

*In the same charism  
with responsibility*



**n. 1 - 2023**

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

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## TO THE READERS

### *United together ... always and everywhere*

I read in Saint Angela's writings and find in the Constitutions the invitation to be *united together*... a goal and a path... Already in the Merician foundation we find this *united together* in the name Angela herself chose:

*Company.*

**Company:** means to be together, to share, to love each other, to wish each other well, to walk, to have the same ideal... For Saint Angela it means: *united together all of one heart and one will.*

**Company:** in our vocation a reality, a condition, with a very specific shared purpose: to choose and serve *the Lord, the Spouse, the Lover, as the only treasure, the only supreme good, our only life and hope.* A Company in diaspora as we are, we do not live under the same roof, not even in the same territory; we have a reserve about our choice of life, no distinctive sign...

**Company:** to live our consecrated secularity: *to be spouses of the Son of God, separated from the darkness of the world and united together to serve the the Kingdom of God in secularity.*

**Company:** is the opposite of loneliness, of closure, of isolation... We are not saved alone and we do not live our vocation alone. Ours is a company of *spouses, mothers, daughters, sisters who have responded to the singular grace of consecration in the Company, through taking up the evangelical counsels with the decisive and absolute will to give themselves unconditionally to God and to their sisters and brothers, for life.*

**Company:** means *meeting each other as loving sisters, and thus, talking over spiritual matters, rejoicing together and together encouraging one another, consulting together and giving good example.*

**Company:** *"United together" in the Company, we share the grace of the presence of the Lord among us; we experience sisterhood and find support and assistance for living our vocation and mission.*

(Cost. 23.1)

**Company always and everywhere...** But how do we do it if there are few of us left in the Companies, and many of these elderly, with

difficulty in keeping each other company, getting to be with each other, forming each other, changing and renewing our government?

How does the only sister in Mexico, in Bangladesh, in Singapore, in Australia, in Germany or in some Italian Companies do so?

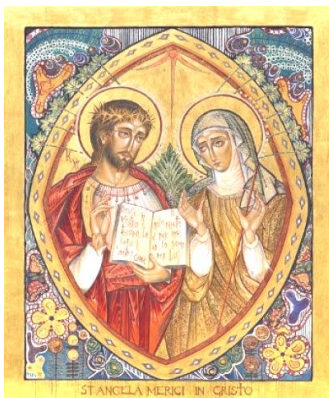
We help each other among sisters, different Companies, neighboring groups... but often these also struggle, because they find themselves in the same situations of fragility, of difficulty.

Particularly in Italy, where the Merician institute was born, there are more difficulties: so many Companies and so few members.

We certainly don't want to feel sorry for ourselves, but neither do we want to deny the reality; therefore we are carrying out a synod of Companies to: listen to each other, discern, walk the path together, evaluate, look for light and adjust, if necessary, the structures which, we know, are not the goal, but a tool to reach the goal.

**Company always and everywhere...** But it is not always said in the same way; we are not fixated on "It has always been done this way," because it can also be changed, as together we look for tools and ways, safeguarding the charism and spirituality and the good of each sister.

**Company always and everywhere...** Let us **all together** help in this discernment: help each other... The Italians gladly welcome the help of the sisters from the five continents who have shared their experience, their sharing, their difficulties and their hopes, *and together, if we have to do something differently, we will do it prudently and with good advice.*



*Let us all offer  
most fervent prayers.  
For in this way, without doubt,  
Jesus Christ will be in our midst,  
and as a true and good master,  
he will enlighten and teach us  
what we have to do.*

Kate



## *The Strength of Weakness*

**Valeria Broll, President of the Federation**

*In obedience to the Spirit, she brought about, for God's glory, the flowering, in an entirely new institution of that admirable form of life... We, her daughters, welcome the charism which the Holy Spirit continually renews... (Constitutions 2:2, 2:3).*

The Holy Spirit, who continually generates Life, worked in the heart and mind of St. Angela. She welcomed the Life of the Spirit, recognized it and lived it to such an extent that she herself became an inexhaustible channel of this Life. She poured it into the Church and – over time – into every person she met, into every person who was willing to accept or reject it, because this is how Life works. Its flow does not stop, because that which is generated by God does not die.

We, her daughters, are witnesses of this action of the Holy Spirit in her, because this flow of Life has touched us too. It has generated in us fascination, nostalgia, joy and wonder, and we have responded to her witness with our whole selves: to follow Jesus Christ according to St. Angela's charism: *to live that admirable form of life that the Savior lived and with him Our Lady the Apostles the Virgins and so many Christians of the early Church.*

St. Angela wanted to call this *entirely new institution* the Company of St. Ursula. Is it still an entirely new institution for each of us, for the Church in which we are inserted, for the world in which we live? Newness is not given by the non-essential situations of the time we live in, is not given by the approval it receives in the various spheres where the Company is inserted, but by our docility to the action of the Spirit that continually generates Life. Does this generative flow find in us a channel free from snags and encrustations, or do we impede its flow with our *"little love for the Lord and the harshness of adversity"* (Rule Ch. 5)?

Let us be enlightened by the Word that lucidly and concretely recounts the lives of the Apostles, the virgins and so many Christians of the Early Church. We will find this Word echoed in the life of St. Angela:

*For as Christ's sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow. If we are afflicted, it is for your encouragement and salvation; if we are encouraged, it is for your encouragement, which enables you to endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is firm, for we know that as you share in the sufferings, you also share in the encouragement (2 Cor 1:5-7).*

In St. Paul's experience of life and faith, is there not perhaps a glimpse of St. Angela's experience in her life? Let's think about her experiences during her pilgrimage to the Holy Land or in her city of Brescia during the looting and military invasions in her city and beyond.

Do we, with faith, endure sufferings and tribulations, or do we complain, question God's nearness, God's presence, God's mercy, God's promise of Life? How do we conduct ourselves in the world where we are placed: with the holiness and sincerity that come from God or with sadness and discouragement, which come from God's enemy, the devil?

*Live in a manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with every power, in accord with his glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy giving thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light.... Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you know how you should respond to each one.... Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.... And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful (cf. Col.1, 4, 3).*

This was the life of St. Paul, the Apostles, the virgins and the many Christians of the Early Church. This was the life of St. Angela, and for us her daughters, is this our life too?

The situation of hardship in which many of our Companies find themselves, are not to be read as insurmountable difficulties, as situations that weigh down our souls, because we do not see many members or many women knocking at the door of "*this entirely new institutione*," but as a providential situation where we can read and live filial obedience, virginal chastity and evangelical poverty: "*With the gift of our will to God, we participate in the Church and with the Church in the mystery of the obedience of Christ*" (Constitutions 19.1); "*we participate ... in the mystery of the virginity of Christ, who loved men and women so much that he gave himself for their salvation* (Constitutions.20.1); "*we participate ... in the mystery of the poverty of the Savior, who received everything from the Father and returned everything as offering to Him, source of all good*" (Constitutions 21.1).

Living in this way, "*we will experience the freedom of God's children, living ... and using ... we will know how to accept our limitations and the problems and the sufferings of life serenely, as a sharing in the poverty of Christ, until the supreme poverty of death*" (Constitutions 21.2).

This is our only strength: the weakness of self, the weakness of the means at our disposal, the weakness of human ways of thinking that live in us and surround us, weakness... But this realization makes us see and experience the paradox of the Gospel. The strength of weakness.

Then like the apostles, the virgins, the early Christians and St. Angela we cry out: *What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?.... No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom 8:35-39).

With the virtue of the strong, which is patience, and the humility of the saints who have borne witness to faith and love, *we welcome the charism which the Holy Spirit continually renews in fidelity to its origins and the expectations of the Church* (Constitutions 2.3).

