return to Desenzano. I would have a vineyard as my own property. Its crop has provided some income for me, and I pay taxes each year.

I was a farmworker again, busy in the vineyard and fields. There in my workplace God once again reached my heart. During the olive harvest, people from all around the area work together in the groves.

One day, after our noon meal in the grove at the Brudazzo, we took a *riposo*. I was dozing and praying. Suddenly I heard music and heavenly voices. There among the olive trees I saw a ladder rising all the way to heaven. There were angels, playing instruments, and young women, singing. I can still sing their song, it entered so deeply into my



heart.

In that moment God showed me that I was to help other women and girls to live here on earth in ways that would lead them heavenward. At the same time, I saw that there is no distance between our life here and eternal life, between earth and heaven, between us and God. I did not yet understand that I was to begin a company of women. But I did realize that God was inviting me to belong to him forever. I knew that everything around me was connected with heaven, luminous with God's light. What peace and joy spread through me!

At first the neighbors didn't know what to make of a single woman like me. I just tried to share God's love with them.

I received *great consolation* and strength *every day in going to Mass*. My daily prayer became a more and more intimate conversation with God in the *secret recesses of my heart*.

Many people began to call me "Suor Angela." Young people would ask me to teach them how to pray. Neighbors began to confide their spiritual questions or family problems, and we would talk about how God's words might light their path.

Their questions were about daily concerns or fears about death. But questions of conscience and religion became more and more frequent. Many of my neighbors didn't know what to think when we heard arguments from Church reformers.

Most of our parish priests were good men, but with little more knowledge than their parishioners. There was no one to lead them, either. Our bishops lived in luxury, far away. We must continue to *pray for the reform of the Church!*

Brescia

That's how I met Caterina Patengola. Poor Caterina! She was already a widow when, in the space of four terrible years, Caterina lost all three of her children. Caterina's grief seemed unbearable.



The friars asked me to go to Brescia in 1516 to be with her for a while. Little did I expect to be starting a whole new life in my early forties!

In the large, comfortable Patengola household, I helped as I could. When Caterina felt like talking, I listened. When she needed comfort, I tried to console her. We prayed together.

Caterina's nephew Giralomo, who was twenty-two years old, used to visit his aunt. One afternoon he brought along a young friend, Giovan Antonio Romano, a cloth merchant. Antonio came often to talk.

Catherina's many friends among Brescia's nobility and other prosperous business and professional people also visited her, many of them deeply prayerful and concerned about others. Their city was in deep distress, and they wanted to help.

So many lives had been shattered by war! In four years the city had been conquered and reconquered three times. Venice had finally gained control in 1516, shortly before I arrived. The wounds of war were deep and festering.

Spiritual and material needs were overwhelming. In 1521 Girolamo Patengola was one of the zealous laymen who were starting a Hospital for Incurables to care for dying sick people. My friend Agostino Gallo is now the hospital's treasurer, and my neighbor Giacomo Chizzola is one of its trustees. Most of the incurables are infected with the "French disease" [syphilis] and receive no help from their families.

Dying women leave little ones orphaned. Isabetta Prato and other good women have gathered orphaned girls to care for them. Laura Gambara takes in women who wish to turn away from prostitution. Isabetta and Laura are leaders. They have enlisted other devout citizens in this effort and have really made a home for the homeless. Laura devoted her own house to shelter them. It is now called the Carità.

Some say that our Church is corrupt. However, devout lay men and women are the Church here in Brescia.

Their courage and commitment come from faith and from prayer—from God. Most of the women are devout widows who have already reared their own children. They have experience and resources. A circle of dedicated women working together for God's children can accomplish wonders.

Several of the men belong to a brotherhood called Divino Amore and encourage each other in good works.

I was eager to support these good laypeople. When they need encouragement or are worried about family problems, we sit down together, talk things over, consider God's word and pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance. I came to realize that Brescia was my place to do God's work.

Antonio Romano is one of these good men. The first day we met, we struck a chord of friendship. Antonio was only twenty-three then, not married, just beginning his business. Young adults like him had looked at the devil's work and wanted a path through the ruins, God's path, to a better life.



Madre

After a few months, some measure of peace had returned to Caterina's heart and it was time for me to leave the Patengola household. Antonio called me his spiritual "Madre" and persuaded me to move to his large house in the Vicolo Sant'Agata, with his cloth

business in the shop at street level. He offered me a small but comfortable room. That arrangement lasted about fourteen years.

Each morning I went to Mass at Sant'Agata. I loved to gaze at the new fresco of the Crucifixion. It is right above the altar, making it clear that in the Mass we can share the graces won for us by Christ's Passion, *his blood shed for love of us*. I went to San Francesco Church for Confession and spiritual guidance, and to meet with other members of the Franciscan family.

In Antonio's home I earned my living by the work of my hands, helping the serving women with the housework.

I soon saw how hard life was for poor girls like the servants in the neighborhood. Many of them were orphans. Others had come from

the country to the city for employment. Most were trying to save enough money for a dowry so that they would be considered marriageable. Some could not marry because their brothers or uncles had refused to pay their dowry after their parents' death. Some employers refused to pay their wages.

