

# *In the same charism with responsibility*



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

**[www.istitutosecolareangelamerici.org](http://www.istitutosecolareangelamerici.org)**

**[www.angelamerici.it](http://www.angelamerici.it)**

**[email: fed.comp\\_2016@libero.it](mailto:fed.comp_2016@libero.it)**



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## TO THE READERS



### *Witnesses to the Beauty of God*

“Witnesses to the Beauty of God” is the title of letter to all consecrated persons marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of St. John Paul's apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (March 25,

1996-March 25, 2021). The letter comes from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, through Cardinal João Braz De Aviz, prefect, and Archbishop José Rodriguez Carballo, secretary. Let me take up their invitation.

### **The Beauty of Consecrated Life**

*"If God is beautiful and the Lord Jesus "is the most beautiful among the sons of man," then to be consecrated to him is beautiful* (Letter: “Witnesses...”).

Beauty, they say, will save the world. But we must find and see this beauty, enter into it, contemplate it, admire it. How often we see only the commitments, the difficulties, the bitterness and the suffering. We need to return to our first Love and rediscover it in all its beauty.

To be consecrated in the Company is not only beautiful. It is *such a singular gift, a great grace, a new and wondrous dignity... We must give him infinite thanks.*

### **The Beauty of Witness**

*"Beautiful, then ... must be the witness and the word offered, because the face we proclaim is beautiful. Beautiful must be what we do and how we do”* (Letter: “Witnesses...”).

Certainly beautiful is the face of *the Lover of us all, that brilliant face which soothes every afflicted heart...*

Beautiful, then, must be our daily witness, and so, *with joy and gratitude, let us welcome and spread the charism of Saint Angela, which is an evangelical and ecclesial charism.*

### **The Beauty of Companionship**

*"Beautiful is the [brotherhood/sisterhood] and the atmosphere that one breathes... Beautiful to be together in his name, to work together, even if tiring at times”* (Letter: “Witnesses...”).

Sisterhood, unity, is a gift always to be sought, never to be taken for granted. This unity is *important...it must be longed for, pursued, embraced, held on to*. At times it may be difficult, but we must believe that, together with our Spouse and Mother Angela, beauty will blossom and gold will shine before us and *the thorny and rocky roads we will find flower-strewn for us, paved with finest gold*.

### **The Beauty of the Evangelical Counsels**

*"How beautiful is our being virgins to love with his heart, our being poor to say that he is the only treasure, our obedience to his will for salvation, and even among ourselves to seek only him"* (Letter: "Witnesses...").

If we take up the evangelical counsels in a Merician key, we cannot fail to enjoy their beauty: *obedience, a great light; virginity, sister of the angels, queen of the virtues, possessing all good things; poverty, which in God has everything, every good...*

### **Beauty in Us and Around Us**

*"Even the environment must be beautiful, in simplicity and creative sobriety: the house, the table that is set..., that there be taste and decorum in the surroundings, so that everything in the dwelling may reveal the presence and centrality of God"* (Letter: "Witnesses...").

I think back with Saint Angela to the beauty of her land, her fields, her lake, the kitchen of her house adapted for the election of the government of the Company, the flowers arranged by Elisabetta Prato for the meeting of the Company's virgins. I reread how beautiful the meetings of the Company must have been *to meet each other as loving sisters and thus, talking over spiritual matters, rejoice together and encourage one another*.

### **It Is Beautiful for Us to Be Here**

*"Supreme beauty, the sacrament of the mysterious beauty of the Eternal One. As Peter exclaimed on Tabor before that explosion of light and splendor"* (Letter: "Witnesses...").

*It is good for us to be here...* says Peter on Mount Tabor. **And it is beautiful for us to remain here, in the Company** that is the Company of Jesus Christ. This beauty will still save us too as, *in the meantime, we do what we have to do* and it will still be beautiful to experience that *every promise will be fulfilled to overflowing*.

Caterina Dalmasso

## BEAUTY, GOODNESS AND TRUTH



**Valeria Broll**  
**President of the Federation**

*“Whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice” (John.10).*

The Good and lovely Shepherd continues to lead us. He walks with us, keeps us from straying. He keeps us together and guides us. He knows the safe places where we can stop to feed and nourish ourselves. He knows the dangerous and impassible places where we must be careful not to fall.

He goes in front of us, preceding us and guiding us. He calls us by name. His voice can restore our security and courage and can be heard at any distance. He defends us, seeks us out, lifts us up, because only he is the Good and lovely Shepherd!

He has a bond with *his sheep* that never fails, and *no one steals them from his hand*. He accomplishes everything so that every person *may have life and have it in abundance*. This is the good news for each one of us: creatures loved, carried and protected by him, watched over and guarded by his gaze, his voice and his hand.

Saint Angela knew this Good Shepherd well, because she contemplated him at length, listened to him in the Word and in her brothers and sisters. She always trusted him and let herself be led with docility. Fascinated and in love with him, she shared everything with him, *interior and exterior*, like a bride with her bridegroom.

Her testimony and her proclamation to us of the Good and beautiful Shepherd to love, follow and choose is defined by her as follows: *Jesus, the only way to heaven* (Rule, Ch. IV). *Jesus, our only life and hope* (Rule, Ch. V). *Jesus Christ, sweet and kind spouse* (Rule, Ch. XI). *Jesus Christ, our only treasure* (Fifth Counsel).

The Constitutions confirm this: *"Saint Angela Merici ... welcomed the mystery of Christ, sent by the Father into the world .... She lived this mystery in the common and ordinary conditions of human existence, united in a spousal stance to the Son of God, her "Lover" (Const.2.1).*

For Saint Angela, listening to and welcoming the Word took place in the fabric of her daily situations and relationships, observing the faces of the people she met, listening to the happy and sad moments that followed one another in her life and in the lives of others. For her, following Jesus meant sharing everything with Him, in silence, in prayer, in relationships with those who inhabited her space and her little piece of the world and the Church in which she was placed.

From this profoundly spiritual and human experience, consecration in secularity took shape in her. From this experience, Saint Angela followed the inner voice to establish the Company so that this project of new life might reach more lives, more women, more hearts docile to Love, to service, to the Beautiful and Good that is written by God in the world and in every creature.

**Secularity:** gift and challenge. The mystery of the Incarnation is the gift made flesh in Jesus Christ and the Life that continues in us, thanks to Baptism and belonging to the Church, the Body of Christ. A gift to welcome with gratitude and humility. A gift that fascinates us, because the world is created, loved and inhabited by God, who in the fullness of time became one of us. The world, soiled by sin, evil, pride and individualism, moved God's mercy to send his only Son. Obedient to the Father, he gave everything for our redemption. He underwent everything: suffering, passion and death for our liberation. By rising he cleansed and enlightened everyone, every heart. He gave back Life, Beauty and Truth to every human being and to every creature.

Saint Angela *welcomed this mystery of Christ sent by the Father. How do we act within this mystery?* By the grace of vocation, we have chosen secularity as our place of mission. Let us, then, walk the paths on which Jesus, Saint Angela, and *"the Apostles, the Virgins and many Christians of the early Church* walked" (Const. 2.2).

This is the challenge and this is the way: *"unceasing prayer and a keen desire for radical fidelity"* (Const. 11). Ways and times are

expressed very well and clearly in the current Constitutions, which it is good to reread, pray over and check, especially Chapter Four: "Consecration and Mission."

We do not want to and cannot make our vocation, our charism generic and vague. So how can we enliven and make this gift of the Holy Spirit in us beautiful and true so that the Company in the Church and in the world expresses what it was born to do? That is, as yeast and leaven of holiness?

By establishing the Company, St. Angela gave us indispensable words and tools so that we would not miss the mark: *"United together in the Company, we share the grace of the Lord's presence among us; we experience sisterhood and find support and help to live our vocation and mission"* (Const. 23.1).

What sap should flow in this "stock with many shoots"?

The sap of Charity, expressed in patience, in affability, in being pleasant, in help given and received, in forbearance, in comfort... in all the nuances and demands of charity. Not only and solely as an individual exercise and asceticism but "joined together." The suggestion that comes to us from St. Angela is to *meet each other as dear sisters, to do everything as charity and the Holy Spirit will enlighten and inspire you, conferring together* and discerning...

