

*In the same charism
with responsibility*



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

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TO THE READERS

The Colonelle of the Company of Saint Ursula *Guard and watch over the spouses of the Lord as most vigilant* *shepherds and good servants* (cf. Prologue to the Counsels)

In April, in Brescia, we reflected on how to enlarge the tent of the Company. We told ourselves that no one should be left on the fringes or outside the tent and that we should continue in unity and communion.

Madre Angela comes spontaneously to mind. In her day she had directed that tasks of leadership and responsibility be put in the hands of local leaders: *the beloved daughters and sisters, the colonelle of the Company of St. Ursula*.

So many times we have talked about the duties of a person in charge. Perhaps it is time to review the Merician Counsels in order to understand St. Angela's desire again, in the present situation.

St. Angela, the mother and foundress, did not want to do everything herself; she distributed tasks – and not minor tasks – commitments of pastoral service to the spouses of the Lord as *most vigilant shepherds and good servants*. Thinking especially of Italy, where the energies are diminishing, but also of the various Companies in the world, often with sisters far apart geographically, sometimes alone and in difficulty... we can recover the role of the *colonelle*, the *moderators of the groups*, as the Constitutions provide (25.8).

The task of the *colonelle* is exalted: *there cannot be another more worthy than to be guardians of the spouses of the Most High.... Grace certainly great and destiny inestimable*.

For such a task, St. Angela invokes for each colonella *the strength and true consolation of the Holy Spirit*.

For such a task, how much one *needs to pray God to enlighten, and direct and teach what you have to do for love of him!*

For such a task, *you have to thank God most greatly that he has deigned to see to it that you are among those he wants to spend themselves in governing and safeguarding such a treasure, his own*.

In short, St. Angela wanted a government of unity and sharing, and if we prepare to live it and accept it in this way, we will *see marvelous things*...

Kate

The Strength and the True Consolation of the Holy Spirit



Valeria Broll
President of the Federation

*“May the strength and true consolation
of the Holy Spirit be in you all,
so that you can sustain and carry out...
(Prologue to the Counsels)*

Strength: gift, not conquest, or personal effort.

Strength is a gift of the Holy Spirit and as such must be received, asked for and cherished, for us to be faithful to our vocation and for our joy in living it. Every gift the Lord entrusts to us is for a **mission**. What is ours? That of participating in the same mission of **Jesus the priest** (to offer and to be offered), of **Jesus the king** (to serve) of **Jesus the prophet** (to be the word and living presence of Jesus in the world, in the Church, in the Company) (cf. Const. 22.1).

This mission, entrusted to us in Baptism and confirmed and strengthened with the secular vocation in the Company of St. Ursula, is a gift that fills us with joy, but it is also toil; it is struggle because *“There is no type of evil which is not here to be resisted, considering that we are placed here in the midst of snares and dangers.... However, my very own sisters, you must not be afraid of this”*

Acknowledging the gift of vocation and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, let us not look at our smallness, frailty, and poverty; let us not rely on personal effort alone; we will never make it.

The Lord, who knows his children well, sends us his **Spirit of fortitude**. St. Angela also knows it well when she greets us by invoking the strength and consolation of the Holy Spirit to sustain the enterprise of our vocation and mission. To be *"like lambs in the midst of wolves."* To be little seeds scattered in the soil of the world. To sustain with fortitude the trials of life. Let us therefore rely on the only power that enables us to carry out the enterprise of our vocation: the power of the Gospel. Gratefully, thankfully, with the words of the psalm we often repeat as we go through our days: *My strength, my song is the Lord. He is my salvation.*

Consolation: a **gift** for going about, walking, proclaiming Life, not for resting, sitting, consoling ourselves, shutting down and taking shelter from difficulties.

Consolation is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Let us ask for it often, daily. *Ask and it will be given to you.* And the Lord who is the God of peace and of all consolation does not make us go without it. The true consolation that St. Angela speaks of is not to be sought in people, in the things we do, but comes from God alone. Every gift is for a mission, and we women – consecrated women – have a mission that is extremely urgent today: the mission to console. Will we succeed in this endeavor if we ourselves experience consolation, and where do we experience it if not by pausing in contemplation of our Bridegroom and Lord Jesus Christ? Let us stand in his company with these Words: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God. For as Christ's sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow* (2Cor 1:3-5).

This prayer and contemplation frees us from anxiety and allows us to radiate peace, serenity, confidence, a spirit of abandonment.

This is our call and mission: to be women of consolation. ***Come Holy Spirit, perfect Comforter, sweet host of the soul, sweet relief.***

The more we need support, the more we need to be supporters of others. The more we feel the need to be consoled, the more we can be consolers of still others...thus we will be seeds of hope in our Company and in every environment where we live, suffer, rejoice.

"The Holy Spirit, the true author of the fruitfulness of the Church's life, has raised up the gift of the Merician charism..." (Const. Decree).

Let each of us, with our own Yes to the Lord, keep alive the Merician charism: gift of the Holy Spirit to his Church.

"May the strength and true consolation of the Holy Spirit be in us all, so that we can sustain and carry out the task entrusted to us."

“By the Grace of God I Am What I Am” (1 Cor 15:10)

Points on How to Understand Spirituality in the Synodal Church



**Don Rino La Delfa, Vice-assistent
of the Counsel of the Federation**

**The Urgency of Spiritual Formation in
View of a Synodal Church**

In the perspective of a Church that intends to modify itself according to the synodal style, one has to ask what is urgently needed. Discarding everything that is openly at odds with this vision, certainly it is not people who enjoy position, power and wealth who will be at the top of the list, much less those who can charm others with an unquestioned oratorical skill because they are endowed with theological and pastoral skills of the highest order. Immersed in the age of technology, even equipping oneself with more machinery and better tools, new organizations or more innovative and efficient methods cannot be said to make the difference. If we get to the root of the matter, what is needed today, as in all times, is the availability of men and women whom the Holy Spirit can use to build up the Church itself, people rich in spirituality, powerful in prayer (cf. Jn. 14:12). The Holy Spirit does not act through methods, but through people. He does not rest on inert machinery, but on people. He does not anoint projects with his power, but anoints prayerful people, thus enabling them to communicate first with God so that they can then communicate in a spirit of solidarity within the community of faith.

The spirituality we speak of – steeped in prayer and study of God's Word, empowered by the Holy Spirit, committed to serving God without reservation and manifested in a spirit of service – is what is needed within history as the Church, that is, as a reconciled community of people with God. The task of the Kingdom cannot be carried out without a spirituality that precedes the actions of believers by stirring up these deeds. Taking the viewpoint of a meritocracy, the secular

environment rightly tends to look approvingly at a person's academic and educational qualifications. Entrusting the leadership of the believing community solely to those with certified qualifications is not the same thing. As important as skills are, they alone are not enough. What determines the life of the Church and is fundamental to its passage within time and space is first and foremost the spiritual discernment of those who lead it and of the whole community, together and in its individual members.

Redefining Spirituality as a Way of Discernment

The notion of spirituality in the lay sense is likened to the desire for something beyond what is merely material. Often, however, this quest takes place in the interiority of individuals regardless of their physical and social experience. In the Christian context, it is more willingly felt as the 'totality' and 'wholeness' of the lives of those who have responded to God's free and gratuitous call to live in communion with him. Spirituality refers not only to the whole life of a person, but more specifically to people's lives shared entirely with God, who introduces all to intimacy with him. Therein lies, in 'wholeness,' one of the most decisive and in some ways also most challenging meanings of Christian spirituality. By God's initiative, people are, in a way, torn from their solitariness and unified with each other and with God through the gift of the Spirit. On the other hand, when we refer to the 'wholeness' of life, we mean that spirituality includes not only the supposedly 'spiritual' part of a person's life. Rather, the whole person, body and spirit, is subject to the demands of spirituality; no part of the human being can escape its scrutiny. Because it is total, in the sense of shared with others, and integral in that it encompasses all dimensions of the person, spirituality is thus not just doing, but primarily being. Indeed, doing is simply the result of being.