Often my widow friends could advise them or find them a better job, even take them into their own homes or the Carità. The men of Divino Amore could represent them in court to obtain their dowries and wages. We helped them find their dignity by experiencing God's love.

Everyone is hungry for God. Yes, even powerful men! Even Duke Francesco Sforza of Milan. When he asked to meet me in Brescia in 1528, he and his court were refugees from Milan. He sought my prayers and asked to be my spiritual son. I visited him soon afterwards on my way home from Varallo. We met again in Cremona, when we were all refugees there in 1529.

The wives of Francesco Martinengo and Filippo Sala came to me in tears. Francesco and Filippo had quarreled over a debt and were determined to settle their score by a duel. Surely one would kill the other! Their wives, the Duke of Urbino, and city leaders had tried to intervene. Their duel might have sparked a bloodbath. I went out to talk with them. Eventually, God softened their hearts, and the duel was cancelled.

God even softened the heart of Lord Luigi Gonzaga, when he had punished my relative so harshly. Lord Luigi is dreadfully severe. My relative had committed an offense... but to lose all his possessions and be exiled! That punishment was excessive. On the way home from a trip to Mantua, I stopped in Solferino to see Lord Gonzaga and asked him to relent. He agreed to recall my relative from banishment and restore his goods.

*Mary-Cabrini Durkin
Company of Canada, Group of the USA*

To be continued...

A WORLDWIDE IDENTITY: KNOWING THE CULTURES OF OTHERS GLIMPSES OF “CULTURA BRASILIANA”

Second part

Inequality and Social Problems

A difficult problem to talk about in Brazil is the inequality between the richest and the poorest. And what is saddest is that the problem is so old that, regarding this issue of inequality, an economist named Edmar Bacha mentioned Brazil as a country with characteristics of "Belgium/India." This translates into a minority with the standard of living of the rich in Belgium and a majority with the standard of living of the poor in India. However, a report published in 2008 and based on the Human Development Index (HDI) indicates the country with characteristics of "Iceland/India, with a minority with an even better standard of living than Belgium and higher than the richest 20% in Iceland – the country with the highest HDI in the world. There is also the England/Ghana comparison. In fact, in the country some people live with a standard of living similar to that of England, while a large part of the population lives with the same standard of living as Ghana. This report also mentions that in Brazil the richest 20% live in better conditions than the richest part of countries like Sweden, Germany, Canada and France.

In the last decade there has been a small improvement in these social differences



with some government social plans, but nothing very significant. The new economic crisis of 2015/2016 pushed many Brazilians back to the level of poverty.

Corruption

Another serious problem that has always marked Brazil is corruption at all levels of society. In reality, this has always been the problem that causes all other social evils, because corruption causes unemployment, stimulates drug trafficking, encourages delinquency and violence. Without doubt, it is the greatest scourge of our country.

Wealth and Resources

On the other hand, Brazil, with its immense territory, is a place of abundant sources of agricultural, industrial and commercial production. The main products that Brazil exports are iron ore, steel, soybeans and their derivatives, automobiles, sugar, airplanes, beef, coffee and chicken meat. Our country has millions of cultivated acres (about 64,000,000) of all kinds of agriculture that feeds all Brazilians, we import almost nothing in the way of food. One of the only exceptions is wheat. We are the largest exporters of soy and coffee in the world. Besides agriculture, we have one of the largest livestock-raising industries on the planet with about 215 million head of cattle. We have more livestock than people. The breeding of pigs and chickens is also very high, making Brazil the largest protein exporter in the world.

Iron ore is another product that is exported on a large scale. The states of Minas Gerais and Pará have the largest reserves of this mineral. In addition, steel production is also highly developed, which promotes a steel industry, metallurgy and heavy machinery companies. One of the leading industrial products that we export is the airplane, produced by Embraer.

Religiosity

The Catholic Church arrived in Brazil together with the



Portuguese colonizers in the 16th century, and the first Mass in this new land was celebrated by Friar Enrico di Coimbra on April 26, 1500. It is clear that the indigenous peoples already settled here had a faith, a faith lived in different religions according to the tribes. Until today, this religiosity is lived in the tribes and is organized and conducted by the Pajés (indigenous priests).

On the other hand, Catholic evangelization spread along with the expansion of Portuguese colonization throughout the territory, since Catholicism was the religion of the Portuguese crown.

In this expansion there were many mistakes and many positive sides. The worst mistakes were made by members of the Crown and the Church who saw the Indians as soul-less savages. The extermination of these native populations was one of the results of this mentality.



The positive side is that we can mention the work of the Jesuit Order. Jesuits promoted an evangelization accompanied by respect for the culture of the tribes and offered an advanced education to the Indians.

Africans were taken to Brazil in slavery and on farms were forced to follow Catholicism. However, this obligation did not erase the roots of African religiosity. In fact, there was a mixture of beliefs.

Already in the twentieth century the growth of Pentecostal religions began and, towards the end of that century, neo-Pentecostal religions. These new denominations developed much more in the poor suburbs of large cities. In the cults, always celebrated with band performances, the promise of financial prosperity, the cure of diseases and the solution of problems is much emphasized. The fulfillment of these promises is linked to large contributions of money to the churches. Today these sects are the greatest challenge for the Catholic Church, as well as for other traditional churches: Lutheran, Anglican, etc.

