

In the same charism with responsibility



n. 1 - 2021

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

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TO THE READERS

The Gift of Fidelity, the Joy of Perseverance...

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has given us a document entitled: **"The Gift of Fidelity, the Joy of Perseverance. Orientations."**

This document makes us reflect on our vocation, formation, fidelity and perseverance.

I wanted to read this document in a Mercian style, in order to rediscover our charism, in order to set it down today too in time and history, with the orientations proposed by the Church.

Certainly, all the difficulties pointed out in the document are not foreign to our Institute; they also question us on some hot topics: discernment, accompaniment, cooling, seriousness, coherence...

In the meantime, the title of the document recalls a **gift: fidelity, and a commitment: perseverance.**

Fidelity and perseverance go hand in hand; they are equivalent, they are synonyms of **joy**, firmness, stability, continuity, constancy, regularity, dedication, love...

On the other hand, the flipside of the coin makes us think of the risks of non-fidelity and non-perseverance: carelessness, instability, inconstancy, infidelity, abandonment, defection...

And in order not to run these risks, we try to seize the positive.

Total and Exclusive Dedication

"Here lies the meaning of the vocation to the consecrated life, an initiative entirely of the Father, who requires from those he has chosen a response of total and exclusive dedication. The experience of this gratuitous love of God is so intimate and strong that the person feels s/he must respond with the unconditional dedication of her/his life, consecrating everything, present and future, into his hands" (Orientations n. 32).

Our Constitutions echo this: *"In Christ, the Father offers each of us the **special grace** of consecration in the Company. With our response, through taking up the evangelical counsels, we express the **firm and absolute will to give ourselves unconditionally to God and to our sisters and brothers, and to be faithful for all of our life**"* (Constitutions 18.1).

Sisterhood...

"A lived **sisterhood/brotherhood** (fraternity) has been and continues to be a valid support for the perseverance of many. In a truly sisterly/brotherly community, each one feels co-responsible for the fidelity of the other; each one gives her/his contribution to a serene atmosphere of shared life, of understanding, of mutual help... Thus, **the community, which sustains the perseverance of its members, also acquires the strength of a sign of God's perennial fidelity**" (Orientations n. 37).

The Company...

"In the Company, we want to seek, build and safeguard the spirit of unity and communion, unmistakable signs of the authenticity of our communion with God.... In sharing among our sisters in Christ, we will find the help to live according to the Spirit in our personal, social and ecclesial life, and the support to overcome the trials of our earthly pilgrimage" (Constitutions 4.4).

Joyful Perseverance...

In her writings St. Angela calls for perseverance, inviting us to:

- *remain as we have been called by God;*
- *live as is required of true spouses of the Most High;*
- *be vigilant...*

Remain in Love

"In order to avoid the tragedy of the abandonment of discipleship or the possible sterility of the vocation, disciples are insistently invited to **remain**. This verb, so dear to the Fourth Gospel, refers to the constant desire and commitment to correspond to covenant love and to cling to the style of Christ." *To remain in love* (Jn 15:9), in fact, is to understand that love is also service, that it is taking care of others" (Orientations nn. 104-105).

Remain with the Lover...

- *My Lord, my only life and my hope....*
- *All our wealth, love, and delight... in God alone...*
- *With a continuous act of love, let us keep alive in ourselves the expectation of the ultimate encounter with our "Lover"*
- *Jesus Christ as our only treasure... in him will be love...*

Let us take up the invitation of the Congregation (CICLSAL), reflect on these guidelines and *then....*

Let us persevere faithfully and joyfully in the work we have begun.

Caterina Dalmasso



LETTER OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION

“Raise your head”

Dear sister,

Raise your head. This is the proclamation that the Word made Flesh in Jesus delivers to us.

Human, creative, social, political reality, the time in which we are immersed, the space we are given to move in is all so narrow, small, limited, weighed down by fear, loneliness, precariousness, distrust of everything and everyone....

On this sea, in this desert, in this stony and dusty earth where we are immersed, a Word resounds: **Raise your head.**

We do well to pay attention to this word, because it is Jesus who utters it, Jesus who makes it resound inside and outside of us. It is Jesus who brings it to fulfillment.

St. Angela must have heard it often and often paused to understand it in prayer, to welcome it, to savor it, to let herself be transformed, shaped, educated and to live by this Word.

Her experience, her story, which we have retraced on the occasion of the 485th anniversary of the foundation of the Company (November 25, 2020), commits all of us, her daughters, to place this Word at the center of our hearts and minds and to pay attention to it.

St. Angela, immersed as she was in her historical, social, ecclesial and environmental context, was captured by nothing, and nothing weighed her down, because her heart was inhabited by that Word which allowed her to rise, to free herself, to fill herself with Truth, with Communion, with Silence, with Creativity in the Spirit. Saint Angela did not run away, she did not hide, she did not isolate herself from reality, she did not let herself be overwhelmed. Rather, immersed in her time, accompanied by the Word, she paid close attention, she watched, she waited, with her head raised: *My soul waits for the Lord, he is my help and my shield. In him my heart rejoices, and I trust in his holy name. I look toward the mountains. From where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. Who will ascend the mountain of the Lord? One with innocent*

hands and a pure heart. Lord, let your grace be upon me, for in you I hope. Thus, every day, every moment, she handed herself over in trust to the hands of the Creator Spirit who never stops working, creating and making all things new. In her the Spirit worked so much and in a great way, because her heart was pliable clay in the hands of the Potter. The Spirit who dwelt in her brought to light through her a new reality: the Company.

The Company: that small/large spiritual family, that totally spiritual community, totally sisterly, totally dedicated to competing only in esteeming, loving, and listening to each other, in circulating the grace of God's presence, and in pleasing only Jesus Christ the Spouse.

That new reality created by the Spirit, which took shape thanks to Saint Angela and her first daughters and sisters long ago in 1535, has come down to us and is presented to us today once again in its originality and freshness: *"Because, dearly beloved daughters and sisters, God has granted you the grace of setting you apart from the darkness of this miserable world and of uniting you together to serve his divine Majesty, you have to thank him infinitely that, to you especially, he has granted such a singular gift"* (Rule, Prologue).

Seeing such grace, seeing this work of the Spirit which has reached us all, we raise our heads. We give thanks, we praise, we marvel, and we recognize the great gift of being part of the Company.

We have been touched by a mystery of grace and benevolence from God. We have been called, *chosen to be true and chaste spouses of the Son of God.* We are called by Love to love. *Persevere faithfully and joyfully in the work you have begun. And beware of losing your fervor* (Last Legacy).

Saint Angela knows the human soul well, she knows that the force of Grace and the force of Evil struggle inside us and contend for our hearts. The experience of the psalmist is often our experience: *"The enemy persecutes me, he tramples my life to the ground, my spirit languishes within me, my heart freezes."* But if our gaze is illuminated by mercy we can experience grace and communion with the Author of Life: *"For your name's sake, Lord, let me live, deliver me from distress, for the sake of your justice. By your faithfulness disperse my enemies; cause those who oppress me to perish, for I am your servant"* (Psalm 142).

Raise your head, for *you are servants of Jesus Christ clothed with a new and stupendous dignity.... Act, move, believe, strive, hope, cry out to Him with all your hearts...* We do not want to walk through life with our heads bowed, weighed down and obscured by worries, fears and concerns, but we want *to look at the things above....* Let us keep our gaze fixed on the Crucified and Risen One and then on humanity that suffers and rejoices, that dies and lives....

Let us walk on this earth in the style of Saint Angela: with our ear attentive to the Word of Life and with hands open to lift up and welcome so many human dramas, so many words and so many silences.... All this is possible and can happen *if in God we have all our wealth, and apart from God we see ourselves to be completely poor, and a total nothing* (Rule, Ch. X On Poverty) *if we are joyful and always full of charity and faith and hope in God* (Rule, Ch IX On Virginity) *if we obey God and every creature for love of God* (Rule, Ch. VIII Of Obedience).

The call to consecrated life in the Company requires a free and continuous inner choice. Are we willing to live as Saint Angela did, *in the common and ordinary conditions of human existence, united in a spousal stance to the Son of God, her Lover?* (Constitutions 2.1) Let us renew our “yes” each day with *joy and gratitude*.

United together in this *entirely new institute of that admirable form of life which the Savior lived and with him Our Lady, the Apostles, the Virgins and so many Christians of the early Church* (Const. 2.2). **Let us raise our heads** and, in Company, let us go through the events of history with our hearts in God and our hands stretched out to so many brothers and sisters who thirst and hunger for relationships, Truth and Hope.

Valeria Broll

**New Ecclesiastical Vice-assistant to the Council of the
Federation Is Named
Mons. Rosario La Delfa**



CONGREGATIO
PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSECRATAE
ET SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE

Prot. n. I.s. 7153/20

BEATISSIMO PADRE,

Sua Eccellenza Reverendissima Mons. Adriano Tessarollo, Vescovo di Chioggia, attuale Assistente Ecclesiastico del Consiglio della Federazione della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, Istituto Secolare di Sant'Angela Merici, ha presentato alla Sede Apostolica la richiesta di confermare la nomina del Rev.mo Mons. Rosario La Delfa, sacerdote della Diocesi di Piazza Armerina, quale Vice- Assistente Ecclesiastico del Consiglio della Federazione della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, Istituto Secolare di Sant'Angela Merici, secondo quanto disposto dall'art. 36.5 delle Costituzioni del suddetto Istituto, per i motivi esposti.

