

*In the same charism*

*with responsibility*



**n. 1 - 2024**

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

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## TO THE READERS

### 2024 Ferry...

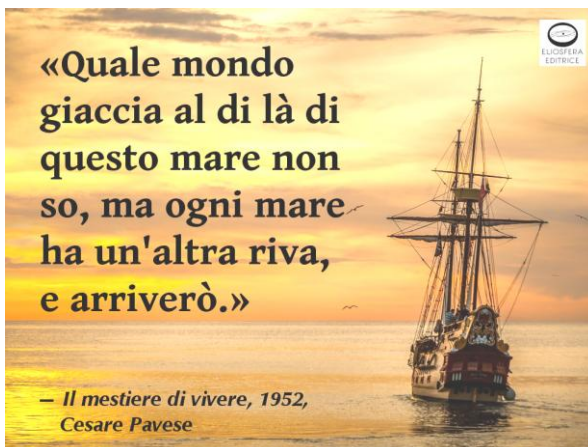
- **1544-2024 = 480<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of the confirmation of the **Company of Saint Ursula** by Pope Paul III, with the Bull “Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae.”
- **1994-2024 = 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the approval** of the Constitutions of the **Company of Saint Ursula Secular Institute of Saint Angela Merici** by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (after the experimental Constitutions)
- **Italian Companies ... toward a single Company.**
- **2018-2024 = The six-year term of the Council of the Federation concludes.**

**A year of crossings from... – to... toward where... ???**

### To Ferry: How? With Whom?

Figuratively speaking, “to ferry” means to enable a change, to facilitate and accompany a passage from one situation to another that is different, from one shore to another.

In thinking about our ferrying, I like to think of Jesus' crossing with his disciples (Luke 8:22-25).



**Let's go to the other shore...**

*One day he got into a boat with his disciples and said to them, “Let us cross to the other side of the lake.” So they set sail.*

So also for the Companies: it happened

in one of the days of one of these years of the third millennium, to do some new thinking. Not to change people, not to seek an earthly paradise, but simply to make a hope-filled passage.

This passage could perhaps also be made with a longer ride, without ferrying, without crossing... but the Gospel tells us about a lake, tells us to cross, to go that way.

So also as Companies, as a federated Institute, we must have the courage to face the situation, to trust, to cross.

**It is not a solitary crossing, but in company, *united together*.** In this crossing Jesus also puts himself in a boat with his disciples. Then, with Him, it is worth taking to the sea.

We don't even know quite where this ferrying will take us, but we set out together with Jesus; we know we are with Him. **Let us not remain fearful on our shore, let us not get stuck.**

Surely St. Angela is with us with the *Lover of us all* and would repeat again today, "*And if, according to times and circumstances, the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice*" (Last Legacy 2).

**Situations and dangers are not avoided, but overcome....**

*While they were sailing he fell asleep. A squall blew over the lake, and they were taking in water and were in danger.*

It is not that Jesus' presence makes us avoid the dangers of the sea, just as it does not make us avoid the storm. Sometimes it seems that Jesus is not even there. Is he asleep?

But the Lord is there. Let us not be overwhelmed by fear. **Let us make the passage of faith** that often arises precisely from need.

St. Angela has also told us, "*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*" (Prologue to the Rule 19).

*"However, my very own sisters, you must not be afraid of this.... I have this **undaunted and firm** faith and hope in the infinite divine goodness, that not only will we easily overcome all dangers and adversities, but we will conquer them, and with great glory and jubilation"*(Prologue to the Rule 22; 25).

### The plea for intervention...

They approached him and woke him up, saying, *"Master, master, we are perishing!"*



We have something to learn from the disciples in the Gospel.

In their fear they managed to rely on the Lord who was asleep. They knew He was in the boat, and they knew how to address an invocation, a prayer, a supplication to him.

**It takes faith, it takes prayer...** We would be lost if, in our approach to human situations, we did not know how to turn to the Lord who is present on our boat, on our ferry. He knows that we will get to the other shore, but we sometimes doubt....

### Where is our faith?

*He awakened, rebuked the wind and the waves, and they subsided and there was a calm. Then he asked them, "Where is your faith?"*

Of course the Lord is able to bring back calm, but perhaps the real danger to the disciples was not the waves and the wind, but the lack of faith.

Perhaps Jesus would have wanted the disciples to have trusted his word by faith, to have believed that they were safe, rather than asking him to save them. Our lives are often complicated. In the face of danger, in the face of difficulties, when our faith begins to fail, we should not insist on the Lord doing something, but we should trust the Lord.

It occurs to me to emphasize and conclude with St. Angela's trust: *"Believe it, do not doubt, have firm faith that it will be so"* (Last Legacy 9-11).

*"Be consoled and have a lively faith and hope"* (Last Counsel 26).

With the Lord's presence, with faith in Him, with St. Angela's confidence... let us board our ferry and put out to sea.

Kate

## ***I Remind You to Stir into Flame the Gift of God that You Have***

(2Timothy1:6)



### **Valeria Broll - President of the Federation**

Come Like a father, like a teacher, like a witness, St. Paul feels an urgency to get this recommendation to his friend Timothy: *"I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have."*

Let us also be touched by this Word, let us hear it addressed directly to us.

**Stir into flame:** give new impetus, give new life, re-launch what by Grace we have become in **Baptism:** God's daughters.

In Jesus, Son of God and our brother, we have become part of his family, we are family members of God.

**I remind you:** St. Paul reminds Timothy of what he is, (son of God) of what he carries within him (God himself, his Word, his Presence, his Imprint, his Life).

This recommendation of Paul leads us to recognize and let our gaze rest on the gifts of Faith, Hope and Charity that the Lord has freely delivered to each of us on the day of our Baptism.

This gift, continually enlivened by the Holy Spirit in us, led us to take **the path of consecrated secularity in the Institute of St. Angela Merici.**

For us the Company of St. Ursula was the place where we discovered faces and hearts in love with God and the world.

Jesus, who became a human being to share our human condition totally, was that Treasure that made it worthwhile to let ourselves be captured by his beauty and follow him. Where? How? "Come and see."

All he needs is our willingness to take the road with him and see that his ways lead wherever there is a brother, sister, family member, little one, poor person like me, to get to know, to stand by, to love, to take care of, to make a way together.

This gift has been given to us **for a mission:** *to serve the Kingdom and its growth in history. In our family and in our profession, in the civil and ecclesial communities, and in our every activity and endeavor, we will keep alive our hope for heaven, where Jesus lives at the right of the Father* (Constitutions 22.2-3).



This mission involves facing one another and living together because **together we have been called to serve "His divine Majesty..."**

Paul encourages and reminds Timothy that God has not given us a Spirit of timidity, but of strength, love and wisdom.

And St. Angela tells us: *May the strength and true consolation of the Holy Spirit be in you all* (Prologue to the Counsels). *Obey the counsels and inspirations which the Holy Spirit continually sends into the heart, ... who teaches us every truth* (Rule Ch. VIII 14-16).

Here is the engine of mission, here is the protagonist, the creator of every project, of every process to generate the new and always remain open to life – the Holy Spirit.

**Our mission:** *"Wherever we are, we will try to be builders of peace; we will be open to the needs of our sisters and brothers ... and will serve him lovingly and gently in each human being.... Our behavior will be judicious and meek, edifying and of good example for all whom we meet; our words will be "wise and measured, not sharp, not harsh, but human and conducive to harmony and charity"* (Constitutions 22.3).

St. Angela, desires women who reflect what they have encountered: *Jesus Christ, sweet and kind Spouse, only Teacher, good Shepherd.*

Women who, like Mary and from Mary, *will learn to progress in faith ... in order to be faithful always, like her* (Constitutions 16).

Women who know how to listen: *And above all, to obey the counsels and inspirations which the Holy Spirit continually sends into the heart* (Rule Ch. 8:14).

Women who are capable of unity: *having charity always burning in our hearts* (Rule Ch. 9:22). *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 10).

Women true and committed in the midst of change: *If, according to times and circumstances, the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice* (Last Legacy 2).

Fearless, strong and courageous women: *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.... Be attentive, with great and longing heart* (Prologue to the Rule 19-32).

Open women: Let her *put all her wealth and love and delight not in material things ... not in herself, nor in any of her own attributes and knowledge, but in God alone, and in the kind and ineffable providence that is his alone* (Rule, Ch. 10:9-13).

Women of prayer: Let them *together remain in prayer with as much strength of spirit as possible* (Rule, Ch. 4:15), *solicitous about prayer, mental as well as vocal* (Rule Ch. 5:1).

Let us entrust ourselves to the Spirit and with humility renew our commitment to be in the world, *all of one heart and will*, harmonious in goodness and bound with bonds of charity.

The Holy Spirit, at times a gentle breeze, at times a rushing wind, at times a light that illuminates, at times a fire that burns invites us all to set sail and confront the new that is advancing.

The fear that sometimes grips us will give way to Hope. May the fatigue and suffering that catch us on the way not distract us from casting our hearts and gaze on the Word who reminds us of God's action in our lives: *"Every branch in me that bears fruit my Father prunes so that it bears more fruit"* (John 15:2).



United and in harmony, let us continually give our thanks to the One who has granted us *such a singular gift* (Prologue to the Rule 5).

