

# Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart



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*As we continue to move through the weeks of December and the season of Advent, we offer reflections this month from three Ursuline Sisters on the theme of "Angela as an Advent Woman." We are grateful to these sisters for offering these reflections for our Advent prayer and pondering.*

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**A**ngela Merici is not the first woman who comes to mind in Advent. Mary is. However, if we take a closer look, both Mary and Angela lived Advent.

For both Mary and Angela, God came suddenly. The Annunciation to Mary came "out of the blue," while she was alone, at prayer. Angela, still grieving for her sister, was going about her daily chores when she had her vision. Both had to wait for God's dream for them to come true. For each of them, trusting God's dream required the faith and hope to believe that it would be realized, in God's own time. We can only imagine the long hours in prayer as each waited to understand what God's dream could be.

We know that neither woman just waited. Mary "went in haste" to help her cousin, Elizabeth. Angela counseled, mediated, journeyed, and "rolled up her sleeves" to take care of the human vestiges of war around her. It was many years after that Angela's vision – God's dream for her – became the formation of her Company.

What is God's dream for us? What do we need to pursue it? Let us look to Mary and to Angela Merici for the faith and hope we need for it to be fulfilled.

*Susan A. Conte, OSU  
New Rochelle, NY*

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**W**hen I hear the word 'Advent' I immediately think of "waiting." Waiting isn't always easy, especially if we are anxious, desiring to be in control, or too busy." Borrowing from James Martin, SJ's book, *Come Forth*, I ask simple questions on how we wait. How do we wait?

Do we wait and just endure life, saying nothing is going to change? This can lead to despair, especially during this time in our lives when there is so much unrest, violence and misuse of power.

Do we wait and just give up? Do we find ourselves withdrawing?

Do we wait with passivity? Just saying, "Whatever" – This is such an empty waiting.

Do we wait with hope and expectancy?

This, I believe, is how St. Angela lived her life. Angela was a contemplative, and from her stance of waiting, she came to know and love her God. She knew her God loved her and loves us all!

She had a dream to create an alternative to the unrest of the world. She never gave up, even in her elder years. Her constant companion was her God.

This is how I want to spend this Advent season.

*Joanne Abrams, OSU  
Santa Rosa, CA*

I find myself overwhelmed with grief, as I listen to the news and read of the devastation in the Holy Land, Ukraine and other areas of conflict. The images reflect unspeakable pain and suffering. I am reminded that Angela also lived in her time surrounded by conflict and violence. I sense she can share with me wisdom in holding the pain and suffering in the midst of the violence. I hear her saying, "Let your first refuge be at the feet of Jesus Christ."

*"Jesus took in hatred, held it, transformed it, and gave back love...  
He took in bitterness, held it, transformed it, and gave back graciousness...  
He took in curses, held them, transformed them, and gave back blessing...  
He took in murder, held it, transformed it, and gave back forgiveness..."*

(Ron Rolheiser "Carrying Tension")

Angela, are you inviting us to hold the tension of our world, not in resignation, but rather to hold and transform it in forgiveness and love? Are there moments when protests are not helpful, only a vow of nonviolence and desire to not project more violence by our words and actions? This is my hope as I journey with Angela this Advent.

*Julie Hickey, OSU  
San Antonio, TX*



## For Prayer and Pondering

*How do I experience Angela as an Advent woman?*

*What wisdom does Angela offer me for this Advent?*