This experience is also well described in the Acts of the Apostles, as the International Theological Commission on Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church confirms: "The Acts of the Apostles attest to some important moments in the journey of the apostolic Church in which the People of God are called to the communal exercise of discerning the will of the risen Lord. The protagonist who guides and directs this journey is the Holy Spirit, poured out on the Church on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:2-3). It is the responsibility of the disciples, in the exercise of their respective roles, to listen to his voice in order to discern the way to follow."

The secretary of the Congregation for Consecrated Life, Msgr. Carballo, echoes this, saying, "A fraternal life [of the Company] that wants to be a living **prophecy** in our time cannot take refuge in "it has always been done this way," in the traditions of the Institute alone, not even in historical memory. Memory must always be at the service of



life. The charism needs to be pruned (purified). We cannot be victims of an ‘archaeological memory.’ Consecrated life must be a living reality. If it were not so, it would be neither life nor consecrated life" (J.R. Carballo). This process of growth in communion and fraternity is accomplished by enacting synodal experiences, like those the Church has used from the very beginning, to face each other and walk in fidelity to the Lord. We find the right attitude expressed in the Constitutions: *"She will feel herself co-responsible for the life and growth of the Company; she will find in it the privileged place for evaluation, dialog and support, and for a journey of renewed fidelity"* (Const.7.3).

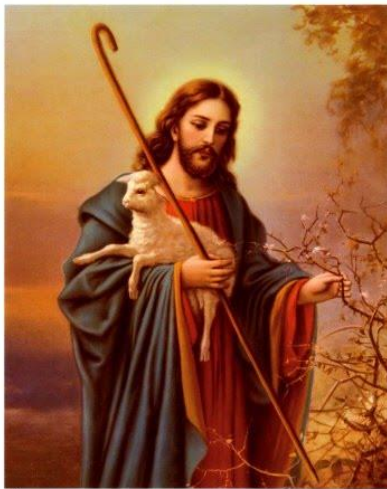
**“Synodality** manifests and concretely fulfills itself as a communion in walking together, gathering in assembly, and as the active participation of all its members in the mission" (Don Raymond).

We are looking forward in August, to the Federation’s international conference, **"United Together to Serve His Divine Majesty."** We will have the opportunity to deepen these vital themes for the growth and renewal of our vocation and mission, our charism and our belonging to the Company, in an Church and society thirsting for communion, participation and peaceful and free hearts that listen and serve for a more beautiful, better and truer world.

See you then, in person in Rome or on a Zoom platform, from August 22 to 25.

May St. Angela, who in the Fourth Legacy suggests that we *"strive with all diligence to be adorned in every royal and beautiful manner,"* bless us all and make us docile disciples of Jesus Christ, Shepherd and Master, Way and Truth.

*Valeria Broll*



# CONSECRATED SECULAR LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF THE ANNUNCIATION AND OF EASTER



**Most Rev. Bishop Adriano Tessarollo**  
**Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Council**  
**of the Federation**

*For this reason, when he came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.... Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll, Behold, I come to do your will, O God'" (Hebrews 10:5-7).*

Here is the "instrument" through which Jesus of Nazareth made his life a consecration to the Father: **his body!** His body enabled him to "enter the world" and to make of it a sacrifice pleasing to God, to accomplish his mission, to respond to his vocation. And his response to the Father was, *"Behold I come to do your will."*

His response involved a girl of Nazareth, named Mary, and a young man, also of Nazareth, named Joseph. Two young people who had their own life project. God's breaking into their lives gave both of them a new and unexpected orientation to their shared plan.

Per First **Mary** committed to the new plan: *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord."* And she would have to wait to understand 'in time' the meaning of that call and the weight and fruit of her response, involved in family life with Joseph 'while Jesus was growing up...' and until the day when she too would be involved in her son's mission on the road, in his passion and in his death.

The same thing happened to **Joseph**. He too found himself faced with a "fact" that seemed contrary to



his plan. But for him, too, came the light of the Lord's word calling him to put his life, his work, his body, at the service of “another” project. His response became concrete in his daily life, starting with his obedience: *“Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him....”* He disposed himself to do that will which he would understand bit by bit, as he lived it, with the necessary 'sacrifices' that he would experience 'in his body' that is, in the involvements of his daily life.

**Pope Francis reminds us:**



*“We know that Joseph was a lowly carpenter (cf. Mt 13:55), betrothed to Mary (cf. Mt 1:18; Lk 1:27). He was a ‘just man’ (Mt 1:19), ever ready to carry out God’s will as revealed to him in the Law (cf. Lk 2:22.27.39) and through four dreams (cf. Mt 1:20; 2:13.19.22).*

*“After a long and tiring journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, he beheld the birth of the Messiah in a stable, since ‘there was no place for them’ elsewhere (cf. Lk 2:7). He witnessed the adoration of the shepherds (cf. Lk 2:8-20) and the Magi (cf. Mt 2:1-12), who represented respectively the people of Israel and the pagan peoples.*

*“Joseph had the courage to become the legal father of Jesus, to whom he gave the name revealed by the angel: ‘You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins’ (Mt 1:21). As we know, for ancient peoples, to give a name to a person or to a thing, as Adam did in the account in the Book of Genesis (cf. 2:19- 20), was to establish a relationship.*

*“In the Temple, forty days after Jesus’ birth, Joseph and Mary offered their child to the Lord and listened with amazement to Simeon’s prophecy concerning Jesus and his Mother (cf. Lk 2:22-35).*

*“To protect Jesus from Herod, Joseph dwelt as a foreigner in Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-18). After returning to his own country, he led a hidden life in the tiny and obscure village of Nazareth in Galilee, far from Bethlehem, his ancestral town, and from Jerusalem and the*

*Temple. Of Nazareth it was said, 'No prophet is to rise' (cf. Jn 7:52) and indeed, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' (cf. Jn 1:46).*

*"When, during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary lost track of the twelve-year-old Jesus, they anxiously sought him out and they found him in the Temple, in discussion with the doctors of the Law (cf. Lk 2:41-50)."*

Joseph would accompany Jesus day after day until his adulthood, so much so that Jesus would be called 'the carpenter's son.' There was Joseph's entire life: "consecrated" to God's plan in the service of Jesus.



**Jesus' own life took place for the most part in the daily events** of his family, in the common participation in the life of his people, in the small community of Nazareth, in daily work with his father Joseph and mother Mary.

In those more than **30 years of human life, simple, common,** hidden, of work, of relationship with his family and the people of his village, Jesus "learned obedience to the Father."

Then came the **time of Jesus' mission.** He did not shut himself away somewhere, but met other people by entering their towns and villages, along the roads and in their homes, involving others in his journeys of evangelization.



His person, his body, his voice and words, his conversations, his prayer to the Father expressed in public and shared with the disciples, and his compassionate feelings and deeds became the means of encounter and the proclamation of hope and salvation for many people.



And finally came the time of rejection, suffering, passion and death. All this was experienced in his flesh, which became the place where he offered himself and became a 'sacrifice pleasing to God.' Others

considered his sufferings and death a "divine curse," yet "through his wounds we were healed," and through his death "life has come to us."

**Here is his consecration in daily experience**, made up of all the moments of "joys, sorrows, hardships and hopes" and of death, all lived with the growing awareness of making his life an offering to the Father sustained by faith in the One who "would have freed him from death."

And on Easter Day Jesus would show his disciples that very body "freed from death," a manifest sign that his life, given as a sacrifice from the first to the last moment, had been given back to him by the Father forever "by raising him from the dead."

Now perhaps we can better understand the words with which we began our reflection: *"For this reason, when he came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.... Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll, Behold, I come to do your will, O God'"* (Hebrews 10:5-7).

From Jesus' experience comes the light that allows us to live with joy, commitment, dedication, faith and hope in every age and situation of our lives. His "earthly" life, his actions, his sufferings, his death and resurrection are for us a "revelation" of the meaning and fulfillment of our life, our work, our suffering and our death.