Valeria Broll





## Reflecting on the Incarnation of the Son of God

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

At the cradle of the Child of Bethlehem, the Gospels tell us that 'angels descended' and 'shepherds' and 'Magi' arrived there.

Many of the faithful have also flocked to our Christmas celebrations, attracted by the message of the 'Crib.' It arouses feelings of awe mixed with a sense of peace, hope and even a certain sense of joy. Contemplating that Child 'with all that is said of Him' refers to an image of God, different from the one that usually accompanies us and from which we struggle to detach ourselves: that of the all-powerful God, who sees all, who knows all, who judges all, who controls all. This Child, on the other hand, suggests to us the image of the God who offers himself to call us to communion with himself, who looks at us benevolently, who smiles at us even before judging us, who rejoices in our presence. At that moment, however, we do not think that the God who manifests himself in the good and humble face of that child is also the God who invites us to convert to that love, that humility and that divine goodness and to live them in our humanity, as he lived them in his humanity. That is, Jesus by his incarnation, life, teachings, passion, death and resurrection primarily manifested an image of God with a benevolent, peaceful and merciful face, a God who rejoices in the presence and joys of human beings but who also calls them to manifest that image of him in their lives, learning in his school. And the Gospel calls those who agree to enroll in Jesus' school, to learn from him and live out those "**disciple-like**" attitudes of his.

After the proclamation of the 'Beatitudes,' Jesus describes what his disciples should be to the people, using some images or small parables: 'salt of the earth, light of the world, a city set on a mountain and a lighted



lamp. Matthew 5:3-16: *“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”* Each of these images emphasizes an aspect of the influence that the disciple and the community of disciples will have on the world, by their attitude, and how the world will react to their words and actions: their attitude to your good works may provoke rejection and false accusations, but it may also have a positive impact on others, leading them to God and His truth. As in his humanity as the Son of God,

Jesus allows human beings to encounter the Father: *“Philip, whoever sees me sees the Father”* (John 14:9), as Jesus asks the disciples *“to give glory to your Father in heaven,”* that is, to recognize him as the Father of all, through how they live (*“your good works”*). We can see the meaning of the image used by Jesus to speak about the disciples’ task before the world.



-*“Salt of the earth”* Jesus' disciples are irreplaceable, like salt for food. But if the disciples are lacking in their specific witness as 'disciples of Jesus,' the world will reject them and trample them *“like the mud of the street”* (Isaiah 10:6).

-*“Light of the world and city on the mountain”* The disciples are assigned a general function vis-à-vis the world, the field where the Son of Man operates (Matthew 13:24-30). The images of the city set on a mountain and a shining light underscore a force of attraction toward which the peoples will turn of their own accord, because the light and glory of the Lord shine in the disciples and their good works; think of the oracle of Isaiah 2:2-5: *“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, ... That he may instruct us in his ways*



*and we may walk in his paths” ... come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!”*. The destination of the pilgrimage will be the community of disciples who shine with the light of their Master, *"light of the world"* (John 8:12), by radiating it with the conduct of their lives.

- ***"Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket"*** Let us grasp the exhortation entrusted to this little parable. The small Palestinian rural house made up of a single room is lit by a clay oil lamp placed on a stand as high as possible so that the light spreads as widely as possible and everyone can enjoy it. It would be just foolish to place it under a pot: it would benefit no one, it would burn for nothing! The disciples are entrusted with the light so that they may shine it, and if they concealed it they would be responsible for it, somewhat like the servant who hid the talent entrusted to him (Mt. 25:25)!

**And speaking of good works** shining before people, let us listen to how Peter and Paul referred to them.

- In 1Peter 2:12: *"Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that if they speak of you as evildoers, they may observe your good works and glorify God on the day of visitation."*

- Likewise in Titus 2:6-14: *"Urge the younger men, similarly, to control themselves, showing yourself as a model of good deeds... He gave himself for us to deliver us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people as his own, eager to do what is good."*

- Acts 9:36: *"In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated means Dorcas). She was completely occupied with good deeds and almsgiving."*

Clinging to Jesus, follow him and accepting the gospel of the kingdom become visible in the practice of faith. If this does not happen, it means that discipleship has become uncertain, insignificant or -- to stay with the image of salt -- insipid; it has gone dark. The gospel accepted in faith should not be separated from the gospel lived. They form a unity, just as love of God and love of neighbor form a unity (22:34ff). This is the 'evangelical secularity' lived out by the disciples before the world.

+ Adriano Tessarollo

# Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart

## Freedom and Union with God's Will

### *Holy Obedience*

We are continuing here the articles drawn from *Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart: The Rule, the Way* by Mary-Cabrini Durkin, published in English in 2005.

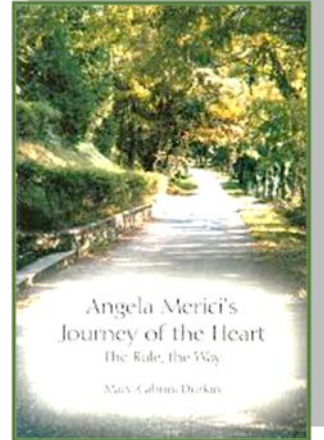
#### Supporting Freedom: Chapter I *On Receiving*

The Rule's Chapter I, "*On the Manner of Receiving*," tells how the Company supported women in freely choosing a way of life. That was truly a revolutionary concept. Angela requires that the candidate have *the firm intention of serving God in this sort of life. Then, she should enter it happily and of her own will* (Ch. I:2-4).

***Her own will!*** Happiness indicates that her choice is free. The personal commitment required in this vocation comes from the woman's own heart and will. The Company has no means of compelling obedience, no interest in doing so. Each one practices it in her own home, in her own neighborhood, in her own heart.

Angela's process for receiving members into the Company combines vision and pragmatism. The Company reversed the usual social processes, in which a woman had little or no initiative. Instead, this process began when a woman wished to join the Company *of her own will*. Angela encourages her to discuss her decision with her parents or guardians: *she should first ask...permission* (Ch. I: 6). This was natural in the sixteenth century.

She continues with the strategy: *...so that the governors [women and men] of the Company may talk with [the parents or other superiors] so that [they may verify that] they do not have any legitimate cause if by chance they should afterwards want to*



*prevent her from entering* (Ch. I: 7). These widows and gentlemen, on a more equal footing with the parents or employer, paid a visit. They verified the woman's freedom to join the Company, freedom from contrary commitments. She must be unmarried and not engaged to be married. Nor could she have promised herself to a religious community.

Once the matrons and gentlemen had verified that there was no *legitimate* obstacle, the parents could not later allege something to prevent her from following her vocation (Ch. I:7). The "governors" guaranteed the new member's freedom. They would support her, even if the parents tried to prevent their daughter from freely following her vocation. What a countercultural provision! Ursuline life was so much outside the norm that the practical measure of this support system was necessary. The Company enlisted power to serve the powerless. People with social position provided credibility. In the last part of the Rule, called "On Governance," and in her Testament, Angela explains more about how these people used their influence on behalf of the members.

As described in "On the Manner of Receiving," the Company's dynamics supported an unusual degree of personal autonomy for women. Choosing one's own way of life! Enlisting people of social standing to support a dependent young woman in making such a choice! This process makes clear an important assumption. In a world where women's subordination and compliance were taken for granted, such is not the *holy obedience* which Angela counsels.

### **From "Mine" to "Thine"**

The women for whom Angela urged holy obedience had already demonstrated that they could choose freely. They were not likely to confuse holy obedience with being passive or subservient. Their capacity for self-direction appears at the very beginning of the Rule and is intrinsic to the very first steps of Ursuline life. As we have seen, the "governors") acted on behalf of the future members' choice, their *own will* (Ch. I:4).