Valeria Broll

## The “Common Good” of the Company of Saint Ursula

**Mons. Rosario (Rino) La Delfa**  
**Vice-assistant of the Council**  
**of the Federation**

### **Does a “Common Good” of the Company exist?**

If we look to “The Church in the Modern World” (*Gaudium and Spes*) 26, we find this general definition: common good is “the sum of

those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready **access to their own fulfillment.**”

The expression "common good," rather than to things thus **refers to persons:** to the individual and to groups, for whom the inalienable and benevolent conditions of social life help them to reach their fulfillment.

It goes without saying that the question of whether there is a common good of the Company (even before the immediate and remote good of the individual consecrated woman) deeply concerns its social and religious aspects. There we find those vital threads in the fabric of relationships. Without relationships there can be no hope of fullness, of fulfillment, that is, the Company.

In *Brothers and Sisters All*, Pope Francis, observing today's world, laments the development of a real schism between the individual and the human community (cf. no. 30). He reminds us that we are facing a decline made up of individualism, conflicts, nationalism, and a lost social sense (cf. no. 11), in which the common good seems to be the least common of goods. In this globalized world in which the individual prevails over the communal dimension of existence (cf. n. 12), and most people are reduced to the role of consumers or spectators, the strongest are favored. It is the throw-away culture (cf. nn. 19-20), a culture of death in which "people are no longer felt to be a primary value to be respected and protected, especially if they are poor or disabled, if they are ‘not yet needed’ – such as the unborn – or ‘no longer needed’ – such



as the elderly" (Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See-January 11, 2016).

Against this drift of death, the saying that John 6:39 attributes to Jesus, identifying his mission, resonates: "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of what he has given me, but raise it up at the last day," meaning the whole of humanity as the good that unites the Father and the Son in his mission. The same Gospel (Jn 18:9) emphasizes how, surrendering himself to his death when he was captured in Gethsemane, Jesus asked that his disciples be left free from death, "So that the word he had said might be fulfilled, 'I have lost none of those whom you have given me.'"

Membership in St. Angela's Company represents one of the certainly distinctive ways of consciously welcoming, embracing and cherishing the sisterhood reconciled by Jesus in his mission through communion and closeness with one's sisters.

This is the common good of St. Angela's Company. Within it, **consecrated women in spousal union with Christ accept together and individually the apostolic mandate to witness to the Gospel**, which always has as its purpose the generative fruitfulness of a people (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:15). They know that they guard it on behalf of the One to whom it belongs, for it was purchased at great cost. At the heart of their belonging to the Company is the commitment to regenerate and animate its inner relational and vital fabric with the power of the Gospel.

In *Brothers and Sisters All*, having the whole of human society as the background of the Church's mission, Francis calls this attitude by a broad term "**social friendship**," by which to combine rights with responsibility for the common good, diversity with the recognition of radical brotherhood and sisterhood. The expression was used in most of Pope Francis' speeches in Cuba in September 2015.

However, it is not a purely social task of solidarity. In the Company, one learns to discern the proposal of the Gospel that goes far beyond solidarity to touch the most intimate chords of being human. In the Message to the President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (2019), the pope states, "While solidarity is the social planning principle that allows unequal people to become equals, brotherhood/sisterhood is what allows equals to be different people."

What is at stake in this distinction is truly decisive for the life of a Company. Francis will say, "**Heaven willing, in the end there may be no more 'others,' but only a 'we'!**" (no. 35). Solidarity is based on the concept of otherness and marks distance; brotherhood/sisterhood unites differences and suppresses distances. In this sense we speak of "closeness."

By going beyond oneself, closeness does not risk being reduced to a process of homogenization in which everyone tends to be the same, but is revealed as a process of surprising distinctiveness, in which **closeness manifests the uniqueness of each in the concert of brotherly/ sisterly unity.** Concisely, the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, No. 139, warns that to love authentically, "We need to free ourselves from feeling that we all have to be alike."

In *Brothers and Sisters All*, Francis says, "Love, then, is more than just a series of benevolent actions" (No. 94); it promotes brothers/sisters, not business partners. Those who are capable only of being partners create closed worlds.

### **The four kinds of closeness that a Merician Company can cultivate**

Closeness follows God's style, which basically is a style of closeness (cf. Deuteronomy 4:7). He himself defines himself this way to the people: "**For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the LORD, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him?**"

#### **A necessary premise**

A consecrated woman's life in the Company is first and foremost **the salvation story of a baptized person.** Sometimes the consecrated woman forgets that what constitutes her fundamental relationship with God is her Baptism; in doing so, she runs the risk of living her membership and role in the Company as if it were a **function.**



It should never be forgotten that every specific vocation, including Merician espousal, is **a fulfillment of Baptism.** The greatest temptation of a consecrated woman is to live a *consecration without*

*Baptism*, that is, without the awareness that our first call to holiness is baptismal.

The consecrated woman, like the Church, must grow in awareness of her permanent **need to be evangelized**. For many consecrated women this often constitutes a paradox.

The truth is that God's choice of those he calls (in whatever state) **does not come from an ideal option but from a concrete commitment** of each one to others. Each vocation **unveils in the one who is called that potential for Love** that we received on the day of our Baptism and directs that potential toward a specific good of the community.

This accounts for the fact that **for consecrated women and their Company the common good entrusted to them is the Church**, that People of God on whose behalf they intend to invest their love in the form of vigilant care and a closeness that makes God's nearness shine through to other.

### The first is closeness to God

Closeness to the Lord of closeness.

**"I am the vine, you are the branches"** – "remain" – "Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. **If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you**" (Jn. 15:5-7).

The Johannine simile of the vine and the branches expresses the relationship established by the mandate to prophesy. Indeed, consecrated life is itself prophecy. From this intimate communion the consecrated person draws all the necessary strength for her witness of life. The relationship with God is, so to speak, the graft that keeps us within a **bond of fruitfulness**. Without a meaningful relationship with



the Lord, the spousal relationship with Christ, something at the heart of Merician spirituality and charism is destined to become sterile.

Closeness to Jesus, contact with his Word, allows us to **compare our lives with his** and to learn how to guard against "scandals." As was the case with the Master, we will go through moments of joy, of miracles and healings, of multiplication of loaves and rest; moments when we will be praised, but also hours of ingratitude, rejection, doubt and loneliness, to the point of having to say, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" (Mt 27:46).

This way of being grafted in keeps the spiritual life from being reduced to mere religious practice.

**Spiritual life is one thing; religious practice is quite another.**

Without the intimacy of prayer, of spiritual life, of concrete closeness to God through listening to the Word, Eucharistic communion, the silence of adoration, the entrustment to Mary, the wise accompaniment of a guide, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, without these concrete forms of "closeness," a consecrated person risks becoming just the inert cog in a machine that turns in circles. One must lay down the "doing" of Martha to learn the "being" of Mary.

A consecrated woman must have a heart "enlarged" enough to make room for the pain of the people entrusted to her, especially her sisters in the Company, and, at the same time, as a sentinel, announce the dawn of God's grace, manifested precisely in that pain.

## **The second is closeness to the leaders**

It passes through obedience. St. Angela's rule is particularly sensitive to this theme, which it develops in an original and deeply evangelical way. Obedience is listening to one's conscience enlightened by the Word of God and formed in conversation, listening and, in some cases, even tension with those in charge of the Company, but always **in fidelity to the shared "common good."** Obedience thus is not a disciplinary



attribute but the **strongest characteristic of the bonds that unite us in communion**. It is the bridge that creates the specific relationship with authority and, through that, with the Church. Obedience is listening to the life-giving will of God that is discerned and implemented precisely in a bond.

### The third is closeness among the sisters in the Company



This is the closeness that weaves and strengthens the **true and proper sisterhood of the consecrated**.

Sisterhood, like obedience, also cannot be a moral imposition external to us. **Sisterhood is deliberately choosing to seek to be holy with others and not in solitude**. It

means charging ourselves with the task of helping others in their lives of holiness.

The characteristics of sisterhood are those of love. St. Paul, in the First Letter to the Corinthians (Ch. 13), left us a **"map" of love** and, in a sense, pointed out what sisterhood should strive for. First of all, **to learn patience, which is the ability to feel responsible for others**, to bear their burdens, to suffer in a certain sense with them. The opposite of patience is indifference, the distance we build with others in order not to feel involved in their lives. In many consecrated women there is the drama of loneliness, of feeling alone. One feels unworthy of patience, of consideration. Indeed, it seems that from the other comes judgment, not goodness, not *kindness*. The other person is incapable of rejoicing in the good that happens to us in life, or I too am incapable when I see the good in the lives of others. This inability to rejoice in the good of others, of others, is *envy*, which so plagues our circles and is a struggle in the pedagogy of love, not simply a sin to be confessed.

To feel part of the community, of "being us," there is no need to wear masks that offer only a winning image of us. That is, we do not

need to **boast**, nor do we need to **puff ourselves up** or, even worse, take violent attitudes, **disrespecting** those around us. For a consecrated woman, if she has anything to boast about, it is solely of the Lord's mercy that she should boast. Sisterly love does **not seek its own interest**, does not leave room for **anger**, resentment, as if the sister next to me had somehow defrauded me of something. And when I encounter the misery of the other, I am willing **not to remember forever the evil received**, not to make it the sole criterion of judgment, even to the point of perhaps **enjoying injustice** when it concerns the very one who made me suffer. True love **takes pleasure in the truth** and considers it a grave sin to attack the truth and dignity of sisters through slander, backbiting, gossip.