La Congregazione per gli Istituti di vita consacrata e le Società di vita apostolica, valutata attentamente ogni cosa, visto il parere favorevole del Vescovo di Piazza Armerina, concede quanto richiesto, confermando la nomina del Rev.mo Mons. Rosario La Delfa, sacerdote della Diocesi di Piazza Armerina quale Vice- Assistente Ecclesiastico del Consiglio della Federazione della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, Istituto Secolare di Sant'Angela Merici.

Dato in Vaticano, il 15 settembre 2020

✱ José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.
Arcivescovo Segretario

Carmen Ros Nortes
Sr. Carmen Ros Nortes, N.S.C.
Sottosegretario

*Orient yourself
to things above
amid the events of every day*

The Company of Saint Ursula in the Time of Pandemic

Mons. Rosario La Delfa
Vice-assistant to the Council of the Federation

A Word among Us ...

The Covid-19 emergency continues to challenge our country and much of the world. For the past year or so, our habits have changed under a heartfelt call to responsibility that has limited many of our daily activities and relationships. Although almost all of us find ourselves unprepared in the face of such an unexpected and rapidly spreading epidemic, consecrated women in particular can also put the strength of their faith at the service of **promoting spaces of social influence** in which they can offer proposals that are consistent with the identity and charism of the Company of Saint Ursula to which they belong. They can also **initiate processes** that correspond to their vocational choice.



This choice is very well summarized in the Constitutions of the Company, which explain the mission of the consecrated women in the Secular Institute of Saint Angela Merici: *“Walking faithfully in this form of life, we will participate actively in the coming of the Reign, giving our contribution by: carrying the renewing strength of the Gospel into the environments where God has called us; discerning the plan of God for history; orienting daily events in the light of things above; being workers for peace and harmony everywhere”* (3.4).

While most consecrated persons cannot be actively engaged in the places where this emergency is taking place, they can still act within their emotional, religious, social and cultural settings through the means at their disposal. So it is worthwhile to exchanging a few words. On one hand, let us remind ourselves how the Company arose to promote in the world a social and religious commitment by consecrated women in situations similar to this one. On the other hand, let us reflect on how the daughters of Saint Angela Merici can bear witness to "**regenerate**" their homelands with Christian feminine genius, underscored by their virginal consecration.

The term "regenerate" not only calls to mind the time when, with God's grace, everything will be finished and the commitment that we will all have to assume then, but it also qualifies the root of woman's unceasing commitment to life. In fact, woman is the fruitful source of life, but also its skillful guardian at all times.

The “Company of Saint Ursula”: from Regular Participation in Social Life to the Task of Its Regeneration

Founded in a delicate moment of history, between the 15th and 16th centuries, by Angela Merici, recognized as the friend and mother of many, the Company, from its foundation, has gradually given substance to the willingness of many women to be instruments of peace and union and to participate, through work and suffering, in the social and ecclesial life of their time. Thanks to her intense relationship with God, based on listening to Sacred Scripture and on the Eucharist, and to dialogue with men and women, the experience begun by Angela would give life to a highly innovative and original foundation. On the social level it affirmed the right of women to choose their own life, and on the spiritual level it emphasized the dignity and richness of the feminine genius. Over time, through the concerns of the consecrated women, the Company would be able to play a delicate and serious role of gathering women and associations inspired by Christian ideas for human promotion, justice and peace.

That experience contributed to defining an **unprecedented identity for women** beyond the walls of their homes and convents, becoming a discreet driving force for participation in the Church, but

even more a driving force for the commitment to witness to the Gospel, human promotion and solidarity in society.

What distinguishes this action of consecrated Christian witness is its deep rooting in the religious, social, cultural, political and civil fabric and its openness to broad collaboration, aimed at building **networks of relationships and projects**.

Its nature is to **combine faith and history**, and this it intends to accomplish to this day in the awareness of generating in every consecrated woman the full awareness of her human and Christian, civil and ecclesial uniqueness, educating her to participate fully as an irreplaceable subject in the decisive spheres of social life.

In fact, women, in the diversity and peculiarity of their own way of being, feeling and acting, represent an essential reserve of energy, potential and positive influence at all times and especially now. This historical phase requires an additional sensitivity to enrich and humanize the social fabric torn apart by the present pandemic circumstance, regenerating it from within.

This is the difference between "participating" in social life and regenerating it. It is not a question of restoring something after a desolating ruin. No, it means infusing life right now where fear, the loneliness of isolation, nerve-racking waiting, mistrust, poverty, and the endless pessimistic effects of the pandemic, besides distancing people from each other, are so destructive to hope. Here I hope to remind everyone how important the specific identity of the Company is, in relation to the ongoing Covid-19 emergency. The Company wants to illuminate its essential task of combining faith and history.

Tenderness: the Way to Regenerate a New Humanism

The question that weighs on the Company is how to behave during the Coronavirus emergency. **Tenderness** permeating attitudes, manners and words is the practical way for each consecrated person to reach out to others and express closeness and genuine dedication in the predicament when physical presence and tactile contact are completely excluded. Let us reflect together on some attitudes to cultivate by appealing to the traits of tenderness and a sense of responsibility as ways to regenerate a new understanding of humanity.

Between Meekness and Shrewdness: The Christian Identity of Ursuline Commitment

In this time of emergency all believers are called to behave as conscious and collaborative citizens, assuming their responsibilities in harmony with the authorities. It is true that many people are suffering from the lockdown, from the preventive measures in social interactions, especially for churches. For consecrated persons, this is an opportunity to stimulate a sureness of God's love in the hearts of those who ask religious questions. It is also important to act responsibly to safeguard the supreme good of their own health and that of others in God's name.

It is also a good opportunity to **counsel** and **advise** alternative ways to participate in and keep contact with one's church community and support for prayer through available media. First, of course, do serious and reliable research, reading or listening to meditations or lessons on the Word of God; forms of prayer suitable for adult growth in faith. It is even more necessary to **create times for spiritual union** in prayer to beg the Lord for mercy and for strength for the sick and health-care personnel to face this challenge courageously, as well as for all public servants.

In order to bind others together in **ecclesial communion**, it is also appropriate to know about and point out the initiatives of one's own diocese, of the Holy See, and of other Christian realities. It is good to see how opportunities for spiritual and liturgical companionship continue to flourish everywhere.

Certainly, the hardest thing to give up is our regular liturgical life. We have already had to scale down the customs of Easter and Christmas in 2020. We do not know what will become of the next feasts. Again, our "**creativity of love**," as Pope Francis expresses it, will foster opportunities to experience and interiorize, as well as advocate for, the most fundamental meanings of the liturgical year. We must balance in our own attitudes such fundamental propositions as forgiveness and reconciliation; the more conscious assumption of our baptismal commitments; renewal of life and abandonment of mentalities and habits contrary to the gospel; the renewal of social relationships. The list could go on and on.

Handling Information as a Form of Consolation

In the present situation, given the speed with which information about the pandemic is circulating, one of the fundamental needs is to seek and promote clear, unequivocal, and scientifically based information from authoritative sources in order to counteract alarmist, reckless, and inappropriate communication. This counteracts rash reactions of panic, instilling awareness, reasonableness and moderation in public opinion, which so often reacts emotionally and irrationally. It also helps to solidify a genuine understanding of reality.

By pursuing **truthful information** that is not twisted to partisan interests, then within our social circles we can cooperate with and encourage the observance of the health restrictions and convince others about their effectiveness and the sacrifices required. At the same time we can reassure people with the help of reliable and well-considered information.

Communications media must be used appropriately for the common good, putting sensationalism or the search for sensational statements in second place, to contribute to a climate that is aware of risks but serene and confident. In situations of danger and emergency, the exercise of free communication should be adjusted according to prudence.

This first attitude will greatly help public servants (civil, health, religious authorities, etc.). Contributing their sensitivity and intelligence at home and work, Saint Angela's daughters will be able to promote an environment of factual truth among their fellow citizens who are not always accustomed to searching for and finding facts and news or deciphering their true meaning.

Being Sentinels on Behalf of the Poor and the Fragile

During emergencies like this, attitudes of mistrust and marginalization easily arise. They reinforce false security and forms of segregation. Committed consecrated persons can foster awareness of the difference between isolation and exclusion. When a society is alarmed, it is easier to compromise fundamental rights, and rarely do voices arise to defend and protect them. In keeping with the Company's spirit and

its fine tradition of social commitment, it is necessary to reaffirm the priority of fundamental human rights and to act so that they are honored.

For example, it would be a good idea to spend some time researching and studying all those laws that our institutions are promoting, in order to act as local resource persons helping others to understand and apply them. For this, it would be good to involve skilled professionals as part-time volunteers, to clarify and provide insights on matters such as aid to families and the needy, the provisions of the law regarding workers, schools, health, social justice, etc.

Knowing their own territory, the local Companies could compile a list of situations that need specific attention and look for sensitive and generous professional experts to consult. One of our great contemporary poverties is illiteracy and the resulting social exclusion, so frequent among us. The consecrated women of the Secular Institute of Saint Angela Merici can undoubtedly fill this gap with their commitment.