Angela confuses us at first when she uses the same phrase, one's "*own will*," at the beginning of Chapter VIII: *holy obedience the only true self-denial of one's own will which is within us like murky hell* (Ch. VIII:1, 2). How negative! If we hope to follow her line of thought, we

have to be patient and pay attention to that phrase, “*one’s own*,” *propria*. That expression will reoccur at the end of the chapter. At the beginning of Chapter VIII, Angela is referring to what happens when we wrap ourselves in *murky* darkness, when our self is so narrow as to enclose us, tightly closed off from others, from other voices. That’s when “my own will” is small and shuts out light. Then we act like the little child who hugs a toy tightly, repeating, “Mine! Mine!” It is a long road from “Mine! Mine!” to “*Not my will but thine be done!*”

In the course of Chapter VIII, *holy obedience* expands the notion of “*one’s own*.” It will grow to mean the self open to others, flooded with light, united with God. By the chapter’s end, we will read Angela’s amazing declaration of one’s ability to find truth within *one’s own* self when that self is opened to God’s voice, God’s messages spoken everywhere. Every human being must go through a growing process into a larger, fuller self. Even Jesus had to grow in this way. Even he had to stretch to embrace God’s way fully. He struggled, agonized, saying, “*Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will*” (Mark 14:36). As the Letter to the Hebrews says, “Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Hebrews 5:8, 9). Of course obedience is a struggle for us, too.

As always, Angela looks to Jesus as a model of life. He shows in human terms how to live in God’s way. Early in Chapter VIII, “About Obedience,” she quotes his words, “*I have not come to do my will, but that of the Father who has sent me*” (cf. John 6:38; Ch. VIII: 3). When she presents Jesus as the model of Ursuline obedience, she focuses on the essence of Jesus’ *holy obedience*. That means doing God’s will.

Let us look at this Gospel passage. John 6 begins with Jesus multiplying loaves and fishes to feed a multitude. The next day, the crowds clamor for miracles and for more bread from heaven. Jesus responds that he is the bread from heaven, come “to give life to the world.” Here is the verse that Angela quotes, “*I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of*

what he gave me, but that I should raise it (on) the last day” (John 6:38-39).

Jesus’ obedience meant uniting himself with God’s will. And God’s will is our eternal life. In that unity, Jesus lived out his mission. He nourished, healed, forgave. He drew people to God by showing them this face of divine love. This is the divine/human example of obedience that Angela finds in the Gospel. It is God-focused. It is a way of sharing in God’s life-giving love for the world. This obedience is not a matter of breaking one’s will but of uniting it with God’s will. It is a continual shaping of one’s life by the Spirit’s guidance. God rather than self becomes more and more our point of reference, as God was Jesus’ point of reference. His humanity sheds light on who God is. He is the divine light shining in the world.

Faithful obedience to God is *like a great light* (Ch. VIII: 4), Angela says—like the lighthouse at Desenzano on Lake Garda’s shore, which shows the way into the harbor, the way home.

This light shines inside us. Holy obedience is not imposed from the outside. It radiates from our inner desire to be one with God. That desire and union naturally shine outward into our actions. *Holy obedience* lights our way to God by guiding our choices. It also shines through our deeds to illumine for others the way to God.

**Union with God!** That is the most important reality about holy obedience. Angela is fervent in extolling obedience, saying that it makes things good, that (again quoting Scripture) it is *better than sacrifice* (1 Samuel 15:22; Ch. VIII:5). She even states that, *to be good*, all our deeds must *be done in obedience* (Ch. VIII:6). Even good deeds, even religious acts, can be done for the wrong reasons. We can do them for some personal benefit. Or we can do them by rote, without thought, without passion. Angela challenges us to keep alight our desire to live God’s way. That is *holy obedience*.

### **Listening – The Voices and the Spirit**

But how can we know God’s will for us? All alone, the self may have trouble discovering it. Angela tells us: by listening. Listen to God present in all of creation. Then listen again, as God’s Spirit whispers in our hearts.





She had felt God's presence. She had heard that whisper. She knew that God is the very Be-ing of our being. Everything that exists is in God, and God is in everything that exists. The God whose presence permeates creation is always reaching out to us from within the world. It is easy to find God's fingerprint in magnificent sunsets, powerful waves, gentle flowers, innocent babies. It can be harder to see the divine image in other women and men, even harder to listen for God's voice through them. Competing messages swirl around us constantly. To know which voices carry God's guidance, we must always be alert. Everyone on our path can bear a message, even very surprising people and situations. Each of us is responsible for our own inner listening that clarifies what is of God, what is merely human and what is distorted.

The Rule's wisdom and counter-cultural perspective grew out of Angela's experience. She had learned to hear God's Spirit speaking in everyone and everything, above all in her own heart. She was an acute listener. Her honesty sifted the competing noises and heard the Spirit's voice. She had also learned to act from her own integrity instead of from outside pressures. She used freedom to serve God and others. The Rule includes her strategies for this *holy obedience*.

*To be continued....*

*Mary –Cabrinini Durkin*

*Company of Canada, Group of the USA*



# WORLDWIDE IDENTITY: GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER'S CULTURES

## Glimpses of France's Culture

France is a country with an area of 543,940 km<sup>2</sup>.

At the edge of Western Europe, France with its surface contours, its mountain



ranges, its coasts widely open to the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean, offers a kind of summary of the different European regions.

French territory also extends overseas with several departments: in North America (Saint Pierre and Miquelon) and South

America (French Guiana), in the West Indies (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint-Martin, Saint-Barthélemy), the Indian Ocean (Mayotte, Reunion), the Pacific (French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna, New Caledonia) and southern and Antarctic lands.

### HISTORY

Originally, the Celts came from Central Europe in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC and settled in a territory that would become Gaul. But the Romans extended their conquests and despite the resistance of their leader Vercingetorix, during the battle of Alesia (in Auvergne), Caesar became master of this Gaul



which, 50 years before Christ, became Gallo-Roman. From this Gallo-Roman civilization we can still admire many works such as temples and theaters (Arles, Nîmes, Orange), and also thermal baths, fountains, and aqueducts (Pont du Gard). The development of the great communication network – river routes as well as land routes – allowed Gaul to flourish in trade.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century A.D., Clovis proclaimed himself king of the Franks; for the love of Clotilde, an ardent Christian, he converted to Catholicism and was baptized in Rheims. In the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, following Clovis' conversion, the countryside was Christianized and numerous religious orders were born. The concern for the weakest and the sick and instruction of the poor would be carried out by great figures in this France still full of piety and religious spirit.

Numerous monasteries were created, and the Orders flourished: Benedictines, Cistercians, Franciscans, Dominicans... In Paris in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Ignatius of Loyola founded the Company (later "Society") of Jesus. Faced with great poverty, Saint Vincent de Paul founded the Lazarist congregation in 1625. Louise de Marillac joined him in founding the Daughters of Charity, whose mission was dedicated to the service of the sick and the poor. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Saint John Baptist de la Salle responded to the need for instruction of the poor and the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was born.

France was Christian, the cathedrals raised their spires. The most famous, Notre Dame de Paris, witnessed France's greatest hours. Along with the Cathedral of Rheims, basilica of the coronations and the Abbey of Saint Denis, necropolis of the Kings of France, Notre Dame took its place as a political cathedral with Philip Augustus, who to celebrate his victory over the Germanic Roman Emperor, during the battle of Bouvines in 1214, came to give thanks during a liturgical ceremony.

In 1598, Henri IV signed the Edict of Nantes which granted Protestants the same religious, civil and political rights as Catholics.