It should be pointed out that Christian spirituality in itself does not correspond to a human requirement, but is always a response to God's grace, a gift flowing from his initiative. By virtue of this, both the

person and the community in their ecclesial experience depend exclusively on the grace of faith believed and professed in participation in sacramental life. In the act of translating their interiority into spiritual works – meaning all the actions by which creation is renewed – they make the presence of the Kingdom tangible. A spirituality based on anything other than a continuous response to God's grace is no spirituality at all. Rather, it is a manifestation of the first sin: pride in being one's own god. Pride leads to thinking that one's own way is sufficient to find salvation; it leads to claiming to be more spiritual than others; it leads to measuring others by one's own spirituality. And when others do not live up to our spiritual standards, we tend to criticize and belittle them. Only when we truly believe that inner transformation is God's work and not our own, only then can we silence our petulant inclination to bring others into line. A spirituality that is more concerned with correcting others than with looking within is no different from the "righteousness" and "spirituality" of the scribes and Pharisees (cf. Mt. 5:6).

The biblical figure of a spiritual person then is one who is "**led by the Spirit of God**" (Rom. 8:14) and "**lives by the Spirit**" (Gal. 5:25). In other words, true spirituality is not the fruit of human effort or the initiatives of our own willpower, but is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Our role is to cooperate individually and together with the Spirit and to dispose ourselves under his authority; only he can transform us into authentically spiritual persons, mirrors of the divine life. Within this space, discernment is the faculty to hear, see, know, judge, and act as God himself would.

Spirituality as a Movement from the Inside Out

A widespread misunderstanding among believers is at the root of differing perceptions and approaches to spirituality. It is not uncommon for it to be assimilated and made to coincide with particular emphases of the culture and trends of the times. Along the course of history, ambiguous models have not infrequently prevailed, then been

completely disavowed and abandoned. Today too we must ask to what extent models in vogue are influenced by the pursuit of public consensus, social recognition and the image projected in relationships. But spirituality does not receive its approval and authorization from the outside since it arises and develops from within, acting, if anything, to subvert a precarious state of equilibrium of external situations that at the moment appear as plausible solutions. An authentic spirituality, individual and communal, is alive where individuals and groups experience a growth stretching beyond them by projecting them beyond the limit of their individuality and the boundaries of general consensus.

The lives of the saints largely and variously correspond to the spirit of the Beatitudes, which contradict the logic of current culture. Although one's spiritual life, so understood, possesses something intensely personal, culminating in occasions of encounter with the Father in whose presence we learn the true measure of perfection in confrontation with his demands, it is nevertheless never individual. Because it is profoundly personal, Christian spirituality learned from Christ does not focus on good performance but on faithfulness. It does not seek its own advantage and recognition, but disposes one to unconditional service. It does not intervene to erect the fortress of one's own singular uniqueness, but to build a bridge to the kingdom of God. The "other" is and remains in every case the key, that is, the prod to action, of true spirituality. With this key, authentically spiritual people approach prayer, devotion, meditation on the Word, and service, aware that the pronoun that holds the dialogue of life in the Spirit is never the 'I,' but the 'You.' With this key, the priority is never the applause of bystanders, superiors or colleagues, but acceptance by God. Being a spiritual person is therefore about a movement from the inside out, not the other way around.

With sadness one realizes that many people, however endowed with incidental wealth or special talents that win them win easy acclaim, nevertheless lack an elemental greatness, a goodness inherent

in their character. There are many who, while delighting in success in their careers, in the construction of a virtual image, in expanded forms of individualism, are often failures in their personal relationships. Individual success is always tied to a paradigm of inconsistent spirituality whose movement starts from the outside in. In Christian spirituality the opposite approach that moves from the inside out proves instead that personal victories precede communal victories, that making and keeping promises to ourselves precedes making and keeping promises to others. It is meaningful that asceticism and mortification find their place in spirituality. These are not solo forms of disciplinary rigor aimed at strengthening spiritual muscles, but indications of costly love like that of the Cross. The greatest victories for the Church of Christ or for the individual Christian are not those achieved through talent or education, wealth or the favor of human beings; these victories are achieved in the private chamber of dialogue with God, when simple and sincere faith discerns there that the "Father who sees in secret" (Mt. 6:6). This movement from the inside out is at the heart of our personal need for spirituality. It should be the operative thrust of the spirituality of communities and groups and be the prod to action of ecclesial synodality.

Personal and Community Relationship at the Heart of Spirituality

Life's greatest battles are fought every day in the silent rooms of the soul. The saying *to feel with the Church* would not make sense if the movement that awakens the Church in souls did not start from the deepest level of each person.

This means that every believer incorporated into the Church, in possession of the Spirit, lives his ecclesial dimension already in the inner growth that comes from his own combat with himself in the darkness of his inner self, examining himself and his motives before the all-knowing God. Adherence to the Church that is confirmed through the act of faith, therefore, necessarily challenges the conscience. For the Church manifests itself as the coming together of the consciences of the

faithful, who in suffering have acquired private and inner victories before engaging in any outward communal struggle. It is the task of every believer who places himself or herself on the path of a synodal Church to start by examining his or her own inner motivations, resolving hidden conflicts and dealing with his or her own sinful tendencies and inevitable weaknesses. After all, being spiritual is not a choice that obeys an option, but the way of living a life-choice. Spiritual life as the work of God's initiative corresponds to his will for us. And his will is that nothing of us be lost (cf. Jn. 6:39; 17:12; 18:9). What kind of people then must we be as believers before the inevitable dissolution of all things?

Peter seems to ask, if not what distinguishes us "in holiness of conduct and godliness," that is, living in a holy and devout way (cf. 2 Pet. 3:11). And even more, "in the image of the Holy One who called you, become holy also in all your conduct" (1 Pet. 1:15). It should be remembered that at the heart of all conduct is relationship. Christianity is not a set of rules or a creed to be followed abstractly. It is involvement with a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Eternal life, according to Jn 17:3, is knowing God and his Son. This kind of knowing does not come through acquiring theoretical knowledge, but through cultivating a deep relationship. Synodality requires an indispensable formation of those who make the synergistic ecclesial journey based on the cultivation of a personal relationship through Christ with the Church and the Father through meditative listening to the Word and prayer. Weaving a personal relationship with the Person of Jesus describes Paul's purpose when he writes, "For I resolved to know nothing else among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

The Grace of Merician Spirituality

The core around which Merician spirituality expands is undoubtedly the experience of the espousal, so much so that Angela states, "spiritual love is beyond comparison much more powerful than

natural love" (Second Legacy 9). A gift of the Spirit, love is primarily experienced as a gentle exercise of one's own freedom and that of others in reciprocity: "And above all, be on your guard not to want to get anything done by force, because God has given free will to everyone, and wants to force no one, but only proposes, invites and counsels" (Third Legacy 8-11).

Angela is so convinced of the uniqueness of being chosen as a spouse that she reminds us in the Rule's Prologue that it first of all separates in order to unite in love and service: " Since, most beloved daughters and sisters, God has granted you the grace of separating you from the darkness of this poor world and joining you together to serve his divine Majesty, you must give him infinite thanks for having granted such a singular gift especially to you.... For this reason, my very own sisters, I call upon you, actually I beg and entreat you all: having been thus chosen to be true and virginal spouses of the Son of God, first, be willing to recognize what such a thing means and what a new and wondrous dignity this is" (Rule, Prologue 4-5,7-8).

The intimacy of Merician espousal is experienced in the secrecy of conscience: "If they want to pray longer, let them go into their rooms, and enclosed there, pray in the way and as much as the Spirit and conscience will dictate" (Rule, Ch 6, 7), and it expands into the task on a par with which "there cannot be another more worthy than to be guardians of the spouses of the Most High" (Prologue to the Counsels, 8).