It would also be desirable to try to understand as well as possible the ways and standards for access to the limited medical resources available to combat contagion: in prevention, in treating infection, in vaccination. Loving, correct advice and human support are certainly an irreplaceable help, especially for the frightened. It is also helpful to learn patience when resources must be rationed. Contrary to the appearance of inept institutions, rationing is usually the only possible good that can be achieved with limited means in a serious situation. The only way to handle it is through **attitudes of solidarity and sharing**.

We Christians learn charity directly from Christ, who "though he was rich, became poor for our sakes, that we might become rich through his poverty" (2 Cor 8:7-9). Charity, like oil in the lamp, must sustain the vigilance of the daughters of Saint Angela. Rather than focusing on ourselves, in this time in which we are all experiencing fragility, our thoughts should go actively to the poor: they are many. Statistics give us dry but impressive numbers.

It turns out today that there are families who have no money to buy groceries. After years of great abundance, some are returning to hunger, real hunger, what our grandparents told us about during the war and

post-war years. No one is counting those who have nothing at all or who, after the virus, will have nothing, yet these people are here. It is a parallel world, underground, made of a thousand forms of resourcefulness and secrets. This category also includes the unemployed, temporary workers, underground workers, the elderly, undocumented immigrants, the homeless, but also seasonal foreign workers, caregivers with expired residence permits, exploited women, and the undergrowth of our opulent society.

It is the diverse world of the disenfranchised. The virus is exposing every reality, and hopefully it will also open our eyes to notice. Inequalities cannot descend to the level of starvation or begging for a bowl of soup. The Company has always been in the forefront of raising awareness of human promotion and solidarity. We are the substance of the poor. This statement, in its idiosyncrasy, denounces the fact that the fate of the poor is linked to our way of using the goods entrusted to us.

Also close to us are the elderly. We are discovering the cruelty of the loneliness with which many of them died, and it makes us reflect on how we have treated them. The dead have paid twice: by being abandoned and by dying prematurely. Our Italy is aging and in the immediate future we will need to reflect on this serious and complex phenomenon. In the meantime, however, let's roll up our sleeves and put them at the center of our daily attention, let's smother them with calls, availability, consideration, services and grateful love.

Having laid bare the fragility of a society that is also opulent, the virus is not only the occasion for assessing the disaster. It is also a stimulus to take another look at the path of social progress that the “developed” countries have followed up to now, and to undertake new paths of individual, social, national and global growth.

The Task of Educating Consciences

The widespread and often irresponsible criticism of government provisions is not surprising. Some people think that these provisions are never sufficient and clear about unwise behavior. For protection, they call for ever more detailed norms regulating civil action and sanctions for those who transgress them. Others call for the liberalization of

behaviors to support economic interests. The Company can give good example in calling consciences to responsibility. During emergency and crisis, when regulations cannot cover the many cases that crop up, we need to develop the capacity for **mature discernment**. Discernment can grasp not just what is useful for oneself, but what constitutes "the best possible" to progress in charity and the common good.

We need to work toward **greater trust** in science, trust in the institutions responsible for managing the emergency and, specifically, in the people who, at the moment, represent those institutions. Trust also in people, at the root of the first two. Perhaps the most difficult, but also the most decisive. How could we live, coexist and even simply survive in our time and in our extraordinarily integrated and complex world if we did not trust in our neighbors and, in particular, in those who have skills and experiences beyond our knowledge? The regeneration of humanity starts from tenderness and not from distrust and hatred. It is done by awakening the conscience.

It doesn't take expertise in "exceptional situations" to be convinced that it is appropriate to trust those who have the responsibility and the task of leading us. This is the presupposition of a mature democracy that calls us to be on the front line with an attitude that is both demanding and constructive. The task of consecrated women in the world – as already mentioned – is to act with discerned awareness, especially with regard to the media and their habitual search precisely for exasperated sensationalism and, in many cases, their subservience to this or that political party with its propaganda and maneuvers. The Company has the task of promoting a **self-formation** capable of empowering the sisters to educate the people with whom they interact toward a wise use of the so-called social media, by definition prone to an excess of information that is not corroborated by a corresponding, comparable critical scrutiny and a reputation for responsibility.

Regenerating Hope

Pope Francis speaks of hope as "a risky virtue."

Perhaps the virtue that runs the most risk now is not faith. It is hope that is being shaken.

We have come to this very difficult experience ill-equipped in scientific and practical tools to deal with it, but also in hope to be able to face it better. We had long confused hope with unrealistic expectations, and it was closed up in some corner of private religion, because we had become accustomed to looking at the future as predictable, manageable, plannable, as if it were entirely in our hands. We had replaced hope with control.

You can still see the lack of hope in the arrogant claim of a date when the emergency will end (a contradiction in terms), the day that the world of economic production especially yearns for, to regain control. Now hope has been replaced by waiting for the vaccine.

Few seem to care about psychological and social balance, or even the number of the dead. The hurry is to get to "reopen" as soon as possible (say the prophet-influencers), despite the fact that the myth of a science that knows everything and solves everything has lost its luster.

In fact, hope is that virtue that allows us to cast a benevolent glance on the face of an unpredictable future.

But once again we have preferred to write and proclaim everywhere a slogan that is the translation of a superficial American *slang*: "Everything's gonna be alright." That's what people say, lacking meaningful words in the face of something irreparable, preferring to break the dignity of silence. It postpones the solution to the problem, blathering something. Or, in our case, a noisy musical din from joyful balconies.

To be convinced, it would be enough to re-watch hundreds of foreign films which have rewritten our lives according to their scripts, in which this phrase recurs, meaningless to the action. Or it would be enough to listen more carefully to the refrain that made the phrase famous in Bob Marley's popular song. In the same line, immediately before, we would hear Marley's cynical command, "Don't worry about a thing," everything's gonna be alright. The sudden collapse of this attitude, after the early balcony scenes, reveals how little luck it had. It disappeared with the advent of the second wave. This slogan is like the surrender of hope, giving in to a mortgage on tomorrow. But hope has to do with today.

Venerable Don Luigi Sturzo said it well: "I have felt political life as a duty and duty says hope." It seems to me that the Company can make this thought its own because of its desire to **combine spirituality and social commitment**. Hope is not a hypothesis about the future, not even a mathematical planning of it, even less letting go of responsibility. It is the capacity to anticipate it in the willingness to welcome the God who comes.

Hope has as its object the time of God and in its exercise the human person verges on God's way of being; he sees today with its anxieties and sorrows about tomorrow; he looks at everything and takes it into his hands (cf. Ps 9:35). Learning to live hope as a time shared with God implies the joyful assumption of the duty of lasting care for the common home, of feeling ourselves to be guests and no longer masters of this home, guardians and guarantors of its beauty and not owners, in a single word, servants of the Lord, proclaimers of the Gospel.

Faith in the resurrection of Jesus is at the origin of our hope. His Easter is the transit from the time of uncertainty and its suspension to the ardor that sets in motion the new time of history. "We had hoped that he would be the one...", the two disciples traveling to Emmaus declared, as if immobilized in a time that seemed lost, as they told the story of their first Easter. When they recognized him they "set out without delay" to announce a new time restored (cf. Lk 9:13-35). Hope is the way forward, just as love is the way back in a single journey: it is sharing with God: his time in our time.

These points can prompt a meditation on the Company's potential. In this moment it allows the Company to cultivate attitudes shaped by the gift of grace, the foundation of each consecrated woman's vocational choice. It would be beautiful to live this journey of hope together with Christ, confiding to him, like the two on the road to Emmaus, the uncertainties and anxieties that trap us in fear and drive us to retreat into the safety and defenses of our own homes. It would be beautiful to let his words warm our hearts until we are wrapped in the courage of tenderness. That tenderness can regenerate a new civilization in hope with the impetus of love.

Welcome and Thank You!!!

Dear Don Rino (as you like to be called),

Welcome as Vice-assistant of the Council of the Federation.

Welcome to this publication, our tool for connecting, intended to safeguard our unity in the same charism, with responsibility.... and where you are now included with your profound and challenging article.

Thank you for the gift of your participation.

Thank you: We will treasure this first contribution of yours for our formation, which will be helpful for our creative fidelity.

worldwide...

[illegible]

Geographically, Australia is a large continent with a land area similar to that of the USA. However, our population is only about 25 million. This is because 70% of this continent is arid land and only sparsely populated.

Living in it requires resilience, hard work, and a respect for the forces of nature. The isolation can be confronting.

There is much they can teach us about how to live in this landscape. Being the driest continent on the planet and having such an arid interior, most of our population lives on the coastal fringes.

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Being part of **Oceania** means that our national **borders are defined by the Pacific Ocean**. To travel ‘internationally’ is literally to travel ‘over-seas’. *To be a nation predominantly of immigrants, this too is isolation.* The British arrived here in 1788 to establish a colony with convicts who would become

free settlers. Consequently, we are perceived to be a western developed nation with most of our immigrants coming from Anglo-European countries up until the mid-20th century. Looking outwards across the seas, however, does not connect us to these distant earlier “homelands”.

Our region is Asia-Pacific. Our main trading partners are currently China, Japan and South Korea. The number of people in Australia claiming Asian ethnicity or ancestry has grown to 12% and this growth will rightly continue. The number claiming English ancestry has decreased to 36%. That decline will also continue. Asia-Pacific is regionally where we live. Asian countries are amongst our nearest neighbours.