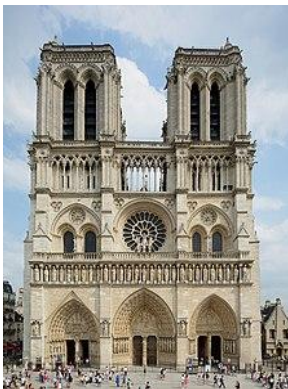
An important event fractured French society; this monarchy of divine right was overthrown in 1789. With the French Revolution, the French became free and secular citizens. A climate of hatred was

established; the property of the clergy and religious congregations was put at the disposal of the State, religious orders were suppressed and monastic vows were forbidden. In 1794, Robespierre decreed the worship of the Supreme Being. We entered the years of the Terror with deportations and condemnations of priests and religious.

In 1802, on Easter Sunday, Napoleon organized a national ceremony at Notre Dame to celebrate the Concordat by which France and the Vatican established a framework for the relationship between religion and the State. When the Pope asked for the recognition of Catholicism as a state religion, Napoleon was content to admit that it was the religion of the vast majority of French people.

A balance was found more than a century later with the 1905 law introducing the principle of separation of Church and State and the protection of religious freedom.

To celebrate the liberation of Paris at the end of the 1939/1945 war, the people gathered around General de Gaulle on the square of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, making it a symbol of national unity. (On April 15, 2019, the popular emotion expressed around the burning cathedral shows, at the time of globalization and secularization, that it remains the most emblematic monument of France).



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On May 9, 1950, Robert Schuman laid the first stone of the European structure which would be essential for maintaining peace. In 2017, 57% of French people believed that the European Union is a good thing, compared to 31% who believe the opposite.

## **SOCIETY TODAY**

An extremely diverse population lives together on French soil today. The industrial revolution has successively changed the French national landscape. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Belgians, Piedmontese, Swiss, Italians, Spaniards and Portuguese contributed to the growth and dynamism of the country. Then it was the turn of the North Africans and, as a result of the Algerian war, entire families came to settle in France. The political authorities favored immigration for the reunion of spouses for married workers. The wars in Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, Vietnam and other parts of the world drove away people who then came to find refuge in a country that assured them work and security. The steel industry, agriculture and construction found cheap labor there. Working-class cities came into being with protective employers, but trade unionism also developed to defend workers' rights.

French society was built on work and production. Homes became more and more comfortable; heavy tasks were replaced by machinery, and the rural, agricultural, familial France rushed into modernity. Cities attracted young people, the economy's service sector developed, and gradually this France rooted around its Gallic rooster, its baguette, its cassoulet or gratin dauphinois adopted the hamburger, pizza, sushi and Coca Cola. Mass distribution, supermarkets and amusement parks attracted this society in search of "the good life." From a France of production we have moved to a France of consumption.

This did not happen without some clashes, strikes, movements such as the "Yellow Vests" in 2019, denouncing injustice and demonstrating the resentment of those who feel left out of a well-being they would like to have access to.

In 2020, a planetary event brought to this society in motion to a halt. A virus coming from distant lands reshuffled working conditions, and the French discovered and adapted to telecommuting and e-commerce. A rebalancing is gradually taking place between the big cities and the smaller towns in the provinces. The search for well-being still guides young households towards the house with a yard, with a sort of attraction for the tourist regions.

In 2022, the population was 65,823,000. The integration of newcomers has given another face to this France that is becoming multicultural. Mosques, Buddhist temples and Orthodox churches are emerging on this land that used to see only the steeples of its churches reaching for the sky. Everyone tries to express faith through culture. But Christian France is shrinking. The number of baptisms is decreasing and something of the sequence of transmission of the faith has been lost. France is republican above all. To fill a spiritual void, the French are turning to personal development, the practice of yoga or other New Age traditions.

## **THE FRENCH CHURCH**

For a long time, the Church of France was called the "Eldest Daughter of the Church," which could be a proud title for us. Joan of Arc, Francis de Sales, Vincent de Paul, Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, Jean-Marie Vianney, Bernadette of Lourdes, Thérèse of Lisieux, Sister Elisabeth of the Trinity, Father de Foucauld and all the others are so present in the life of the whole Church, so influential by the light and power of the Holy Spirit! Even if the number of pilgrimage sites is decreasing, they are still visited with fervor by those who come to implore the help of the Virgin Mary or of great saints at Lourdes, Lisieux, Sainte Anne d'Auray.... In Paris, the Chapel of the Miraculous Medal is always full. In this historic chapel of the Daughters of Charity, the Blessed Virgin appeared to a young novice, Catherine Labouré, in 1830, asking that a medal be struck in her name. Taizé and Paray-le-Monial bring together many young and not-so-young people in search of spirituality.

But when St. John Paul II came to France in 1980, he asked the real question, "France, eldest daughter of the Church, are you faithful to the promises of your baptism?"

Today the Church of France is in turmoil and the newspapers take a malignant pleasure in repeating it. Scandals are multiplying ... yet behind these scandals that make a lot of noise, adult baptisms are also on the rise and Alpha courses continue to attract so many young and old looking for something.

Associations on behalf of the most needy are multiplying. So we are the Church on the move, as Pope Francis asks us to be. In these new times, the Church is also updating. A report about the behavior of some members of the clergy brings to light the wounds suffered and too long kept hidden. Women's voices seem to be heard more.

Though this diversified France is no longer the standard-bearer of the "Eldest Daughter of the Church," it remains a France eager for communion and communication, despite the temptations of coldness and self-absorbed attitudes.

## THE COMPANY OF SAINT URSULA

At the time of World War I, the "French Company of St. Ursula" was born in Lyon.

Countess Maria Annunciata de Maistre was born in Rome in 1862 and lived mostly with her family near Turin. After several family bereavements, she came to France to raise her nephews.

On June 14, 1906, Marie went to Brescia to the cradle of the Company, no doubt advised by her faithful servant and friend Josephine Gugliemino, who already belonged to the Company of Turin. She sought to be admitted to the Company of Brescia. This form of giving to God allowed her to simultaneously meet the urgent needs of her struggling family. The following year, in 1907, Marie de Maistre made her consecration into the hands of Maddalena Girelli, who received her during a celebration at the shrine of Saint Angela in Brescia. She returned to Lyon, where her nephew Pierre was entering college. Maddalena proposed that she plant the Company there.

Suffering from a serious illness, Marie de Maistre died in 1925. This death was a heartbreak for her daughters, and a period of trials and suffering followed the death of the superior of the Group of Lyon. After consulting with the leaders of the Company of Brescia, it was decided to unite the Group of Lyon with the Company of Turin.

Marie Louise Favier was entrusted with the direction of the Group of Lyon.

On April 17, 1929, Monsignor Louis-Joseph Maurin, archbishop of Lyon, with the favorable opinion of Cardinal Gamba, archbishop of Turin, canonically erected the Pious Union as "Company of St. Ursula

according to the primitive Rule given by St. Angela Merici and approved by the Holy See."

Around 1992, the French Company was involved in an unexpected adventure. At first, through various telephone contacts, we discovered that St. Angela's message was already present in some hearts willing to receive it. What a surprise! It made us reflect.

In Congo, Marie-Bernadette was seeking to transfer into the consecrated secular life according to St. Angela, and in Cameroon, young students eager to follow Jesus Christ in a spirit of sisterhood and sharing had found in a magazine the presentation of the Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici.

This is how the groups in Cameroon and the DRC were born. The Company of France gladly accompanied them. We have made a total of 35 trips to date. The DRC became an autonomous company in 2016. In Cameroon, as in the DRC, we were immersed in a different culture that we learned to know and love.