Our Parishes

On the other hand, the Catholic faith today is particularly lived in the thousands of parishes that exist in Brazil. Their division into smaller communities is typical from north to south. In these small communities, celebrations are usually led by lay ministers and permanent deacons, since there are never enough priests. Another common characteristic is the countless ministries, always coordinated by lay people, which promote the whole life of the parish. In addition to these ministries, many groups of young people, couples and the other lay faithful promote evangelization.



Merician Presence

The presence of consecrated secular women following Saint Angela Merici began with the arrival of the French missionary Nicole Marie Jeandot on December 22, 1960, when she landed in Rio de Janeiro to teach French. During a trip to Brescia in 1966, Nicole and Mother Xavier Echaniz contacted the Company of Saint Ursula. The Company gave them a relic of Saint Angela Merici to deposit in the chapel dedicated to her in the city of Suzano - SP.

After this trip and with the support of the Cardinal Archbishop of São Paulo, Most Rev. Angelo Rossi, Nicole started a Company in Brazil, receiving ecclesiastical approval in December 1968. She contacted three consecrated Italian women living in

neighboring dioceses. This group had its first meeting on April 24, 1969. In the following decade, a small group of Brazilian women from the state of São Paulo joined Nicole to form a first nucleus. Later, women from the states of Minas Gerais and Bahia increased the group and reaffirmed the Brazilian Company. In 2002, a group of ten women from Novo Hamburgo - RS, joined this first Brazilian nucleus.



In 2004, the members of the state of Bahia, in the Northeast, saw the need to create a new Company for that region, since the number of vocations had increased and the distances in Brazil were great. Incorporated by the Federation Council and approved by the Holy See, this Company in the Northeast and the original one in the South form a large family that lives the spirit of Saint Angela Merici in Brazil.

Thus, in the midst of all this immense Brazilian universe, our secular Ursulines evangelize with the spirit of Saint Angela. They give themselves to the Church in Brazil as ministers of the Eucharist, as leaders in various ministries, as attentive custodians in parishes, as women in the family. And they give themselves to the Brazilian people as witnesses of the Gospel of Our Lord.



P Vilson Trevisol and the Brazilian Company

Online Meeting with Italian Sisters in Initial Formation and Young Italian Sisters



On Saturday, July 4, the initial formation team, together with the president, met by video conference with sisters in initial formation and temporary consecration and some young sisters consecrated for life.

During these months of pandemic, the team had proposed and sent them some short reflections on: "the Merician Alphabet". This allowed them to know and reflect on some aspects of St. Angela's life and spirituality. They were invited to share by writing about the joys and trials experienced in this period. Many of them responded in writing to these prompts, which led to sharing and exchanges with some of the team and/or with their formation director in the Company they belong to.

Eighteen sisters took part in the video-conference.

Each shared her experiences in this particular period, starting with a letter of the Merician alphabet that had most affected them: **Contemplation, Empathy, Fasting, Kindness....**

In the video conference they expressed their difficulties and sufferings, their joys and their intimacy with the Bridegroom.

The spiritual journey, which sprang from the insights given with the Merician Alphabet, has allowed us to grow in love and faith, and to penetrate more and more into the Merician charism.

The letter of the alphabet that most impressed and helped these sisters was "A" as AMORE (LOVE). Love that St. Angela had towards everyone and that a Daughter of St. Angela must have toward everyone and everything. Love that the Bridegroom has toward us.

The video conference was desired and appreciated by all the sisters. It was important for all: for the young sisters who wanted to meet to get to know each other better and to share experiences and

support each other, for us in the team to get to know them and understand where and how they are walking, what is important to work on to help their formation, and how St. Angela speaks to their hearts.

Edda for the Formation Committee

A Is for Affectionate...

A word that we find in the writings of St. Angela and in the testimonies of witnesses who testified in her beatification process.

Those who knew her bore witness to this woman's sensitivity, welcome, trust, and consolation as someone capable of kindness, affability, agreeableness, and affection.

Affability and kindness are key words of our spirituality.



***Be gentle and compassionate
toward your dear daughters....***

***For you will achieve more with kindness
and gentleness than with harshness
and sharp rebukes (2nd Counsel).***

In everything, willingly be gentle (3rd Legacy).

***You must strive to use
All possible gentleness... (3rd Legacy).***



Living for the Lord, Right Where We Are...



My name is Katarína Kudzbelová. I am 40 years old. I live in Slovakia in Prochot, a mountain village surrounded by nature. I live in the family home with my mother and grandmother, my sister and her three children, and sometimes with my brother.

I work as a sitter in the social services facility of Jesienka in Prochota. I take care of sick and problematic people, through whom I learn to know Jesus himself.

I desire his love in order to love others and to give joy and hope to clients, colleagues, family, and friends.

Since childhood, I wanted to belong only to the Lord. But the circumstances of my family did not allow me to enter the convent. My mother's visual impairment and other difficulties indicated consecrated life in the world. But I had no idea that there was such a consecration.