The spousal spirituality exhibited by Angela Merici could culminate in an equally relational figure such as "shepherdesses," a spirituality of shepherdesses, since the spiritual inheritance of a consecrated woman is summed up in responsibly guarding and spiritually nourishing others: "I beg you with all my heart, please be watchful and most vigilant, like so many caring shepherdesses, for this heavenly flock entrusted to your hands" (Tenth Legacy 1-2; cf. Prologue to the Counsels 6).

The synodal way of living spirituality can be felt in the insistence with which we read in the Testament, "**Take care especially that they are united and one in will, as we read of the Apostles and other Christians of the early Church: 'Erat autem eorum cor unum'; that is, they were all of one heart**" (Acts 4:32) (Tenth Legacy 7). Angela proposes a consecration without a convent, entrance ceremonies or distinctive dress. She replaces these outward aspects with the involvement of interiority (of will, heart and mind) in religious life and detachment from worldly values.

Fundamental to the perspective of interiority, and thus characterizing her vision, is the fact that the will replaced obligation in fulfilling what is prescribed: the precepts are not in the form of an order but in the form of advice, in that active and conscious participation was counseled: "**My last word to you, by which I implore you even with my blood, is that you live in harmony, united together, all of one heart and one will**" (Ninth Counsel 1). And in the Testament she affirms, "**Loving each other and living in harmony together are a sure sign that we are walking the path right and pleasing to God**" (Tenth Legacy 12), suggesting that the distinctive qualities of communion experienced within the Companies were not drawn from imposed institutional principles but from the free exercise of interiority and spirituality through "willing": "loving each other and living in harmony" become a sign of the inner will to walk on the right path.

Thus, even in its community dimension, the Company of St. Ursula stands on interpersonal relationships among Ursulines, on the human qualities of individuals, in particular, friendship, love, willingness, tolerance, and mutual respect. Angela, once again, puts the humanity of individuals at the center of the life of the Company. She is deeply aware of the importance of the relational dimension among the Ursulines, marked by the search for unity and concord. She recalls, "**See then how important is this union and concord. So, long for it, pursue it, embrace it, hold on to it with all your strength**" (Last Counsel 10-14).

WORLDWIDE IDENTITY: GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER'S CULTURES GLIMPSES OF “THE CULTURE OF SINGAPORE”

Nature and Characteristics

W Singapore, a city-state at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, is about 137 kilometres north of the Equator. The population is 5.9 million living on 719



square km of land.

It is the largest port in Southeast Asia and one of the busiest in the world.

Once a British colony and now a member of the Commonwealth, Singapore first joined the Federation of Malaysia at its formation in 1963 but seceded to become an

independent state on August 9, 1965.

The island is in the equatorial monsoon region of Southeast Asia, and its climate is characterized by uniformly high temperatures. Its maritime location and constant humidity keep the temperature between 27 degrees C and 38 degrees C.





Singapore is mostly built up with high-rise buildings that serve as office spaces and residences for the majority of the population. There are a few thousand acres of evergreen rain forest preserved around catchment areas.

Heavily urbanized, Singapore has a high population density. Its birth and population growth rates are the lowest in Southeast Asia.

The population of Singapore is diverse, the result of considerable past immigration. Chinese predominate, making up some three-fourths of the total. Malays are the next largest ethnic group and Indians the third.

Because of this ethnic diversity, no fewer than four official languages are recognized—English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay, and Tamil.

English remains the main medium for administration, commerce, and industry, and it is the primary language of instruction in schools.

Religion

Religious affiliations reflect ethnic patterns.

About two-thirds of all Chinese profess some degree of attachment to Confucianism, Buddhism, or Taoism. Virtually all Malays, and some Indians, adhere to Islam. The Christian community has grown rapidly. Almost all of the remaining population practicing a religion is Hindu, but there are also many Singaporeans who have no religious affiliation.

Catholicism

Catholicism in Singapore has its roots in the Portuguese presence in Asia. It is believed that the first Catholic priest set foot in Singapore in 1821, two years after Stamford Raffles' landing, to attend to the needs of the growing community consisting largely of British colonialists and some Chinese; However, it is probable that there had

been Portuguese missionaries operating out of Malacca in Singapore during the Portuguese period, 1511–1641, prior to the British conquest.

The local Church is currently led by William Cardinal Goh, the fourth Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore.

According to the 2020 census, 18.9% of Singaporeans identify as Christians, 37.1% of whom identified as Catholic and the 62.9% as 'Other Christians' (chiefly Protestants).

The Catholic Church operates kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and Catholic Junior College. Some schools are operated by the archdiocese and others are under the trusteeship of various religious orders.

We have the presence of several religious congregations here: Jesuits, Redemptorists, Franciscans, Canossians, Good Shepherd Sisters, Montfortians, Gabrielites and Carmelites, just to name a few.

There are many active Christian communities from the various charisms of this century like the Focalare, Neocatechumenal Way, Faith and Light, World Christian Meditation, Couples for Christ and several more.

Our churches boast an active participation of the faithful. Many parishes offer daily Mass, and on the weekends there are several Masses offered, all of which are well attended by the young and not-so-young.

Industry



production has been diversifying from such labour-intensive industries as textiles to high-technology activities like the manufacture of electronics and precision equipment and oil

In order to attract foreign investment, the economy was liberalized, and a series of incentives were provided to multinational corporations; chief among these was the establishment of free trade zones. Gradually,



refining, which yield a much higher added value to production.

Tourism

Tourism has become increasingly important to Singapore's economy. Singapore's central location in Southeast Asia and its excellent air transportation facilities have been boosted by massive investment in hotels and shopping malls. Duty-free stores and a variety of recreational attractions, along with the renovated waterfront, are among the main attractions.



Government

Singapore is a unitary parliamentary democracy. The president is head of state; until 1991 the largely ceremonial post of president was filled by parliamentary election, but in that year the constitution was amended to allow for the direct popular election of the president and for presidential powers to be expanded. The parliamentary majority selects the prime minister, who is head of government, and the cabinet from its own ranks, and they in turn form the government.



Cultural Life

Cultural activities in Singapore are largely springing from one or another of the major civilizations of China, India, Indonesia, or the West. Traditional Chinese and Indian music, painting, and drama are practiced by numerous cultural societies and professional groups. Popular culture, based on modern mass media, is far more widespread. Musical films that popularize Hindi and Tamil songs have a considerable following, as do films from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and the United States.

Education

Education is highly valued in Singapore, and its education system is elaborately structured.

Primary education is free and lasts from six to eight years; the language of instruction is English, and students are required to learn any one of the other three official languages as a second language.

Students at the secondary level are placed into academic or vocational and commercial tracks.

Opportunities for higher education are determined by academic performance and usually involve two or three years of pre-university instruction followed by enrollment at a university or technical college.

A Secular Ursuline in Singapore

Vocations to the religious life and priesthood, though, are very few and seem to be on the decline. People prefer affiliations to Christian Communities rather than religious congregations.



For myself, I was introduced to the company by Fr Iker SJ, my spiritual director. He introduced me to Helene (Company of France) in Chiangmai. I had never known such a way of life existed in the Church.

Though I have made significant efforts to make the Company known, it has still not caught on. Several women have come to have a look and have gone. I am the only Ursuline in Singapore. Together, Monica V and I form the Asia-Pacific Group.

I see my vocation as a gift of our Lord, to keep me sane. I was highly restless before, but now I am peaceful and embrace the responsibilities and the crosses with joy. Fortunately the Lord has nestled this vocation in the Neocatechumenal Way, of which I am a pilgrim with my community of 25 persons. The Company owes a great debt of gratitude to The Way in safeguarding the vocation of this solo sojourner.

Ebba, Asia-Pacific Group

Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart

Listening to Scripture, Church, and Guides – 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.