Today the French Company is an interdiocesan and intercultural company. In the Company of France, in addition to the group from Cameroon, we have 4 committed Congolese women who bring us their youth, their confidence in the future despite their often difficult lives. The Company has crossed borders to Belgium. The distances between us are great, but thanks to the Internet after COVID, we try to meet regularly online. We also schedule three face-to-face meetings a year. Distance is not the only problem. Work commitments, often in the social sector, force us to work even on holidays, and attendance at meetings becomes difficult.

We take advantage of these meetings, thanks to the subsidies offered by the Federation, to deepen our knowledge of St. Angela, the Federation, the writings of Pope Francis and our life of commitment in the world. We try to maintain contact with the growing number of members who can no longer travel. Saint Angela's phrase "united together" is close to our hearts. As she invites us to do, we are attentive to discern the calls of the Spirit in this world where God sends us, keeping faith and hope alive.

May Saint Angela continue to shine on us and guide us toward Jesus, our only Treasure.

*The sisters of the Company of France*

*Yvonne Talbutt Secular Ursuline  
in the Group of Lancaster, England*

**Yvonne's Life in the Light of  
Saint Angela's Spirituality  
1946-2020**

Yvonne Talbutt went peacefully home to Jesus on September 3, 2020. I have decided to reflect on her life within the context of St. Angela Merici's spirituality. Therefore, I chose to apply some of the sayings of St. Angela, as a means of connecting Yvonne's life within the Company to Angela's charism.

St. Angela begins the Prologue to the Rule with a blessing, *"In the name of the blessed and indivisible Trinity,"* one which Yvonne would have fully approved my using here.

I came to know Yvonne as woman of very strong character, indeed a matriarch. She had an amazing memory and was exceptionally clever, allowing her to fully understand how Sacred Scripture underpinned her life as a consecrated woman. This knowledge which Yvonne possessed can be applied using a quotation from the Rule: Angela says, *"Blessed are those into whose hearts God has infused the light of Truth"* (Rule, Prologue 12).

During her debilitating illness, I was privileged to be able to bring her Holy Communion. Although she was no longer able to leave the nursing home to attend daily Mass, the Eucharist remained the center of her life. This way of being echoes St. Angela's description of the reason for the importance of attending daily Mass: *"In the sacred Mass are found all the merits of the passion of our Lord"* (Rule, Ch. 6:3).

Along with the many physical sufferings which Yvonne endured and offered to God with great courage, there was one cross in her life that brought her both some sadness as well as deep joy. This was when her son Stephen responded to God's call to the priesthood. Her sadness was human (at his leaving) but her



joy came from her faith that it was a mystery and the will of the eternal Father. Her acceptance is reflected in St. Angela's words, "[God] *wants only what is for your good and joy*" (Rule, Ch. 10:18).



Stephen was with Yvonne when she entered the Company of St. Ursula, and she was present at his priestly ordination in July 2019. In her last hours she received the Sacrament of the Sick from Stephen himself before she died.

One of Yvonne's favorite Scripture readings was the parable of the hidden treasure and the pearl (Matthew 13:44-46), which tells of the man who sells everything he has once he finds his one and only true treasure. She is again in tune with St. Angela when she says that "*In God, she has all her wealth ... with God possessing everything*" (Rule, Ch. 10: 6).

This tribute endeavors to paint not an idealistic picture, but a truthful one. She was strong-willed and often spoke her mind, but this was tempered by her understanding of others and their weaknesses. This insight was brought about by her personal experience of how illness leads us to rely on others. She gained a personal awareness of the vulnerability of the human condition.

To me, one of her greatest strengths was her courage. When she was ill she underwent various invasive medical procedures without complaining and seemed to be able to endure them without any apparent fear. If I were to sum up Yvonne's ethos using another quotation from Angela, it would be, "*Always let your principal recourse be to gather at the feet of Jesus Christ*" (11<sup>th</sup> Legacy, 3) and again, "*Let them have Jesus Christ for their only treasure*" (5<sup>th</sup> Counsel, 43).



Marie Rodden



From August 24 to 28, 2022, I had the opportunity to participate in Rome as a delegate of our Institute/Federation, in the ordinary assembly of the World Conference of Secular Institutes (CMIS).

The assembly was held after a delay of two years: in fact it had been scheduled, in Avila at the natural expiration of the four-year term, in August 2020. At that time the plan was to open the conference to all members who wished to come in the days preceding the assembly itself, which is reserved for general leaders. Because of well-known events related to COVID restrictions, it was not possible to implement the program, and CMIS therefore "split" the meeting into two segments. The conference open to members became the "forum," which many of us were able to attend, held online over three days:

**May 7: "The Change of an Epoch";**

**May 21: "Discernment";**

**June 4: "The Courage to Prophecy."**

The assembly, which included the election of the executive council, was to be held in person or using mail-in voting.

On the advice and with the approval of the Vatican Congregation, CMIS opted for an in-person assembly, which was held in Rome August 24-28, 2022. The assembly's **main purpose was thus to renew the "government" of CMIS** by electing the nine members of the executive council who, in turn, elected the three-member presiding council. The person who gets the most votes has the title of president without any decision-making power, acting as coordinator.

Antonio Vendramin, (who got the most votes) felt it was right to "hand over" the presidency to Elba, in recognition of the fact that the majority of secular institutes are female.

Besides fulfilling the statutory requirements, the assembly offered two moments that were unique in their own way. One was an

audience with the Holy Father Francis, who gave us a speech that, I am sure, all institutes will consider for reflection.

Another very beautiful and, in my opinion, very important moment, was the report of Dr. Daniela Leggio, an official of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, entitled: "FROM SYNODALITY: THE AUTHORITY OF SERVICE," referring to the full reading and reflection on both speeches.

*Maria Rosa Razza*

**COMPANY of SAINT URSULA**  
**487<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION**  
**Brescia, November 25, 1535 – November 25, 2022**

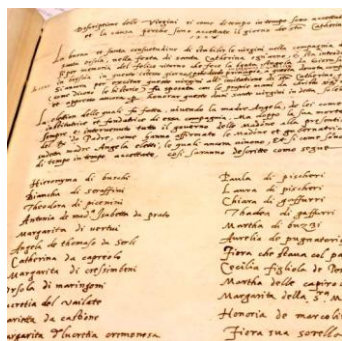


Last Nov. 25 in Brescia together with many daughters of St. Angela belonging to various Companies scattered all over the world, I too participated in the celebration of the 487<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Company.

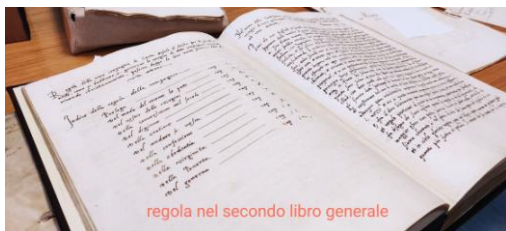
It was in fact Nov. 25, 1535 (Feast of St. Catherine of Alexandria), that Angela with some companions, after participating in Holy Mass, started the first Company. Each sister then wrote her name in the Book of the Company as a testimony to her promise to give herself entirely to God in the form of secular

consecration. Commemorating the beginning of the Company, a famous painting by Romanino portrays St. Catherine kneeling in the center receiving the nuptial ring from the Child Jesus, on Mary's knees. And on the left of the painting is a small, almost insignificant detail, a crown just above the wheel of martyrdom.





A beginning, a story, made up of so many women who, even though they are no



longer here, return to our minds and hearts thanks to a book (first of many others) and from an image (first of many others). With competence and passion, Prof. Bellotti helped us to read and interpret this painting through his heartfelt talk in the morning in the crypt of the Sanctuary of Saint Angela in Brescia. It was a plunge into the past that moved us because it made us touch documents (still preserved at the State Archives in Brescia) written by sisters who in their time tried to live their secular consecration in the world with passion and responsibility with the charism of St. Angela.