We entrust ourselves "to the One who has the power to free us from death," as he did for Jesus of Nazareth.



+ Adriano Tessarollo



*worldwide...*

Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world, located in Southeast Asia,



lying between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. It consists of more than 17,000 islands, of which 8,844 are named, and 922 permanently inhabited.

Indonesia has many high mountains, the highest of which are over 4000 meters. Many of them are active volcanoes. Indonesia has the largest number of active volcanoes in the world, 127 in all. A volcano eruption brings



many disasters, but after the eruption, the land will become very fertile.

A variety of vegetation can grow there, and minerals are abundant. In some places, hot springs emit sulfuric water and become tourist attractions and are also good for health. There are tropical rainforests and jungles, as well as swampy mangrove areas. Indonesia's most fertile land is on the island of Java.

Based on the census in 2020, there are 270 million Indonesians. More than 700 living languages are spoken in Indonesia by 1,340 recognized ethnic groups.

87% of the Indonesian people are Muslim, 7.60% Protestant, and 3.12% Catholic (8.33 million).

What holds us together in this great variety of tribes and languages is our official foundational philosophy: the “**Pancasila.**” It comprises two Old Javanese words originally derived from Sanskrit: “*pañca*” (“five”) and “*sīla*” (“principles”).

Thus it is composed of five principles which are inseparable and interrelated:

1. Belief in the one and only God
2. Just and civilized humanity
3. The Unity of Indonesia
4. Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives
5. Social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia



**The national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*,** is an old Javanese expression usually translated as “unity in diversity.”

The **eagle** is a symbol of creative energy. Its principal color, gold, symbolizes the greatness of the



nation. The black color represents nature. There are 17 feathers on each wing, 8 on the tail and 45 on the neck, marking our independence day: August 17, 1945.

Another unifying factor is **our national language**, the “**Bahasa Indonesia**” based on Malay, which had long been a commercial and governmental *lingua franca*.

Last but not least among our bonds is our **universal brotherhood and sisterhood**. We address elder gentlemen with “Bapak” (Father) and elder women with “Ibu” (Mother) no matter their social standing, President or beggar. Equals are addressed with “saudara” (brother) and “saudari” (sister), and younger people with “Adik” or “Dik” (younger brother or sister).

## Characteristics of Our People

### Indonesians Are Friendly



We are known for our huge smiles and the effort we put into hiding the dark side of our personalities. We are very easy to make friends with. The downside is that we tend to hide our feelings and are reluctant to speak our mind.

We love peace and do whatever we can to avoid conflict, so we often act cool, as if things are okay when they are really not. However, this applies more to the Javanese and Sundanese people on the island of Java, who make up the majority of the Indonesian people.

Others are more spontaneous in expressing their opinion and feelings. But on the whole we are friendly and welcoming and like being with others.

### Indonesians Are Creative

A love of arts and nature runs through Indonesians’ veins.





The country's diverse culture has been preserved and can be seen today as it was hundreds and thousands of years ago in traditional dances, textiles like batik and weaving, intricate carvings and more. Also they adapt Indian dances to Indonesian rhythm and movements.

Many people nowadays make a living by recycling waste materials including plastic into art objects or other useful articles like modes of transportation, bikes, motorcycles, and tricycles.

Our people are also very creative in finding new medications from herbs, which are abundant in our forests or which they grow at home.

People also invent new ways in agriculture, like making the most of their limited space at home to plant vegetables, etc.

### **Indonesians Are Tolerant**

We welcome diversity. The nation boasts over 300 ethnic groups, which makes it a melting pot. There are also six official state religions. Different members of the same family may adhere to different religions and live harmoniously under the same roof

Given the amount of diversity, conflicts do occur, but not frequently. During the heavy floods in Jakarta recently, one mosque was inundated by water. Since the Muslims could not pray in their house of worship, the Catholics very readily invited them to do their daily prayers in the nearby Catholic church, and they gladly accepted.

### **Family**

Our Indonesian culture stresses that people are socially responsible for their families and that children must look after their elders.

For example, they may have to work away from home to provide financial assistance or give up their leisure time to raise siblings. On one hand, this pressure can be restrictive for young Indonesians as much time is consumed with family duties.

However, their loyalty is rewarded with a sense of security and reciprocal assistance when needed.

The nuclear family is the newly predominant household structure as it has become more common for couples to only have two children.

Elder grandparents or unmarried siblings may join the domestic unit as personal circumstances change. Some of our members of the Company of St. Ursula stay with their family or relatives and become a blessing for them.

Because of poverty, overpopulation and difficulty finding jobs, many of our people, especially women, are looking for work abroad, in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Arabia, with the hope of sending their wages to their families in Indonesia. Due to lack of education, they work as domestic servants. Many have been mistreated, not paid, have been tortured, even killed. Many of them are illegal immigrants, so they have no protection.

In 2016, an estimated 9 million Indonesians were working overseas. However, this is likely an underestimate because many migrant workers are hired without authorization and avoid detection; even for authorized Indonesian workers there is no central authority that compiles numbers for all destinations.



### **Influences of Different Cultures**

The culture of Indonesia has been shaped by long interaction between original indigenous customs and multiple foreign influences, like Portuguese, Dutch, Chinese, and Arabs. In the course of time they became one with the Indonesian people and with its culture, often because of intermarriage.

Among our Indonesian Catholics there are quite a number of Chinese-Indonesians. They make up 25% of the members of our Company. To understand the mindset of Chinese-Indonesians, we have to understand the history of how they came to Indonesia.

Most *Chinese Indonesians* are descended from southern *Chinese immigrants*. *Chinese* people have lived in the *Indonesian* archipelago since at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Many came initially as sojourners

(temporary residents), intending to return home in their old age. Some, however, stayed in the region as economic *migrants*.

The Chinese-Indonesians are Indonesian citizens, and almost all of them have adopted an Indonesian name; for example, “Tan” has now become “Sutanto”. They don’t know the Chinese language, nor its culture. But all of them celebrate “Chinese New Year” with a big family gathering.

The Western world has influenced Indonesia in science, technology and modern entertainment such as television shows, film and music, as well as political system and issues.

### **The History of Our Catholic Church**

The Dutch began to colonize Indonesia in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century diocesan priests were sent to serve the Dutch people. They were too few to reach out to the natives.

In 1859 the Jesuits came as missionaries and served the Dutch as well as the native people.

In 1863 Fr. Frans van Lith opened a school in Muntilan, Central Java. The school became famous because it produced important figures for the development of Indonesia. The Catholic Church in Indonesia is not limited to the process of forming indigenous people, priests and bishops and inculturation, but also involves the process of the Church's role in the life of the nation. The sons and daughters of the Church are also sons and daughters of the nation.

**In 1856 the Ursulines of the Roman Union** landed in Batavia (now Jakarta) and began to establish schools for girls.

They were followed by other religious congregations



who establish hospitals. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Jesuits invited priests from other orders and congregations.

Nowadays there are diocesan priests in more than 30 dioceses, 19 orders and congregations of priests, 4 congregations of Brothers, and 38 orders and congregations of Sisters. The Catholic schools, hospitals and orphanages are considered the best and are highly preferred.

In the last few decades, there have been many recorded cases of attacks by radical Muslim groups against churches and Christians. This created fear within the Indonesian Christian community. These incidents mainly took place on the island of Java, where Christians are a minority. Unfortunately, this situation is likely to continue.

However, these attacks can be explained as expressions of fear and frustration from the perpetrators because Indonesia is considered by the perpetrators to have undergone a process of 'Christianization' after the independence period.

Their generally weak position makes most Indonesian Christians realize their position as a minority; therefore they try to build good relations with Muslims. Even so, regarding the sense of Indonesian nationality, Christians are just as strong in nationalist pride as Muslims, who make up the majority. Christians are also very supportive of maintaining Indonesian unity.

The Dutch Colony ended in 1942 with the Japanese occupation. Then Indonesia declared its **independence on August 17, 1945** when the Japanese surrendered. But it required four years of struggle before the Dutch agreed to relinquish their colony.