The Many Voices

Each of us has a God-given environment made up of people and resources.

Angela uses her favorite pedagogical device, a list, to make her spiritual teaching specific and concrete. She enumerates voices. Consistently paying attention to them is important and rewarding. It is a way of finding God in the people and world around us, God in the circumstances of our lives. Angela speaks in the Rule about obeying them.

Although *holy obedience* is always to God's will, it begins with open-hearted **listening**, a willingness to learn from everyone and everything. Then, in the heart we sift what we have heard, seeking to **discern** which elements of it may suggest God's guidance. From **listening** and **discernment** we move to **action**, that is, to obeying.

This is how obeying God sometimes takes the form of obeying other people or government. Human and limited though they may be, they can signal God's guidance to us. Angela catalogues many forms of human authority. She then situates the capacity for and the responsibility of discernment squarely in the individual human heart.

Listening to Sacred Scripture

Her list emerges from the circumstances of women in her time and place. First among these guideposts are God's commandments (Ch. VIII:7), not only the Ten, but other scriptural teachings. She was familiar with both Testaments. We notice throughout her writings how often Angela herself looks for guidance to the Bible and to Jesus' life. She quotes Scripture constantly. Usually these lines are in Latin from the Vulgate edition of the Bible current in her day. Often she then translates

the biblical verse into Italian or paraphrases it. Her applications of these teachings show her openness to God's word. She lived the Psalmist's prayer, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Listening to the Church

Next, the Church's teachings are also very important (Ch. VIII:8). Truth—one of her favorite names for Jesus—has given us his Spirit in the Church to guide us. He has told us to listen very closely and respectfully to the Church's voice. Angela quotes Jesus' saying, "*who listens to you, listens to me; who scorns you, scorns me*" (cf. Luke 10:16, Ch. VIII:8). What constitutes the Church's voice? Who can claim it?

Angela tells us to pray *that God not abandon [the] Church, but reform it as he pleases* (Seventh Counsel:24).

Clearly she does not think that all churchmen speak with the voice of Christ! In fact, in the Seventh Counsel she also warns us against that mistake, citing the possibility that *a confessor, or some other religious, [may] turn them away from some good inspiration* (Seventh Counsel:6).

In Chapter VIII, she lists the Church and then, separately, *one's own bishop and pastor*. They are a very important part of the Church, of course. But we must not equate them with the Church. Brescia's unfortunate situation made that clear. Its absentee bishops did not serve their diocese. Brescia heard very little about them other than the collection of the taxes paid to them. Angela was grateful, though, for the service of Cardinal Cornaro's vicar, Lorenzo Muzio, who helped her obtain diocesan approval for the Rule in August 1536.

Yet Angela did not consider that every word, even from the Pope, must be heard as the voice of the Church, or the voice of Christ, as we have seen. Out of respect, she would not have relished refusing him directly. She had listened respectfully to the Pope, and she had discerned the Holy Spirit's direction in her heart. The result of that process was clear to her. Her solution was to explain her sense of mission in Brescia and then to return home. Angela had to pursue the integrity of her own mission.

Her *own!* *Propria!* That word again! Not the dark "own" that is *like murky hell*? She hoped not. She trusted not. By 1525, the fifty-year-old Angela had long been listening to others, to the Spirit's leading, and

to the gradual unfolding of events in her life. She trusted the Holy Spirit's guidance through all these channels, over many years.

So churchmen are not necessarily the same as the Church. In Chapter VIII Angela distinguishes between the Church and churchmen, or churchwomen, for that matter. The Church is made up of the saints and sinners of all the ages. We may have to listen very carefully, very prayerfully, to hear how Christ speaks to us through the Church, especially in turbulent times.

Listening to Spiritual Fathers

Besides bishops and pastors, this list in Chapter VIII mentions a *spiritual father* (Ch. VIII:9), someone wise and experienced in the spiritual life; someone we can consult regularly in these matters. Angela's own early experience of spiritual direction came when she lived in Salò. The Franciscan friaries at San Bernardino and on the Isola dei Fratri, a nearby island in Lake Garda, drew many lay people in search of good advice and spiritual guidance.

Angela Merici had been an impetuous girl, eager to serve God. The Franciscans showed her how to pray. They taught her spiritual practices that developed stability and consistency. They must have challenged and cautioned this teenager as she needed. They invited her to serve God in others. They counseled her in observing the Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis, which framed her life of prayer and action.

In the approximately twenty years after she had returned home to Desenzano, she periodically returned to Salò to visit her Biancosi relatives and to seek spiritual guidance from the Franciscans there. When the friars asked her to travel to Brescia in 1516 to console the bereaved Caterina Patengola, she was a little over forty. In Brescia, Angela sought a *spiritual father*. Toward the end of her life it was Father Serafino of Bologna, one of the Lateran canons at St. Afra Church.

Unless we listen regularly to a wise guide, we tend to hear only the voice of that small self that needs to grow and grow. How do we identify such a person? There is no foolproof way to recognize wisdom. But a wise guide in the spiritual life should be prayerful, true to Holy Scripture in word and in integrity of life. S/he should be listening, perceptive, respectful. The person should have common sense and

know human nature and the ways of God's Spirit. One touchstone might be, "Does this person lead me to my own deeper truth, invite me closer to God and encourage me to generous service?" Angela warns her daughters to avoid those who try to steer them away from the practices of Ursuline life or who begin to cross the boundary to inappropriate *familiarity* (Seventh Counsel:3, 6-11).

Spiritual Mothers

Angela also sought guidance from holy women. She visited Stefana Quinzani in Soncino and probably also when Stefana occasionally came to Brescia. As a Third Order Franciscan, she must have revered the Franciscan Saint Clare and Saint Catherine of Siena (a member of the Dominican Third Order).

The frescoes in Isabetta Prato's oratory picture Saints Paula and Eustochium, holy women of antiquity. The simplest people and popes and queens had called these women "*madre*." Many Brescians came to Angela for spiritual counseling. Even Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, asked her to be his spiritual mother. He visited her in Cremona and in Brescia, and she visited him on her way home from Varallo. Like Francesco Sforza, many called Angela "*Madre*."

So why does Chapter VIII speak of a spiritual father? Why not a spiritual mother, a reality that was very much within Angela's experience? Clearly, we should listen to God's leading, even seek it, through spiritual mothers, too. But in her day men most often filled this role. Besides the force of custom, many people sought spiritual guidance when they went to sacramental confession, thus to a priest. Furthermore, in sixteenth-century Italy priests were usually the persons best trained in spirituality.

To be continued...

Mary-Cabrini Durkin

Company of Canada, Group of the United States

Leaders on Zoom

On Saturday, Feb. 25, 2023, invited by the Federation's President and Council, directresses



and vice-directresses in Italy and various continents had an on-line meeting on Zoom. The meeting began with a time of prayer, an introduction by the President, a careful reading of the results of the Italian Companies' statistics, and the sharing of experiences of the world and Italian Companies. This meeting was well received by all, timely and attended with great desire and joy. We were numerous, festive and ready to listen and share the joys, difficulties and experiences that the Companies experience.

It was a pleasant time for each of us to see each other again, exchange news, regain hope and confidence and prepare to move forward. In fact, the meeting was organized to start a process of change in the Company in Italy – many Italian Companies – one Company. During the meeting we were all invited to reflect, to commit ourselves, to turn problems into challenges, not to get discouraged, to get out of our own little garden to continue with different means, new tools and creativity, to offer and make known and witness within the universal Church the charism of St. Angela Merici today and make it visible. The Companies cannot be halted on the basis of numbers, but rather broaden their horizons... In conclusion we need to move... open our hearts and minds.

The Holy Spirit, invoked by each one of us, will know how to enlighten the Federation and each individual sister to respond to the new formative, spiritual, moral and administrative needs and to strengthen the relational relationships among the various Companies more and more positively.