Only two years ago, in the silence of the hospital, I heard the soft whisper of the Holy Spirit and understood the direction of consecration in the Company of St. Ursula, in the Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici.

Therefore, even after speaking with my confessor, I decided to say “yes” to the Lord in this very institute.

I ardently desired the freedom to spread my wings and fly in the breeze of the Spirit. Only now, since I have taken this path that the Lord invites me to follow, do I understand that it is he himself who is teaching me how to live and be free.



Why did I choose Saint Angela's road and her institute?

Probably what struck me most was the idea of experiencing the Lord Jesus right where I am. To live like Him in one's family, at work, in relationships with others and to be his. To live the life of Jesus in Nazareth. To pass along joyfully, with Jesus, his message of hope and love in everything that I encounter. Yes, sometimes it is difficult, but nothing is impossible with Jesus. I feel that I am being guided by the Holy Spirit in all the circumstances of life.



Jesus gradually leads me towards freedom and through our heavenly mother Mary and St. Angela. I am slowly advancing on the path of Love in all things.

Through the talents he gave me, Jesus wants to communicate with the people I meet (through photos, poetry, song). I also discover the wonderful splendor of God in all creatures and in all relationships.

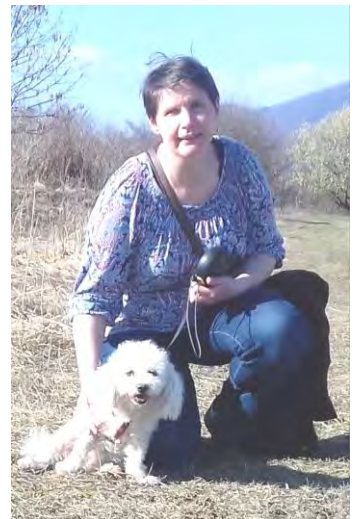
Through the formation in the institute, Jesus helps me to know myself, to accept myself as I am. I am grateful and learn to accept not only my freedom but also the freedom of others. He teaches me to be a pencil in his hands and, although at times I do not realize it, he sanctifies those whom I meet or with whom I live through his presence in me.

Katarína Kudzbelová, Company of Slovakia

The Lord's Desire for Us Is Stronger than Death...

My name is Andrea.

I came to know the Company of St. Ursula in Slovakia four years ago, through our directress Maria. In January 2017 I met the Company for the first time in Košice during a conference on St. Angela Merici. Then events took a rapid turn: in May, on the feast of the Virgin



Mary of Fatima, I joined the Company, and two years later I made my first temporary consecration.

Everything did not always go smoothly...

The desire to be consecrated to the Lord was born in France, where I lived for 16 years. From the personal experience of the Lord's love, I arrived at the conviction that I could not live any other way than in the arms of God, completely for him, to act with him...

At first, still in France, in a time of lively and joyful faith, everything seemed simple. The Lord certainly gives us this grace at the beginning, so that the memory of it may accompany us in a time of less joy. I loved the Lord, the people and the Church inseparably, and I understood that I wanted to serve the Lord. I dived headlong into every "service" and found joy in it.

I had forgotten the ancient advice that love and caution should go hand in hand. And so, among many difficulties and setbacks, I lost joy and confidence.

I returned to Slovakia in 2014 and felt unworthy of the original idea of consecrated life. But the desire persisted. The Church's Year of Consecrated Life began, and so this "theme" captivated me completely.

But in what way did the Lord wanted this from me?

I did not know. I thought about my life, what I was doing, my choices.

I went on pilgrimage to Italy for a few days. I did not come back from the pilgrimage with a direct answer to the question of where and how, but with the *hidden treasure*. Through the guidance of the priest in Confession, the Lord encouraged me in this way: *if God wills it, he will make you understand*.

Some time later, I was called by Catholic television Lux to see whether I would be willing to interpret a live broadcast of the Holy Father's visit. I didn't even know what I would interpret. They also "forgot" to give me the texts. I was surprised to see it was a live broadcast of the grand opening of the Year of God's Mercy. This is how the theme of Mercy came into my life.

So, naïve and passionate about service in the Church, I accepted an offer to participate in a national project. They asked me to move from Trnava ("little Slovak Rome") in the southwest of the country to Martin in the north, where I knew no one and nothing.

All sorts of difficulties accumulated ... even those I would never have thought of. And so gradually hope faded, but love remained.

About six months after my first consecration, I began to drown in doubt again... But grace was not lacking...

In Confession, a priest once told me: the question is not whether you are or are not worthy, the promise is free, but rather **"how to live, how to walk to persevere in it?"**

The Lord's desire for us is stronger than death. This is his love. This is the basis of our commitment.

I am slowly beginning to love lovingly my ordinary life among the people of the world as a sister to one and all.

I work as a nurse in a hospital in the department of internal medicine. We are learning to have a very human experience among staff and patients, their families and each other. Between joy and pain, we try to live honestly and simply, accepting ourselves in our diversity.

I am very happy that my life is in God's hands. I thank God for everything, for all the people I meet.

I consider the hospital chapel of God's mercy to be my parish in Martin, because the Lord called me there at the beginning of my journey to Martin and within the Company. However, I feel at home in all the other environments too.