### **Education in Indonesia**

The Netherlands left behind good schools that continued to be developed by Indonesia from kindergarten to university. In cities education is guaranteed, but less, even much less in rural areas. School buildings are inadequate or non-existent so that children have to travel long distances on foot to school.

Great development is achieved by the presence of computers and sophisticated devices such as computers and cell phones. In cities people used them, but again in rural areas there is lack of internet access and people cannot afford to buy those expensive devices.

In the city there is even an overuse of the cell phones. Children as young as three years old are already addicted to them. Recently there was news that dozens of children were admitted to mental hospitals due to overuse of their cell phones.

On the other hand, in the village the children cannot attend the online classes that are now used during the pandemic because they have no internet access and are too poor to buy cell phones.

The disparity in Indonesian education has widened since the Covid-19 pandemic began spreading its power. Countless schools have closed, and doubts linger as to when things will return to normal.

### **The Company of Saint Ursula in Indonesia**

Our form of life, as members of a secular Institute, fits well into Indonesian culture. More so, it fits the Merician charism.

Our national motto is "**unity in diversity**," which is completely in line with St. Angela's Last Counsel: *"consider how important union and concord are. Then long for it, seek it, embrace it, hold onto it with all your strength."*

Indonesia has such a great experience of diversity; we breathe this diversity in every environment, in the family, in the neighborhood, at school and at work. Unity does not require uniformity, so the Company of St. Ursula fits in well in Indonesia.

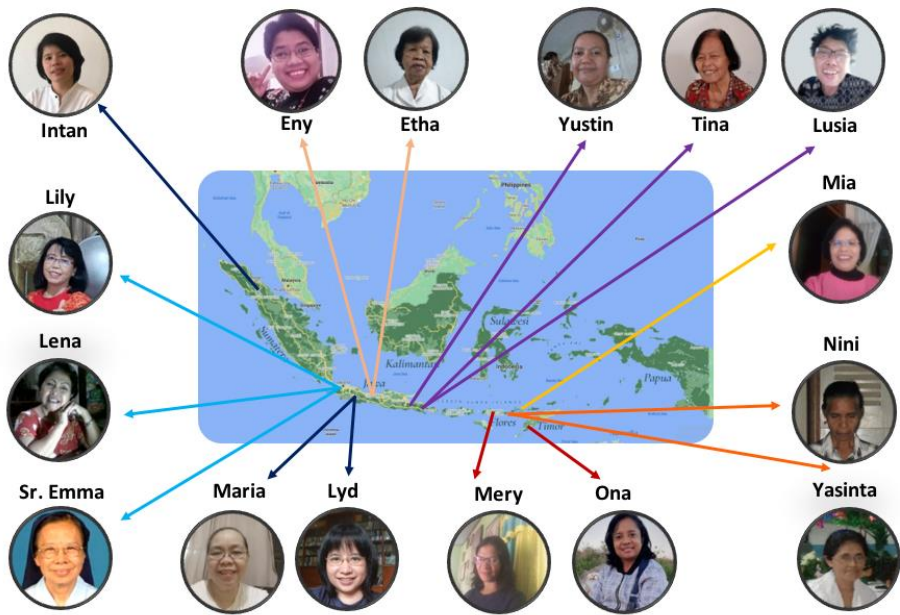
Harmony can be achieved as long as we have a daily way of life which, for us secular Ursulines, is given primarily by participation in the Eucharistic celebration, which is celebrated everywhere with the same Word of God and the same Eucharistic table.

Living happily this motto of being united together becomes a lifelong project, and we strive to do so with all our strength.

Our sisters come from many different places with different backgrounds. We present a map of the sisters of the Company of St. Ursula in Indonesia. There are five islands of origin for our sisters, namely: Sumatra, Java, Flores, Lembata, and Timor.

The Company of St. Ursula was introduced to Indonesia in 1989 by Sr. Emmanuel Gunanto, OSU, and founded by Elisa Tarolli, who led our annual meetings/retreats for thirteen successive years.

So far one four members have preceded us to our Father's House. May they rest in peace, and may we be able to bear witness to the marvelous charism of Saint Angela Merici in our land.



*The Indonesian sisters, with Sister Emma*

## Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart A Letter from the Madre – The Prologue First Part

We continue with sections of “*Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart: The Rule, the Way*” by Mary-Cabrini Durkin, published in English in 2005.

### A Letter to My Beloved Daughters and Sisters

Angela Merici begins her Rule with a prologue *in the manner of letters* (Index of the Chapters). She is addressing her *beloved daughters and sisters* (Pr.:3). She speaks to them out of her heart, not about them in a formal or distant tone. She often addresses them as *sorelle mie* (Pr.:7, 15, 22). The Prologue

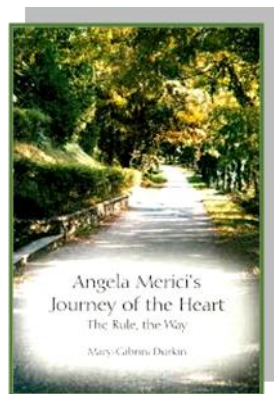


immediately sets the tone. This warmth is intrinsic to the Rule, which presents the Company as a network of close relationships, suggesting a spiritual family. The word *company* (typical term for spiritual groups) suggests its Latin origin in *cum* and *panis*: with + bread, “bread-sharing,” a group of people who share bread and thus life.

Angela's intense, relational character stamped this companionship.

For its members, companionship constituted an entirely new reality. As unmarried women they were anonymous and invisible. The birth of a daughter was not usually celebrated, and daughters were often unnamed or even omitted entirely in the regular declarations made by heads of households. Single women had no connections with one another based upon their similar circumstances.

The relationships within the Company would give them solidarity and transform them into a public presence in Brescia. That in itself was an historic phenomenon. They would continue





to live in “the world” of family or employment but *apart from the darkness of this miserable world* (Pr.:4), that is, enlightened by spiritual purpose and joy.

This solemn letter opens *In the name of the blessed and undivided Trinity* (Pr.:1). The Trinity presides over the Rule: the Holy Spirit over the chapter on obedience; the Son, known in Jesus, over the chapter on virginity; and the provident Parent over the chapter on poverty.

In the first lines, the author addresses her overarching purpose, as dramatists do in their prologues and composers do in their overtures. The Prologue sketches a summary of Ursuline life, from beginning to end. Chapter I is “About the Manner of Receiving” members. The life unfolds until the last chapter looks beyond the grave to the members’ heavenly destination.

### The Call – A Gift

The Prologue introduces the mainspring of the life described in the Rule. Ursuline scholars Luciana Mariani, Elisa Tarolli and Marie Seynaeve describe the heart of Angela’s message in these words: “Christ has taken the first step towards her by his initiative of love; he is the ‘Lover.’”

The Rule’s basic dynamic is God’s loving initiative and our gratitude for *having been thus chosen* (Pr.:7). [*Y*]ou must give him infinite thanks for having granted such a singular gift especially to you (Pr.:5). Gratitude is the mainspring of Ursuline life. [*Y*]ou have been called by God (Pr.:9). God’s call is a gift. The whole Rule is about how to cherish the gift of invitation into intimacy with God. When we receive a precious gift, we treasure it. We take practical steps to care for it, use it well and preserve it. If the gift is an invitation to a life, the practical steps are the habits of that life. Angela calls them the *means and ways* (Pr.:10, 13).... The Rule, then, has little to do with rules. Through its pages, Angela talks to her daughters, members of the Company of Saint Ursula, about their new life. Her warmth is palpable...with the energy of personal presence, face to face with her *beloved...most beloved daughters and sisters...my very own sisters* (Pr.:3, 4, 7). The Prologue makes it clear that the whole Rule is a personal statement, germinated in her own experience. Implicitly, she



communicates how God has reached out to her, invited her to live deeply in Christ's love. Bit by bit, she worked out ways that helped her answer the invitation. That is what the Rule describes, a way of responding. It all starts with God. Always—God invites, we respond.



### Called Together – The Company

Angela was sixty when she established this Company, this way of being *together*.... One of her favorite words, a theme struck early in the Prologue, is *insieme*, that is, *together*. *God has granted you the grace*, she says, *of...joining you together to serve his divine*

*Majesty* (Pr.:4).