With eyes full of images and hearts full of gratitude, we then stood before our holy Madre in the Sanctuary of St. Angela to sing all our praise for her for not being afraid to embark so courageously on a path that was as revolutionary as it was urgent for that period, capable of giving a new dignity, then as now, to so many women eager to follow God on this path.

From here we too took courage to be a prophetic sign in this world of ours. To be like those buds announcing that spring is near, that the Lord is here among us, and like precious buds reflecting God's love in today's reality, which is sometimes full of darkness and fog.

Brides of Christ radiant with light and precious in the eyes of God, as Monsignor Gaetano Fontana, Vicar General and Superior of the Company of Brescia, urged us to be in his heartfelt homily during the Mass celebrated in the afternoon at the Sanctuary.

After these events experienced together, and with so many emotions in our hearts, it was a great joy then to be able to meet once again with some "younger" sisters for a sisterly sharing at the Casa of the Company of Brescia. After almost three years of forced distancing I,

Chiara of Trent, Paola of Modena, Giuseppina of Bologna, Angela of Palermo, Vita Maria of Marsala, Orietta of Padua, Fabrizia of Florence, and Vittorina of Milan were finally able to experience our first in-person meeting.

We opened up to each other, we shared our lives, our experience as consecrated women in our world, in this today that is so uncertain and apparently without points of reference. We told each other our frailties, our sufferings, even the hardest ones that brought back the truest tears to our faces. It was extraordinary, however, to see how much each of us, through the light of the Spirit, was able to transform so much suffering into a blessing, into an opportunity to rediscover once again the presence of a God who loves us and is capable of transforming even the most painful situations into opportunities for good. *“Our every pain and sadness will turn into joy and gladness, and thorny and rocky roads we will find flower-strewn for us, paved with finest gold.”*

Chiara Campolongo





## **FROM THE COMPANIES AND GROUPS**

### **Brazil Northeast August 13-14, 2022**

**"My grace is enough for you"**

(2 Cor 12:9)



Nine sisters of the Company gathered for a retreat in the presence of Bishop Antônio Tourinho Neto. Times of reflection and discussion to deepen our study of St. Angela and the Institute. Times of grace and inner richness.

Eight candidates received the medal in their admission to the probationary period, and another one is beginning the journey

Edésia and I were present and welcomed the sisters and accompanied the entire retreat.

*Hildeni*

### **Burundi 2022**

15-20 August 15-20, 2022, 20 of us participated in spiritual exercises. Father Modesto our



friend, and Joseph Bigirimana, our Assistant, were present.

We were also at the grave of Father Peter Nkundwa, who began our Company.

On August 19, during the consecration ceremony at the



Cathedral of Christ the King of Mushasha, 24 sisters renewed their consecration.

On Aug. 20 another 12 made their first consecration and 7 made their consecration for life.



## From Burundi to Italy...

Last November 14, 2022, President Valeria and Maria Rosa visited Fr. Modesto Tedeschi, the Xaverian priest whom so many of us have come to know.

The Federation is much indebted to him for the service of knowing and accompanying the Group of our "Bene Angela" who, after a definite path of incorporation, are now a beautiful autonomous Company.

P. Modesto suffered a serious car accident, from which a mother and her two babies she was carrying emerged unharmed.... He alone had the injury, with his left leg fractured in several places.

Now Fr. Modesto is in Italy, at the Xaverian motherhouse in Parma, where they are taking care of him.

He has had surgery and is now undergoing rehabilitation in hopes of getting back on his feet and, most importantly, returning to Burundi, where he has been a missionary for more than 40 years.



Valeria and I attended the Holy Mass concelebrated by Fr. Modesto and many other Missionary Priests who are now living out their elderhood in the nursing home.

P. Modesto still has his "grit," and in anticipation of our visit he wanted, and obtained, that we be given a space to talk about our vocation.

We said goodbye by asking these "angels," satiated with life and work for the Kingdom, to pray for us and pledged to remember them in our prayers.

*M. Rosa*

## Party in the Company of Piacenza



The Company of Piacenza had a "big" party to celebrate the 100th anniversary of its canonical establishment in 1922 by then diocesan Bishop Menzani.

It was a beautiful gathering "United Together"

with many sisters from other Companies, but also a sharing with other secular institutes and religious, lay friends and family members.



The concelebration, presided over by our bishop Bishop Adriano Cevolotto, was concelebrated by six other priests. In various capacities they have known and appreciated the work of the Company, that of so many sisters who now make up the Company in heavenly glory and are still beside us with esteem and sisterly closeness.

*Maria Razza*



## **Brazil South**

### **Renewal of Temporary Consecration**



On December 18, 2022, Maria Ilda Monteiro de Castro renewed her temporary consecration in the parish of São Sebastião in Volta Redonda, Rio de Janeiro.

Ilda belongs to the Company of Southeast Brazil.

She is also part of the Serra Movement, which supports seminarians in the diocese. She supports them

spiritually, through prayer groups for vocations throughout Brazil, and materially, by providing food, clothing, shelter and other necessities to the seminarians. Thanks to all these efforts, there is no shortage of vocations in our diocese.



Ilda is very happy. She is a widow and mother of two children.

From a young age she had a desire to consecrate herself to

God, but her father wanted her to get married.

"I am very happy, I was able to fulfill this dream even at an advanced age," she said.

In attendance were 25 seminarians, some priests, our Vicar General and Bishop Dom Luiz Henrique da Silva Brito.

Both seminarians and priests of our diocese address Ilda with special affection and consider her a true mother.

We are grateful for Ilda's presence in our Company, which gives this beautiful witness of Christian charity.

*Luisa Monteiro*

## **Company of Agrigento 2022**

As every year-end is a time to take stock of the past and make plans for the future, so we sisters also paused to examine the past time and thank *"the Lover of us all"* for the people he places beside us on our journey and for the many graces he bestows on each of us.

Together we recalled some shared experiences of sorrow and joy within our Company of Agrigento in the year just ended.

Accompanied by her Madre St. Angela, our sister Filippina Farruggio of Ravanusa received the embrace of her beloved Spouse on Feb. 21, 2022, at the venerable age of 99, after 48 years of consecration. A humble and good woman who, together with her sister Luisa, observed and bore witness to the foundress's charism by carrying out God's will even in physical suffering.





On August 17, 2022, Mariella of Ravanusa, accompanied by her family members and her friends pronounced her first Yes into the hands of the Directress Liliana Barbera, with our Assistant Fr. Giuseppe Scozzari present.

We are at a very important stage, reached by overcoming many difficulties caused by the pandemic but also by health problems. A persevering vocational journey, rich in spiritual moments, also supported by the Federation's formation team.

On December 10, 2022, Lina Ferro of Canicattì, one of the company's first Ursulines, celebrated her 101<sup>st</sup> birthday and 79<sup>th</sup> anniversary of consecration.

She demonstrated fidelity to the Lord, "our only Treasure," and to St. Angela, both in her work environment for 40 years as an elementary school teacher and in countless parish initiatives, as well as still being a fruitful contributor to the Company.



The year ends but other projects are on the horizon. On March 8, 2023, we will celebrate the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our diocesan Company.

It has been a time of joy and thanksgiving for the good done by the sisters during this century and beyond, but also by the witness that each of us gives daily in service, charity and humility in our surroundings.

*The Daughters of St. Angela of the Diocese of Agrigento*



## Company of Toronto 2022

*Act, Move, Believe ...*

No doubt you recognize these verbs from St. Angela's writings - the Prologue to the Counsels.

The members from the Company of St. Ursula of Toronto and from other places have been "moving"- some of them across the oceans!

Eugenia Viernes, the former Directress of the Company of Toronto, moved home to the Philippines on July 27, 2022 to live the remaining years of her life.