The Lord has taught me to love the diversity of communities and the greatness of God's work in each of them. God's love has no boundaries.

I also thank the daughters of Saint Ursula of Brescia, the sisters whose joy and welcome made me feel that I am truly the daughter of Saint Angela.

And thanks to our mother Angela for having laid out such a beautiful road for us.

Andrea, Company of Slovakia

Ring the Bell...
From Our Sisters in Eritrea,
Awaiting the Dawn of Hope...

*“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead;
and Christ will give you light.”*

(Ephesians 5:14)

Ring the bell: Let's wake up and get out of bed;
now is the time to awake from sleep
and look at time without end.

Let us begin to review our lives
with the word of God as our guide.

It is not the time to set out guided only by our own will.
It is time to kneel with truth and humility
and thank God with all our heart.

Ring the bell: It's time to ask forgiveness,
knowing that God created us for his glory.
God loved us and gave us His Only Son,
who saved us by paying with his precious Blood.
For this great gift of his, what is our answer today?
Our duty is to return to God with humility,
because he is the Way, the Truth and the Life
and welcomes us with an embrace of great love.

Ring the bell: Let us encourage one another with the word of God
to get up from everything that blocks us,
not with our own skill alone, but with the power of God.

Ring the bell: Let us get up and continue on our way,
not letting the lamp of our faith go out.

Ring the bell: Let us wash our hearts and hands
repeatedly with the soap of confession,
let's not let our interior be corrupted by the guilt of sin.
Let us remove all evil and root out our arrogance.
Let us love each other with all our hearts.

As the Prophet Isaiah points out to us *“Go, my people,
...and close the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a brief moment,*

until the wrath is past” (26:20).

The Lord will intervene for our salvation: “The Lord will free you from the fowler’s snare and from the destroying plague” (Psalm 91:3).

Let us pray for those who have died, for those who are sick.

May the Lord give mercy and health, guide and give Wisdom.

Ring the bell: Let us accept instructions and follow directions:

Let us keep our distance and wash frequently with soap and water, let us help ourselves not to get infected in this pandemic.

Illness does not distinguish between poor and rich; it exterminates all the people. But it will not be this way forever:

we want to gather together, we want to continue our usual life and talk about the future.

The dawn of hope will come and we will all embrace each other together.

Ring the bell: let us listen to wise advice;

let's avoid negligence, let's put the instructions into practice.

Even though the world, with its limited intelligence,

has refused to worship and thank God,

and human beings have gotten lost in stupid thinking,

and have worshipped and served what God himself created,

let us now listen to what God tells us: *“Two evils my people have done:*

they have forsaken me, the source of living waters; they have dug themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water” (Jeremiah 2:13).

Ring the bell: Today we have found time to learn new things.

The time will come when we must leave this world; together we bow our heads and feed on divine food.

In the end God will bring us into his house, with his angels. Let

us wait full of hope and love, because our life is heading in the right direction. Paradise awaits us.

***“Because you have kept my message of endurance,
I will keep you safe in the time of trial that is going to come to the
whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.”***

(Revelation 3:10)

Azieb & Tighisti, Group of Eritrea



Special Year of Laudato Si'

A special year for reflecting on the encyclical: May 24, 2020, to May 24, 2021.

Here is a prayer composed by Pope Francis for this occasion.

It would be a good idea to pray it...

Loving God,

Creator of Heaven, Earth, and all therein contained.

Open our minds and touch our hearts,

so that we can be part of Creation, your gift.

Be present to those in need in these difficult times, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.

Help us to show creative solidarity as we confront the consequences of the global pandemic.

Make us courageous in embracing the changes required to seek the common good.

Now more than ever, may we all feel interconnected and interdependent.

Enable us to succeed in listening and responding to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.

May their current sufferings become the birth-pangs of a more fraternal and sustainable world.

*We pray through Christ our Lord,
under the loving gaze of Mary, Help of Christians.
Amen.*



Surveying Integral Ecology in the Light of Laudato Si'

1. **Response to the cry of the Earth** (greater use of clean and renewable energy, reduction of fossil fuels to achieve carbon neutrality, protection and promotion of biodiversity, access to drinking water for all, etc.).
2. **Response to the cry of the poor** (defense of human life from conception to death and of all forms of life on Earth, paying special attention to the most vulnerable groups, including indigenous communities, migrants, children at risk of slavery, etc.).
3. **Ecological economy** (sustainable production, fair trade, ethical consumption, ethical investments, disinvestment from fossil fuels and from any other economic activity that could harm the planet and its inhabitants, investments in renewable energy, etc.).
4. **Adoption of a simple lifestyle** (moderation in the consumption of resources and energy: avoid single-use plastics, adopt vegetable-based diets and reduce meat consumption, make greater use of public transport and avoid polluting transportation, etc.).
5. **Ecological education** (review and redefine teaching programs, reform schools in the light of integral ecology with the aim of creating ecological awareness, stimulating concrete action and promoting the ecological vocation of young people, teachers, leaders in education, etc.).
6. **Ecological spirituality** (restoring a religious vision of God's creation, encouraging greater contact with nature in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude, promoting liturgical celebrations focused on creation, developing ecological approaches in catechesis, prayer, retreats, formation, etc.).
7. **Emphasis on community involvement and active participation in the care of Creation**, at local, regional, national and international levels (promoting public awareness campaigns, encouraging rootedness in the local area and nearby ecosystems, etc.).