Life on the coastal fringes is more hospitable. Our sunny skies, beautiful beaches, bushland with its unique flora and fauna, all call us outdoors. Our landscape may not have the

grandeur of other countries, but it has its own unique beauty.

Like our landscape, Australians are often said to be “understated” as a people. Australians are known to be “laid-back”, that, is relaxed and easy-going. This is not only due to our sunny skies and love of nature drawing us outdoors, but also due to our landscape

that demands of us a surrender to that which we can't control. The bushland, that we love so much and which separates our coastal fringe from the arid interior plains, is too often devastated by summer bushfires.



“We Are ONE, but We Are Many”

As one of our favourite songs acclaims. In our distance and isolation we have learnt to be open to all countries.



In 2019 *every single country from around the world* was represented in Australia's population and 29.7% of our population in 2019 was born overseas.

Over 20% of our population speak a language other than English at home, with the dominant languages being Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Italian and Greek. We rely on immigration to grow our population.

This tyranny of isolation and distance is the fuel that ignites our capacity to pull together in times of crisis, to champion the battlers irrespective of failure or success.

It is the fuel that drives us towards unity rather than polarisation when differences arise. It is the fuel that helps us to seek the common good first. The rights, good and freedom for the individual are first of all embedded in the common good.

We cannot stand beside each other in equality, solidarity and with utmost loyalty without also deeply respecting the dignity of each one. Respect for the dignity of each person is one of the primary values promoted by our Government.

Yet, we are far from perfect. Our First Nations Peoples are not yet recognised in our Constitution. The road to reconciliation is far from complete.

Our Government is slow to embrace action on climate change. We have our protests. We have an increasing gap between rich and poor.

However, we will not risk being a divided nation. We also love regulation and are generally compliant. We have good welfare and health systems.

Long term government planning over the last 200 years has also encouraged Australians to own their own homes – the aged pension is not adequate to pay rent. This makes our population less mobile than in other countries and brings with it certain stability in local communities. It is a concern of our Government that young people can no longer afford to buy their own home, particularly in large cities such as Sydney. The Government offers various schemes to encourage people to try to own their own home.

Spirituality

Many a religious poet and theologian have harnessed the image of the silent desert interior of this continent as a compelling image for the sense of the spiritual in many Australians.

A significant number on our 2016 census identified themselves as spiritual but not religious. This is an emerging space for conversation and dialogue, a space that needs to be nurtured. It a space I try to find in conversations. It is a conversational space outside the domain of formal evangelisation. However, it is the space where we can begin to pull back from a strident secularism.

More than 60% of our population would identify as belonging to some Christian denomination. Approximately 23% identify as Catholic. Less than half of those who identify as Catholic would celebrate Sunday Eucharist regularly. While we are one of the most secular nations, there is something about our landscape that nags at our spirit and calls us inward.

Vasco da Gama, a sixteenth century Portuguese explorer called Australia “the great south land of the Holy Spirit”.

Church and Ursuline

Ecclesially, the tyranny of distance and isolation allows our bishops to be somewhat insular and lacking in courageous outlook and vision. We do not have enough young men in our seminaries. There is a quiet acceptance that religious institutes in Australia will die out. The only ones to be encouraged into new life are the more monastic-style orders. There is no Conference of Secular Institutes.

What of the future for the Merician charism in Australia?



The Ursulines first arrived in Australia in 1882 from Duderstadt in Germany, via Greenwich in England. Schools begun by the Roman Union Ursulines remain enthusiastic about St Angela and her capacity to speak to young women of our day. The staff are committed to perpetuating the story of St Angela, the flame of her spirit, and holding her up as a model to young women. I am privileged to be invited to accompany them in this.

In a country that demands of its citizens respect for the dignity of each person, that values community service, and that relies on solidarity and unity to build the common good, it is easy to see a home for St Angela here.

I try to live and nurture these values wherever I find myself, building in a little “Gospel tweak” when necessary.

We are often called the “lucky” country. It is true, that in so many ways, this country is blessed, not least because of our distance and isolation giving us freedom and demanding of us resilience and a spirit of striving together.

Monica Vaughan, Asia-Pacific Group

Angela's Story, continued

Continuation of a section drawn from *Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart: The Rule, the Way* by Mary-Cabrini Durkin, published in English in 2005

Travels and Pilgrimages

Mantua

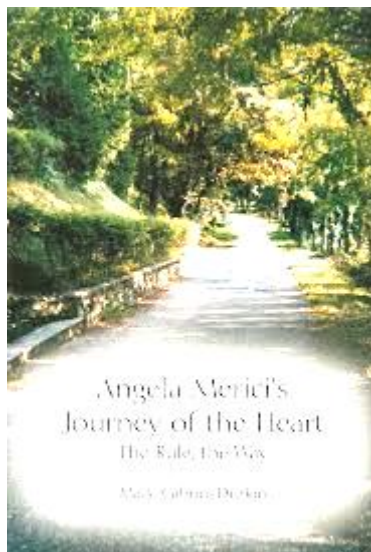
That pilgrimage to Mantua was one of many, even though travel is hard and dangerous.

Even so, I relish the different sights and places, especially ones that help me to experience God's presence and guidance more deeply. Two holy women, Osanna Andreasi and Stefana Quinzani, inspired me to travel, to seek these blessings. Both had shared in Christ's Passion by the stigmata, like St. Francis, and both experienced a mystic marriage with Christ, their heavenly Spouse. They were examples to me.

Antonio and I visited Blessed Osanna's tomb in Mantua around 1520, to pray there. Before her death in 1505, Blessed Osanna had belonged to the Third Order of the Dominicans. The holy Stefana shared her wisdom with me when I visited her in Soncino before her death.

Holy Land

Following the footsteps of Jesus Christ in the Holy Land was the most blest pilgrimage, and by far the most difficult. We were not sure till the last moment that we could even go. Antonio and my cousin Bartolomeo Biancosi and I went together in



1524.

We arrived in Venice, a few days before the feast of Corpus Christi. According to the custom, we pilgrims—forty-some—walked in procession from San Marco Cathedral to the port, wearing our wide-brimmed hats and carrying our traveling sacks and water bottles and gripping our walking staffs. The bishop blessed us and the ship. The next day we launched out onto the sea. We put in at Canea on the northwest coast of Crete, where suddenly I was almost blind! When we arrived in the Holy Land, only the eyes of my soul showed me where our Lord and savior lived and taught and healed. How I wept at Calvary and kissed the ground where *he poured out his blood for love of us*! All the way, my companions' care made God's love more visible than the places we visited. I had to depend on my walking staff and on them.

On our return, before sailing out of Jaffa, we had to stay eight days at Rama for safety, since armed assassins were lying in wait to kidnap us.

Amazingly, on our voyage home, God restored my sight as I prayed before a crucifix. I will never know how or why this strange blindness came upon me. Whatever the cause, God helped me to sharpen my inner sight and taught me to rely on my companions. Through this blindness came a way of seeing, not one I had planned. I had yearned to see the holy places, but I learned to experience them even without sight.

On the waters, a tempest separated us from our fleet and blew us off course as far as Tunisia. Then Turkish pirates menaced us. Near Durazzo, the Turkish captain came on board and we thought we might be attacked. We realized that the pirate fleet was lying in wait to attack us. How intensely we prayed! God must have guided the captain and sailors, because somehow we slipped by the ambush. We were saved.

We finally docked back at Venice in early November, more than five months after we had first embarked.

So many great artists have beautified the city! One of my favorite art works was the series of paintings of Saint Ursula and her Companions. The painter, Carpaccio, shows them as though they were in Venice right now. These martyrs of the early Church seem to be heroines of our own day.

Because Venice does so much to assist pilgrims, it is customary to assist the city's charities when pilgrims return. Antonio and Bartolomeo and I spent about three weeks there, helping out. Ladies and gentlemen directing the charities asked me to stay and guide the Hospital.

But Brescia was where I had been led, even though I was not yet sure of how to fulfill my mission. We arrived home on November 25.

Rome

The next year, 1525, was a Holy Year. A pilgrimage to the four major basilicas in Rome carried special blessings. I went as part of a group. Like Saint Ursula and her companions, we prayed at the sites sanctified by the martyrs' courage.

We saw Messer Piero Della Puglia, a papal chamberlain, whom we had met in the Holy Land, and he arranged for us to have an audience with Pope Clement VII. There were hints about needs in Rome. The Holy Father asked that I consider staying in Rome to guide the charitable works. Yet I knew that my mission was in Brescia. The solution was shown to me in prayer. As soon as possible, we returned to Brescia.



Varallo

There was still a mist over my path. I made more pilgrimages, seeking guidance.

I made two pilgrimages to Varallo, in 1528 or '29 and again in 1532. Friar Bernardino had the idea of constructing small chapels there to replicate the holy sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Since he died in 1499, the Franciscan friars have continued building shrines showing the early and final events of Our

Lord's life. Only a few have been completed. But those are so realistic! I value the grace of experiencing places and people directly. Somehow, that directness moves my heart deeply.