#### **The fourth closeness, the last, is closeness to the People of God**

We must start from the realization that it is for each of us **not a duty but a grace**. Mission is a passion for Jesus but, at the same time, it is a passion for his people:

A Company should be a Church in miniature and therefore act for the growth of the whole Church. A certain way of living separate from the rest of the Church is a perversion because it is constituted on "distances." This is bizarre: not closeness, but the opposite.

This fourth type manifests itself in a style of **closeness, compassion and tenderness**, in the manner of the Good Samaritan, who recognizes the wounds of his people, the suffering lived in silence, the self-sacrifice and sacrifices of so many fathers and mothers struggling to keep their families going, and the consequences of violence, corruption and indifference, which always suffocate the hopes of the little ones.



*Don Rino La Delfa*

## Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart Relationships and Spirit - *Holy Obedience*

### Responsibility, Relationships: Chapter XI *On Governance*

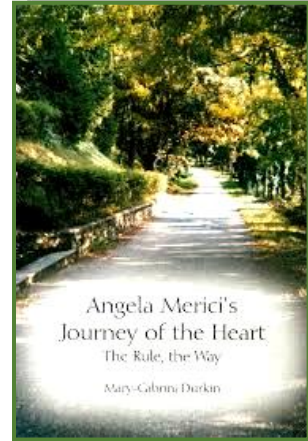
Angela lists various sources of wise guidance, for example, the people responsible for guiding the Company, which Angela saw as a spiritual family. We know little of Angela's early family life, where her attitudes related to obedience and to family may have been formed. The Counsels and Testament may hold clues. There she consistently uses familial imagery in speaking of the Company: sisters, mothers, even fathers.

The familial model that emerges, especially in the Rule's chapter "About Governance," is marked by the principle of subsidiarity. That is, matters should be handled as much as possible by those directly involved, not passed up and down a chain of command. Those closest to a situation have responsibility for it. Others assist according to their special competence.

(The following description of the Company's governance model refers to Angela's original conception, as outlined in the Rule. With time, many changes took place.)

First and foremost, each member of the Company is responsible for her own life. She makes her own decisions. Special roles of leadership emerge to handle special needs, but not to control the women's activities. For example, the members elect neighborhood leaders, the *colonelle*, to be *teachers and guides in the spiritual life* (Ch. XI:4). Colonelle have no power over the members entrusted to their guidance but assist those who face difficulties.

Another group, the *widowed matrons*, also consists of



elected leaders (Ch. XI:2). Their function is to manage the affairs of the Company as a whole—shared activities—administering any income the Company may receive. They support Ursulines who need help in conflicts with family members or employers. They guide members in practical matters, providing instruction and correction when necessary. They make decisions about matters affecting the whole Company. Their decisions have the authority of loving concern, which Angela describes as motherly. But, she says, *not...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).

All is invitational. The dynamic is anything but hierarchical. *Colonelle* and *matrons* work together to resolve difficulties which are beyond the resources of either group alone.

### Concern, Respect, Trust

Even less is the Company patriarchal. Angela provides that *four mature men* function as *agents* on behalf of the Company, with the loving concern of *fathers* (Ch. XI:3, 6). When problems require legal or business expertise, the *matrons* enlist the assistance of the *four mature men*, also elected by the members. The men are to represent the Ursulines in spheres of law and business to which women did not usually have access. The distinctive “fatherly” quality is loving concern, not control. This perspective was quite unusual in the culture.

Does the Company’s dynamic indicate that Angela grew up in a family that functioned with mutual respect and cooperation? Perhaps that is how she learned so early to trust herself. Trust became her hallmark. She trusted her own—and other women’s—capacity to make sound decisions. She created a Company based on mutual trust and collaboration.

Listening to the *governors of the Company* is an important avenue of the Spirit’s guidance on issues related to the Company and to one’s living of the Rule. Respecting and cooperating with their authority shows that *one’s own will* has expanded to include the common good.

Clearly, Angela is talking about relationships. *Holy obedience* may ultimately focus on God, but we live it in the web of life, a web

woven of relationships. Authentic openness to God leads us to be open to others.

How true this is in the home, especially! Chapter VIII counsels obedience to *fathers and mothers, and other household superiors*, who might be relatives or employers or supervisors at work (Ch. VIII:11). Many early Ursulines lived in their family homes. If the father had died, the brother might be the head of the household, as may have been the case when Angela lived in Desenzano at the family farm through her twenties and thirties. A few older members of the Company may have rented rooms, but many members lived where they worked. Most employed women were household servants: maids, cooks, seamstresses, ladies' companions. Regardless of one's residence or job, respect and cooperation can light up the home or workplace.

In these relational settings, Angela encourages a regular practice of saying, "I'm sorry," being willing to acknowledge faults and offenses and to *ask pardon* (Ch. VIII:12). Being "right" is not so important as being in right relationship. The person who is always in the right is indeed blind and deaf to her own truth. That is the person who cannot see the bright light of *holy obedience*. She cannot hear the Spirit's voice.

### Unjust Authorities

So often, though, human authorities are domineering, unjust or abusive! What can we do in oppressive situations? If holy obedience is not about doing-as-you're-told, what alternatives are there?

Complying with injustice or abuse is definitely not *holy obedience*! This is where the Rule directs the Company to step in, just as when a woman seeks to join. Chapters I, III and XI identify situations where community leaders might be needed to support an Ursuline whose family or employer was bringing pressures contrary to her vocation, her safety, or justice in her economic interests.

In Chapter XI, "About Governance," Angela directs the *colonelle* to visit the Ursulines of their neighborhoods twice a month. One reason for these visits is *to check whether [her] household superiors may be abusive in any way or may want to hinder [her] from some sort of good or pressure [her] into some danger of evil* (Ch. XI:9-12). The *colonella* tried to help the member work out a way of handling

it. If that was not successful, the *colonella* presented the problem to the council composed of *colonelle* and matrons. Often a matron could help work it out. She brought a certain influence to bear with a parent or employer, influence that unmarried and poor women did not have. If the situation required confronting a powerful person or involved business or legal transactions, the matrons or men were called in, depending on the problem (Ch. XI:13, 14).

So obeying *household superiors*, or any other human beings, is not absolute. Listening, respecting, cooperating, and—yes—obeying the just exercise of authority and responsibility: these serve the relationships and the common good. These habits may well be ways to obey God’s will.

That is true for civil government, too, *the laws and statutes of the Lords and the governors of the republics* (Ch. VIII:13). Respect, cooperation, the common good. And the light of discernment to direct our actions.

### **Discerning the Voice of the Holy Spirit**

Discerning freedom of choice, situated realistically in a family and society, was a prerequisite of Ursuline membership. The very process of choosing this life requires the ability to claim one’s inner authority and be responsible for one’s decisions. Angela tells women, even young women, so accustomed to conforming their whole lives to the instructions of outer authorities, that they can *continually* hear *the counsels and inspirations* of the Holy Spirit within their hearts (Ch. VIII:14). Obedience requires that they continue to listen for God’s voice.

Discernment again! The Holy Spirit is always inspiring our hearts, always counseling us, Angela insists. It could be easy, then, to jump to the conclusion that “Whatever I decide to do is right!” But it is not so simple. So far, Angela has explained the importance of outward listening to the voices in our world. Now she discusses inner listening to the Spirit. Just because a thought comes to mind, that fact does not necessarily mean that it is the Spirit’s voice. There are other voices inside us, too.

### **True and False Voices**

Voices from our past life ring in our ears. Family members have crafted the lens through which we see ourselves and others. Their words of love or esteem or scorn or brutality or suspicion or generosity still echo in us. Since some parents think little of their daughters, many women have little sense of their dignity. Perhaps as a corrective, Angela emphasizes *what a new and wondrous dignity this [vocation] is* (Pr.:8). “[S]o noble a flock,” she tells the matrons (Prologue to the Testament:19), and “[Y]ou must esteem them,” she instructs the *colonelle* (Prologue to the Counsels:9).

Society’s values are also inside us. Some may strengthen our spirits, but others are far from God. In Brescia, for example, vengeance was a powerful motive, often disguised as honor. We know how Angela influenced Filippo Sala and Francesco Martinengo, who were prepared to duel to the death under the influence of that false value. If we are honest, we recognize that our own nature is infected with sinful tendencies. Selfishness of all sorts speaks loudly. We often act out of pride or fear or acquisitiveness or self-indulgence or anger. That is a false obedience.

Be clear on this. In any situation, we will choose to act or not to act. We will obey. The question is whether we will obey God or something else. Will we obey our conscience or our compulsions? Discerning the difference is a lifelong process. We have to work at it. How are we to hear what God is saying through multiple, fallible voices?

A person who listens is no longer wrapped tightly in the narrow limits of the self which, all alone, is *like a murky hell*. She has opened herself, and in her heart has shone that *great light*. Wise guidance helps us to sort out conflicting voices. Experienced people shed light on our situation.