An Invitation from One of Our Canadian Sisters

As a member of our diocesan Justice and Peace Committee, I recently received the following information: On 24 May 2020, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the encyclical, Pope Francis announced a Special Laudato Si' Anniversary Year from 24th May 2020 – 24th May 2021.

“I invite all persons of goodwill to adhere to it, to take care of our common home and our more fragile brothers and sisters,” said the Pope.

We invite everyone to join us. The urgency of the situation calls for immediate, holistic and unified responses at all levels – local, regional, national and international. We need, above all, “a peoples’ movement” from below, an alliance of all people of good will. As Pope Francis reminds us, *“All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents”* (LS, 14).

For excellent information go to: <https://www.laudatosi.org>.

No doubt, each of us is responding in some way in our care for our common home. I have found that my “ecological conversion” has taken place slowly, often in little ways.

The photo is a picture of our community garden which brings



beauty, hope and food to a marginal area of the city of Saskatoon in Canada where I live. It definitely looks like we are “going green”!



Bernice Daratha, Company of Toronto, Group in western Canada

Martha: Example of a Secular Vocation...



I found this fascinating title in the online August newsletter of the Company of St. Ursula in the United States.

I was invited to reflect on this example of a secular vocation.

But does Martha really have something to teach about consecration to God in the world? But was not Mary, the contemplative sister, the one who *had chosen the better part*?

Why Martha?

Because Gabriele Cozzano, Angela Merici's faithful secretary, cited Martha of Bethany among the saints remembered as an example of secular vocation in ordinary life.

In his writings we find these beautiful expressions:

The Church began in virginity and must end in virginity. Virginity, I say, which outwardly lives according to the common way of life... This is how Our Lady lived, St. Joseph, St. Martha... St. Ursula and very many others (Cozzano's Comforting Epistle 966).

❖ **Who are my points of reference for my secular vocation?**

Why Martha?

Because she was a friend of Jesus, and Jesus certainly did not choose his friendships at random.

On his way up to Jerusalem, Jesus found hospitality with a family: two sisters, Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus in Bethany, near the holy city, **welcomed him into their home and offered him food and lodging. This would often happen**, particularly in the week before Jesus' Passion (cf. Mk 11:11; Mt 21:17; Jn 12:1-11).

Jesus, who had been rejected by the Samaritans, found a home that welcomed him, that **allowed him to enjoy the intimacy of friendship, to rest, to have time to think about his mission.**

When he entered the house, **he was welcomed by Martha**, an active, enterprising woman, who felt committed to preparing him food and a table worthy of a rabbi, of a friend.

She was also busy and absorbed in service... and who among us would not be?

The Gospel passage teaches us that hospitality is twofold: one must welcome the other not only into one's own home, but also into one's own life. This comes from a strong relationship of friendship with the Lord that Martha experienced very well, to the point of expressing, at a tragic moment, the death of her brother: *You are the Christ, the Son of God.*

In the meantime, Martha and Mary were certainly not opposites, as Pope Francis reminds us well: *"Listening to the word of the Lord, contemplation, and concrete service to our neighbor are not two opposing attitudes, but, on the contrary, they are both essential aspects of our Christian life. Aspects that should never be separated, but lived in deep unity and harmony."*

❖ **How is my friendship with the Lord? How do I live it? As a duty to do, or as a duty to be, a duty to be with Him?**

Why Martha?

Because she represents the exchange of sweet reproaches... "Don't you care?"

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and anxious about many things."

"Jesus affectionately reproaches Martha. And he does so by contradicting not the service, but the worry; by questioning not the generous heart, but the anxiety. Those words repeat to all of us: beware of too much that lurks, of too much that can rise up and swallow you, that worries, that takes away freedom and distracts from the face of others. 'Martha,' Jesus seems to tell her, 'first people, then things.' He can't stand that Martha is confined in her role of service, drowning in too many commitments. 'You are much more than that,' he tells her.

'You can be with me in a different relationship.' **God doesn't look for servants, but for friends;** he doesn't look for people who do things for him, but for people who let him do things, who let him be God" (Ermes Ronchi).

And as a friend, Martha will still feel free to scold Jesus for not coming when her brother Lazarus was dying. A practical woman and a woman of faith: *"But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will grant you... Yes, O Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God..."* (cf. John 11:17 and following).

- ❖ **Do I let myself be questioned by the Master, the Christ, the Lover of us all? Do I allow myself to reproach, to get hold of myself again... to continue to savor his presence and his friendship?**

Why Martha?

Because she teaches me to welcome...

Martha followed Jesus: in her ordinary life, almost imperceptible, at home, in her daily life: "Martha hosted him" (Luke 10:38).

Martha welcomed him, prepared, was busy, was engaged in many services... she also feels free to come forward and question the Master about the attitude of her sister who is "chatting": *"Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me"* (Luke 10:40).

- ❖ **How do I welcome, make room for the Lord, the sweet and kind savior, every day in my life?**



Why Martha?

