

Heartbeats

The Company of St. Angela in the 21st Century

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People of Hope Today

As 2020 draws to a close, we continue to dwell in the throes of a worldwide pandemic. Winter darkness envelops many parts of the globe, and our Church has begun a "New Year" with the Hope of Advent.

Heartbeats has focused these past months on "Angela Merici, a Woman of Faith and Hope," and for this issue, we invited our readers to share their experiences of how faith and hope carry them in these times. Enjoy this tapestry from many who carry the spirit of Angela in their hearts.

"For those who love God, all things work together unto good." Although I learned to value this text years ago, I believe the COVID trial is testing my belief and practice of this gospel advice! I must hold on, keep testing the authenticity of my hope. Lord, with the heartbeats of Angela, teach me to be ready to live her faith-inspired hope and echo her constant "Yes!"

*Margaret Mary Cain, osu
— Alton, IL*

I am very aware that God has been very good to me all my life - even during some very rough times. Remembering all those times gives me faith to know that God continues to guide me and lead me home.

*Loretta Kilby
— Hockessin, DE*

The song "The Lantern of My Life" by Jamberoo Abbey, Australia on YouTube always lifts my heart and gently challenges me.

*Theresa Davey, osu
— Springfield, IL*

Like Jeremiah, I believe "God's plan is for peace and not disaster." My own faith and hope are getting me through this challenging time, and the goodness, care and attention of all, especially my neighbors, fills me with gratitude. St. Angela reminds us, "Have hope and firm faith that God will help you in all things."

*Mary Cosgrove
— Waterford, IRELAND*

"See I am making all things new." (Rev. 21:1-5) Every moment is the unfolding, the blossoming of this new creation. Seeing beautiful things, hearing music or listening to an uplifting conversation / This is HOPE.

*Regina Marie Fronmüller, osu
— New Orleans, LA*

I continue my ministry in pastoral care at a local nursing home here in Louisville. We are several months into imposed restrictions for our elders, the hardest of which are limits on visits with family. This challenges hope for them and for those of us working with them - yet it nourishes hope as well in seeing their resilience! The wonder of the indomitable human spirit! I also find support in phone and zoom conversations with family and friends. We must be creative in our connections, but those connections are vital.

*Mary Teresa Burns, osu
— Louisville, KY*

This year has tested my faith and hope as it has for many people. Within a few months, I lost my beloved grandmother, my husband lost his job, and I found myself in quarantine. I did not feel that I had the strength to carry the weight, nor did I see an end to this difficult downward freefall. To me, faith means having complete trust in God and I recognized that faith and prayer have always pulled me through. St. Angela's words motivated me and created a fire inside my heart to keep the faith: "Pray to God, humble yourselves under God's great power, because, without doubt, God has given you this charge, so God will give you also the strength to be able to carry it out, provided you do not fail for your part."

Shannon Culotta
— New Orleans, LA

"The hope we seek in Advent is the graced capacity to say yes."
(Christopher Pramuk)

I find hope again and again among those who say "yes."

Mary Sullivan
— New Rochelle, NY

This is certainly a challenging time for our world, so having faith that better times are ahead is more important than ever. The other day as we discussed Thanksgiving plans with the boys, they told us they would rather miss this holiday together than take the chance of not having future holidays together. It is in the concern and love of family, friends and coworkers that I find hope.

Ellette Gibson
— St. Louis, MO

Advent is a sacred time inviting us on a journey to prepare our hearts and lives for the presence of God among us, where we leave the place of our birth to journey to the birthplace of another. It is an invitation to renewal - to receive comfort and hope in the deep of winter, and be immersed in the eternal unchanging nature of God.

I find great hope in the Advent readings from the Book of Isaiah: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone." By using the symbolic power of candles on the Advent wreath, we illustrate this passage; we are awaiting the Light of the World and the Dawning of Hope.

Dr. Helen M. Wolf, Ph.D.
— Scranton, PA

I find hope in witnessing firsthand the faces of those who are food insecure as they receive necessary items, in those who organize food drives, in first responders receiving the gratitude of others, and in the resilience of our sisters who have been separated from us because of COVID.