Mary-Cabrini Durkin  
Company of Canada

**To be continued....**

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

## Glimpses of “Italian Culture”

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### Nature

Italy belongs to the European continent but more exactly to Eurasia. It is a 1,200-kilometer-long peninsula shaped like a boot; in the north it is connected to the rest of Europe by the mountain range of the Alps and is traversed by the Apennine chain; it extends into the Mediterranean Sea, which laps three sides of it; and it lies between the Iberian and Balkan peninsulas.

In the enchanting chain of the Alps we find the stunning Dolomites, famous for their pink color and original shapes created by limestone rocks.



There are numerous islands, the largest being Sardinia and Sicily, but we also find many smaller ones grouped in archipelagos. Recall the small island of Lampedusa, the southern end of Italy closer to Africa than to Sicily, which is often talked about in recent years because it is the landing point for so many migrants.

Italy is rich in diverse landscapes, from the sea to lakes, plains, mountains,



volcanoes, hills and lagoons. In this variety of natural environments we find an abundance of flora and fauna with valuable biodiversity.

The Po Valley in the north is the largest, it is of alluvial origin formed by the great Po River that flows through it, the second largest plain is the Tavoliere di Puglia in the south and both are important for agriculture.

Italy is rich in rivers and lakes. Garda is the largest lake and very dear to us because in Desenzano, a town on its shores, our Saint Angela Merici was born and in Salò, a town also on the lake, she lived some important years of her youth with her maternal uncles.

In the Apennine region some lakes are of volcanic origin. Our country, in fact, is a land of volcanoes and earthquakes finding itself on the border of several tectonic plates. In Sicily we find Mount Etna, the highest active volcano on the Eurasian plate.

*The climate* of our country is strongly influenced by the sea, which is a beneficial reservoir of heat and moisture, determining the so-called Mediterranean climate.

## **The Population**

With more than 60 million inhabitants, Italy is the fourth most populous country in the European Union and has a population density of 201.1 inhabitants per square kilometer. The population, concentrated mainly in coastal and flat areas, is characterized by a high number of elderly people, a low birth rate but a life expectancy of 79.1 years for men and 84.3 for women (among the top countries in the world for life expectancy).

Since 2001, the number of residents has increased and most of the children born have foreign parents.

### **New citizens**

The long period (1860-1970) of Italians emigrating abroad had just ended when, from the mid-1970s and in the following decades, Italy became an immigration country: from an exporting country to a labor-importing country.

According to the latest available data, foreigners in our country number more than 5.3 million and account for 8 percent of the national population.

They are generally employed as low-skilled labor in industry, agriculture and especially services; many, however, work as small business people. In recent years, marked by a serious economic crisis, more businesses run by foreigners than by Italians have sprung up.

### **Multiethnicity and integration**

Italy is becoming, albeit with much opposition, a multi-ethnic country, as evidenced not only by the presence in our territory of as many as 196 different ethnic groups, but also by the increasing number of mixed marriages and the inclusion in all levels of the school system of a growing number of pupils of nationalities other than Italian. The transition from mono-ethnic to multi-ethnic country still leads to problems of integration.

### **Italy's History**

Italy has always been the center and meeting place of great civilizations. In fact, from the 11<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., the peninsula welcomed highly civilized peoples, such as the Phoenicians and Greeks, who founded prosperous colonies on its coasts.

By the Roman era we speak of Italics, Roman citizens who inhabited the peninsula, not yet Italians but already something else from their Etruscan, Celtic, Greek, Samnite, Sabine, Osce, Ligurian and Latin roots.

From the second century B.C. to the third century A.D., the *Roman Empire* subdued and politically unified the entire Mediterranean basin; to the many peoples settled on its shores (in Europe, Asia, and Africa) it transmitted the Latin language and Roman laws and also spread the great Hellenistic culture that had matured in Greece and the Near East; it also built numerous important roads that connected the different regions and fostered trade and commerce.

The great Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D. and for many centuries in Italy there were clashes between many different peoples to conquer the country.

### ***The Middle Ages***

In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. the Arabs conquered the coastal regions of North Africa, Spain and Sicily. The rapid expansion of Islam

and the spread of Arab culture caused a deep rift in the Mediterranean world.

The 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the establishment of many maritime republics. In central and northern Italy the communes, autonomous forms of city government with legal-political recognition, developed.



During this period the first universities arose, in particular the one in Bologna (1088) followed by the one in Padua (1222). Between the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Florentine painter **Giotto** launched a great artistic revolution by detaching himself from the Byzantine

style and recovering contact with reality and nature, thus paving the way for the renewal of the following centuries.

### ***The Modern Age***

Later, between the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, from some cities that were the seat of duchies, republics, and lordship-dominions (including Florence, Siena, Milan, Mantua, and Ferrara) began the cultural and artistic movement that profoundly influenced European and Western civilization.

This period is called the **Renaissance**, which means a new beginning, in this case of Italian culture, and the birth of modern culture. This period saw the development of art, architecture, literature, philosophy and science. Exceptional figures lived in these years such as the universal genius *Leonardo da Vinci* who was a painter, sculptor, scientist and engineer, and the genius *Michelangelo Buonarroti*, who was a distinguished sculptor, painter, and architect.

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In *the field of science*, Florentine scientist **Galileo Galilei** (1564-1642) revolutionized scientific procedures with the introduction of the scientific method; for this he is considered *the father of modern science*.

The Italian peninsula remained politically divided among many different states for a long time yet, largely subject to foreign rule.

### ***The Contemporary Age***

The increasingly widespread aspiration for national unity gave rise in the first decades of the nineteenth century to the revolutionary uprisings and wars of the Risorgimento. They led to the birth of the Italian state.

In 1861 the Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed under the Savoy monarchy.

The modernization of society was slow. It was not until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that an industrial base was established; but the phase of economic expansion did not resolve the deep imbalances that already existed between the North and South of the country. Political-territorial unification was completed in 1919-24, after the end of World War I, with the annexation of Trentino-Alto Adige and Venezia Giulia.

The severe economic crisis of those years favored the rise to power of Fascism, which transformed the state in a totalitarian and centralized sense. Close ties developed with Nazi Germany on whose

side Italy entered the war in 1940, experiencing one of the most tragic periods of its history, engaged in a conflict that also turned into civil war.

After World War II, Italy became a **parliamentary republic** by referendum on June 2, 1946, and gave itself a **new democratic constitution** that came into effect on January 1, 1948.

Within Italy's borders are: the **Republic of San Marino** and the **Vatican state**.

The former is one of the oldest republics in the world, while the Vatican is the heart of the Roman Catholic Church with the seat of the Pope. It is a city-state at the center of the capital, Rome.

Italy was **one of the founding countries of the European Union** since as far back as 1951, when economic cooperation began; it has been a member of the euro zone since 1999 and adopted the euro in 2002.

Regarding **religion**, in 2021 79.6% of the population declared themselves Christian (specifically 75% Catholic), 15.3% atheist or agnostic, and 5.1% professed a non-Christian religion.

## Culture

Italy is, without a doubt, synonymous with art and history. Artistic beauty is everywhere, and every corner of the country holds wonderful surprises. Ours is one of the greatest artistic-cultural heritages in the world. Besides representing art and music in all their forms, Italy is the cradle of the operatic tradition.

Italian culture is also world renowned for *literature*. We cannot fail



to mention **Dante Alighieri** (1265-1321) author of the Divine Comedy who is considered the father of the Italian language. We would like to recall here his hymn to the Virgin which we also find in the Liturgy of the Hours as a Marian hymn: *"O Virgin Mother, daughter of your son,/ most humble, most exalted of all creatures/ chosen of God in His eternal plan,/ you are the one who ennobled human nature,/ to the extent that He did not disdain,/ who was its Maker, to make Himself man"* (Paradise, Canto XXXIII, trans. Mark Musa). Myths, theology, astrology, linguistics, politics, philosophy are all encapsulated in this timeless masterpiece.

Special mention should also go to **Alessandro Manzoni** (1785-1873) one of the greatest Italian writers of all time, famous for his novel *I Promessi Sposi*, in which he develops the concept of Providence according to which, in human history as a whole and in individual events, the divine will is manifested.

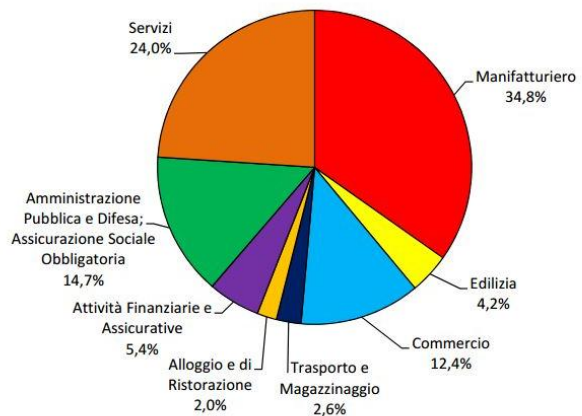


Likewise, here is what Manzoni makes the protagonists of his novel think of as they leave their beloved Land to get to safety: *"He who gave you so much joy is everywhere; and He never disturbs the joy of His children, except to prepare for them a more certain and greater one"* (Ch. 8).