Valeria and Liliana, Sicily

Brescia April 22-25, 2023
Italy: Many Companies – One Company?

Contents and Emotions...



Together... listening to the voice of the Spirit

Thinking back to the meeting in Brescia, observing the atmosphere in which it all took place, and comparing myself with the other sisters, I can tell you that what the Madre says in the Eighth Legacy came true: *"Eighth: you must take care to have your daughters come so that, together like this, they might also meet each other as loving sisters, and thus, talking over spiritual matters, rejoice together."*

We were helped from Above, by the Word of God, by Madre Angela, by prayer, by the Dicastery of Consecrated Life, by Bishop Tessarollo, Assistant to the Federation Council, by the Federation President and Council, by the sisters of Brescia, always ready for sisterly hospitality.

To all these gifts must be added the Holy Spirit, who blew much, much,



much, in each and every one, leaving us amazed, consoled and full of

joy. The joy of being united together, the desire to work united in one heart, in one faith and in one charism... circulated among us.

A meeting of peace, serenity, amazement among those who did not know each other and among those who were meeting for the first time, surprises in seeing the beauty in each other's otherness, exchanges of experiences, hands touching, arms encircling, as if we had always been there, in that place, as a family always used to being together.

We worked, both in groups and in plenary sessions, trying to be co-responsible and synodal, within the 'synodal path of the Church. It was beautiful, not always easy, to experience the silence for listening deeply to proposals, ideas, doubts and feelings of the sisters, respecting and expecting them, and trying not to take advantage of others but doing this, not under compulsion but out of love.



Although it was our first time working with this synodal method, the results came....

The Spirit blew in our sails and conducted us to the first shore of the journey we undertook.

Listening to the Spirit, the assembly identified some sisters who will go to other sisters to listen to their needs, problems, states of 'mind, but also to the richness, life and charismatic experience, or gifts that they can bring into communion.

I thank the Lord for the gift of being able to meet with you, and I thank each one of you, yes each one, because, even those who were not there physically, were united with us in prayer, with their ears inclined toward the voice of the Spirit TOGETHER.

Elisabetta, Company of Padua

Searching for What Is Right...

*“Holy Spirit, grant that we may find our unity in you,
so that we may be able to walk together toward eternal life
and not distance ourselves from the path of truth,
and grant that we may seek what is right.”*

From April 22 to 25 last year I went to Brescia together with Nelly, the Directress of my Company, Turin, and Carmela.

We participated together with other leaders in the two-day program *"Toward a new face of the Company."*

How many memories I have of returning to Casa Sant'Angela in Brescia, where you can feel the heart of the worldwide Company beating ! I remember my initial formation and meeting other young women who like me made the journey to become spouses of *the Lover of us all*, Jesus.

How many prayers before the Body of St. Angela, to draw strength to live our Merician charism!

St. Angela's words echoed within me in these days: *Act, move, believe, strive, hope, cry out to him with all your heart...* (Prologue to the Counsels 17).



In this lies
our unity,
which comes
from the heart
of God and
which we want
to shape
towards a new

face of the Italian Company.

I enjoyed the group work, where each of us knew how to tell about ourselves and where silence and listening started with the Word of God.

United together feeling all of us co-responsible, paying attention to our formation and secularity, a proposal was born and approved: **to form a commission of various sisters of the Italian Companies to continue working on the project of a new Company, making it known, visiting and meeting the various Companies.**

May the Holy Spirit give each of these sisters strength and courage. May your mission go well, sisters!

We must live post-Brescia, unafraid of the future, in prayer, discernment, dialogue and friendship, on the road to a larger family of our **Company**.

Heartfelt thanks to President Valeria, to the Council of the Federation, Bishop Adriano and to all the sisters who participated.

Maria Lucchesi, Company of Turin

You will see marvelous things...

The leaders and we, the young members already consecrated and in formation, gathered in Brescia from April 22 to 25, 2023, to discuss together the proposal already examined in all the Companies of Italy: **"Many Companies – One Company."**

Listening to the Word, the Eucharistic prayer, the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the maternal protection of Our Lady and St. Angela



Merici all allowed us to face, discuss and reflect both in the assembly and in the various working groups, on the

possible means and ways to live this possible change.

The presence of Bishop Adriano Tessarollo, the Assistant to the Council of the Federation, and the online connection with Dr. Rosalba Rossi and Fr. Leonello Leidi of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life guided and supported us to begin with hope and faith this journey toward a new face of the Company.

Many new and beautiful things will be organized to respond to the needs of the Italian Companies, where St. Angela's charism is always alive. Several obstacles confront today's Companies: the advanced age of members, health problems and the management of properties that often become a hindrance to living one's consecration in joy.

These days of shared experience allowed us to reflect on the experimental steps to be taken as we go along; each small step will always be taken with much prudence and respect.

A **working group** was formed within the assembly **to coordinate the common journey of the individual companies.**

For all of us, the time spent together was very valuable and necessary for a mutual exchange of ideas and proposals.

St. Angela says again to her daughters and sisters: ... *Without doubt you will see marvellous things, if you direct everything to the praise and glory of his Majesty and the good of souls* (Prologue to the Counsels, 18).

Liliana, Company of Agrigento

Thoughts from the Speakers at the Meeting in Brescia

Toward One Italian Company ... Why:

✚ To give meaningful and appropriate support and backing to the **formation** of possible new members, finding in the Company a



'living and vital' group for their own journey of growth with a view to incorporation into the Company through their local group.

✚ To recover the historical role of the '**Colonnelle**' according to the task that St. Angela entrusts to them in the 'Counsels'. That is, that of accompanying the daughters entrusted to them with human and spiritual closeness, without being burdened with various juridical and fiscal management responsibilities. The latter would be the responsibility of the Directress and her Council, having, of course, heard the opinion of the group through its leader.

✚ To increase the sense of belonging and 'sisterhood' among the members of the entire Italian Company, moving from the 'mine' of the individual Company to the 'ours' of the sisters of the Italian Company, in which it is conceivable that the Merician charism may continue to live and not die with the end of the current individual diocesan Companies.

Bishop Adriano Tassarollo

Autonomy and Communion...

- ❖ *Autonomy can sometimes decline in certain situations (difficulties with elections, government, formation, meetings) ...*
- ❖ *Autonomy can sometimes become an obstacle to communion...*
- ❖ *Do not allow yourselves to be guided by economic issues, so as not to get stuck. Remember that the goods of the Companies are ecclesiastical goods. Evangelize this area too. Have a free heart ...*
- ❖ *The evangelical witness of a secular institute is lived in the structures of the world. Freedom, then, from the structures and works of the Companies that have had their day ...*
- ❖ *Pay attention to the path... leave no one behind on the edge ...*
- ❖ *New choices must safeguard the institutional and charismatic sphere ...*
- ❖ *Involvement is important and should be as broad as possible. Everything with charity and with attention to people ...*



Father Leonello Leidi

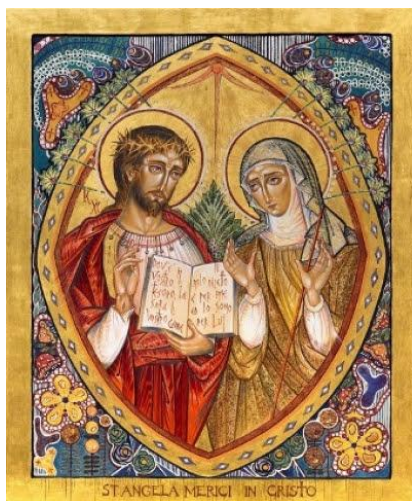
The New Canonical Entity

- ❖ *Does not undermine the Companies' autonomy...*

- ❖ *The current Companies would remain with their structures and recognitions, referring to this new canonical entity for programming, decisions and choices...*
- ❖ *This new canonical entity will not be subsumed into the Federation that serves the Companies around the world ; it will be an Italian entity...*
- ❖ *This canonical entity will accompany the Companies especially at the formational, administrative and organizational level...*
- ❖ ☐ *It will need to think about closeness to persons, including the elderly and isolated...*
- ❖ *Commissions may be formed or delegates or reference people may be appointed taking into account each reality...*
- ❖ *One can proceed with listening to God's word, without being afraid of the future...*
- ❖ *We are not a community, but we are called to communion. Together... to help each other and to be helped...*