The Company offers a way of being *together* in a spiritual family of sisters. Like other adult siblings, these “sisters” do not necessarily live together; in fact, that is rare. Their ties are not of blood, nor of shared labor. Their connections are spiritual bonds, woven together through personal contact.

The Rule presents the main outlines for building this family (especially in Chapter XI), and the Counsels and Testament offer more details. Angela directs members to gather at least once a month for the sacraments and regularly for spiritual enrichment and, *talking over spiritual matters*, to *rejoice together and together encourage one another* (Ch. VII:12, 13; Eighth Legacy). Twice a month the local leaders are to visit the members in their neighborhoods. They are to offer guidance and encouragement and, if a member has a problem, work out a way to help. If one of the women is in need because of poverty or illness or old age, others must care for her, in a sisterly spirit (Ch. XI:7-13).

For Angela, companionship is part of the call, something necessary. Ursulines need each other. Their unity is a *mighty fortress* (Last Counsel:15). *Loving each other...in harmony together* is Angela's *sure sign of walking the path right and pleasing to God* (Tenth Legacy:12).

The fact that others are faithful is a great strength and encouragement. United spirit and practice create an unseen circle of which we are, each and all, a part.

The Company brought to fulfillment the call that Angela had experienced as a teenager.... Angels and women on a ladder between heaven and earth—the sight and the music—put into image and sound a movement of spirit that must have been stirring in her already, and which she continued to unfold for years to come.

**Each person has a call, a vocation. How can we hear it?** To hear this call we must go deep inside. Each of us was created with particular capacities for living well and happily, for loving and being loved. We usually sense how we will do that best, along what path of life. In other words, God’s call comes first through the divine breath that shaped us. It may take a while to hear this voice clearly. But the Holy Spirit continually teaches us our own truth. From the awe-inspiring fact of God’s call, the Prologue moves to stress the *new and wondrous dignity* of the Ursuline vocation (Pr.:8). [*F*]or how many great persons...do not have...such a grace! (Pr.:6) ...a life of such glory that we...will become queens in heaven (Pr.:17).

This assessment flies in the face of the sixteenth century’s devaluation of an unmarried woman, with no standing, no security. Exploitation threatened her—all sorts of exploitation—and she had little recourse in society or the courts of law. Even today, for a woman to be alone can be fraught with danger. Girls and single women may be the least-valued people in society. But the world’s values do not measure one’s worth. On the contrary, we know how God esteems and loves us—all of us! With that understanding, each member can lift her head and shape her life. Enlightened and empowered by God’s perspective, an Ursuline should share God’s way of seeing, should see the dignity of all people whom society may disregard. Angela created in Chapter XI a countercultural, even revolutionary network of relationships. People with resources and social position were put at the service of their weakest neighbors. She envisioned a new familial structure bridging classes and clans.

### Spouse – The Mystery

The Prologue describes the character of the Ursuline vocation as being *spouses of the Son of God* (Pr.:7, 17). The authors of *Contribution towards a Biography* assert that “the specific note of Angela’s

spirituality would be the contemplation of this mystery of Christ-Spouse.... To make this mystery of Christ-Spouse present in the Church, to give witness to it in the world by one's life and by one's word, this would be the charism which Angela would bequeath to her daughters...."

"Spouse" is the word that Scripture uses to show the covenant of deep love between God and Israel. In the biblical Covenant, God promised Israel a home in the Promised Land. Yet the Covenant is more about abiding in God's love than about geography. On Mt. Sinai, God and Israel forged a partnership of belonging to each other, a Covenant of love, honor, and faithfulness. The prophet Jeremiah put it like this,

evoking God's voice, "This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days.... I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

The metaphor of "spouse" continues in the Church's life. We are the Church, and the Church is the daughter of Israel. Christians live the continuing Covenant, whatever their vocation may be. Angela draws on this millennia-long tradition when she emphasizes that her daughters are *spouses of the Son of God* (Pr.:7). Jesus Christ is our human image of

God. In him we see what God is like, how God deals with us. And what do we see? Jesus invites us, draws us, into a deep and intimate relationship with God.

Contemporary experience in many cultures offers new insight and further challenge into spousal relationships. Some spouses live a real equality. They collaborate.

How might this newer idea of espousal illuminate our human situation *vis à vis* God? Mary Conroy, OSU, spoke of "a partnership of the whole of life." A partnership with God! To be God's partner means that the relationship is bigger than any individual human being. It is not



merely personal. We become God's collaborators, making God's work our own! Jesus inaugurated his ministry with such a commitment "to bring glad tidings to the poor...to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free..." (Luke 4:18). Jesus would do God's work.

Angela Merici lived such a partnership. Her deeply intimate prayer to Christ ripples outward to the circles of *family, relatives and friends* and to those *who do not know [him]*. It glows with her ardent zeal *to open up the blindness of their minds* (Ch. V:24, 31, 34). Her deeds lived out her words through service, witness and even liberation.

Words are always pale symbols of reality. For Angela, the word "spouse" symbolizes, in human terms, a mutually loving covenant of life. It is an idealized image, of course. Many human spouses do not live up to it. Israel and the Church do not live up to it. Many Ursulines do not live up to it. But God always does....

Our more clinical era may find such mystic language excessively emotional, imaginary even. But Angela's down-to-earth practicality balances it with common sense. The Rule is about habits and small daily actions, not about imagination.

When she dictated the Rule, she was an old woman over sixty—no sentimental bride! She had learned the day-in-day-out, year-in-year-out *means and ways* of acting as Christ's in the midst of the world, not by a word, but by deeds. Again and again, in the Prologue and through the subsequent chapters, she insists on the need to *embrace* the Rule's sensible practices (Pr.:13, 29), *since there is little or no difference between freely saying: "I no longer want to serve God" and not wanting the ways and the rules necessary to be able to keep oneself in this* (Pr.:14).



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

## Angela Merici: A Reflection on the Seed



By happy coincidence, the Gospel passage of January 27, 2021, memorial of Saint Angela Merici, has offered us very rich and varied food for thought that we would like to be enlightened by.

**It is the parable of the sower**, we could say, trite and overused, we have heard it too many times and heard it explained too many times, so that it just does not draw us to listen.

However, if we look in the same place, we might find a treasure, an heirloom, that has been shining before our eyes for decades and we hadn't even noticed.

We find in this parable a great deal of closeness not only to the life of the foundress but, above all, to the history of the Company, starting from the same recognition of the holiness and prophetic contribution of the foundress. Despite the fact that she was venerated, she was not canonized until nearly three centuries after her death (Pius VII, 1807). By then the Company had already spread, and the name of Angela Merici was known from East to West.

It can be seen that this woman's great intuition had a long way to go before it found not only recognition by the Church, but also the discovery of all its modernity, which was four centuries ahead of its time. (Secular institutes would spread between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the time of their true explosion.) The Church's experiment therefore lasted quite some time before its effectiveness was discovered.

But what Angela had discovered and proposed was already all there, in her initial intuition that she tenaciously kept alive, sustained by the Spirit.

Just as in the story of the seed of which Jesus speaks to us: **the seed is the most fragile and at the same time the most resistant**

**reality.** The whole plant is already within it in its potentiality; there is no need to add anything else, except soil, water and sun.

I want to say that God's work, in its planning and effectiveness, is already there at the moment in which the Lord proposes it to the listener.

In fact, the listener is compared to the ground that welcomes that life-project, or rejects it, or suffocates it, or forgets about it, just as in the various happenings that the Lord explains in the parable.

So it involves a synergy (almost a conception) between that product which is already there in the initial seed and the person who receives it in her own heart, in her own life, in the center of her own vitality and decision-making.



The question of time, on the other hand, seems to be irrelevant, given that the Lord can arouse charisms which, for the time in which they are received, seem like subversive

novelties, while they then reveal themselves to be true fuel for history, like petroleum, or a kind of agitation that allows history to grow, to move forward and, to put it in modern terms, to evolve.

But beware: **what must develop is the seed, and the seed must become a plant that produces other seeds,** other life projects, other fuels for history.