Because St. Angela proposes Martha's style to me...

In the Company, we too follow Jesus in our insignificant secular occupations, without any striking public signs.

Let us pick up St. Angela's 5th Counsel, about secular life, and we will discover how St. Angela wants us to put "Martha" into practice *in our homes, in eating, drinking, sleeping, laughing, listening, talking, visiting each other, in any place, in behavior, in actions...*



For St. Angela we must be Martha, in the style of Mary. *Let them have Jesus Christ for their only treasure, for there also will be love.* Certainly we too, like Martha, or perhaps more than Martha, need to hear the calm voice of the Master: *"Martha, Martha, you are worried and anxious about many things. There is need of only one thing..."* (Luke 10:41-42).

And so we find **the synthesis of our way of life, the only thing we need**, in our Constitutions (4.1) that we strive to live:

*"United to Him, source of true wisdom,
we try to bring about in our life
that admirable integration of action and
contemplation
which was found in our Mother and in our early
members:
being in the world, sharing in the active life,
they enjoy the contemplative life,
and in an admirable way,
join action to contemplation;
the height of contemplation does not deter them from
action,
nor does activity hinder
a taste for heavenly things."*

(Cozzano, Reply)

Kate

FROM THE COMPANIES AND GROUPS

120 Years of the Company of Bergamo



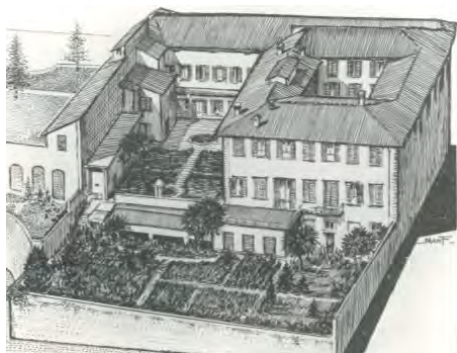
For a believer and for a Christian community, celebrating an anniversary is not and cannot be reduced to a simple external celebration or

the evocation of nostalgic memories. Instead, it represents a propitious occasion to thank, reflect, check back, and plan the future before the Lord, who through his Spirit has raised and continues to raise wonders in his Church. This also applies to the Company of Saint Ursula, which in 2020 recalls its 120 years of presence in the Diocese of Bergamo.

The archives contain the names of thousands of women who consecrated themselves to the Lord as daughters of St. Angela. Even though their names and faces slowly disappear from our memory, they are well known to the Lord, who wrote them in the Book of Life.

In a discreet, even hidden way, these sisters of ours worked with joy and passion in the Lord's vineyard, irrigating our land with their prayers and sacrifices. Thanks to them, our land has brought forth masterpieces of holiness, works of charity and service, vocations to the priesthood and





the consecrated life, beautiful testimonies of authentic Christian life. There is only one thing to say: thank you, Lord!

In the face of this long and fruitful history, a look at the present could induce a sense of bewilderment, provoke a series of questions, or bring a veil of sadness: today in Bergamo there

are just over twenty Angelines. Why so few? Why is this wonderful charism of St. Angela Merici – one of holiness lived in daily life – so little appreciated, or in any case no longer attracting girls and young women? Why, as we often say, does the Lord not "send more vocations" to the Company?

It is not up to us to scrutinize God's designs. Our task is to live the present as a time of grace, knowing how to seize the opportunities for good that it offers us.

Seven years ago, when the bishop asked me to become an assistant to the Company, my friends told me that I should simply accompany a reality that had now reached sunset. Instead, the Lord has given me the grace to witness the truth of the Psalmist's words that the righteous will flourish like palm trees, will grow like cedars of Lebanon, planted in the house of God, even "bearing fruit even in old age" (cf. Ps 91:15).

In general, when one gets older one tends to shut oneself away, to reduce relationships with others, to repeat patterns consolidated over time. The Company of Bergamo has not followed this path, but on the contrary has opened up, has multiplied relationships, has dared to take new paths.

A few examples: until a few years ago, the Company's central house was closed to outsiders, so much so that even many priests, like



myself, residing in the diocesan seminary – whose gate is 30 meters from the entrance door to the Angelines – had never entered it. Then, thanks to the directress Elisa, supported by the whole Company, the house opened and even agreed to welcome within its walls an important diocesan reality, the Pope John XXIII Foundation.

Thus, every day there is an opportunity for a meeting, an exchange of words, a precious mutual help in the demanding work involved in maintaining such a beautiful but also such a large house.

Another example: despite the reduced number of Angelines, the Company of Bergamo has not eliminated initiatives but, with the approval of the diocesan bishop, has had the courage to create a Foundation dedicated to Saint Angela Merici that will be in charge of keeping alive the memory of such a precious treasure [the spirit of St. Angela] as well as taking care of the preservation of the house and promoting cultural and spiritual initiatives in harmony with the Merician charism.



One last example. During the tremendous COVID-19 epidemic, our Company thought to express its concrete closeness to the people most affected and in need of help, allocating a significant sum for them, through the hands of the bishop.

There is no better way to celebrate an important anniversary: thank the Lord by making the logic of his Providence our own. We joyfully offer a small sign of charity, in the knowledge that we have received so much from God's grace and have been blessed by Him.