Cremona

In September 1529 Emperor Charles V and his army were marching to Piacenza, where Pope Clement VII was to crown him. Everyone feared that the Emperor's army would invade Brescia. The terrors and sufferings of 1512 were still quite fresh, painful memories. My friend Ippolita Gallo Dorosini, a young widow, was fleeing to Cremona with her brother Agostino Gallo and his wife Cecilia and their household. They invited me to join them there. We were all afraid.

Brescians in exile and many others found their way to the Gallo house in Cremona. Worried, afraid, they came seeking comfort and prayer. Agostino and Cecilia had given me a small room of my own, and it did tend to get crowded with visitors.

So many crowded in when I fell sick and they thought I would die that they looked to me like the choirs of saints and angels. My young friend Girolamo Patengola came to congratulate me on going to heaven. He had written a poem about heaven's joys and read it to me:

...And now, in heavenly bliss, with a crown of palms,
She lives in happiness among the Angels.

The very thought lifted my spirits so powerfully that I sat up. Agostino tells me that I talked for half an hour about the joys of heaven. All of a sudden, I was well! When I realized that I had missed my chance to go to heaven, I burst into tears and scolded Girolamo for tricking me into recovering. Poor Girolamo! He didn't know what to say. He stammered that he was sure I was going to die within a day and that he hadn't wanted to displease me. But I didn't die, and I think that Girolamo was happier about that than anyone.

The Emperor ignored Brescia completely in February 1530. So we went home in peace. Just about then, Antonio married Francesca, and I thought it best to move from his home. Agostino and Cecilia invited me to make my home with them in the Vicolo San Clemente. Agostino thought about how crowded the little room in Cremona used

to get. He insisted that I should have two rooms in their home in Brescia, one for the mat that I sleep on, and one for receiving visitors.

People came with their troubles, seeking consolation; people worried about decisions on family matters, like marriages, seeking counseling; people with ruptured relationships, wanting to make peace. Preachers and theologians came, and together we sought God's Truth in the Holy Scriptures.

The Vision Is Clarified

It is only a few steps from the Gallo home to the small church of Saint Clement. About this time I got to know Agostino's good friend Alessandro Bonvicino, the painter people call Il Moretto because of his dark complexion. He has been working on a series of paintings for Saint Clement Church. It's his parish. He earnestly hopes to enkindle prayer in the faithful. Alessandro teases me and says he wants to paint my portrait, but I tease him in turn and say, "Over my dead body!"



Among his fine paintings, one of my favorites is *Saint Ursula and Her Companions*. I had always revered these martyrs, since Papa read to us about them from our book about the saints and martyrs. Look at Saint Ursula. With what firmness she holds Christ's banner and shares it with her companions! She is not only royal. She is a leader, inspiring these

women to steadfastness and to *celestial glory*. Saint Ursula would be the patron of our company of women!

The Company was beginning to gather, mostly servants and daughters of craftsmen. Over these years, many women and girls had confided to me the secrets of their hearts—their call to belong to *God*



alone. Most of their families were planning marriages for them. There seemed to be no other choice. Some might have welcomed life in a monastery but were too poor to have the required dowry. Some families needed their care or support. Other women simply wanted to consecrate themselves to God while remaining in their homes or in their employment.

There was no place in society for single women, at least no place of dignity. Nonetheless, I had lived that way, cared for by God's providence, guided by the Holy Spirit, embraced by the love of the Son of God. I began to see that my vision so many years ago had pointed to this way of life. I invited these women to pray together. They asked me to teach them the way of life that has brought me so much joy.

The fulfillment of my vision was ripening. Yet so many years had passed! I hesitated. I sought further guidance, again at Varallo. With fourteen other pilgrims, I traveled there in 1532. God let me know that this was the moment, that I must *act, exert* myself!

I gathered the women who had heard a call to this life of the Company. Dear Isabetta Prato gave us the use of a large upstairs room in her house, on the Cathedral Piazza. It's our oratory.

We had it frescoed in 1533 with scenes to inspire our prayer: in the center the Crucifixion with the Blessed Mother on the right and Saint John on the left, sharing the sufferings and the graces of Christ's Passion. There are scenes of the Annunciation, the Nativity, Jesus in the Temple, and the Assumption of Mary. On either side are figures of saints: Saint Paula and her daughter Saint Eustochium were a widow and a virgin. Saint Elizabeth of Hungary is shown caring for little girls, like her namesake Isabetta Prato, so devoted to the care of orphan girls. The martyrs Saints Faustinus, Jovita and Afra are our city's patrons. Saint Ursula is on a ship carrying the banner of a victorious martyr.



Companions

I've traveled much in my life, but not since the Company took shape. Now I am on a different road, a road of life that we travel *together*. We are real “com-pan-ions,” real “sharers-of-bread,” of life, on our journey. The vision I had so many years ago at the Brudazzo seemed once more before my eyes, in the faces of these women, these flesh-and-blood women.

Next I took a room near St. Barnabas but soon moved here to this apartment by St. Afra Church, with Barbara Fontana. St. Afra is over the martyrs' relics, downstairs in the crypt. My little bedroom is at the top of the stairs.

This larger room used to be the Lateran canons' dining room. It's a good place for receiving my daughters who come to be instructed, and a good place for sharing a bowl of vegetable soup and a bit of bread. Matrons who help guide the Company gather here to consult and plan, along with the colonelle, the Ursulines who teach the others in their neighborhoods.

Some days are so full of visitors that I relish the night hours, when I can pray in deep silence downstairs in the crypt near the martyrs' relics.

The Foundation

We began the Company on November 25, 1535, the feast of Saint Catherine of Alexandria (Mama's patron saint) and the anniversary of my return from the Holy Land. Saint Catherine was a woman of great wisdom. She also gave a shining example of the courage and faithfulness that the virgin martyrs of the early Church witnessed to their world.

Twenty-eight *daughters and sisters* attended Mass together at St. Afra Church. After Mass we signed the Book of the Company. Each woman wrote her name in testimony of her promise to give herself to God as a member of this Company.



We live by a Rule of life. Gabriele Cozzano has written it all down as I dictated it to him. Our diocesan vicar, good Lorenzo Muzio, helped us to get approval for it in 1536.

Gabriele is my firm friend and confidant. He's a teacher of literature and a notary. When I die, he will continue to encourage and protect the Company, which is so close to his heart.

It took me four decades to realize how to bring about the vision God had sent me in the Brudazzo. But now it is alive. I am thinking about what will happen after my death.



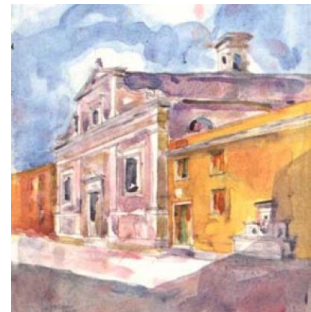
To help the colonelle be good *teachers and guides* to my daughters, I have dictated to Gabriele my Counsels for them. To help the matrons guide the Company, Gabriele has written out my Legacies to them. The sisters elected me “Madre for life” in our election, which was held here in the kitchen on March 18, 1537. At my death, the Lady Lucrezia Lodrone will succeed me as the principal “mother.”

Heavenward

As a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, I had always expected to be buried in a Franciscan cemetery. But instead, in 1532 I petitioned Church authorities at the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary and received permission to be buried in the Church of St. Afra.

I look forward, but with a grateful look backward, too.

Realizing that I will soon be going to Heaven, people are visiting. My nephew Tracagno, who is a doctor in Salò, came recently, and another relative who is a canon of St. Nazaro. When Tomaso Gavardo and Giacomo Chizzola were here, I wasn't feeling strong enough to get up, so naturally our thoughts turned to life and death. We talked about Christian living. Just as they were going—in fact, Giacomo was nearly out the door—Tomaso asked for a bequest from me, some spiritual teaching. I told him, “*Do during this life what you would like to have done at the time of death.*”



Soon I will die, and *Jesus Christ, my kind and sweet spouse, will draw me into the heavenly company of those who have lived for him alone. Marta, one of our earliest members, is already in heaven, crowned with that golden and brilliant virginal crown.*



But I will always remain with *my dear daughters still on earth, along with Jesus, my Love and theirs, helping them with their prayers and their good works, till we are all together in heaven.*

I don't know what the future will bring. They will have to make *changes if the times and circumstances require new rules* or a different way of doing things. If they *remain strongly united, and gather at the feet of Jesus Christ in fervent prayer together, he will enlighten them and teach them what to do.* Then this Company, which God has planted, will endure.

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

I Chose to Love God

There was an eight-year-old little girl who dreamed of being a nun.

She had that dream after meeting an elderly sister who left a deep impression on her. Although it was only a short encounter, it was enough to make her desire to be a sister.

She grew up in a big family, who gave her the sense of togetherness and being surrounded by many people in her life.

I remember that piece of my story very well. The elderly sister, whose name I don't even remember, still makes me feel at peace when I think about her. Her smile, the way she greeted me, the way she stroked my hair, stayed with me.

But the childhood story was not able to prolong my dreams. The change in the environment and the situation soon made me forget my ideals.

The family exodus to Riau was able to change and slowly forget my dream.

Entering university and then working, I started to feel something deep inside. I started asking myself questions about where I should direct my steps.

I was wondering if I should follow my dream of becoming a consecrated woman or if I should set out to live like my mother, a woman who raises her children.

