

Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart



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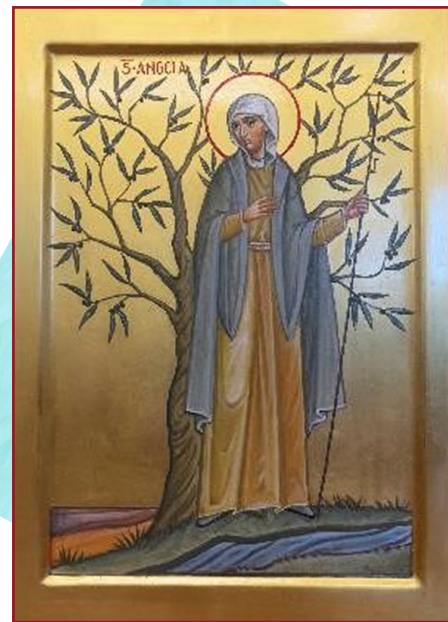
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From the very beginning of religious life, men and women have associated with religious orders. Following the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), congregations of vowed men and women became more intentional about inviting the laity to do so. Sometimes called “associates” or “companions,” these women and men are recognized as “charism carriers,” sharing in the spirit and spirituality of a particular congregation and its founder. The USA Roman Union Ursulines are blessed with their Associates/Companions of Angela. Today Associates/Companions can be found in all three USA provinces, with groups located in Dedham, MA; Laredo, TX; Malone, NY; Moscow, ID; New Orleans, LA; New Rochelle, NY; San Antonio, TX; St. Louis, MO; and Wilmington, DE. For this issue of *Heart to Heart*, we invited our Associates/Companions to respond to four questions. With gratitude to those who responded, the reflections below share the heart of the responses we received.



What prompted you to become an Ursuline Associate/Companion of Angela?

Reading the responses from our Associates/Companions of Angela was a reminder of the words of Jesus, “Come and see.” Several of the respondents spoke of the lifelong influence of Ursulines they had in school. One said that for 75 years, since kindergarten, her life has been shaped by the values of the Ursulines of her school days. Some met Angela in Ursulines they have known in the workplace: “Finding peace in coming to work with the sisters.” A common desire seemed to be “to learn more about St. Angela – the person, her teachings, actions and beliefs that inspired so many to follow her.” An appreciation of coming together was expressed. For Ursulines who meet with the Associates/Companions of Angela, there is the joy of “fostering a deeper knowledge and love of Angela” and of interacting with a broader community.



(Paolo Orlando, 2022)

How does being an Ursuline Associate/Companion of Angela strengthen your spiritual life?

Our Ursuline Associates/Companions find their spiritual lives strengthened in a variety of ways. Many shared how a deepening knowledge of St. Angela – her life, her words, her experiences, her faith, her mentoring presence – strengthens their living, enkindles their own spirituality, and grounds them in the values and virtues with which she lived. Mentioned most frequently were the values and virtues of kindness, compassion, hope, gratitude, wisdom, and dependence on God. Equally important and vital to strengthening one’s spiritual life is being part of a supportive, nurturing community with which to gather, pray, share, and break bread. Associates and Companions reflected on the joy, hope, and companionship that are fostered in their coming together and being together. The shared insights into Angela, along with each one’s willingness to share the ups and downs of his/her own spiritual journey, is a source of strength for the day-by-day journey of faith that each one walks.



(Paolo Orlando, 2007)

What aspects of Angela’s charism do you resonate with, and how do you try to live that spirit in your life?

A charism, often hard to define, is a gift, given to serve God, church, and the world. Angela was a strong charismatic woman. Her charism drew many to her for solace and guidance. Responses as to what aspects of Angela’s life resonated with our Associates/Companions were many. There were common threads throughout. Statements also included how sisters and associates were moved to live the spirit of Angela in their lives. Angela’s strong faith, and reliance on the Holy Spirit, “putting God first,” and “finding her first refuge at the feet of Jesus” are convictions that strengthen a strong personal relationship with the Trinity and encourage respondents to live dependent on God. Angela’s emphasis on the individual, respecting and listening to each one, and establishing personal relationships inspire acts of kindness and understanding with others, overcoming polarization and working for peace in our ministries. Her invitation to “siate piazzevole” (“be peace-willed”), leads to hospitality, creating community wherever we go, where all are welcome, and striving to build relationships with all. Her words, “Always in your midst,” “You will achieve more with kindness and gentleness than with harshness and sharp rebukes,” and “Act, move, believe...” encourage living in freedom, allowing God to direct our lives.



(Sr. Margaret Beaudette, SC, 2003)

For Angela, relationships with God, creation, self, and others were very important.

How do you seek to integrate these in your life?

Among the Associates/Companions, consensus emerged which indicated that relationship with God provided an essential foundation for their lives. One responded, “many Hispanic Christians begin or end their aspirational conversations with the word ‘Primero Dios’ – ‘God first.’ This was central to who Angela was and what I believe is her legacy...to get closer to God through all of our relationships.” Others commented that creation and humanity are a unity. Designed by God, we are all ‘dust’ and should remember to care for the world, and one another, with the greatest of care, rooted in our inherent dignity. Angela appreciated the depth and richness of each unique person. She respected and loved in relationship without demeaning, or judging. Angela encouraged those who gathered with her to make a difference in their world by reaching out to those in need, treating all with respect and love, and living a life of dependence on God.



(Pietrogrande and Kostner)

For Reflection

What most speaks to you in the above reflections?

How do you personally respond to the questions posed to the Associates/Companions of Angela?



Lake Garda