Rosalba Rossi, Dicastery

*...Be happy
and have lively faith
and hope.*



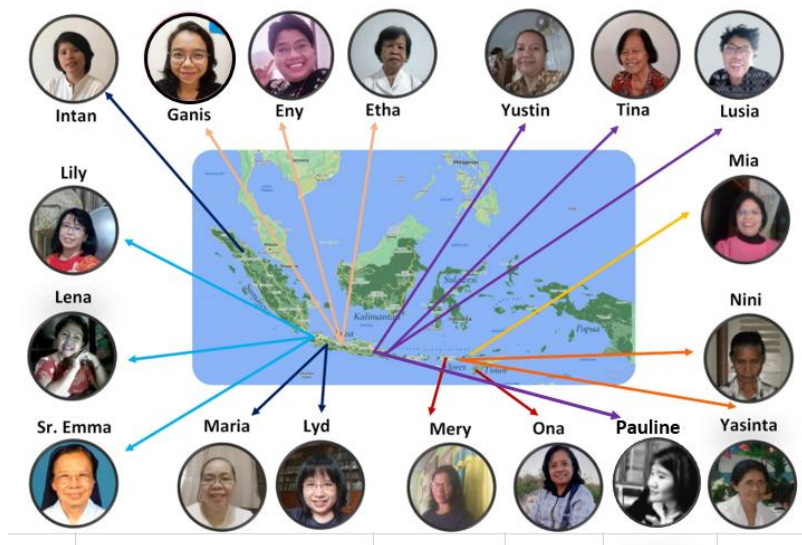
FROM THE COMPANIES AND GROUPS

Company of Indonesia: Distances and Closeness...

In the Company of Indonesia we are very scattered in the territory. There are sisters living in the same city; there are sisters in different villages, different provinces, even different islands.

For example: I in Bandung and Mery in Nagakeo, East Nusa Tenggara, are 1528 km apart. The distance between Bandung and Kupang is 2604 km.

For the national retreat in 2022 in Bandung, Mery took a boat to Kupang where she met Ona, and then together they took a plane to Surabaya, where they met Pauline. Three of them then took a train to Bandung, and in Yogyakarta Angelina Ganis boarded the train (she herself had traveled from Rembang to Yogya first by car). Sometimes we also have a meeting in Bali, which is 886 km from Bandung.



We hold a nationwide meeting in person once a year. About twice a year there is a meeting for some who live in the same province.

Once every three months those in the same city/periphery meet. (Before COVID the meeting was monthly).



Formation is conducted regularly online.



It is based on the Word of God, the sharing of our life experiences, the writings of St. Angela, the Constitutions and the material we receive from the Federation, especially *In the same charism*.

We all feel we are sisters in the Company and in the Federation of Companies.

Lydia, Directress, Company of Indonesia

Non-Italian Companies: Diversity and Unity...

In the online reflection meeting for Directresses and Vice-directresses on the "***Widening the Tent***" proposal in February, Mary-Cabrini offered an overview of the organizational and formation experiences of non-Italian Companies. The material was the result of an inter-Company consultation. The reflections, which we summarize here, were about: Company identity, meetings, and challenges.

Identity as a Company:

- Because each member is nourished in the same Merician charism and by the same Rule and Constitutions, the members find their identity both in their local Companies and in the larger family of the Institute.
- St. Angela was realistic and practical. She taught us to cultivate our deep relationship with Christ and to do so in company with our sisters. For these purposes, she provided "means and ways" that are extremely practical. They include personal spiritual practices. They also include concrete, I would even say

corporeal means, aspects of being truly together: one-on-one visits every fifteen days, grasping one another's hands, caring for sisters with needs of illness and old age, enjoying one another's company.

Relationships and meetings

- Virtual meetings online are the most common means: for prayer, for relaxation, for personal sharing, for celebrations of Ursuline and liturgical feasts.
- Telephone, email, and mail are other supports.
- The internet poses difficulties for some, because of age, expense, or the instability of connections in some areas.
- Some of our Companies are very creative in how they use these means.
- There is strong agreement that these virtual means truly nourish relationships that are well-grounded in personal contact. They are not a substitute for being together in person.

Challenges and ways of addressing them

- It must be said that almost all of them have much greater distances than any regions of Italy, even thousands of kilometers.
- Being together in person remains essential and is faithful to the spirit of St. Angela.
- Most Companies are able to convene in person at least annually for a retreat and consecrations and other meeting. Some can convene two or three times per year. However, some members are not able to travel because of age, disability, expense, familial responsibilities, or the demands of their employment.
- Some Companies have local clusters that can meet much more often.
- Some leaders can visit sisters individually, but not all.
- The maternal, pastoral care of the leaders is important.
- Leaders act as “bridge persons” sharing and encouraging communication within the Company and with other Companies.

Contributions from :
France-Cameroun; Slovakia-England; Indonesia;
Brazil; Canada-USA; Kenya; Madagascar

110 Years of the Presence of Secular Ursulines in the Diocese of Agrigento

We wish to share with the sisters around the world our joy and gratitude to the Lord, "Our Only Treasure," and to St. Angela Merici, our founding mother, for having celebrated the 110th anniversary of the foundation of the Company of Agrigento, based in Canicattì, on March 6 and 7, 2023.

Two afternoons of communion, praise, thanksgiving, harmony and spiritual beauty. The first day with Eucharistic adoration was led by different groups. On the second day, Mass was concelebrated by the vicar general of the Diocese of Agrigento, Fr. Giuseppe Cumbo, the Company's assistant Fr. Giuseppe Scozzari and four other priests with one deacon and two servers.

Numerous faithful, friends, sisters and collaborators from the parish communities of the region and also from neighboring regions participated. We all felt celebratory, thanks to the many faces of the Church present. With us they too recalled the presence, the humble and silent apostolate, prayer, and catechetical activities and the witness of the many Ursulines living in these 110 years in the various areas of the diocese. A beautiful piece of history that certainly cannot be forgotten, the history of the past, motivates us to live the present and to project ourselves into the future. Precisely for this reason, even though our numbers are reduced compared to past years, we sisters still today try to be salt and leaven in this society and in this particular historical moment in which we live.

Adding to our joy on this anniversary of our foundation were the many messages received from the various Companies from Italy and around the world. The good wishes received from our President Valeria and the Federation Council were particularly welcome.

The presence of the directress of the Company of Caltanissetta, Carmelina Burgio, with some sisters during the celebration of the



Eucharist was also a precious gift for us that allowed us to experience this historic moment of celebration "United Together."

The Company of Agrigento



The Company of Ragusa and the 30th Anniversary of VO.CRI



Greeting from the Directress

I thank the president of the VO.CRI (Association of Christian Volunteers), who invited me to say a few words about today's celebration and the birth of the first welcome house, "Sant' Angela Merici."

The first thought that flashed through my mind was that, in order to understand the present, it is important to know the past, the origins. I start from as far back as 1535, the year in which St. Angela Merici, in obedience to the Holy Spirit and to the Glory of

God, planted an entirely new institute, that admirable form of life: secular consecration. Angela Merici welcomed the life of the Spirit, discovered it and lived it to such an extent that she herself became an inexhaustible channel of this experience, pouring it into the Church, into time, and into every person willing to welcome it.

The flow does not stop, because what 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, who with joy and immense amazement have responded with our daily "YES."

St. Angela wanted to call this entirely new institute the COMPANY OF SAINT URSULA.