The first plant might even die, but the continuity of the project would remain unaltered, because it comes from God, the source of life and history. All the various historical achievements can change, evolve, even disappear and then reproduce themselves in some other part of the earth, in a new and surprising form, but always faithfully anchored to the initial charism.

What stifles the development of the seed is not so much the fact that it can be transplanted, but keeping it in an inhospitable soil that



does not allow it to develop to its full potential (Jesus' image of stony ground, brambles, the road).

And the greatest risk is precisely this: an inadequate tilling of the soil, lazily and stubbornly keeping the seed in the same sterile soil. Another risk is our unwillingness to listen again each time to this parable because we think that we know it too well, so that we no longer allow it to speak to us. We do not discover what it has to tell us each time, not in its story line (which is always the same as the Lord pronounced it the first time), but in its prophetic potential. By prophetic I mean God's ability to speak to history in an ever-new way with the same ancient words.

**That ground that soil, is us**, with our stories that evolve or come to a stop. That choice depends on how the heart makes itself available to welcome the seed that is always ancient but is renewed each time in a way that we cannot predict.

Who could ever say what will come out in the evolution of life from a reality as small as a seed? Even the seeds of the gigantic baobab trees are small.

Moreover, in the intimate moment with the disciples, when they ask the Lord about the parable, Jesus is surprised by our lack of understanding. He tells them – us – in a peremptory way that if we cannot understand this parable, we will certainly not be able to understand the others either. Therefore, this one becomes the criterion, the key to understanding and discovering all the others. If we do not understand this one, we will be foolish to think we have understood or can understand the others. And the other parables all speak to us of the Kingdom, which is nothing other than the explanation of the relationship between us and God.

This parable, as a fundamental criterion of all the others, tells us that God places in our history a life project (what else is a seed if not this?) that has in itself infinite potential for growth and enrichment.

Once this project has taken root in our soil (our life inserted in history), God enables it to develop autonomously without any further intervention on his part. He gives the ability to develop it to the soil, that is, to us. That soil will produce, the more it is free from blockages, both internal (stones) and external (brambles, thorns).

The third possibility, the road, which the Lord points out first, is the most wicked, because it does not even allow the seed to penetrate, but allows some hungry bird to take it away.

Now, excluding this last possibility – let's hope we can exclude it anyway – as for the other two, **what inner blockages do not allow the charism given to me to develop in and around me?**

**What, instead, are the external instances** that oppose the accomplishment of God's work in our lives? (They are not so external after all, given that Jesus speaks of "the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and all other lusts" [Mk 4:19].)

**Yes, God's work, because that is what it is all about: the seed we have received is his and not ours.**

We run a great risk: that of appropriating the seed, treating it as absolutely ours, so that we consider it a right to have recognition or even compensation for the energies we employ in a work that has its origin in the heart of God and that always has him as its absolute "master."

So, if this were the case, we might as well have acquired a government job for which there are unions that support us in the recognition of our rights and in the recovery of any wrongs or lack of recognition.

**But our only union is that of the apostles: Christ crucified.** And our only reward is his blessed face and His voice that will say to us, if we have served well: *Come good and faithful servant, partake of the joy of your Lord.*



*Don Antonino La Manna,  
Assistant to the Company of Catania*



## ***Most Vigilant Shepherds and Good Servants: Interpersonal Relationships and a Life of Communion***

**Meeting of the Formation Guides of the Italian Companies –  
March 13, 2021**

**Some echoes, some suggestions...**

***Most Vigilant Shepherds and Good Servants...***

Valeria, President of the Federation, introduced the event:



We move with Saint Angela Merici: in her footsteps, on her paths, within her project, within a mission that she entrusted to us: "to be most vigilant shepherds and good servants."

We are sisters to whom, in one way or another, a task has been

entrusted, a mission within the Company we belong to....

We can surely say that it is a **great grace** to form and educate and to bear witness in our lives and our words to life's meaning and significance and to consecrated life in secularity within the Merician charism.

First of all, the grace of the vocation calls for thanksgiving: *"You must give him infinite thanks for having granted such a singular gift especially to you"* (Rule, Prologue).

But this grace, carries with it a **responsibility**, a great responsibility: to teach other sisters *"the truth of this unique way of life"* (Rule, Ch.1).

**How, then, are we to live this grace and this responsibility?**

Again St. Angela, present in our midst, suggests to us how to do it: *"Regard yourselves as ministers and servants, reflecting*

***that you have more need to serve them than they have to be served by you, or governed***” (First Counsel).

The service, the mission, the task that has been entrusted to us, is ***to defend and protect [our sisters] from wolves and robbers*** (Seventh Counsel); ***what you want them to do, do it yourselves first... to practise any virtue together with them*** (Sixth Counsel) and together with them ***“with a joyful spirit ... and with docility we will let ourselves be led by the Spirit ... so that our being may assume the form of faith, hope and charity,”*** the Constitutions tell us (3.2).

### **Interpersonal Relationships and a Life of Communion...**

Maria Rocca guided the reflection. She began with a brief story from Paulo Coelho.



*"A disciple said, 'All the masters say that spiritual treasure is discovered through solitary search. So why are we all here together?'*

*"The master replied, 'You are all together because the forest is always stronger than a solitary tree. The forest conserves moisture,*

*resists hurricanes, and helps the soil be fertile. But what makes a tree strong is its roots. And the roots of one plant cannot help another plant grow. **Being united together for the same purpose** means allowing each person to grow in his or her own way, and this is the path of those who desire to be close to God.'*"

"And we are here together because the forest, i.e. the Federation, is stronger than any tree, i.e. each individual Company (since it represents all the Companies), but at the same time each Company with its roots has the necessary strength to resist difficulties and hardships ...

We are here together, even if physically distant, because we are called to be mothers, teachers, shepherds and servants.

We are called to a life in/of communion (not only within the Company). This way of living must be guided by values; in order for a life of relationship to develop, stabilize, and mature, motivations greater

than our small self are indispensable, with a continuous reference to something "more." That is the fundamental characteristic of human nature and is the drive to grow, as persons and as consecrated persons.

**In summary:**

(a) The ability to enter into relationship is not improvised. It requires a long and patient preparation, a slow and progressive maturing.

(b) It is an art that is learned at the school of other people and requires discipline, concentration, patience, constant implementation, much interest and practical exercise.

And so we shall see St. Angela's wish fulfilled: for *"God to enlighten you, and direct you, and teach you what you have to do for love of him in this task, and there cannot be another more worthy than to be guardians of the spouses of the Most High."*

***HAPPY TO SEE EACH OTHER'S FACES AGAIN....***



With great joy, on Saturday, March 13, 2021, we spent a few hours in a video conference with the formation directors of Italy, reflecting on the theme: *"Being most vigilant shepherds and good*

*servants."*

I would like to thank the President and all those who collaborated in planning and carrying out this occasion for formation and for exchanging experiences.

At this special meeting, we were all happy to see each other again. Our faces showed the difficulties, the worries, the tiredness, the various sufferings that have marked this pandemic year, but our eyes were overflowing with happiness.

Who would have thought that right in our homes, an intimate and personal place, we could welcome and host so many sisters in video

conference (besides in my heart with the daily prayer for the Company)?

This meeting was an occasion to renew our faith, to draw the living water of hope, and to receive with an open heart the love of God that through our meeting, listening, and animating each other makes us ever more sisters to one another, daughters of Saint Angela, spouses of Jesus Christ and mothers of those entrusted to us.

Together we reflected on the pedagogical dimension of the relationship between persons, in our case between sisters, especially with those in formation.

During Maria Rocca's talk she said, *"The capacity to enter into relationship is characterized by three interacting forces: openness to values, the overall maturity of the person, and the capacity for relationship and communion."*

These insights made me reflect on how delicate it is to enter into relationship with another, and how discreet the dialogue with the person who sees in us an example to follow must be.

To each and every one a special thanks, always accompanied by prayer.