I felt a strong desire to be true to myself again, **I wanted to offer my life to my Lord who is extraordinarily good. I wanted to live my life glorifying his name.**

But at this point the desire to enter a monastery was hampered by family conditions. I had to provide for my five nieces and nephews who had lost their fathers.

I felt the sense of responsibility for helping them grow into independent people.

Inside my heart I reflected and decided to live as a free



person and offer myself to God.

Finally, I believe that God listened to my prayer and led me to encounter Maria and Lydia, who introduced to me the Company of Saint Ursula.

I am sure this is the path I was looking for. This is the way of life that I have always desired, dreamed of and that I have always asked for in my prayers, even at night.

Many people ask me, "Why do you want to become an Ursuline?" For me, life as a secular Ursuline offers ample space to work and fulfill my dream of "bringing the love of God through my life" where I am, where I live.

Becoming a secular Ursuline means living among ordinary people.

By becoming a secular Ursuline, I can still take care of my nephews and nieces, help them grow, and guide them to realize their dreams and their ideals.

By becoming a secular Ursuline, I can love my family and be present for them and with them. It is my family that needs me most now, and in the meantime I can offer my life fully to my God and to the people around me.

I hope that my presence in the large family of the company of Saint Ursula can bring color and happiness to many people.

May God bless my steps.

Intan Purba, Company of Indonesia





CONSECRATION FOR LIFE

*Final seal of the spousal covenant,
“to sum up all things in Christ”*

(cf. Eph. 1:10)

On October 3, 2020 I said “yes forever” to the Love that has accompanied me since I was a child.

In the days leading up to it, I dwelt upon the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians, among others. I was reviewing my entire history, 53 years of searching, joy, fatigue... in any case a history that is 'sacred' because He passes through all of it: enrolling in medical school with the desire to go on mission; then the experience of three years in a religious family serving sick people in the hospital; the crisis when I returned home (I have given you everything, Lord, what do you want from me?); the beginning of a job as a doctor; the emotional bond with a man to whom I felt a strong attachment; six months of seclusion in Carmel; then finally the decision to listen quietly to His will, with an open heart and free from my own ideas or desires; making my own the words: "I come, O Father, not to do my will, but your will."

For me, belonging to the Lord meant either going to a monastery or to an order of active life; I had heard about secular consecration, but it seemed to me that it was neither fish nor fowl, and instead...He wanted me His own in the world and 'what a new and wonderful dignity it is!' Truly His ways are not our ways....

What immediately struck me and attracted me to the Merician charism is the "*admirable synthesis of action and contemplation*" that is realized in a *form of life lived by Jesus himself, by the Madonna, and by so many saints* of yesterday and today.

Continuing the journey, year after year, one very beautiful thing that I have felt in my heart has been the unification of my whole person and with that a basic serenity I had never felt before. Thanks to the formation meetings, the retreats and the closer relationship with some of the sisters, I have learned to know myself better, to accept others as they are, to try to accept my limits, to share desires and hopes, doubts

and sufferings, to grow together. Every day I experience the strength and at the same time the gift of being '*united together*' and I praise and bless the Lord for this! Our worldwide identity, moreover, is an aspect of the Institute that I feel is mine and that I experience through WhatsApp, thanks to my (poor) English; in this way I am able to keep in touch with various sisters I met in the international conferences organized by the Federation. I am very happy because in this way my horizon is broadened and also my heart, knowing other realities in which the spirit of the Company is incarnated!

I come to my consecration for life with immense gratitude to so many people (family members, friends, consecrated persons) and so many sisters who have accompanied me to this point, some already in Heaven. May the Lord bless and reward them all! A river of grace to keep and put to good use on the journey ahead of me, staying attentive "*because our life and our salvation depend on it*".

I try to live the charism in daily realities, especially in the family and at work, with patience and above all with a heart open to the various problems of my patients in the outpatient clinic, people who have been entrusted to me, for whom I must pray as well as cure. This, I think, is the spiritual motherhood that I have been experiencing for a few months now, also with regard to my very elderly father and mother. Yes, the roles are reversed: we become their parents. Now more than ever they need affection, help and comfort. For the past two months mamma has been in an assisted living residence because with Alzheimer's her situation at home had become unmanageable, and lately we haven't been able to go because of COVID. It is very hard for me to experience and accept. Light, guidance and support come first of all from the Word, which always accompanies me day by day; from the sacraments; from the words of St. Angela and from the closeness of the sisters who help me to entrust everything to the Lord and '*to strip my heart of all affection and place all my good in God alone and in His benevolent and ineffable providence, He who wants nothing but the good and joy of His children.*'" To this God, faithful to his promises, be praise and glory forever and ever, Amen!

Paola Cameroni



485th birthday of the Company

An Invitation

Dear friends,

With hearts overflowing with joy and with gratitude to God and to St. Angela, we warmly invite you to participate in the celebration recalling the 485th anniversary of the foundation of the Company of St. Ursula.



The pandemic prevents us from gathering and meeting one another and limits our presence, but, thanks to collaboration with the Centro Mericiano, with the Italian Merician Conference, and with the Office for Social Communication of the Diocese of Brescia, it will be possible to follow the celebration live streamed on YouTube and the Facebook page of “La Voce del Popolo”:

*<https://www.youtube.com/user/vocemedial/>
<https://www.facebook.com/lavocedelpopolobrescia/>.*

United together in the spirit of our foundress St. Angela Merici, who 485 years ago, in obedience to the Holy Spirit and for the glory of God, brought into flower this marvelous form of life that the Savior lived, and with him the Madonna, the Apostles, the virgins and so many Christians of the Early Church (Constitutions 2.2), we invite you to follow this event with great and thankful hearts.

It will help us to renew our love for Jesus Christ, our only Treasure, and our sense of belonging to this great family, the Company that “Jesus Christ will never abandon as long as the world will last.”

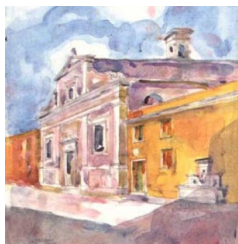
Maria Teresa Fenaroli

*Superior of the Company of St.
Ursula, Daughters of Saint
Angela of Brescia*

Valeria Broll

*President of the Federation
Company of St. Ursula, Secular
Institute of Saint Angela Merici*

***Glad about the Companies' worldwide reach,
we welcomed the invitation***



An Online Anniversary for Everyone

Some Reflections about the 485th Brescia, Sanctuary of Saint Angela Merici November 25, 2020

**From an article by G. Belotti and G. Pelucchi:
Numbers, Foundation, Newness...**

"The celebrations for the 485th anniversary were organized by the Company of St. Ursula of Brescia and by the Federation of Companies, thanks to the collaboration of the Office for Social Communications of the Diocese of Brescia and the Merician Center.

"...Though live-streaming, the event reached as many sisters as possible who are living today the spiritual legacy of Angela Merici, right where they live and work. In addition to the Daughters of St. Angela, the numerous Congregations of Ursuline Sisters, the Italian Merician Conference and the groups of associates, the 'friends of St. Angela,' who are committed to living the Merician spirit in their own families, are also involved. The Holy Mass presided over by Bishop Tremolada was the central moment when this memory was revisited and celebrated."

The numbers:

"**In the Company of St. Ursula**, Daughters of St. Angela of Brescia (diocesan) there are currently 88 Daughters of St. Angela consecrated for life; and two in temporary profession.

In the Company of St. Ursula Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici - Federation (international) the numerical picture is as follows:

- in Italy there are 30 Companies for a total of 450 members, of whom 25 are in formation;
 - in Europe there are 4 Companies (65 members);
 - in North America (2 companies, total 25 members);
 - in South America (2 Companies, total 60 members);
 - in Asia, one Company of 35 members;
 - in Africa there are 2 companies, total 323 members.
- Overall there are 958 members of whom 290 are in formation."

[There are also a number of Groups who are not yet autonomous Companies.]

The Foundation

"On November 25, 1535, the feast of St. Catherine of Alexandria, Angela Merici founded the Company of St. Ursula, which would give shape to a new dignity of women with consecration lived no longer in cloisters but in the world... For the time it was an arduous path, lived without the protection of the walls of a cloister, and that therefore required a continuous renewal of conscience in fidelity to the pact with God and with the Company.

"...A free choice, but at the same time all-embracing, guided by the Rule, a masterpiece of religious and existential teachings in which knowledge and religious inspiration grew into enthusiasm and eloquence. The Prologue of the Rule opens with the description of the greatness of the gift received with the Company of Saint Ursula, becoming *spouses of the Son of God*, *spouses of the Most High* and of the prize bestowed in heaven, where they will be *glorious queens*."



Something New

"What Merici proposed was, for that time a 'revolutionary' way, strongly evangelical, as it overturned (in heaven) the social hierarchies of women's destinies, so much so that the people who are eminent in the world – that is, *empresses*, *queens*, *duchesses* – would have wished to have been at least *handmaids* of the new *spouses of Christ*.

"...Angela's Counsels and Testament are a masterpiece of psychological insight and a masterpiece of that pedagogy which, in the name of Love, overturns educational relationships...."