Father Ezio Bolis,
Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Company

Words from the Company of Bergamo:



Dear sisters, we who belong to the Diocese of Bergamo, which has been strongly affected by the pandemic, thought not to remain inert, crying and watching the many victims that this virus has destroyed, but also to do something to contribute to those in trouble.

We know that our sisters have served many priests, helped in parishes, led prayer groups, and comforted the sick with visits and with the Eucharist. And now the suffering of this people is also ours.

Thinking of our 120th anniversary in this diocese, we wanted to offer our presence with a gesture of love.

To this end, in agreement with our assistant, Fr. Ezio Bolis, we gave our generous contribution of money to our bishop, who is doing his best to meet the most urgent needs.

We believe that our St. Angela is happy and smiles at us for this gesture of ours that seeks to be a “thank you” for what we have received and given in these 120 years. We also invite you to join us in welcoming the embrace of our Foundress.

Elisa Bortolato

Response of the Bishop of Bergamo:

Dear Elisa and dear Don Ezio,

I am deeply moved by and grateful for your generous commitment to express to those who are in precarious situations of family and work difficulties because of the contagion. From this perspective we know that a difficult time awaits us.

I would also like to welcome the feelings that accompany your generosity: they are a testimony of that spirituality that St. Angela gave to her daughters and that you have re-appropriated on this 120th anniversary.

May the Lord bless you all,

+ Francesco Beschi

Group of Eritrea



First of all we want to thank the Lord for the great gift of being able to meet together after so long apart because of the corona virus.

We sang Psalm 133 of sisterly love: *"How good and how pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell as one... There*

the Lord has decreed a blessing, life forever more."

In the past, we used to make the annual spiritual exercises together in a comfortable place, but this year, in this particular situation, we could not be together.

For this reason only the Asmara group was able to gather for the spiritual exercises from July 31 to August 2.

The title of our retreat was taken from the book of Isaiah 30:15: ***"By waiting and by calm you shall be saved, in quiet and in trust shall be your strength."***

Abba Aron, our ecclesiastical assistant, was absent and so Abba Haile Tesfamariam, a Vincentian, accompanied us. We found a place in our House of St. Angela. The days began with Holy Mass, then breakfast together, the first meditation, time of silence, meditation and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament of Jesus. After lunch a little rest, in the afternoon the second meditation, still time of silence and meditation, Rosary, prayers of intercession and thanksgiving. The meditations were truly instructive and profound. I remember some titles:

- 1) The meaning and usefulness of spiritual exercises
- 2) Stop and ask yourself: *who are you, where are you going?*
- 3) I will listen to the Lord my God speaking to me
- 4) What hinders prayer?

5) The pillars of consecrated life: poverty, purification, obedience, trust

6) *We are a letter of Christ* (2 Cor 3:3).

Father reminded us that the end of the exercises also corresponds to a new beginning: everything we have heard and learned we must now put into practice in our lives.

For this great gift from the Lord, we were all happy and we thanked God and repeated with St. Peter: ***"Lord, it is good for us to be here, let us make three tents, one for you, and one for Moses and one for Elijah"*** (Mt 17:4).

"Thou hast cheered me with Thy wonders, O Lord; I sing with joy for the works of Thy hands. How great are your works, O Lord!"
(Psalm 92: 4-5)

Azieb Arefaine



Christiana and Jane, all Nigerian sisters.

Let us thank the Lord together for such abundance of gifts and feel committed to accompany this nascent promise in the land of Nigeria.

Vania Rampone

Group of Nigeria

At the conclusion of the annual spiritual exercises of the Company of Padua, which accompanies the Group of Nigeria, on August 30, 2020, we welcomed Patricia for her first consecration. We also admitted Gloria, Elisabeth,



Company of Burundi: Explosion of Grace!



On August 29 and 30 in the Cathedral of Christ the King in Mushasha, Diocese of Gitega:

- ❖ **23 first consecrations,**
- ❖ **30 renewals,**
- ❖ **42 consecrations for life**



Father Modesto, guide and leader of the spiritual exercises for the Company of Burundi, explains:

For the sisters of Burundi, for many years now this meeting for spiritual exercises has been the highlight of the year. That is even more true now.

They prepare and save up in order to be able to participate and contribute materially and spiritually to the success, sure that they will receive even more than they give.

Also this year they had to provide for their travel expenses, a contribution for the reception... then a kilogram of beans each.

***There were about 250 participants** and it says a lot that no microphone was ever used, because there was none...but also because their eager attention immediately and joyfully absorbed as much as they could take in, with serene gratitude.*

In my many years (56) of priesthood I have never found such a large assembly whose size was matched by so much joy in listening and participating.

In a review of the Company's first three years of autonomy, all of them were full of gratitude for the unexpected and miraculous



progress, the largest Company in the Merician world...

May the Lord continue to give us the joy of living with joyful

humility.

With much affection and much grateful joy,

Padre Modesto



Company of Congo

In tune with Burundi, on the same day, August 30, the Company of Congo also celebrated **new consecrations: two in Mbuji mayi and Kananga and four in Lubumbashi.**



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