*Liliana, Company of Agrigento*

### **The Project of Formation**

*The project of formation "...Could transform the idea of formation in its contents, methods, and timing. It would finally be an integral formation, built on the rock of eternal love that sets one free, forming integrated persons who have learned to evangelize their feelings, to love God with a human heart, and to love humanity with a divine heart! It will be a formation that continues for a lifetime."*

(From the Congregation of Consecrated Life: *Witnesses to the Beauty of God*  
March 25, 2021, 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata*)

## Mediator of Peace and Sisterhood



I was born in 1978. I belong to the Nyabiraba Parish. I was received into the Company in 2005. First consecration in 2018, renewal in 2020.

I was in 4th grade when I realized that consecrated life attracted me. I confided in a priest. He told me he would take an interest in helping me. In the meantime, I was also thinking that it was necessary for me to get married to support the future of the family. But I learned that there were two girls in the family who had chosen the consecrated life. It seemed to me that I too should follow their example to thank God for the good he had done for us. This desire returned and prompted me to look again. And so it was that I learned that there are the daughters of St. Angela Merici. I decided to write to the committee of the daughters of St. Angela of our Parish asking to share their mission. I waited for a response.

In the year 2018 I was able to realize that the call was no longer a dream, but that it was possible that there were so many of us. I learned about the Company's origin and deep roots and solid foundation. I found the answer about the possibility of consecrating myself to the Lord in the life of always being among people. I enjoyed the possibility of being able to fraternize with other sisters from different nations, exchanging news with them, and being part of different nationalities. I was so pleased to see that our directress in Burundi also had the opportunity to be chosen to represent other countries of Africa in the Council of the international Federation. In this universal sisterhood we find love, hope, and joy, and each one discovers the grace of being an instrument of communion for others.

St. Angela Merici's Company was born in difficult times. May St. Angela help us to keep our heads above water in equally difficult times. May she help us to be in solidarity with all the nations of the world. May the consecrated woman in the world, with her untiring self-giving, be a mediator of peace and of sisterhood in the power of the Word that saves and in the Eucharist that nourishes us.

*Paulina Ntirakirwa, Company of Burundi*

## For Me, to Live Is Christ...



I was born in 1975 into a Christian family. I received my Baptism at a young age. I attended literacy school. When I reached sixth grade, I was confirmed.

I grew up as part of the "Eucharistic Crusade" Movement. I was one of the girls who danced. When I got older, I became responsible for the dance group. Later I was also chosen as a catechist, that is, among "those who work to make God known." I tried to make myself useful in the best way possible... to the point of desiring to be consecrated. The Holy Spirit introduced me to the Company of daughters of St. Angela Merici. I was accepted in 2007. I made my first consecration in 2013; renewal in 2018 with deep and great joy.

In the Federation magazine we find much news of the different Companies in the world. We realize the fervor that St. Angela Merici had in giving herself to the Lord, in her commitment to prayer and in the generosity that moved her to love God above all else. I rejoice to hear how we are part of a universal company, even if we do not share the same language. The Holy Spirit sustains us to meet and understand one another.

I draw strength from prayer and listening to the Word of God, but also from the example I find in St. Angela Merici, treasuring the teachings of those who support us in our vocation.

In fact, I also find help in the instructions I have to prepare for the catechumens I have the joy of guiding. I become more and more convinced that the consecrated life helps us to progress in holiness and to strengthen love. St. Angela's writings help me to advance in the consecrated life and keep me from being a prisoner of earthly realities.

The consecrated life is the beginning of the heavenly way down here on earth. I feel that Christ has become my true Spouse. The cross we encounter in life becomes a "bridge that leads us to God." We too should be able to say: "Truly, for me, to live is Christ.

*Jaqueline Nkurunziza (= "good news"), Company of Burundi*



## In Burundi Initial and Continuing Formation Continues



This year (2021) we received 14 new candidates.

Some of them were received on January 27, feast of Saint Angela Merici, and the others on the 31st of the same month; they belong to six different parishes.

In total we are 267: 43 are in the probationary period; 62 have made their first consecration; 57 have renewed their temporary consecration; 105 are consecrated for life.

We still have 19 letters of request for acceptance. We will accept them, after careful evaluation, in 2022.

We continue to make ourselves known to the bishops and priests. The Archbishop of Gitega always accompanies us.

In the name of the Company of Burundi, I sincerely thank the Federation and each one of you who have helped us so much and continue to accompany us.

We always thank Father Modesto, who is always close to us in all our needs.

Ciao, everyone!

*Pasqualina NSHIMIRIMANA, Directress of the Company of Burundi*

*In the Diocese of Ruyig for the last admissions*



## With God I Have Everything...

# Formation & Conversion

I was born in Bandar Seribu, a small town in North Sumatra. The town is located in the countryside, away from the hustle and bustle of the city. I belong to the Batak tribe, which I consider a gift. I love the Batak culture which gives a sense of kinship with anyone who belongs to the clan, indicated by the surname. The clan is like a bridge that connects its members to love each other through brotherhood/sisterhood. My name is Marintan Purba, so whenever I meet someone whose last name is Purba, the person automatically becomes my family.



I am used to a large family because I have ten siblings: five girls and five boys. I am the sixth child. From childhood we were taught to love, respect and care for each other.

My childhood experience seems to determine my current life. I work at Rumah Harapan Indonesia (RHI = Indonesian House of Hope), taking care of children from poor families who have a serious illness, e.g. cancer, heart problems, etc., by giving shelter, food and everything needed for medical treatment. Because of the current pandemic we have to work harder and pay more attention to the health of our young patients.

The RHI offers a temporary stay and is open to all children from various regions. To continue to run the RHI, we need rapid antigens for every patient and parent to maintain safety and health.

This means we have to spend a lot of money. But God is present in our ministry by sending us good people to help with the funding.

My vocation as a secular Ursuline is one of the most beautiful gifts of my life. Serving God through others with all I have, combining all my strengths and weaknesses in the offering I make. I believe that with God I have everything, and every difficulty can be overcome with the strength he gives me.



Church activities are also affected by the current situation. I am currently involved in the Catholic Youth movement. We have online Masses for Catholic students. Deepening the faith and sharing the faith happens through zooming. Of course it has a different flavor from meeting face to face. But at least we try to keep the faith of young people alive by serving each other and experiencing an encounter with God.

*Marintan Purba, Company of Indonesia*

## **Salt and Leaven in the World**



The green nature and yellow rice paddies in the windy climate and the bubbling water flowing from the beautiful hills... you can't see them around the towns and in the offices in the city anymore. From our workplace I can only see tall silent walls, office buildings and hotels in the hot sun. This is a description of Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia.

The streets are crowded with cars and motorcycles. Everyone seems to be in a hurry, struggling to survive, each with their own problems without concern for others. It seems that way, but it is not always so. Our Archbishop, Ignatius Cardinal Suharyo, appealed to the faithful during this year's Lenten season to *"Love more, be more involved and become a blessing."* We were invited to care, love and be involved with others as St. Angela did in her day.

I lived with my mother until she passed away on September 5, 2010. In the last two years of her life she suffered from several health problems. Outside of work hours I would devote my time to her. She was so weak that she could not walk on her own..... She had to be helped in every way, but she was always kind and grateful, and appreciated everything I did for her. A couple of days before she died

she asked me to stay with her and not leave her to go to the office. I loved her dearly and miss her deeply to this day.

I have always been involved in pastoral work as a catechist, teaching catechumens and preparing people for the sacrament of Confirmation. Since my mother's death, I have more time to devote to social work with the parish. During this pandemic, many people have lost their jobs. The number of poor people has increased significantly. So from time to time we distribute food items to rickshaw drivers, garbage collectors and the poor, regardless of their religion.

Each year we raise funds to provide a special Christmas lunch for the orphanage and nursing home. This is what we do with the orphans – what a joy to see their happy faces!

During this pandemic we have been advised to stay home. Fortunately, the internet allows us to stay in touch with our family and friends to help each other, pray together, send good wishes, chat, comfort the sick, share our joys and sorrows. Our spiritual life is also nurtured by live-streamed Masses, meditations and online Scripture courses, and webinars.