At the invitation of Marcella Hinz, a former Ursuline of Bruno, Eugenia entered the Company of St. Ursula of Canada in 1992. Eugenia felt drawn to consecrated life and through this way of life she could continue to assist her family in her employment as an educational and library assistant. She was elected as the delegate for the English speaking group of Toronto in 2008, and as Directress for the newly formed Company of St. Ursula of Toronto from 2014- 2021. She will be connected to the Company in the Philippines, in which she has also played a founding role. "Salamat" Eugenia for your faithful service!

Instead of their usual monthly meeting during July, the members moved through downtown Toronto and saw fountains and terraced waterfalls, the Peace Garden and the Eternal Flame, the labyrinth and the Eaton's Center, and enjoyed ice cream together!

During August, Pauline Baguley, a member from the Company of England, visited Bernice Daratha, a member of the Company of Toronto who lives in Saskatoon.

Pauline had come to visit her son and his family who emigrated to Canada some years ago. Pauline and Bernice met together "*as loving sisters, talking over spiritual matters and rejoicing together*" (8<sup>th</sup> Legacy).



*The sisters of Toronto*



## The Company of the Democratic Republic of Congo 2022



The Federation Council organized a visit to the Company of the Democratic Republic of Congo on the occasion of their Ordinary Assembly held on Sunday, August 21, 2022. Gianna of the Company of Caltanissetta and Tonina of the Company of Padua took part along with President Valeria and the Vice-assistant to the Council of the Federation, Don Raymond.

Upon our arrival on August 19 in Lubumbashi, capital of the southeastern Province of Congo, we found a beautiful and warm welcome from the sisters gathered at the Camaldolese monks' house of spirituality and immediately participated in the concluding meeting of their Spiritual Exercises led by their Assistant, Father Jean Louis. The sharing and spontaneity with which they communicated their reflections as a group made us feel part of one big family, open and collaborating. In their comments, they pointed out the importance of paying attention to the sisters, bringing peace, the prayer that brings unity, sisterhood lived in God's Word, sharing and not having prejudices. They expressed the belief that faith is the grace that God gives us to help us live together, the joy of being together, living the mission where we are, and that Christ is the point of reference for all our life as sisters.

The next day, Saturday, August 20, there was a morning Eucharistic celebration with the consecrations of two sisters. The episcopal vicar Msgr. Denis Moto presided over the Mass, animated by a parish choir. Many family



members and friends were also present.

The Ordinary Assembly for the election of the new government took place on Sunday, August 21. The Company has five regional groups: Kinshasa, Kisangani, Mbuji-Mayi, Kananga and Lubumbashi. At the Assembly, each group presented a brief report of the situation and proposals for future work.

The following were elected: Directress Régine, Vice-directress



Mélanie, and four councilors, each representing a regional group. The Company experience strong unity and collaboration and felt like a vital part of the Church and the Federation. The President Valeria encouraged them to live sisterly communion and face the future united together by walking the

path pointed out by St. Angela.

A special memorial was held for Marie Bernadette, the first Directress of this young DRC Company. In the morning we went to her tomb to pray all together, led by Don Raymond. In the afternoon, together with Mélanie and Agathe, we visited the family to comfort and assure them of Marie Bernadette's remembrance and place in the local Company, but also in the Federation. The family wished to emphasize the variety of activities carried out by Marie Bernadette for so many people, on material, educational, cultural and social levels, especially for the promotion of women's dignity. For our part, we presented our charism, our commitment to formation for the sisters in the Company and its insertion in the local Church. On this occasion it was nice to have Don Raymond with us, as he could intervene with appropriate explanations doing a true cultural mediation.

During those two days we also visited some sisters, got to know their homes, enjoyed their warm welcome, and experienced the joy of our participation in the same life, in Saint Angela. These were very important moments of getting to know their concrete life and their family environments.

Finally, we went for an interview with the episcopal vicar Msgr. Denis Moto together with the Directress Régine and the new Council. He welcomed us in his office in the episcopal curia and showed great interest in our Company. Régine delivered the minutes of the Assembly and presented the situation of the Company, scattered throughout the DRC.

Valeria, the President, emphasized their membership in the Federation and the ties that are continuously maintained to care for both the formation of the sisters and the organization of the Company. On this occasion too Don Raymond facilitated our communication with timely and clarifying comments about our organization as a Company within the Church.

Our visit to the Company of the DRC ended with great hope that we will continue to share the path that St. Angela has shown us.

Our President Valeria, with wisdom and foresight, encouraged the Company to live united together and to face difficulties and share

good things. The experience was a great witness of faith for us, and we give thanks for the full and generous welcome they gave us.

*Tonina, Company of Padua*



## Group of Ethiopia



*And when you visit them,  
I give you this charge,  
to greet them, and  
shake hands with them,  
also on my behalf.  
(5th Counsel)*

On August 24, 2022, after the wonderful experience in Congo, together with the President, Valeria Broll, and Tonina Rocca we arrived in

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to visit our sisters.

Upon our arrival Sister Gabrielle and Sister Abrette, Ursuline religious sisters of Gandino, welcomed us and accompanied us to their home, where we spent our stay among sisters. We felt immediately at home, a little disoriented by the cold weather we did not expect to find. It was the rainy season and rain and cold characterized our stay, but the warmth of the sisters and the people who welcomed us warmed our hearts and we always felt like family.

On the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>, our dear Hanna came to welcome us with magnificent roses that communicated all the love and joy of our meeting. Hanna also brought a candle, a beautiful picture of St. Angela and other flowers to make a small altar, which could honor St. Angela and make our "meeting as dear sisters" more solemn.

Sister Ababa, who speaks Italian well, helped us to learn a little about Ethiopian Catholic culture and to communicate with our sisters in the Amharic language. Our joy was great when we were joined by Degnesh, who lives in Gimbi, a town 440 km from Addis Ababa. We felt fortunate to have met her while she was in the capital for health reasons. We gathered around St. Angela to tell our stories and to remind each other of the joy and beauty of our vocation, despite the difficulties of language. It was good to feel the joy growing and to sense that our presence was comforting and encouraging. The group consists of five people, four of whom are over 60, and with some health problems, in a



country that is as beautiful as it is poor, where people's lives have been marked by a civil war for two years. This veil of sadness surrounded us, too, on the day of our departure, when we learned that Macallé, the city where our Tiblelse lives, had been bombed and several children in a kindergarten had died. We have had no news of her for some time.

On August 26, we were able to reach Magdalena, thanks to Abba Kidane, a Cistercian monk who accompanied us in his off-road vehicle. Without him it would have been impossible to reach Magdalena in Mendida, 150 km from Addis Ababa, along a dirt road in the rain and with numerous checkpoints. The joy of the meeting was immense. Magdalena's body is marked by age and frail health, but her heart is full of those fruits of the Spirit that we can enjoy when we live in God: love, joy, peace, hope, faith. We shared a festive meal in an emotional atmosphere of welcome in Magdalene's family.

August 27 was the day for meeting Tecla, who lives in a small tin house next to the cathedral. At Tecla's, too, we breathed the joy of an extraordinary welcome and of finding ourselves together to share the beauty of our vocation. In her, too, we saw the glow of joy in belonging to the Company, her serenity while bedridden by illness,



and the faith and love that allow us to go forward despite all difficulties.

Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the beautiful witness we received and for the joy and the extraordinary welcome that our Ethiopian sisters gave us.

G. S.



## **Group of Kenya** **Retreat and Celebration**

Our spiritual retreat together in Tamu, Archdiocese of Kisumu, started on 2 January 2023 with a lot of blessings.