(La voce del popolo - November 26, 2020)

From the Presentation by Gianpietro Belotti

The Aim and the Way

“The charismatic aspects are found well defined in the Merician writings. The whole first part of the Prologue of the Rule is a masterpiece of enthusiasm and eloquence in enunciating the specific characteristics of the nascent Merician way; it opens with the description of the greatness of the gift received with the Company of Saint Ursula becoming - spouses of the Son of God; spouses of the Most High- and closes with the prize granted in heaven, where they will be glorious queens....



“The Company is being defined in relation to the primary goal it intends to pursue: to bring these chosen virgins to nuptial union with Christ, strengthening their virtues so that they may please Jesus Christ, their Spouse. This is the one great end that justifies the Society....

“Thus, if the aim is nuptial union, it will be love that will shape every internal relationship. And the point of reference for the governance structures of the Company will be maternity, which Angela linked to transcendence, descended from Christ himself. It is he who has chosen her *to be the mother, living and dead, of this noble company.*

“From this springs what has been defined as the pedagogy of love: *Be gentle and compassionate towards your dear daughters, she recommends in the Second Counsel, for the more you esteem them, the more you will love them; the more you love them, the more you will care for and watch over them.* If the aim of the Company is to form, accompany, and strengthen the spouses of Christ, the way it does so is an industrious life in the world at the active service of the Church, which is a total and absolute point of reference: *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.* And the profound meaning of this heartfelt appeal, *live a new life*, exhorts the women to an unceasing journey of interior renewal, in contemplation of the divine that is poured out in service of the renewal of the Church and of Society....”

From the Witness Given by Carla Osella

Our Role

We are clear about our role: to be on the side of God and our brothers and sisters according to the parable of the Samaritan: *"He passed nearby, saw him and had compassion."*

Angela attracted everyone with her steadfastness of faith, and so the invitation is to be women of faith, capable of sowing hope, of generating hope!

We can only do this if we live all this in small daily gestures. *"We, the spouses of the Son of God Most High,"* are called to leave traces of God in the hearts of human beings who are lost and afflicted....

And Angela invites: *"Let them put their hope and love in God alone..."* (Fifth Counsel).

We are called *to be true and chaste spouses of the Son of God*, faithful to Him, to His Word, to the support of our brothers and sisters in daily life.

A medieval saying goes: *"The virtuous walk, the wise run, lovers fly"* and spouses can do nothing but fly together, forever!

From the Homily of the Bishop of Brescia Most Rev. Pierantonio Tremolada

We celebrate this Eucharist in remembrance of an event of great importance not only for the various families of the spiritual daughters of Saint Angela Merici, but for the entire Church and, in particular, for the Church of Brescia, which venerates Saint Angela Merici as its co-patroness.



A New Form of Consecration for Women

.... We are in a very precise epoch of history, the year 1535, on a precise day, November 25, and a precise feast day, Saint Catherine of Alexandria. On this day, on this feast day, Saint Angela carried out a work that would mark history and that acquired the form of witness. She founded the Company of St. Ursula, which would give shape to a

life of consecration no longer in cloisters, but in the world. A true revolution in the way of understanding female consecration.

A Company

...She founded a Company. The term *companionship* is a beautiful one, since it alludes to a double presence: that of God – the company of God – and that of the persons among them, that is, the sisters, that is, a sisterhood which, however, did not necessarily include a common residence, as was the case for communities of consecrated life up to that time. Each would have had her own life path.

Espousal

This Company would be given a Rule, regulating a life that is totally directed towards the service of the Church and the world in the name of Christ.

The secret of all this, from what we can glean from Saint Angela's writings, is espousal to Christ, that is, as she herself said, the primacy of living Love, love above all for Christ the Spouse.

As has rightly been written, "Perfection for Saint Angela is not the perfection of moral virtues, even though the virtues are necessary to achieve this perfection. Perfection consists in union with Christ, in being his spouse."

A form of mysterious and intimate commitment, which then becomes espousal. A powerful mystical experience, and yet nuptial love then becomes the highest expression of a fully human love, which opens itself to all. A free, intense, incarnate, passionate love.

Maternity

Spousal love is accompanied by motherhood. In fact, this charism that is kindled allows the witness of faith to take on the form of a unique form of maternity, completely new....

Angela spoke of maternity towards her spiritual daughters, but first of all the maternity of these same daughters, together with her, towards all those people, especially young girls, whom she met in the service she carried out in the name of the Lord in the world.

The style of this motherhood is gentleness and sweetness:

Willingly strive to lead them with love and with a mild and kindly hand, and not imperiously, not harshly, but in everything, willingly be gentle. Pay attention to Jesus Christ who says: 'learn from me, that I am gentle and meek of heart.'

Hers is also an action of redemption and promotion of the condition of women at that time and at the same time an action of renewal of society, precisely through the regenerating witness of the charity offered by women.

In this, too, she opened up a new path. This required, together with a truly prophetic intuition, a great deal of courage....

An Inheritance

There is an inheritance, then, that St. Angela hands on to you above all, her spiritual daughters, but also to our Church of Brescia, which loves her very specially, and to the entire universal Church. She is handing on a mystical experience of Christ's love, a spiritual falling-in-love, which should distinguish every soul and to which St. Angela's daughters are called to give clear witness.

She also bequeathed to us, as a legacy, a heart animated by a desire for good for all, by the missionary impulse that led her to care for people by being among them, at their side, accompanying them, sharing with them, listening to them....

It also teaches us to be in the world without being of the world, therefore, as salt, as leaven, as light that overcomes darkness.

It would be nice to understand what form the great charism that St. Angela Merici aroused in the Church takes today and to transform it into a proposal for new generations.

May the Spirit of God help us to do it for the good of God's Church!

Angela Merici, Virgin

January 27

Angela Merici

(Desenzano del Garda, 1470 - Brescia, 1540)

founded in Brescia in 1535

*the Company of Saint Ursula,
an institute of consecrated life in the world,
bequeathing to it its own Rule.*

*The Counsels and the Testament manifest
a deep evangelical spirit
and intense spiritual life.*

*The diffusion of the Company
and the birth of different Institutes
of Ursuline Sisters*

*have spread the veneration of the saint
throughout the world.*

She was canonized by Pius VII in 1807.

**Finally accurate
in the new Roman Missal,
this is the wording
in memory
of Saint Angela Merici.**



*Thanks to the one who intervened for this correction,
which arrived on time where it needed to be...*

FROM THE COMPANIES AND GROUPS

Company of Crema

Gratuitousness – Professionalism – Dedication

These words summarize the life of a little woman, **Maria Bolzini**, Daughter of Saint Angela, for whom the municipality of Monte Cremasco, a town on the outskirts of Crema, has dedicated and named a street.



In order to get to know Maria Bolzini, since I couldn't find any particular news in the archives of our Company, I used the book of a local historian: Pietro Savoia: *Monte Cremasco: Memories of the Past and Chronicle of the Present*.

On page 38, this text says, "Monte Cremasco has 66 streets and one square. Most of these streets and squares are named after people who have left their mark on Italian history: men who often sacrificed their lives for their beliefs and ideals, or famous poets, artists and scientists.

Via Maria Bolzini

Only five streets are named after people who were born and/or lived in our country. **The only street named after a woman is Via Maria Bolzini** (Monte Cremasco 1872 - 1953 – Teacher).

Who is Maria Bolzini? What did she do that was so important to have a street named after her and to be buried in the Cemetery Chapel reserved to the parish priests of Monte?

Maria Bolzini consecrated herself at a very young age in the Company of Saint Angela, together with other young people in the territory around Cremasco, who were directed to this choice of life by several parish priests.

The group made direct contact with the Company of Brescia, since the Company had not yet been officially constituted in the Diocese of Crema, which would happen in 1903.

In the resolution of the Municipality of Monte with which the new street was established and dedicated, we read, **"Maria Bolzini: As foundress and teacher of Monte Cremasco's kindergarten, she distinguished herself for her long commitment lavished with generosity, professionalism and devotion in promoting the literacy of the children of Monte Cremasco."**

In the above-mentioned book, on page 173, the beginning of Maria's educational activity is described:

"... At the beginning, the kindergarten was more than anything else a place for safe-keeping, that is to say, it was about taking in the children and taking them away from the dangers of ditches, of fire, of the road, of the stable, since the parents and the older brothers and sisters were waiting for work in the fields; the old people, when they were there, were busy working in the house or farmstead.

The children were gathered and cared for. They were taught prayers, some songs and poems and rudimentary instruction. The kindergarten worked from the end of winter until late autumn. At the end, the activities were presented to the local authorities and parents through the famous "essays." The first essay of which we have certain information was in 1900.

As the programs and methods of the kindergarten or of Froebel's kindergarten gradually became known, the school applied them and became so highly qualified that in 1913 the municipality began the procedures to recognize it as a "Moral Institution" and thus enjoy the economic subsidies of the municipality.

Over the years the school has developed. It was provided with a suitable location and qualified staff. Today it is a state kindergarten within the Rita Levi Montalcini Comprehensive Institute.

I was struck by the words chosen by the municipal administration for the motion. The words are both evangelical (gratuitousness and dedication) and secular (professionalism). It seems to me that they synthesized not only the life of this sister of ours, but the more general characteristic of our form of life and, therefore, the brilliant intuition of Angela Merici: *to understand and bear witness to the renewing force of the Gospel* (see the Collect of the Liturgy of January 27, Feast of Angela) in the midst of the world.