In the field of law, **Cesare Beccaria** (1738-1794) with his essay 'Of Crimes and Punishments' questioned the use of torture and the death penalty and laid some fundamental foundations of modern law.

## Changes and the Economy

Today many young Italian graduates are looking abroad for job opportunities denied in our country. There are



about four and a half million Italians living abroad. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Italy was involved in many internal migrations. In fact, with the industrial recovery following World War II, there were major population shifts from the countryside to the cities and from the South to the North of the country.

In the 1990s, the Italian economic system changed and the weight of the tertiary service sector increased compared to the primary (agricultural) and secondary (industrial) sectors. The Italian economy has weaknesses such as the imbalance between northern and southern regions, the shortage of natural resources and the scarcity in funding for research.

*Tourism* is one of the most important resources, and its contribution to GDP formation approaches 10%. However, the sector needs greater enhancement of minor art centers and food and wine tourism.

### **The Industrial System: Tradition and Innovation**

After World War II, the country experienced an accelerated industrialization known as the economic boom period. During that period, “Made in Italy” became established in the world, a designation that alone is a guarantee of high quality products and has made us a world leader in luxury sectors.

The national industry consists mainly of traditional sectors that are still very productive: textiles and clothing, footwear, precision engineering, and automotive. Also very important are agribusiness and petrochemicals.

Prominent among innovative industries are aeronautics (helicopters), biomedical (artificial prosthetics) and life-saving pharmaceuticals.

Industry has the following weaknesses: small scale enterprises, insufficient investment in scientific and technological research, brain drain, and shortage of skilled workers.

### **Italian-style eating**

Cooking is an important part of Italian culture and is best known worldwide for pasta, pizza and ice cream, but the variety of its foods is much richer. Thanks to the many influences of the different peoples

who have succeeded one another on the peninsula, the number of Italian recipes is vast. It is a nutritious and healthy cuisine, mainly peasant in imprint, close to the land and its products. Italian cuisine, with its components, constitutes the so-called Mediterranean diet.

## Society

*Volunteerism* is widespread and represents a highly positive aspect of Italian society, a sign of responsibility, solidarity and care for our people.

The *Italian health care system*, free for all with regard to hospitalization, represents an advanced sign of civilization in the right to health even if many countries in the European Union surpass us in quality of services.

Regarding *education*, schooling is compulsory for the ten years ages six to sixteen. The percentage of people with a high school diploma is high, while the percentage of college graduates is lower than the European average.

Over the past fifty years, the *family* has transformed from patriarchal to nuclear; marriages have decreased, cohabitations, divorces and the number of people living alone have increased. However, family and home still represent important values and strong points of reference for us Italians.

In addition to the *social problems* already mentioned, that is, the low birth rate resulting in an aging population, the following should be mentioned: unemployment especially among young people, heavy bureaucracy and corruption.

*Claudia and sisters of the Company of Padua*

**To be continued...**



**COMPANY of SAINT URSULA**  
**488th ANNIVERSARY OF FONDATION**  
**Brescia November 25, 1535 – N ovember 25, 2023**



*"La buona et santa consuetudine di stabilir le virgini nella Compagnia di santa Orsola, nella festa di santa Catherina ogn'anno, è sta introdotta sì per memoria del felice ritorno che fece la beata Angela da Gierusalemme in Brescia in questo istesso giorno, et perché diede principio in tal giorno l'anno 1535 a questa devota Compagnia, sì ancora per excitar queste virgini all'imitatione di santa Catherina, quala (come dicono le historie) fu sposata con le proprie mani da Christo signor nostro"*  
 (dal Secondo Libro Generale)

## Compagnia di sant'Orsola

Every year for the anniversary of the birth of the Company, getting together in Brescia is a special event, just special.

Already on the train I was already anticipating the meeting with the sisters and the beauty of the day ahead. How wonderful to be with the sisters with whom you share this great, beautiful and deep spirituality.

The morning began with a visit to the eighteenth-century Queriniana Library, the most important and prestigious library in the city of Brescia, with corridors and reading rooms, one after another, in short, an evocative place to read or consult ancient books and volumes.



Everything was very interesting, especially the

explanations by Prof. Ennio Ferraglio, director of the library, "On the Merician Sources at the Queriniana Library in Brescia" and by Prof. Gianpietro Belotti of the University of Brescia, who reported on "A Difficult Legacy: The Company of St. Ursula from Bewilderment and Crisis to the Development of a Model Institutional Identity."

I am always amazed and positively astonished when, during the meetings of our Company, in addition to moments of prayer and communion, moments of history and culture are included that help me to greater personal and spiritual growth.

Meeting for lunch was a time when I got to know more about the sisters with whom I shared the table. It is good to get to know more about the different Companies scattered in different cities.

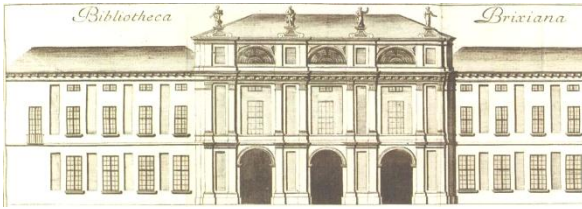
But the most intense moment, for me, was the Eucharistic celebration. I remember the feelings and emotions accompanied by a magnificent solo voice combined with the sound of the organ, that helped me savor a hint of heaven, raising and elevating the most beautiful and sweet and serene feelings to the Lord.



Thank you to all the sisters and everyone who worked to make this important day a success. Especially to the organist and the singer who gave us moments of great emotion and feeling.

*Mariella, Company of Turin*

## Library of Brescia



November 25, 2023, was special because we were given the opportunity to visit the **Queriniana Library in Brescia**: a marvel of resources, history, literature, meetings and openings, and for us, **original documents concerning the history of the Company**.



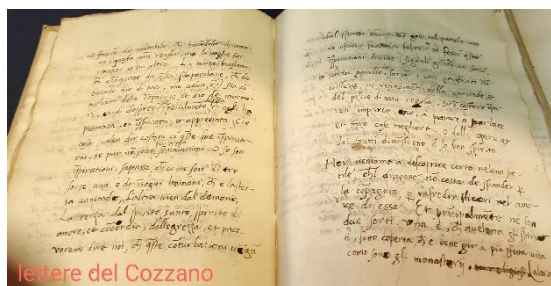
e, also provided for the construction of the building that is still its home today. It was opened to the public in 1750.

The Queriniana's holdings consist of about **600,000 printed volumes**, including ancient and modern (about 150,000 constitute the ancient collection, including 1158 ancient printed documents and 8386 from the 1500s) and **more than 10,000 manuscripts**, including codices, loose documents and epistolary materials.

Thanks to the helpfulness and friendliness of **Library Director Ennio Ferraglio**, who personally accompanied us through the spaces of

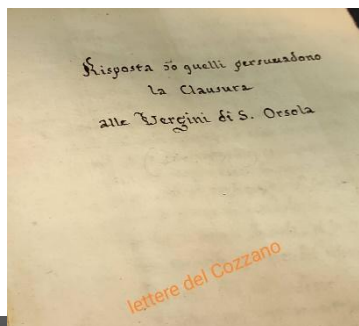
The Queriniana Library was established in 1747 by the Bishop of Brescia, Card. Angelo Maria Querini, who, in addition to establishing the library collections for public use and endowing it with sources of inc om





knowledge, we were excited and marveled at so much heritage. Not only that, but the excitement reached its peak when on a table in a room that welcomed us we found an exhibition specially set up

for us, displaying the originals of the Merician sources preserved in this very library: *the second book of the Company, the letters of Cozzano (manuscript), the Rule of Turlino, the life of Angela by Father Francesco Landini...*



The Director allowed us to touch and photograph these original texts, for us precious relics of our history and charism. He then instructed us on these sources and their contents.

Afterwards our historian, Professor **Gianpietro Belotti**, a friend of ours, of the Company and of the Library Director, entertained us with a historical report on the early years of the Company.



For this anniversary three copies of a volume containing the digitization of the **original pages of the Second Book of the Company** were prepared and given to the Superior of the Brescia Company, the President of the Federation, and the Italian Merician

Conference.

A very precious gift indeed. Heartfelt thanks.

Kate

## ***FROM THE COMPANIES AND GROUPS***

### **The Company of Indonesia**

From June 29 to July 6, the President, accompanied by Dorian La Delfa, sister of Fr. Rino (Vice-assistant to the Federation Council, unexpectedly unable to attend), visited the Company of Indonesia, which gathered in Bandung for its annual retreat, ordinary Assembly, the consecration of two members and a new admission to the probationary period.



The retreat was led by Sister Emma, Ursuline religious, initiator of the Company in Indonesia. The general theme was taken from the encyclical "Brothers and Sisters All."

The president gave a talk on Hope in the life of the daughter of St. Angela.

Don Rosario (Rino) La Delfa, gave a talk through an online connection on the theme, "The Common Good of the Daughter of Saint Angela."

At the conclusion of the retreat some young people led the liturgy. Merician spirituality was presented to them. The retreat was followed by the ordinary Assembly.

Lydia

Kidarsa, directress; Mia, vice-directress; and Yustina, Mary and Lili, counselors, were re-elected.

