

Prayer for the Feast of St. Ursula

Prelude

We gather together and celebrate our patroness St. Ursula and her Companions. We pray for one another, near and far, and we lift up those we have promised to remember in our prayers.

Pause for a moment to speak aloud the people and/or situations we bring with us to prayer.

Gathering Song

In the spirit of St. Ursula and her Companions, we lift our hearts in song and praise to God.

“Standing on the Shoulders” by Earth Mama

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w87oZSp6CUc>

Reading

(from Sister Ignatius Stone’s *Angela’s Alphabet*)

“There is no doubt that St. Ursula was one of Angela’s favorite saints...Her name was given to the little Company of twenty-eight members she founded in Brescia, Italy, on November 25, 1535. Ursula was one of the most popular and most frequently represented saints throughout the Middle Ages and early Renaissance period...Perhaps even more influential than art in creating a cult of St. Ursula throughout the Middle Ages was what could almost be called an influx of relics purporting to come from various archaeological excavations over the centuries in Cologne, the site of the death of Ursula and her companions at the hand of the Huns in the 5th century... Angela admired the way in which Ursula, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was able to transform the lives and values of her virgin-companions. Guided by the Holy Spirit, gradually detached from the values of the secular world, sanctified by their obedient and virginal life, Ursula’s companions were ready to embrace a martyred death.”

Leader: As we look at representations of St. Ursula and companions on page 2, we see symbols and photos of history and myth that must have caught the imagination and heart of Angela Merici. What captures your imagination and heart? Are there any symbols or representations that speak to you? Or others you have used at times?

Reflection/Sharing

Closing Litany

*(group members can take turns leading;
all can join together in the response)*

Ursula, lover of Jesus, teach us to know him more deeply:

R: *Ursula, protect us each day of our lives.*

Ursula, lover of pilgrimages to holy places:

R: *Ursula, protect us on our journeys of life.*

Ursula, community builder with your companions:

R: *Ursula, help us build community in our family and in our ministries.*

Ursula, faithful spouse of Christ, even unto death:

R: *Ursula, give us courage when we face difficult challenges.*

All: *St. Ursula, protect our future! Amen.*



St. Ursula and Companions



Hans Memling, *The Shrine of St. Ursula*: A gabled reliquary box in the form of a gothic cathedral (**left**). Scenes from the pilgrimage and martyrdom of St. Ursula are featured in the six panels along the sides. Mary and the infant Jesus are painted onto the gable panel on one end of the reliquary, and St. Ursula and companions on the opposite end. St. Ursula is pictured spreading her mantle around her disproportionately small companions, symbolizing spiritual motherhood. The shrine was commissioned in 1489 for the Saint John's Hospital in Bruges by two nuns, Jacosa van Dudzeele and Anna van den Moortele, and shown publicly only on the Feast of Saint Ursula.

The Master of the Legend of St. Ursula: *The Legend of St. Ursula: the Church and the Synagogue*, 1475-1482: This altarpiece, with eight panels depicting the call, pilgrimage, and martyrdom of St. Ursula, is now in the Groeningemuseum, Bruges, Belgium. **Right:** Martyrdom panel, detail.



Stefan Lochner, *Altar of the City Patrons: St. Ursula and Companions*, left panel of triptych, c. 1442 (below). Closed, the altarpiece shows the Annunciation; opened it shows the Virgin and Child, flanked by the Patrons of the City of Cologne. The left panel features St. Ursula and her companions, who were martyred in Cologne. A mass grave found in 1155 was believed to be their remains.

This altarpiece was commissioned for Cologne's city council chapel, and is now in daily liturgical use in the Cologne Cathedral.



Left: detail of St. Ursula and St. Aetherius from Stefan Lochner's *Altar of the City Patrons*. St. Ursula carries an arrow, the instrument of her martyrdom, and wears the symbols of her royalty. St. Aetherius is pictured in princely garb alongside St. Ursula, as her betrothed. According to some traditions, he also suffered martyrdom in Cologne, and is venerated as a saint.