But, as Pope Francis tells us, *"We may not always be able to reflect adequately the beauty of the Gospel, but there is one sign which we should never lack: the option for those who are least, those whom society discards"* (The Joy of the Gospel, 195).

Maria Bolzini chose to bear witness to the Gospel by dedicating herself to the little ones whom society at that time did not take care of, giving herself to them in the awareness that, having received everything gratuitously, she had to give everything gratuitously (Mt. 10:8), that is, her life.

She carried out this task "with professionalism," not only moved by her "good heart" but animated by the desire to "do good and do it well" with competence, attentive to experiments elsewhere, to apply them in her school to benefit the "little ones."

A little woman who accepted Angela's invitation:

"Act, move, believe, strive, hope, cry out to him with all your heart, for without doubt you will see marvelous things, if you direct everything to the praise and glory of his Majesty and the good of souls" (Prologue to the Counsels).

These "marvelous things" have been recognized, acknowledged, and still remain!

Luciella

Company of Brazil South **Celebrating Consecration** **in the Time of the Corona Virus**

The preparation for our spiritual retreat was a real challenge: I had to look for an accessible place for the candidates. I approached five retreat house locations, but they were not welcoming for fear of Covid19.

So I realized that I could not organize the meeting anywhere. Returning to my home, I put myself in prayer before Jesus and asked for help. I prayed Psalm 22: The Lord is my shepherd.... I meditated and begged God the Father to grant me light, courage and strength to decide for the best.

Tired, late at night, I went to rest and entrusted everything to Our Lady, very confident that she could open a new path for us. In the morning of the next day, praying Lauds, it seemed to me that Our Lady



was saying: *"I too could not find a suitable place to give birth to the Son of God and I was content to stay in a cave..."*

"Have the meeting at home!"

The inspiration to make my accommodation available brought me great peace of mind. I communicated the idea to the manager and received her

approval.

With all the safety regulations for Covid19, I invited ten sisters and Father Vilson. It was the maximum capacity for my house.

Elza, Libera, Marli, and Mirsa made their first consecration.

Everything went well, with much joy, harmony and cheerfulness.

Father Vilson, our ecclesiastical assistant, accompanied us on the three-day retreat and celebrated Holy Mass. Thanks to him, we experienced an excellent preparation for the consecrations. We discussed together on different biblical themes, on the call to consecrated life, on mission. Our Lady was presented to us as the first consecrated woman.

Everyone was able to ask questions serenely, dialoguing freely and receiving answers. We all learned...



family.

With great pleasure we share our joy with all the Ursulines of the world and, in a special way, with the Council of the Federation that has accompanied us so closely.

May Saint Angela Merici help us to continue in prayer and fidelity, united as sisters in one big

Maria Gatelli

A Word from the Newly Consecrated

I express my joy, also on behalf of the other sisters who participated in the November 2020 retreat, a retreat that was very well prepared. We all participated, learned, prayed and helped each other. We grew in faith and all our questions were heard and clarified.

Our sister Maria Gatelli tastefully prepared her home, making it a very welcoming and harmonious place. Everything was perfect, done with love and gladness. Thank you so much.

Mirsa Maria

It is impossible for me to summarize in a few words the sublime moment we experienced. For me it was like the "Wedding at Cana." God is always faithful and has given us a new spiritual family; I have found other sisters in Christ.

I was amazed when I learned that Father Vilson would celebrate the Eucharist just for us. He was truly "the Anointed One of God, the *alter Christus*": he gave us a true catechesis, rich in Gospel insights. We received the sacrament of reconciliation, and we experienced moments of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

The Gospel passages proposed by Father Vilson made our commitments of consecration clearer. We will be called to answer responsibly for our choices, because we cannot live by appearances, between two masters, between the sacred and the profane.

We must decide for the Lord, make our commitment to him, keep ourselves vigilant, not only in our youth, but also in our maturity, living in the world, in family or professional life, without fading away, without getting tired, without getting discouraged.

We must keep the lamp burning with the oil of love and faith in our hearts, until the final encounter with the Lover of us all.

We felt the presence of holy Mary and Saint Angela in our sister the Maria Gatelli's commitment to prepare carefully, receiving us in her house. She was like a mother to us, preparing a feast for her daughters. She surprised us with delicious cakes, sweets and cookies, prepared with great care by one of her goddaughters... I am sure that these moments were celebrated in the same way in Heaven. Amen!

Marli Ediles

From the Sister-Company of Brazil

Dear sisters of the south of Brazil,

With joy we share with you the choice of Libera, Mirsa, Elza and Marli, who have made their first consecration to the Lord and want to be true and worthy brides of the Son of God. We, your sisters of the Northeast, have prayerfully accompanied your retreat in spirit. May the Lord bless you with the abundance of his graces, increasing your faith and love for our Institute.

In Saint Angela Merici we embrace you affectionately.

Edésia Villas Boas, Company of the Northeast.



Ilda's Consecration



Ilda is a widow and mother of two children, a son and a daughter. She is 69 years old.

From a young age she always wanted to consecrate herself to God. She had married anyway because of pressure from her father, but then she was left a widow.

She is very active with the seminarians of our diocese. She is a true mother to them, always present and caring, taking care of clothing, food and everything necessary for the maintenance of the young men in the seminary.

She is also the regional coordinator of the Serra Movement in the southeastern region of Brazil. This is an international movement of prayer and support for priests and vocations.

Thanks to her efforts and the involvement of so many people in prayer, there is no shortage of seminarians and priests in our diocese.

At her consecration (Sunday, December 13, 2020), several seminarians, three priests and Bishop Luiz Henrique da Silva Brito were present. All were very happy and said several times, "Ilda is worthy of her vocation!"

After the solemn Mass, with the Bishop presiding, Ilda and a team of friends who are cooks prepared a tasty lunch to share their joy.

We have gained a sister chosen and blessed by the Lord. May her journey in the Company always be lived in perseverance and holiness.

*Luisa de Rego Monteiro
Company of Brazil South/Southeast*

The Group in the USA Marks 20 Years

In a celebration through Zoom in the era of COVID, the Group of the USA marked its 20th anniversary since Kathleen Hallinan (right: signing the “Book of the Company”) and Mary-Cabrini Durkin began this group on November 25, 2000.

(<https://companyofstursula.org/who-we-are>)

The USA Group is part of the



Company of Canada. Réjeanne Leduc and Thérèse Bolduc, Directress and Vice-directress of the Company, participated in the celebration through Zoom, assisted by the French-English translation provided by Marie Chantal Mukuluku.

Two consecrations (Elena's and Marie Chantal's) took place in Quebec at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Company of Canada (2017). The President of the Federation, Maria Razza, and the Vice-president, Kate Dalmasso, participated.



Group of the USA – together in 2019

Kathleen died in 2008.

Mary-Cabrini is part of the Council of the Federation.

The spirit of Saint Angela and the memory of Kathleen and of Jacqueline Morin permeated our time together. *“Our deceased sisters are still present in our life,”* commented Marie Chantal.

Through a PowerPoint program we recounted the story of our Group’s twenty years with photos and memories.

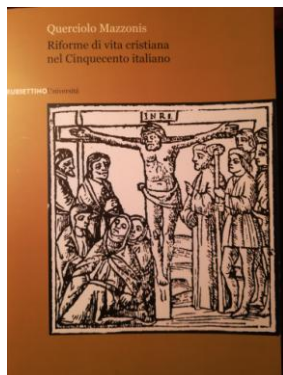
The sisters who have joined us in these years and our current candidate told the stories of their own vocations.

Rachael, the last to arrive, compared each one to a piece of a mosaic that, when combined, create a loving portrait of our Madre Angela.

(Group of the Company of Canada in the USA)

Alerts

Reform of Christian Life in Sixteenth-Century Italy



Querciolo Mazzonis deepens his studies on the spirituality of the Italian reform movements of the sixteenth century. **Angela Merici figures among the protagonists of his new book.**

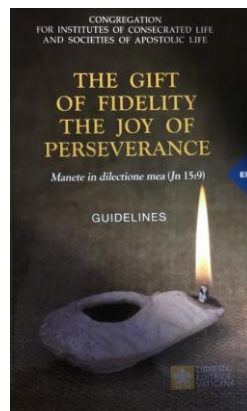
By examining the fifteenth-century roots of Angela's thought, and some characters and writings of her time that may have influenced her, Mazzonis proposes a new theory on the incubation and foundation of the Company of Saint Ursula. The Brescian saint is seen within a "non-conventional" reforming current, alternative to both Protestantism and official Catholicism, which promoted a new conception of Christian life through which to reform society (rather than the Church). The book explores the development of the Ursulines in northern Italy after the Council of Trent, under the leadership of Borromeo and other bishops close to him. To order (in Italian):

<https://www.store.rubbettinoeditore.it/riforme-di-vita-cristiana-nel-cinquecento-italiano.html>

New document!

“The Gift of Fidelity, the Joy of Perseverance”

was presented on December 10, 2020, via live-streaming. The document comes from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.



From the Liturgy

*O Lord,
may Saint Angela commend us
to your mercy;
may her charity and wisdom help us
to be faithful to your teaching
and to follow it in our lives.
We ask this through
our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God,
for ever and ever.
Amen.*

(Prayer for the Liturgy of January 27,
memorial of Saint Angela Merici)

For internal use