The President was able to experience the vibrancy of the Indonesian Company, the care for specific formation, the sharing and division of services and



responsibilities, the use of technology to foster formation, and the intense relationships which overcomes the enormous distances among the sisters scattered throughout the territory.



The Indonesian sisters are grateful for the very welcome and comforting visit of President Valeria and express gratitude for everything:

*"We give thanks for God's Providence in this national retreat from June 29 to July 3, 2023. We are very grateful for being able to feel God's loving presence in our meeting, especially for God's faithfulness in our respective vocational journeys; especially for Ganis' first consecration and Merry's consecration for life.*

*"We realize more and more that God is present and that his hand continues to work fully and wonderfully in our lives, even through events that seem ordinary and simple."*

*The Indonesian sisters*



## Nigeria



The Group of Nigeria rejoices because several sisters were welcomed into the Company on August 26, 2023.

*To God be the glory!*

## Burundi... Abundance of Vocations!

**In August 2023:**

- 26 consecrations for life
- 12 first consecrations
- 14 renewals of consecration





**Persevere faithfully and joyfully...**



## Visit to the Group of Cameroon

Last summer, from August 16 to 23, together with Joséphine Kamuabu from Belgium and Michelle Langlois, the directress of the French-Cameroon Company, we traveled to Cameroon, to Yaoundé, where our sisters reside.

We arrived at night and were welcomed with joy by Christine, Claire and Angèle. We were hosted in the Pallottine House that offered us the possibility of continuing adoration, precious moments of communion that sustained our beautiful experience.



The Cameroonian group grew out of the French Company, of which it is a part, and is composed of six members: Nathalie-Thérèse, Angèle, Elisabeth, Christine-Henriette, Ruffine and Claire. We met all of them except Ruffine, who was in France because of health problems. It was good to meet them. We felt the special presence of Marie Joséphine and Tarcille, who were important people in the Company and are now in the Company of Heaven.

We also met people searching for their vocation who approached the Company with a desire to know it. We were unable to meet aspirants Marie-Thérèse and Marie-Stella, who live in the North (Ngaoundéré) and had participated in the spiritual exercises with our sisters. Enthusiastic about the experience, they showed an interest in

entering our institute, but unfortunately they were unable to join us due to the suspension of buses coming to the capital.

We relished the joy of being together, listening to experiences, and sharing reflections on consecration and secularity in our Constitutions. It is always exciting to gather and experience the joy of living the unity of Merician spirituality; different in origin, culture, age, but united in belonging to Christ, our only Treasure.



The highlight of our stay was Claire's consecration on August 19 in the chapel of the Pallottine House. The Mass was presided over by Fr. Alix, a Pallottine priest and Assistant to the Group, and concelebrated by Fr. Ignace Assiga, a priest very close to the Company. Claire was beaming; the Group was very happy. We celebrated simply.

After Mass we shared lunch, which Claire herself had prepared, with close friends and some of Claire's family members.

An important moment in the life of the small group was its reorganization and division of the roles of delegate, training leader, cashier, secretary. Each

took on a task of responsibility.

Visits to the cathedral, Mont Fébé, the Benedictines' small museum of African art, and Don Ignace's parish to admire his agro-pastoral project enriched our experience.

Thank you to our sisters for their witness in a context that is not easy for women, for the warmth of their fraternal welcome, and for their showing interest in joining our institute; unfortunately, however, they were unable to join us due to the suspension of buses arriving in the capital.

Heartfelt thanks to Michelle and Joesphine, to the Company of France, to the Federation, and especially to the Lord for the singular gift we have received.

G.S.

## **Madagascar August 2023**

### *Loving unto Death...*

With excitement and great joy on August 4, 2023, I welcomed at the Antananarivo International Airport the Federation delegation: President Valeria Broll together with Federation Council Vice-assistant Don Raymond Nkindji Samuangala and Tonina Rocca of the Company of Padua, whom we knew from her previous visits.



We had been looking forward to this welcome visit for several years already, since, due to COVID, the last visit of Maria Rosa Bernasconi with Dina Salice from the Company of Como) was in 2017.

Our Group of Madagascar, since the beginning of the year, has been preparing for this meeting especially spiritually to remember and thank the Lord for the **30 years of the presence of the Merician charism in Madagascar**, which began with the consecration of the late Sister Cassilde in December 1993 in the presence of Maria Rosa Bernasconi, delegated by then-President Caterina Dalmasso.

The Eucharistic celebration 30 years ago had been presided over by Bishop Jean Guy Rakotondravahatra, to give weight to our charism in the Malagasy Church.

On August 6, 2023, evening, after two days of travel, we arrived in Fianarantsoa at the house of the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate where we all met.

The Eucharist that we celebrated immediately was really a thanksgiving to the Lord and St. Angela for the conclusion of the group's spiritual exercises and at the same time the beginning of our meeting with the Federative delegation.

The period from the following day, August 7, until their departure was a **robust period of intense and rich formation** for us, albeit in different ways and at different rhythms.

On the first day of meeting to introduce us all, we truly felt in Valeria the affection of a mother eager to know her daughters better.

The President brought greetings from the whole Federation, especially from those sisters who have already come to Madagascar (Kate, M. Rosa Razza, Edda, M. Rosa Bernasconi...).

The President guided us daily to understand and live the spirit of St. Angela through the Rule and writings of St. Angela and the Constitutions of the Company.

In parallel, Fr. Raymond, starting from the Word of God and Church documents, helped us to deepen our vocation, our love for Christ, the Merician gift and charism, in our Malagasy reality.

The President reminded us that there are currently 12 of us; **by now the Group of Madagascar is close to becoming a Company.**

She invited us to sow our gift in the dual reality: the Church and the world; we are like a small plant that grows and must bear fruit. For this, we must know how to act responsibly and at the same time, know how to listen to the Lord.

On August 12, in the chapel of the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate, **our sister Charline RASOAVELO renewed her consecration.** For this occasion, the young people from the probationary period were invited.

All together, sustained by St. Angela's prayer, we raised our humble "magnificat" to the Lord.

The Eucharist was presided over by Fr. Jean Noel RANDRIANIRINA, Assistant for the Group and Vicar General of the Diocese of Ihosy. Also concelebrating at this Eucharist was Fr. Attilio Mombelli, a Vincentian missionary and brother of Virginia Mombelli, who was at the origin of the Madagascar group. (Passing through Madagascar, she met Cassilde, who agreed to follow the charism of St.

Angela ... and from this meeting the Company's Group in Madagascar was born.) Of course, the Vice-Assistant of the Federation Council, Fr. Raymond Nkindji Samuangala, also concelebrated.

It was a celebration that made us feel spiritually united with each other and also in communion with the whole worldwide Company.

The celebration ended with a community lunch, with a good menu that was so varied, but above all seasoned with a real joy of being together and belonging to the family of St. Angela.

The following day, August 13, we all moved to **Ihosi, the place where the Group of Madagascar was born.** We were particularly



eager to show the environment in which our group began, and to visit the church dedicated to St. Angela Merici, which the Italian sisters wanted to see precisely as the "foundation stone" of the Company.

In Ihosi, we continued formation to prepare us to become a Company, while those in the probationary period had spiritual exercises led by our Assistant Fr. Jean Noel.

This visit of the Federation delegation, particularly in the person of the President, was a strong experience of sisterhood for us, just as if we had had "the visit of St. Angela here among us." We felt in our hearts the warmth of being "family," the joy of knowing each other, of sharing, of being united together as sisters, the mutual support in our vocation and also the invitation to **"love to death, as did Christ the Lover of us all..."**

And in thanksgiving to the Lord, we want to express our gratitude to Valeria, Don Raymond and Tonina, express our joy and assure them of our prayers for all the good they gave us in this unforgettable meeting.

Thank you.

*Voahangy*

## **Congo DRC 2023** **Annual Retreat**



Our Company is made up of groups far apart, and so this year the 2023 retreats in the DRC were held in each province with different dates and themes.

In  
**Lubumbashi,** the  
retreat concluded with a  
big Mass of



thanksgiving where Marie Claire made her consecration for life and two others renewed their commitment.

In **Kinshasa**, at the concluding Mass of Thanksgiving we enjoyed the renewal of the consecration commitments of two of our sisters.

In **Kisangani**, the retreat concluded with



a beautiful Mass, during which our sister Josiane renewed her consecration commitment.

In **Mbujimayi**, the retreat ended with the consecration of a church in Kananga.

Within the year, 2023, we had a sister consecrated by and in Kananga for the first time. Her name is Fidèle Georgette Kanku and there are also two aspirants. Also in the whole Company we had two other consecrations: a first consecration and a final consecration.

### **Training workshop for the Council of the Company of Congo**

August 23-26, 2023, the Federation offered the Council of our Company a specific training session for us in charge. The trainer was Father Raymond.



Present were:  
Mélanie TSHIYAMBA,  
Françoise MUTAMBA,  
Joséphine MALIBA,  
Charlotte KABANGA,  
Agathe KILOBA  
and Régine MUTOMBO.



On the first day the Kinshasa group participated in the solemn opening with a Mass of Thanksgiving during which we received a relic of our Mother Foundress Angela Merici sent by the Federation Council.