As a form of secular consecration, it spread initially in northern Italy, especially in the area around Brescia, where St. Angela began it.

The presence of the daughters of St. Angela in the province of Ragusa (but belonging to the Diocese of Syracuse) dates back to around 1935-1940, with a substantial number of members involved in various fields: scholastic, political, pastoral, familial, etc....



When the Diocese of Ragusa was established, the daughters of St. Angela also became an autonomous Company within this Diocese.

With sacrifices and commitment they purchased the property located in Ragusa at 139 Ecce Homo Street, making it available to the Diocese and to those who needed it for various meetings.

Like their mother, the daughters of St. Angela, guided by the breath of the Holy Spirit, listened to the cry of the new poverties emerging in the area, thus the St. Angela Merici House of First Welcome was born, offering a hot meal and a shower to those without. From a small gesture come many sprouts that give life to VO.CRI, which today celebrates its 30th anniversary, giving ample answers to the needs of the area.

May the Breath of the Holy Spirit continue to be light to guide and make fruitful the work He began in the splendor of Truth and especially in Charity. Thank you, and good wishes for the continuation of this welcome.

Enza Iurato



Company of Congo DRC

Albertine Kyakubisama

An Adventure with Her Jesus

On January 13, 2008, Albertine Kyakubisama made her first consecration in the Company of France, the same day she was sent on mission for a very specific service: *"I am sending you to this war-torn region to be a messenger of peace, hope, joy and love. May you be a support to wounded women who are victims of violence. May you be a mother to all those children abandoned, marginalized and left to fend for themselves. Wherever you go, the Lord awaits you,"* Marie Bernadette, the leader, told her.

She loved and sought the secular life. At 54, she embraced the secular life in the Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici with great enthusiasm, to be leaven in the dough, fermenting humanity to make the world present in the Church.

Her work: Life converted into apostolate. Always on her feet, ready to go, ready to act, always concerned for others. Albertine bore witness by living our charism in the world. She was a mother with a big heart for the destitute and the spiritually poor.

She started an orphanage with young children. Now there are 39 children aged from 4 months to 17 years, both boys and girls. She was also in charge of the social center for teenaged mothers in the Archdiocese of Kisangani.

She was admitted to hospital on the afternoon of March 3, 2023, and died on March 4 at 6:16 pm, as a result of an intestinal blockage.

Our sister Albertine left a positive witness in the archdiocese, and all of Kisangani is talking about her, Christians and Muslims alike.

The sisters of the Company of Congo



Company of Brazil Northeast



The Company of Northeast Brazil grew out of the Company of the South.

Although Northeast Brazil is a very large region consisting of many states, the Company's members are all concentrated in the state of Bahia. Many live in the city of Salvador, which is the state capital. Others live in the distant city of Jequié and surrounding towns, and still

others in the recently created Diocese of Cruz das Almas, all dispersed in various cities in the diocese. The women of the Northeast, accustomed to the difficulties imposed by the region, are fearless, courageous, determined and, above all, of unwavering faith, full of trust in God's power and in constancy in prayer.

The Company's group in **Salvador** is composed of fifteen women consecrated for life, associates and women on a vocational journey, all of whom are accustomed to the hurried life of big capital cities. Some are retired; the younger ones are active, working in various professional fields and involved in the pastoral activities of their parishes. One sister works professionally in the Archdiocese of Salvador and, in this context, also does pastoral work. They meet once a month at the convent of our Ursuline Sisters, "Convent of Mercy," where they hold formation and prayer, share their journey and socialize, with times of great joy and relaxation.

During the June and Christmas celebrations, they gather in the parish hall. The last Christmas celebration was held in the church of San Lázaro, where our sister Gildete also participates.

In January, during the festivities for St. Angela, the annual retreat is held at the regional level, with the participation of the Salvador, Jequié and Cruz das Almas clusters. This year the theme was

"Charism, essence of vocation." The preacher, Deacon Renato Santa Rita, founder of the Anawim Catholic Community, offered us a wealth of content and addressed topics such as: Founding Charism and Ascetical Dimension of a Charism, among others.

In **Jequié**, the group consists of eighteen Angelinas (consecrated for life, temporary consecrated, in initial formation and in the probationary period). The group is continuing well. In recent years, the monthly meetings were organized online on account of COVID. The spiritual director, Dom Paulo Romeu, a diocesan bishop, participated in one of them. The group remained united in prayer, study, sharing and celebrations.

After this phase, there was a return to monthly face-to-face meetings and home visits for those who were not present at regular meetings. These are women who have a great love for the Institute and St. Angela and remain actively engaged in their parishes in various actions and missions in the service of the Kingdom of God.

Each region has its own specificity and develops its pastoral work or services according to its reality and availability.

We in the Diocese of **Cruz das Almas** are thirteen sisters scattered in different cities of Recôncavo Baiano.

Besides the ordinary meetings of study, prayer, sharing, and celebrations, I personally constantly visit my Angeline sisters in their cities. We are all involved in parishes where we are located, in pastoral activities and movements such as Liturgy, Extraordinary Ministry of the Eucharist, Catechesis, Diocesan Caritas, Tithing, Singing, and Children's Ministry. Some, through their professional work, exercise pastoral care in schools, health care and more.



*Hildeni Nunes de Argolo
Company of Brazil Northeast – Group of Cruz das Almas*

From Peru... to Spain... to the Company of Turin



*Behold, Lord,
I come to do your will...*

My name is Georgina; I am **Peruvian**. I met St. Angela's Company thanks to Nelly Romero. We have known each

other for a long time and met again five years ago in Peru.

When we met again, I saw her happy and fulfilled. She told me about the Company of Saint Ursula, Secular Institute of Saint Angela Merici... and from that moment the thought of consecrating myself to the Lord never left me. Always I had felt the Lord's call to serve him and nurtured the desire to be totally for him. I kept discussing with Nelly my desire to be consecrated.



In 2017 the opportunity to make a trip to Italy presented itself and I was able to get to know the Company of Saint Angela of **Turin**. I attended the retreat and got to know other sisters: Giuseppina, Rina, Carmela, Maria and all the other sisters. Upon my return to Peru, I continued to deepen and learn more and more (through the Internet), dialoguing with the Directress Nelly about the life of Saint Angela and the Company.



For reasons of work, in June 2019 I moved to Spain, where I live and work as an assistant to the elderly, in **Almería**.

In this country I met the Sisters of Mary Reparatrix and established a beautiful friendship of collaboration with them.

At their place I teach Spanish to foreigners from Morocco. Also, thanks to the Sisters, I have a place for prayer, for times of adoration before the Lord and for my retreats.

Thanks to my work with the elderly I also met Don Andre, who used to visit the woman I was caring for. The Directress Nelly Romero sent a proxy to Don André so that he could receive my first consecration on her behalf and on behalf of the Company, in the chapel of his house. It was a beautiful day of great emotion and much happiness.



I thank the Lord that he is always with me and his Providence never fails



me. I have full trust in him and in all those he places in my path.

On February 4, 2023, in Spain, I renewed my consecration for three years into the hands of Directress Nelly. My formation directress Carla was also present. I ask to continue the journey *with a great and yearning heart.*

Georgina Barrientos Lisbona – Company of Turin

Company of Burundi

A Beautiful Witness of Life and of Company...

A welcoming red land; colors, flavors, smells different from those we know; people always on the move without the



nagging of time; the joy of living, though without the comforts we are used to; lack of work for many people: these are some of the aspects I saw, with Valeria and Kate, from April 11 to 16 in two cities in Burundi. I “saw” but certainly cannot say “I know,” because there were too few days available and too few places visited!



The only major drawback for me: not knowing

the language and not being able to communicate directly. Fortunately, we had an exceptional translator, Don Alexis, who accompanied us every moment of our stay. My/our THANK YOU to him and to Pascaline, who sought him out and found him.

