

# Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart



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## St. Angela and St. Francis



*As a young woman, St. Angela became a member of the Third Order of St. Francis. This issue of Heart to Heart explores how this Franciscan spirituality influenced Angela and invites us to reflect on how it impacts our share in her charism and spirit today.*

“There can be no doubt that one of the greatest influences in Angela’s life was the spiritual guidance and help that she received from the Friars Minor of St. Francis...At the time she was staying with the Biancosi family in Salo after the death of her parents and sister, the friars had erected their San Bernardino Convent on the Isola, an island on Lake Garda, and said Mass at the church quite near the Biancosi household. No clear date or place of Angela’s entry into the Franciscan Third Order is known, but Agostino Gallo had a clear memory of the reason: *“She eventually took the habit of the Third Order so that it would be easier to go to mass, confession, and communion. In those days, in fact, lay persons were not allowed to receive frequent communion, as was the case later.”*

(Ignatius Stone, OSU, *Angela’s Alphabet*)

“Angela’s parents, sister, and one brother died while Angela was still young. She lived with an uncle and aunt in Salo for several years until she returned to the family farm as proprietor. During the time she lived with her extended family, she became a member of the Third Order of St. Francis and was formed in their spirituality. She grew in joy, peace, simplicity, and other virtues of the Franciscan way of life.”

(Martha Buser, OSU, “Contemporary Spirituality of St. Angela Merici”)



“... there are many ways in which [Angela’s] writings reflect the Franciscan influence, especially in their Gospel foundation, tender images, and call to such typically Franciscan virtues as poverty of spirit, harmony and peace, joy, and devotion to the humanity of Jesus Christ.”

(Carolyn Brockland, OSU, “Elements of Franciscan Spirituality in the Life and Writings of Angela Merici”)

“Since Angela’s own spiritual journey began as a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, the evidence of this Franciscan influence is visible in both her life and her writings. Among the elements of Franciscan spirituality which can be discerned in Angela’s legacy are an emphasis on peacemaking, finding a creative way to renew the Church, the evangelical foundation of her *Rule*, its Christocentric focus, use of tenderness and familial imagery in describing the relationships among the members of the Company, stress on leading by examples, and with great respect for individual differences, loyalty to the Church, appreciation for the natural world and the importance of joy, and awareness of the humanity of Jesus Christ, particularly in his Sacred Passion.”

(Carolyn Brockland, OSU, “Elements of Franciscan Spirituality in the Life and Writings of Angela Merici”)

“Today, the message of the two founders [Francis and Angela] is particularly necessary, that of Francis, so as to come to an authentic evangelical poverty, adapted to our times of unlimited consumerism; that of Angela, so as to propose the beauty of a life given wholly to Christ, and for always.”

(Marie Seynaeve, OSU, “Francis and Angela”)

“[Angela] shared with the Capuchins [Franciscans] a particular devotion for Christ and his Passion, a deep spirit of prayer united with availability to all who came to her, a spirit of poverty, humility and penance very near to that of St. Francis.”

(Marie Seynaeve, OSU, “Francis and Angela”)



*Angela embraced the spirituality of St. Francis and shared it with her sisters in the formation of the Company of St. Ursula. With that backdrop, we reflect on the following song, “Walk With Me,” and the moving reflection by Lee Veriga, OSU, surfacing how the influence of Franciscan spirituality is made manifest in our own lives.*

“Walk with Me”

(Porter’s Gate)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYaF7e2QSEQ>

Let us lead with patience, with a gentle word  
Bearing every burden, laying down the old hurt  
When our feet are stumbling and the climb is steep  
All you people of good will, would you walk with me?

Would you walk with me through the wilderness  
When we cannot see through our differences  
When the dust has settled and the votes are cast  
Would you walk with me?

Let us lead with kindness, with a listening ear  
Hearing every story, laying down our old fears  
Though our hearts are broken and the pain runs deep  
All you people of good will, would you walk with me?