Perpetua prepared the ground and welcomed the sisters on 3 January. We counted our blessings as we joined to prepare food, toured the woodland and rocky ground, and linked with Mary-Cabrini through Zoom with laughter and joy.

Spiritual blessings continued to shower on us as we listened to Fr Matthew's inspiring, spiritual, challenging, nourishing talks and reflections. They were full of enlightenment as well as food for thought for our spiritual journey there in Tamu and thereafter in our contemplation in action in our respective parishes.

We thank Mary-Cabrini, the President's delegate, for dedicating her time to support us this far, and we missed her physical presence. We thank all our sisters, Valeria and the Council in a special way, for joining us in prayer.

We celebrated **ten years of the Company's presence in Kenya** by lighting a candle, by the transfer of Jacinta to our family from religious life on her birthday, and by the first consecration of Lucy and Florence (pictured with Father Matthew). Congratulations, dear sisters!

St. Angela and St. Ursula celebrated with us. We pray that we may all persevere like John the Baptist (central theme of our retreat) in reflecting Christ our Lover in our daily choices.

Our time together was a bonding time.

The three days repaired a lot in us, spiritually, emotionally, mentally, psychologically and physically.

*Perpetua Nyakundi, Group of Kenya*

## The Council of the Federation in Rome for Historic Event

Tears in my eyes and deep emotion: this is how I could summarize the morning of January 3, 2023. With some sisters of the Council, Msgr. Tessarollo and Don Raymond, we had the opportunity to stop and pray before the coffin of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and then to participate in the Holy Mass in the chapel of the Chair of St. Peter celebrated by the late Pope's former secretary, Cardinal Josef Clemens, with about fifty concelebrants.



These two very intense moments put me in touch once again with the Church's universality and the faith of so many Christians. I was struck by the silence that reigned in St. Peter's Basilica, despite the large number of people in attendance, and the perfect organization in managing such a large flow of people.

Pope Benedict's last exclamation echoed in my



mind: ***Lord, I love you.***

I would say that his whole life can be summed up in these three words: he was first of all a man of great faith, then a great theologian and a refined intellectual. In his first address to the faithful, as soon as he was elected, he presented himself as *"a simple and humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord."* Simple and humble yes, in the literal sense of the terms (as one journalist noted). And he demonstrated this once again at the moment of his retirement from the papacy.

Paraphrasing what St. Angela says, I feel that I *“must give God infinite thanks for having granted such a singular gift especially to us”* (Rule Prologue 5).

On our return, as guests at the Passionist generalate, we continued with our planned activities: a day of spirituality and a day and a half of Council.

Don Adriano offered us two intense meditations: on Jesus as disciple of the Father and on the disciple as witness, *“salt of the earth, light of the world and city set on a mountain”* (Mt. 5).



He also helped us reflect on the relationship between discipleship and mission; for us who live in the midst of the world, the first place of our mission is our own life! At the same time, like every disciple, we are called to be missionary, that is, able to bring others to encounter Jesus Christ.



Then the Council (via Zoom with the sisters who could not be physically present) addressed the items on the agenda, with a special focus on the Companies recalling important milestones and experiencing difficulties, the organization of meetings with Directresses and Vice-directresses, and more.

While appreciating the possibility of connecting via the Internet, being present together allows one to experience in a far more enriching way *“the united together”* that St. Angela encourages.

Maria Rocca

# Remembering Benedict XVI's Words to Secular Institutes

## ➤ *Characteristics of secular mission:*

**Witness to human virtues** such as "righteousness and peace and joy" (Rom 14: 17),

**The "good conduct"** of which Peter speaks in his First Letter (cf. 2:12), echoing the Teacher's words: "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works

and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven" (Mt 5:16).

**Commitment to build a society that recognizes in the various environments the dignity of the person** and the indispensable values for [one's] total fulfillment.



## ➤ *Secular witness:*

May you feel challenged by every suffering, every injustice and every search for truth, beauty and goodness. This is not because you can come up with the solution to all problems; rather, it is because every circumstance in which human beings live and die is an opportunity for you to witness to God's saving work.

## ➤ *Daily relationships*

This takes place in the daily relationships that you can weave in family and social relations, in professional activity, in the fabric of the civil and ecclesial communities. The encounter with Christ and the act of following him impels and opens people ... for if God fulfils himself only in communion, it is also only in Trinitarian communion that human beings are fulfilled.

## ➤ *Personal, human relationships:*

You are not called to establish special forms of living, of apostolic commitment or social intervention, but rather, forms that can come into being through personal relations, a source of prophetic riches.

*May your lives be like the yeast that leavens all the dough (cf. Mt 13:33), sometimes silent and hidden, but always with a positive and encouraging outreach capable of generating hope.*

***The place of your apostolate*** is therefore the whole of humanity ... both within the Christian community and in the civil community, where relationships are formed in the search for the common good, in dialogue with all, called to witness to that Christian anthropology which constitutes a sensible proposal in a society bewildered and confused by its multicultural and multireligious profile.

***Proclaim the beauty of God and of his creation.*** Following Christ's example, be obedient to love, be men and women of gentleness and mercy, capable of taking to the highways of the world, doing only good. May yours be a life that is focused on the Beatitudes, that contradicts human logic to express unconditional trust in God, who wants human beings to be happy. The Church also needs you to give completeness to her mission.

#### ➤ ***A joyful life***

*Above all, live a life which is joyful and full, receptive and forgiving because it is founded upon Jesus Christ, the definitive Word of God's Love for humanity. (This paragraph delivered on July 18, 2012, in Assisi)*

*Be seeds of holiness  
scattered by the handful  
in the furrows of history!*



(Pope Benedict XVI, meeting with secular institutes commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Provida Mater* February 3, 2007)





# Trent - Infant Jesus, King devotion of the Company and now for the Diocese...

## Prayer

*Lord Jesus, we see you as a child and believe that you are the Son of God, made man by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary.*

*As in Bethlehem, we too with Mary, Joseph, the Angels and the shepherds adore you and acknowledge you as our only Savior. You became poor to make us rich by your poverty: grant that we may never forget the poor and all who suffer. Protect our families, bless all the children of the world, and grant that there may always reign among us the love that you have brought us and that makes life happier.*

*Grant that everyone, O Jesus, may recognize the truth of your Christmas, so that all may know that you have come to bring the entire human family light, joy and peace.*

*You are God, and you live and reign with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen. (Pope Benedict XVI)*

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Clotilde Nardin superior of the Company of Trent, introduced the devotion to the Infant Jesus in the Company of St. Ursula, Daughters of St. Angela Merici, in 1929. Many people testified that they had received help, consolation and inner strength, thanks precisely to the intercession of the Infant Jesus, King.

Since 2009, the Company of St. Ursula has no longer been present in the Casa St. Angela. **In agreement with the Archbishop of Trent, the Carmelite Fathers have welcomed this statue at the city's shrine of the "Madonna della Laste,"** so that the Infant Jesus, King, will continue to watch over the city of Trent and the diocese, still bringing relief, serenity and hope to many people.



*For the 60<sup>th</sup>  
World Day  
of Prayer for Vocations*



*Good Father, Giver of life,  
all creation, time and history  
speak to us of You,  
of your love and of your passion for each one of us.  
You have called us from our mother's womb,  
sowing in us lofty desires  
for happiness and fulfillment.  
We ask You: send your Spirit  
to enlighten the eyes of our hearts  
so that we may be able to recognize  
and appreciate all the good  
that you have bestowed on our lives.  
Grant that we may allow ourselves  
to pass through your light,  
so that your Church may reflect  
the colors of your beauty, and each of us  
may respond to our own vocation,  
participants in the marvelous and multiform  
works that You want to accomplish in history.  
We ask You this through Jesus Christ,  
your Son and our Lord.  
Amen.*