In the evening with Father Raymond we drew up the schedule, then gave an update on how the Council works in collaboration with each group. Finally, Father Raymond outlined the points that would be developed over the next three days: reviewing recruitment criteria; deepening the dimensions of our vocation; using the synodal method.

On the last day, after all of Father Raymond's in-depth reflections, we exchanged different experiences and situations before saying goodbye at the conclusion.

The Council was very pleased with the time spent with Father Raymond. We were happy and he was happy in our quest and commitment to give our best for the future of our Company as a Secular Institute and for the continuing formation of our members.

On behalf of our Company and on my own personal behalf, I sincerely thank the Federation for its motherly concern in constantly thinking of us, nurturing us spiritually, and spending time to support our retreat and bring Council members together for formation and meeting. All this is for the good of the members and the Company.

We are grateful, and will be forever grateful, as we strive to move forward responsibly, as our Mother Angela asks us to do.

*Régine and the sisters of the Company of Congo*

## Company of Poland August 24-27, 2023

The trip to Poland, as to other Companies, had been postponed because of COVID and other urgencies.

But this time we succeeded, thanks to the cooperation of Maya and her directress of the Company of Slovakia.

For years Maya has been following the Slovakia Company as an invaluable support and back-up through visits and attendance at the Company's meetings in Poland.

For this visit Maya was the perfect translator, precise, knowledgeable, enthusiastic...indispensable.

I arrived in Poland, welcomed and escorted from the Katowice airport to a house in the Diocese of Katowice, where the sisters were doing spiritual exercises led by their ecclesiastical assistant. Immediately there was a big welcoming party, lots and lots of joy.



two are 91 years old (still lucid and also active in their own way in the group). Only three are available for some commitment of responsibility (the directress, the vice-directress and a councilor).

They meet monthly at the Ursuline Sisters' convent; the assistant is always present, very helpful and attentive to the Company.

The documented history of the Company and archives are with the directress.

The Company was born with the history of some oblates of the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union in 1958; they joined the Company in 1968. The first consecrations within the

The Company of Poland consists of nine members, three of whom cannot participate actively for reasons of age and health. Of the six who are still mobile,



Federation were in 1972. The federated Company of Poland became autonomous in 1985.

The Company's current government expires in August 2024; the directress is in her first term. The sisters are pondering how to proceed, with no new vocation for years. Lately two people have approached, interested in this form of life, but so far they have not decided.

Together they share and clarify problems and plans such as whether to be open to joining another Company (the Company of Slovakia is possibly open to welcoming them) or whether to think about and prepare again for an Assembly to elect a new government this year.

Their current orientation seems to be to still remain an



autonomous Company, however accompanied by the Company of Slovakia.

The striking aspects of the Polish sisters are their joy, fidelity, faith and devotion. These are the gifts of those present and of the long tradition of those who preceded them and were able to pass on so much goodness.

We had time to pray, talk, compare, question, and celebrate together, and none will forget this meeting anytime soon.

We made an appointment to meet in Rome for the Federation Assembly; in the meantime we keep the contacts alive, *attentive and with great and eager hearts*.

Kate

## Consecrations in the United States

### I Cannot Thank Him Enough...

Four members of the Company of Canada, Group of the USA, took steps forward on the path of consecrated life on **September 23, 2023**: Elena's consecration for life, Elizabeth's first consecration, and renewal by Heather and Rachael.

Reflecting on the event, and especially her own final commitment, Elena says, "I feel great consolation and joy. My heart is so full, knowing how much we are loved by God!"

St. Angela told us, "You have to thank God infinitely that, to you especially, He has granted such a singular gift."

Elena Elena recalls these words in her own response: "**I cannot thank Him enough** for giving me to His Son, and for giving his Son to me! And for giving me such wonderful sisters to share this beautiful journey with. **I really cannot thank Him enough.** It really is stunning to think that all along, God had this incredible plan for my life."

The ceremony took place in the chapel of Duchesne Academy, Elena's alma mater, in Omaha, Nebraska.

Our days of celebration also included Marie Chantal's birthday.

*Mary-Cabrini Durkin*



**The Company of Como**  
**Passing on a good... for so much good...**



**The complex on  
Prudenzia Street  
in Como passed to  
Caritas Solidarity  
Foundation, a non-  
profit service**

On the eve of the feast of St. Ursula and Companions (October 20, 2023) Dina Salice, the Directress of the Company of Como symbolically handed over the keys of the spaces owned by the Company to the diocese in the presence of the Bishop of Como, His Eminence Cardinal Oscar Cantoni.

This place, home of Mother Mella, the woman who began the Company in Como, had been left by her family to the Company as a place of prayer, meetings, communion, and spiritual growth. It was once inhabited by several members, but today is only a reference point, as each sister lives her consecration in her own familial, social and parish environment and/or elderly home.

In the Church St. Angela in Como, hundreds of sisters have made their consecration to God in the 123-year history of the Company in this diocese.

The complex, now donated to the Caritas Foundation of the Diocese of Como, is a sign of the sharing of what has been received by the Company and now given back for the needs of today in the area through the





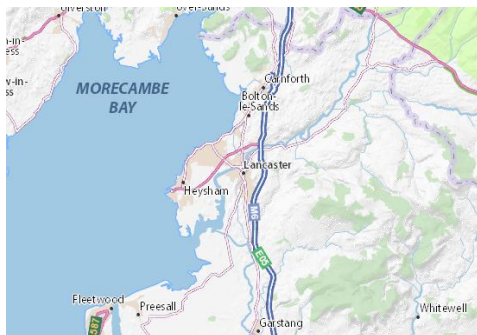
Eskenosen Association, which has been involved in welcoming migrants for years.

Families from Syria, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Guinea, Gambia and Ukraine are currently housed in the facility.

*Sisters of the Company of Como*

## English Group

The Group of Lancaster, England, has four members, who live within 25 miles of each other. They consider themselves fortunate to be able to see each other twice monthly: once for a meeting and once for lunch, sharing their lives, news of family and friends, current issues and fun.



Mary-Cabrini, Federation Councilor, enjoyed these lunch gatherings during a visit in November 2023.

Meetings include Morning Prayer of the Church, scripture reflections, discussions and reports. All are involved in planning events or representing the Company in diocesan vocations groups and the National Conference of Secular Institutes.

Marie W and Marie R prepare on-going formation on the Rule and Constitutions. A website is in the planning.

“Members feel very close,” says Marie W, their local leader, “only a telephone call away from each other” between gatherings.

*Mary-Cabrini Durkin*



## Together in Kenya



(Company of Piacenza).

The climax was Leah’s renewal of consecration and Pauline’s reception into the Group of Kenya.

Leah’s nephew Fr. Philip concelebrated Mass with Don Rino, and Pauline’s parents and family participated joyfully. Our sisters danced. Novices and postulants of the Ursuline religious came to serve as our choir.

“Full of the spirit of St Angela,” said Perpetua, describing a week in Nairobi (Nov. 28-Dec. 3). Six members from five dioceses gathered with Mary-Cabrini (Federation Councilor), Don Rino Ladelfa (Vice-assistant to the Council), and Paola





Paola enjoyed “an unforgettable and wonderful experience from a human and spiritual point of view.” Don Rino praised the beauties of the country and especially of the Kenyan people and the “marvels” of the week.

Perpetua, the local leader, is grateful to the Holy Spirit for the “time of inner listening to each other, sharing our hope and unity, celebrating our lives, rejoicing talking over spiritual matters, receiving encouraging talks from Don Rino (who led a day of retreat) and from Mary-Cabrini and Paola.

“In joy, peace and love we celebrated our gift of life globally and locally.”

Visiting the Office for Consecrated Life and meeting Nairobi’s Archbishop Philip Anyolo provided “a chance to share our sense of witness in the Church and society, carrying the charism of St Angela,” says Perpetua.



The European visitors viewed African wildlife in Nairobi National Park and at a zoo close to the St. Joseph Retreat Center, where we stayed.

*Mary-Cabrini Durkin, Company of Canada*

## Company of Canada... Fresh Start

With joy and courage,  
Friends, let us raise our eyes,  
Let's head out to sea,  
Where God is calling us!

United to Saint Angela  
By bonds of friendship,  
Let us lead the "new life"  
Which inspired her.

Let us walk in Company,  
In sisterhood,  
Spouses for life  
Of the God of Majesty!

Through the mountains and the valleys  
"Toward blossoming paths"  
As our beloved Mother  
Promised us long ago!

*Réjeanne Leduc*



### Historic Change in the Company of Canada

The Company of Canada ended 2023 by shifting its governance from Quebec to the United States of America. Members in the USA are no longer a distinct Group but form a single united Company.

The term of  
Directress Réjeanne Leduc,  
Vice-directress Thérèse  
Bolduc and Councilor  
Gertrude Guimond  
concluded as of December  
30.



At an Assembly in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA, three Americans were elected: Mary-Cabrini Durkin as Directress, Marie Chantal Mukuluku as Vice-Directress, and Elena Taylor-Garcia as Councilor.

The Company's new center will be in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Jacqueline Morin began the Company of Canada in 1967. It developed and mentored three Groups.