Would you walk with me through the wilderness  
When we cannot see through our differences  
When the dust has settled and the votes are cast  
Would you walk with me?



# For Prayer and Reflection

## “Angela and Francis”

(Lee Veriga, OSU)



Angela, at the crossroads of time,  
You met Francis, kindred souls,  
Drawn to one another by the cries of your people and your earth,  
A world in turmoil and distress.  
The same cries, we your daughters, hear today.

You were both led by the voice of the One who was your Truth;  
The One who teaches us what it is we must do  
To rebuild our Church and our World.

Angela, embracing the way of Francis, you draw us into your Company,  
Inviting us to become with you, participants in a revolution of tenderness and mercy;  
Witnesses to the Word that can transform us into instruments  
Of peace, love, mercy, hope, light and joy.

In silence and contemplation,  
In song and dance,  
With passion and clarity,  
We live with the confidence that you  
Have shown us through your life  
And promised us in your words.

In solidarity with the spirit of Francis,  
You reflect to us the strength and power of living in simplicity and harmony,  
Attentive to the Spirit’s stirring within us.  
As brothers and sisters with those we encounter and with our earth,  
We seek to live in mutual relationship,  
Interconnected with the source of all Life,  
Nourished by Word and Bread,  
Cherished by the Lover of us all.

As a woman of deep faith, strong courage and unshakeable trust,  
You encourage us to embrace, like Francis, those shunned by our society.  
You teach us to offer hospitality and an inner spaciousness  
That welcomes all, with respect and dignity.

And here, in this space we are called -  
To listen: to listen to stories shared -  
The story of our Universe, our beginning,  
Of Brother Sun and Sister Moon,  
The story of who We are,  
The stories of all those we encounter.  
We listen, to be transformed, so that in turn, we may transform the lives of  
those who have shared their stories with us, in trust and hope.  
We are called to listen to ..... **[personal responses may be added]**

Continued →

Here in this space, we are called—  
To communion: to be at one—  
At one with all creation,  
At one with our brothers and sisters,  
Breaking down boundaries, upturning barriers that separate, isolate and alienate.  
Building a community that is open and inclusive,  
Rich in compassion and love and where all can feel they belong.  
We are called to be in communion with .....**[personal responses]**

Here in this space, we are called -  
To serve: as the One who donned an apron and washed the feet of his disciples.  
For it is in giving, that we receive.  
In service, as authentic agents of change,  
We respond with integrity, wisdom and truth  
To the needs of all those who turn to us for help.  
Seeking ways that will bring justice, healing and peace.  
We are called to serve .....**[personal responses]**

Here in this space, we are called -  
To witness: as women standing before the empty tomb and those on the road  
to Emmaus; in union with our Beloved.  
To boldly proclaim and embody, through our actions and when necessary with  
words, the message of the One who is our Way, our Truth and our Life.  
To witness to the Hope that finds its source entwined in the mystery of the  
Paschal story of life, death and resurrection.  
Breaking through the darkness of despair and loss,  
To witness to the Light of New Life and the promise of true freedom,  
That guides us and enlightens us as we journey forward.  
We are called to witness to .....**[personal responses]**

Here in this space, we are called -  
To celebrate: as at the Wedding Feast at Cana, in joy, embracing each moment.  
Gathering in all to the table of plenty, offering hospitality and friendship,  
Sharing all which is life-giving and nourishing with those who hunger and thirst  
for what is right.  
Celebrating, in wonder and awe, Mother Earth's bountiful gifts,  
Unconditional love and forgiveness that knows no bounds.  
We are called to celebrate .....**[personal responses]**

Angela, we give thanks for your meeting with Francis,  
For embracing and deepening within us, his spirit of inclusiveness, of seeing all of  
Creation as our brothers and sisters and sharing his total reliance and trust in  
knowing God will provide for us wonderfully well.  
We see that we must respond as you both did, starting by doing what's necessary,  
then what's possible and then we will find ourselves surprised,  
by doing the impossible!