The Burundian sisters spent the night before the Assembly in prayer to ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit on their journey, which began the following afternoon with the roll call of those present, divided into their groups. It was interesting for me to see how the groups, which currently number 27, work, some consisting of a few people, others more numerous. I thought I could already see the possible Italian Company!

After a day of training, the next morning Pascaline, outgoing Directress, presented her report, covering the six years of her past term, and the treasurer presented the financial report.



Then, after the reading of the articles of the Constitutions that covered this time, the voting began. There were a few proxies for a total of 223 eligible voters.

Pascaline was re-elected with 189 “yes” votes on the first ballot. I would say that this outcome showed the Company’s satisfaction with the result of her great commitment to the Company, overcoming the inevitable difficulties and opposition.

We then proceeded to the vote on the Vice-directress, who for the next six years will be



Justine. Then began the longest period, which kept the tellers working late into the night. Since 11 councilors were to be elected, the counting was very challenging.

It all ended with a solemn Mass of thanksgiving, presided over by the special secretary of the Bishop of Gitega, Fr. Boniface. Finally, after dinner, there was an evening of celebration with singing and dancing.

I feel a great esteem for Pascaline and what she is able to do for her Company, both as human promotion and as formation for life and for consecrated life. Some steps still remain to be taken to fully understand and live secularity, but the road begun seems to me to be the right one. Thus the Company needs sisters who can form themselves by studying, without the fear of creating divisions between "those who have culture and those who do not," because there are different ways of responding to the call. In formation in those days, the term "culture" was used quite a lot to say that culture is given by school or university, but it is also given by life.

A big thank you to the Burundian sisters for the witness of their lives and to the Federation, that offered this interesting experience.

Maria Rocca

The Path of the Company of Burundi...

From my several trips to Burundi I have noticed a gradually more Merician path, which I'll try to trace in this summary:

- They were a group of about 300 people, called "Bene Angela": men and women. The founder, Fr. Peter Nkundwa, started this group on St. Lucy's Day, December 13, 1956
- The members of this group desired to live for the Lord, prayed, lived in their environment, did charity and assistance, loved St. Angela Merici although they did not know her charism and spirituality. They longed for ecclesial recognition; they considered themselves religious. They were not clear what a secular institute might be. Even less did they know what it meant to have and observe Constitutions.
- The Founder had given them norms. Father Modesto (an Italian missionary who accompanied the group and then the Company) made both the Founder and the Bishop aware of the Company as a recognized secular institute.

- The Archbishop of Gitega, Most Rev. Simone Ntamwana, came to Italy in 2007 to one of our conferences, presenting and asking for the reception of the "Bene Angela" in our Institute. The Holy See was approached, which clarified that they do not welcome groups as groups into an Institute. We needed to evaluate vocations and begin specific formation.
- At that point, since it is a women's institute for us, only women begin a course. Some men in the group would later become associated with the Company. Over time some left and some began formation. First consecrations of 37 Bene Angela took place in 2012. They became a Group dependent on the Federation Council.
- Two sisters (Pascalina and Paolina) come to Italy, welcomed by the Company of Trent to learn Italian and understand Company life.
- St. Angela's Writings and the Constitutions were translated into Kirundi.
- Many years of travels to Burundi and formation according to the Constitutions of the Company have sought to clarify as we go along the identity of our specific vocation, the demands of this form of consecrated life in the world, and its commitments and responsibilities. This formation is not taken for granted and is not finished.
- The Company Burundian was recognized in 2017 (first autonomous government). In 2023 (April 14) the second election of the directress and her council took place. The Company currently has about 250 members, including those consecrated and probationary sisters.
 - ❖ **Organization:** good, already preset before becoming a Company. Regular meetings, group leaders and formators.
 - ❖ **Growth in numbers:** now about 250 members.
 - ❖ **Responsibility and leadership:** good leadership by the re-elected Directress, Pascaline. Also the Assembly was well prepared in every aspect.
 - ❖ **They still want to improve by committing themselves....**
 - To a greater knowledge of the charism:** emphasizing secularity for an Institute of Consecrated Life in the world and Merician spirituality.

To deepen an understanding of our codes of holiness, the Writings of St. Angela and the Constitutions.

To intensify formation on the personal, group and Company levels: specific formation according to our charism and spirituality.

To aim for a **global formation**, through study and knowledge of languages (Italian and French); improve formation professional too, for one's work and livelihood.

Greater responsibility and co-responsibility: all participating and involved.

To maintain and consolidate relations with the Federation: writing, communicating, feeling part of this extended family at the service of the Companies, that is, the Federation, with its task of safeguarding unity and charismatic fidelity.

In summary, the Burundi Company presents itself as:

A happy Company, willing to grow in the charism and in suitable formation; a good Council has been elected, with new elements; they are happy to be in the Federation.

And we are happy with you dear sisters... May you continue well ...

all attentive, with great and longing hearts!

Kate

Glad to be brides of Christ and daughters of St. Angela...

Testimony of Fr. Alexis BAVUGAMENSHI,
priest of the Diocese of Muyinga in Burundi, Professor and formator
at St. John Paul II Theological Major Seminary in Gitega

Five days spent together with the sisters of the Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici of Burundi: here are vacation days truly well spent. Alongside the Assistant, Rev. Fr. Joseph, I was associated with the national gathering of the Company held in Gitega, April 10-15, 2023, primarily as an Italian-Kirundi-French translator.



A delegation from the Federation Council, consisting of sisters Kate, Maria, and Valeria, was present to

attend the Assembly, which was aimed at renewing the Company of Burundi and organizing elections for a new government. The first strong impression for me was meeting and getting acquainted with the three members of the Federation Council, all outstanding people, one better than the other. From the reception at the international airport in Bujumbura, we seemed to have known each other for a long time. In fact, two of them were coming to Burundi for the umpteenth time. Maria, who was coming for the first time, was delighted with the experience, which reminded her, as she often said, of her missionary experience in Brazil.



The second impressive time for me was the Assembly itself. In the hall were more than two hundred sisters, from very young to elderly of a certain age, some with

severe mobility difficulties. They gave me the impression of well-motivated people, glad to be truly "brides of Christ" and "daughters of Saint Angela Merici," and to be participating in the event.

They are simple people, without much education, but really convinced of their vocation rooted in holy Baptism. In the wings, I could also notice an impeccable logistical organization, the work of so many sisters and friends who collaborated in the preparations for the conference, of course under the leadership of the Directress Pascaline, to whom my sincere thanks go for associating me with this historic event in the annals of the Company of St. Angela of Burundi. As proof of her leadership competence, she has been re-elected to a second term for the next six years as Directress of the Company. To her, to the Vice-Directress and to the entire Council go my sincere best wishes for a fruitful apostolate among the sisters. My participation in the Assembly again made me sure that



we never cease to learn: the days spent with the Bene Angela sisters allowed me to update myself on the reality of consecrated secular life. The sisters themselves expressed so much desire to clarify their specific identity, since some of them just invincibly confused consecrated secular life and religious life. The answers given by the Italian delegation to the questions as well as the various teachings, including by the bishop's secretary, Rev. Fr. Bonifacio, clarified well the concept of consecrated secular life and the necessity and importance of secular life in the Church and in the world. "Our task," said the priest, demonstrating with his gestures, "is to be salt and leaven in the world. We do not need titles; our baptismal dignity and our consecration are enough for us to bring to maturity the seed planted by St. Angela Merici."

It was pleasing to have the statue of St. Angela venerated in the hall during the days of the Assembly. It is



now placed in the little chapel of the Company of Burundi's St. Angela House.



"Last but not least," infinite thanks to the Lord for the close friendship with the Bene Angela of Burundi and the sisters delegated by the Council of the Federation. I renew my promise of fervent prayer for the Institute, and also my availability for however I can help in case of necessity.

Don Alexis Bavugamenshi

***Persevere faithfully and joyfully
in the work you have begun...***

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