1. Marcella Hinz led the Toronto Group, which became autonomous in 2014.
2. The Group of the Philippines remains under the wing of Toronto.
3. The USA Group is now continuing the life of the Company of Canada.



*Mary-Cabrini Durkin, Company of Canada*

### **An Assembly Full of Serenity and Mutual Love**



Réjeanne Leduc and Thérèse Bolduc, outgoing Directress and Vice-directress, went to the Assembly on December 30, 2023, the date of the union of the Quebec group with the U.S. group for a new beginning of the Company of Canada.

Our stay in Cincinnati was filled with serenity and mutual love! I was certain that the wonderful group guided by Mary-Cabrini, each and every one of them – Marie Chantal, Elena, Heather, Rachaël, Elizabeth – were brought together by the Holy Spirit, who unites them in the Company through the charism granted to our foundress, Saint Angela Merici, and that their hearts are open to live

the Gospel in "*that admirable form of life that our Savior lived, and with Him, our Lady, the Apostles, the Virgins and many Christians of the early Church*" (Constitutions 2.2).

We were welcomed with great kindness, as were each of the sisters, who are humble and have a wonderful, charming simplicity. Mary-Cabrini was very generous with everything, to make a celebration of this historic event.

She really left no stone unturned, and neither did we, Thérèse and I, nor her daughters, to make the meeting a complete success.

I would also like to thank Marie-Chantal Mukuluku, our translator during the evening of sharing, and especially during the meals.

Thanks also to Rachaël, who drove us from the convent of the Sisters of Notre Dame (where we gathered) to the residence of Mary-Cabrini, who welcomed us for the dinner banquet after the day's elections.

We were able to experience that, with ingenuity and simple means of translation, Love can overcome the barriers of language, geography and space.

We can now, with St. Francis of Assisi, declare ourselves happy because we have experienced that we can love others as much when they are far from us as when they are with us.

Drawing on the words of Pope Francis, allow me to express simply what is essential in an open sisterhood: The essential "*is that which allows us to know, value and love each other regardless of physical closeness, no matter where we were born or where we live.*"

There is much more to say, particularly about the unfailing loyalty of Thérèse Bolduc as our first collaborator in Quebec.

I'm also thinking of the prayerful contribution of two members of the Quebec group who were unable to join us: Gertrude Guimond, former councilor, and Muguet Joazile, serving in Ecuador. Thank you!

*Réjeanne Leduc, former-directress, Company of Canada*

## The Council of the Federation Begins 2024 in Rome



It has now become a custom for the Federation Council to gather at the beginning of the year for a time of spiritual reflection and a meeting.

This year marks the end of the six-year term of the current Council.

All the more reason why we were pleased and needed to meet to give thanks for the gift of this service to foster the world wide nature our institute and to plan for the next Ordinary Assembly in July.

There will still be intense months of work to accompany companies and sisters and to organize for being *united* together in the days of the Assembly, for taking stock of the past, reading the present and looking to the future.

The gathering in Rome on Jan. 2-5, hosted in the Maria Bambina Institute by the colonnade in St. Peter's Square, was as impressive as ever. Don Raymond gave us meditations on the days of spirituality and helped us reflect and renew our faith and our vocation of self-giving and service.

A few days after Christmas, close to the crib in St. Peter's Square, we declared ourselves on our way to a destination, to Someone always to be discovered, met, followed ... to our **Lover**. The Son of God was born on earth so that we can reach heaven. On a journey from Bethlehem to Emmaus, the Lord walks with us, stays with us.

We meditated on the two disciples of Emmaus to rediscover for ourselves the wonder of a life-changing encounter, an encounter that becomes a journey, that becomes a relationship, that



lights the way toward the Resurrection. So we too, consecrated women in the world, want to seek the *star* that guides and orients our existence, recognizing the Lord alive and present in the Word and in the Eucharist.

We prayed together, we worshiped before starting the intense work of the Council agenda. We also feasted together and, amid labors and joys, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we came up with the title of the next Federation assembly: *With Saint Angela on the Roads of Hope - Be Glad and Have Firm Faith and Hope.*

The title describes the life of the Companies in a special year, preparatory to the jubilee of 2025, which will also be the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Angela's pilgrimage to Rome for the jubilee 1525.

The ecclesial jubilee of 2025 will have the theme *Pilgrims of Hope*. And we, the daughters of St. Angela, will go on our pilgrimage of evangelical and Merician hope *and thorny and rocky roads we will find flower-strewn for us, paved with finest gold* (Prologue to the Rule 27).

Kate

## **We Stand before You, Holy Spirit**

### **Prayer of invocation to the Holy Spirit for an ecclesial assembly of governance or discernment**

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,

as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us,

make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go

and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;

do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path

nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity

so that we may journey together to eternal life

and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You,

who are at work in every place and time,

in the communion of the Father and the Son,

forever and ever. Amen.

# 61<sup>st</sup> World Day of Prayer for Vocations

April 21, 2024

**“Let the One Who Thirsts Come!” (Rev 22:20)**



The icon of the Christ who is to come leads directly to the root of the Christian vocation and the source of every call. All Scripture closes with a cry that holds a promise:

**“Let the one who thirsts come forward, and the one who wants it receive the gift**

**of life-giving water”** (Revelation 22:17). **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me”** (Revelation 3:20). To intuit one's vocation is to discern the warmth of the divine that shines through what is human as the red of the Lord's garments emerges from the blue that symbolizes history: it is to share his Passion and to spend one's life in his love.

## Prayer for Vocations

Lord Jesus Christ,  
Son of the Father,  
who always come to dwell  
among us,  
make us live according to  
your feelings  
so that our communities  
and our homes  
may be capable of an authentic  
and cordial welcome.  
May the young people  
who meet us  
feel that they are loved  
And may a desire to seek

the meaning of their lives,  
revealed in their vocation,  
be released in them.  
Instill in the hearts  
of all the baptized  
the will to spend  
their lives  
in the ordained ministry,  
in consecrated life,  
in marriage and in lay life  
lived in the world,  
so that the Church,  
which is your and our home,  
may shine with the beauty  
of all vocations. Amen

# Jubilee 2025



## 2024 – Year of Prayer

On the recommendation of Pope Francis, 2024 will be the Year of Prayer:

*In this time of preparation, I would greatly desire that we devote 2024, the year preceding the Jubilee event, to a great “symphony” of prayer. Prayer, above all else, to renew our desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to him and to adore him.*

*Prayer, moreover, to thank God for the many gifts of his love for us and to praise his work in creation, which summons everyone to respect it and to take concrete and responsible steps to protect it.*

*Prayer as the expression of a single “heart and soul” (cf. Acts 4:32), which then translates into solidarity and the sharing of our daily bread. Prayer that makes it possible for every man and woman in this world to turn to the one God and to reveal to him what lies hidden in the depths of their heart. Prayer as the royal road to holiness, which enables us to be contemplative even in the midst of activity.*

*In a word, may it be an intense year of prayer in which hearts are opened to receive the outpouring of God’s grace and to make the “Our Father,” the prayer Jesus taught us, the life programme of each of his disciples.*

Pope Francis



## Prayer for the Jubilee

Father in heaven,  
may the *faith* you have given us  
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,  
and the flame of *charity* enkindled  
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,  
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*  
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us  
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.  
May those seeds transform from within both humanity and  
the whole cosmos  
in the sure expectation  
of a new heaven and a new earth,  
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,  
your glory will shine eternally.  
May the grace of the Jubilee  
reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,  
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.  
May that same grace spread  
the joy and peace of our Redeemer  
throughout the earth.  
To you our God, eternally blessed,  
be glory and praise for ever.

Amen

*Pope Francis*

## Prayer for the Assembly

**God the Father**, grant that we may again see marvels, directing all to your glory and to the good of the Company. Through your customary goodness, grant now to our leaders the graces and the gifts for governing according to your love and your will.

**Jesus Christ, our only treasure**, to you we have promised our virginity and our very selves. In you, in the Company, we are bound to one another with the bonds of charity; in you we esteem one another, we help one another, we support one another. Help us to put our full commitment and energy into doing our duty well.

**Holy Spirit**, we ask you for strength and true consolation, so that we may be able to sustain and carry out the charge to which we have been called.

**Saint Angela**, you have promised to be always with us, helping us with our prayers.

Now you see us and know us, and you want to and can help us; be with us for the good of each and all.

You who have called us to be sisters and mothers, grant that we may remain united in heart, and thus have the assurance that every grace we ask of God will be granted to us infallibly.

You who have invited us to come together to make a good examination of the government,

grant that in seeing one another, in our reasoning together spiritually, we may make each other happy and console one another, and all this will be of no small benefit to us.

In this coming together, we want to take into account and have carved in our minds and hearts all our sisters, one by one: their names, their condition, their nature, their every situation and their whole being.

Stay with us along with our Lover, that He may enlighten us and instruct us as a true and good Teacher about what we must do.

**May God bless us: in the name of the Father,  
the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

*Kate*

# *With Saint Angela on the Roads of Hope*

*Be happy  
and have firm faith and hope* (9th Counsel 26)



## **ORDINARY ASSEMBLY OF THE FEDERATION**

**Casa di Esercizi Spirituali Padri Passionisti  
Rome July 30 – August 4, 2024**