My relationship with God is deepened through the Eucharist and the Word of God, which I read, meditate on, and practice in my daily life. It helps me to become salt and leaven in the world, inspired by St. Angela, sharing and caring for others, both through material things and by listening and encouraging and sharing faith.

I feel very enriched as a secular Ursuline. It allows me to share what I freely receive as a gift from God's mercy, through my person, my time, my energy, my skills, my heart and material things, even though it is not much.

It is still very little compared to what St. Angela did for Jesus and for people. Every day I draw new life from Jesus, the source of life, like a branch that remains part of the vine. I trust in Jesus, my only treasure. If I remain in his love, my joy will be complete (cf. John 15:9-17).

*Theresia Lilyana, Company of Indonesia*

**Thanks for a Special Formation Guide  
For Her 60th Anniversary of Religious Profession  
Sr. M. Emmanuel Gunanto**



*Dear Sisters,*

*Our very dear Sister Emma, OSU, celebrated her 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a nun in the Order of St. Ursula. She brought the Company of St. Ursula from Brescia to Indonesia with Elisa Tarolli and planted it here in Bandung as the Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici, which then spread through Indonesia in the north and east. Until this very day, she has been the greatest supporter of our Company of St. Ursula in Indonesia.*

*Lydia, Directress*

What a beautiful goal you have reached, dearest Sister Emma, in your fidelity to the Lord! What a joy for the Company of Indonesia that had you as its initiator and still continues to enjoy your precious accompaniment! What a joy also for us who have had the good fortune to meet you in person and to enjoy your teachings. We accompany this important anniversary with immense gratitude and pray for you, dearest Sister Emma, and also for your congregation that has so many times lent you to our Company. Forward all, *with a great and longing heart!*

## I Raised My Head



Valeria's letter "Raise your head" in the first 2021 issue of "In the same charism" made me wince a bit, because it recalled an experience....

I was on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje for only a few days, so brief that the program did not include a climb up Mount Krizevac. From a window of the hotel where I was staying I could see the mountain and the big cross on top, and I was sorry I couldn't go up there. Then, thank God, there was the idea to go there in the middle of the night at 3 AM, the same day of the departure scheduled for 12 noon.

So many of us in the group started the climb, steep and with many rocks and boulders on the way. Climbing to the top takes three hours, including the prayer stops at each of the Stations of the Cross, which begins shortly after the climb. With little training, so as not to get caught up in the fear of not making it, I concentrated on one step at a time. But as I climbed, the distance between me and the rest of the group increased, and with my little strength I was in trouble....

When I arrived at the 9<sup>th</sup> Station, when Jesus falls for the third time, I collapsed in total discouragement and defeat: the rest of the group continued to climb and no one had noticed my discomfort, so I also had a strong sense of loneliness and abandonment.

I was tempted to go back, but I didn't want to, yet I wasn't able to continue. I was in a blockage and began to cry with so much pain.

It was then that I raised my head towards the Cross. It was like seeing Jesus waiting for me. I felt his real presence, and in this act of abandonment he dissolved all anguish and despondency. I felt light and strong enough to continue, and the most amazing thing was that I gained ground and reached the top with the rest of the group!

This beautiful and special experience taught me that without Jesus we can do nothing. He is the strength, the light that makes us see clearly, the remedy and the solution to every problem or difficulty.

Since then, in every difficulty, remembering what I experienced and putting aside my pride, I literally raise my head: He is always there and he is never missing.

*Luisa, Company of Modena/Bologna*

## **Living the Spirit of Saint Angela and Making Her Known**

I am the only secular Ursuline in Australia, belonging to the Asia-Pacific Group.

In 2004, I moved from teaching maths and accounting) to the role of “business manager” in an Ursuline school in Sydney. In 2017 I retired from school completely. I now work two days a week in parishes (assisting with financial management). However, now that I have retired from the school, the Principal invites me back each year to assist with “new staff induction on the Ursuline charism”, and sometimes staff spirituality days. I am their “Ursuline” link.



There is also a small group of teachers that meet 6 times a year (but not this year with COVID) on a Sunday afternoon. They call themselves “Companions” of St Angela.

The Principal, Mary Leask, has recently purchased a copy of Mary-Cabrini’s book on the Counsels and the Testament. They used that recently for a staff spirituality day. Next year, if our meetings can resume, the work will continue with this book. It all helps to keep alive the spirit of St Angela and to make her known.

I have also befriended the Principal of another Ursuline school (about 1000km away!) and she has invited me onto one of their committees (via zoom) and I should be visiting that school next year (if the borders are open between our states). Both Principals, with some of their executive team, came on a pilgrimage with me last year “In the footsteps of St Angela”.

I try to have them own the story and the charism of St Angela, so that they will continue to pass it on. The recent staff spirituality day using Mary-Cabrini’s book was run without me – and that is good. The Principals are growing in confidence to pick up responsibility for passing this on.

Hopefully, one day, some young people may come forward together to do what the Girelli sisters did. I hope I'm still alive when that happens!



*Monica, only secular Ursuline in Australia*

## Formation Meeting for Leaders



At the invitation of the President, we met for a video conference on the afternoon of **May 1 and 2** to listen to and reflect on two important themes for the life of each of our Companies:

1. **"The Constitutions, a gift of the Church for living in the present historical context and for facing the future"**
2. **"The theological aspects of our charism" to express it in truth in every part of the world in which we live.**

We were helped to reflect by Dr. Rosalba Rossi, who works in the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and by Don Raymond, Vice-assistant to the Federation Council.

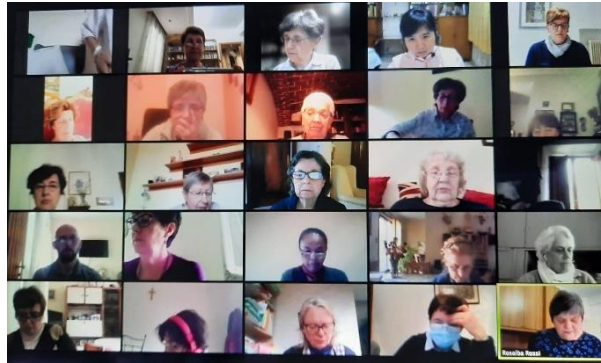
The meetings were designed for all the directresses, Vice-directresses, Councilors, treasurers, formation guides and the Federation Council. More than seventy leaders from the various continents participated. An extended celebration of connected companionship....

In the meeting of **May 1**, we shared some ideas about the interesting report of Dr. Rosalba Rossi on the observance of the



Constitutions and their practical implications, including after the latest additions.

We also devoted a little time to reflecting on the **2020 statistics**. The data that emerge present the real situation of the world's Companies. They provoke us to reflect. They ask us to interpret them in order to live in truth in



today's world and, if necessary, to make choices that are appropriate to our reality, that of being consecrated women, linked to our territory but freer from structures that are perhaps no longer meaningful. It is our life that must be meaningful.

On **May 2**, we were helped by Don Raymond, deputy assistant to the Federation Council, to open ourselves to the theme of the inculturation of the charism, because the Company of St. Ursula, Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici, in whatever geographical place it is present and operating, is called to express clearly the specificity of its charism.

After Don Raymond's rich presentation, we divided into breakout rooms according to language and responded to some prompts about our charism and about the current situation of inculturation of the Company in the world. It will be a theme to be taken up and studied.

Together we concluded all together with a moment of thanksgiving and prayer.

We look forward to meeting in person at the next convention. However, this instrument of video-conferencing has opened our hearts and minds to the various companies around the world that we would not otherwise have seen and greeted. We shared the responsibility of being *most cordial mothers and sisters*.

*Kate*



# International Convention

in person  
or on streaming

*“United together to serve  
his divine Majesty”*

*(Prologue to the Rule, 4)*

**Rome, August 22-25, 2021**  
**Istituto Maria Santissima Bambina**  
**Via Paolo VI, 21 - 00120 Roma**

**SPEAKERS: Sister Maria Gloria Riva; Don  
Rino La Delfa; Gregorio Vivaldelli.**



**For information: Maria Tamanini**

Cell. +39 335 8275647 - Email: [tamaninimaria@gmail.com](mailto:tamaninimaria@gmail.com)

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