Pat Schifini, osu
— New Rochelle, NY

Being principal of the Academy of Mount St. Ursula during this pandemic is quite a challenge. Only about 25% of our students come to school for in person classes, the others are full remote learners. Many AMSU students receive financial aid, and I am in the process of editing their thank you letters. All stress how this time inside has made them appreciate their families more and caused them to rely on God and faith to help them as they deal with anxiety and depression. Many express deep gratitude to the AMSU faculty and staff. The people at AMSU are what keep my faith and hope during this difficult time. It's AMSU's 165th anniversary year and I strongly believe that God, Angela and Ursula are steering our ship through these troubling waters.

Jeannie Humphries, osu
— Bronx, NY

In a time like no other, I've learned the joys of Zoom for meetings, connecting with friends, even spiritual direction. I've learned that there is an alternative to everything—the Amazon truck driver is my new best friend; remote tutoring a seventh grader in math is a challenge, but I love seeing her smile when she succeeds; we did Thanksgiving “takeout” where the people who usually come over picked up dinner from our front porch. I've learned that God wastes no opportunity to speak to the heart. I saw a review of *The Ignatian Adventure (Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Daily Life)* by Kevin O'Leary, and started the Exercises in May. There has been a certain calmness with the pandemic. It has been a surprisingly wonderful atmosphere in which to do the Exercises at home.

Clara Zahradnik
— *Wilmington, DE*

I have had the extraordinary blessing of being part of an on-going global zoom series by David Whyte that has focused on the conversational nature of the reality that is common to humanity, COVID 19. Through his poetry, David Whyte leads listeners on an interior pilgrimage. This situation can lead us to new doors that open around us in the midst of being shut down. The invitation to awaken to the possibilities of this moment is here, to “be new and newly alive” as he says.

Glenda Bourgeois, osu
— *Dallas, TX*

What gives me hope is that individuals are striving to use their own talents to help others stay safe and healthy in mind, body and soul during these challenging times. It's **Serviam** all the way! The vast majority of people are loving their neighbors in such a variety of unselfish ways.

Aurelia Weil
— *Fenton, MO*

“EVERYTHING IS RELATED “
(Laudato Sí #117): Like the Good Samaritan, when we are *affected* by another person or situation and give a personal and active response, we find ourselves transformed and take on what has affected us. We are reminded of our own vulnerability, and this opens us to something greater than ourselves. Life can therefore continue, and so can our way forward. This is what hope is all about!

Brigitte Brunet, osu
— *Paris, FRANCE*

We at Francis Place have been gifted beyond measure by our loving God! We have come through bouts of COVID with very mild cases. As time went on, fear was replaced with hope and thanksgiving. We are thankful for our faithful, caring staff, somewhat fearful themselves. It was with joy that each of us was told that we are now COVID free! Thank you for your prayer and many communications.

Susan Barry, osu
— *Eureka, MO*

ELEMENTAL HOPE: Last night, a cleansing rain.
This morning, a sunrise.
Tomorrow, strong winds bringing change.
Meanwhile, soil rests, awaiting spring sowing.

Mary Lapping, osu — St. Louis, MO

MSNBC gives me hope. Why? Because amid the cacophony of disparate voices out there, MSNBC is for me one voice of truth and reason. Some consider it “far left.” But I think Jesus would be a respected guest on “Morning Joe,” for example, with hosts and commentators questioning him and delighting in his answers. For those intrepid searchers and tellers of truth—journalists and reporters, these words: “Well done! I call you friends.” Indeed, the thought of Jesus on MSNBC gives me hope.

*Mary Troy, osu
— Dallas, TX*

I find hope in the faith of our parish members. A parish friend of mine and local funeral director brought me closer to the reality of the suffering in describing her work now. Her sorrow, compassion, and tears for the many dying and their families has profoundly affected me as never before!

*Rosemary Skelley, osu
— Decatur, IL*

Gratitude has sustained me throughout 2020. Whenever I become frightened or worried I count my blessings. One recent evening I was taking care of my baby grandson and toddler granddaughter. While rocking them they snuggled their little heads onto my chest and I could hear them peacefully breathing. I held their tiny hands in mine as they fell asleep. They remind me that God is in control and I’m so grateful for my blessings.

*Nanette Rice
— St. Louis, MO*

I am grateful for the gift of faith, and I experience the strength of hope. It is a very precious, hidden source in the heart to look into the future. I find hope in compassion, in positive and beautiful things happening, in silence, in the rosary, good sharings with different people, surrendering myself and reality to God, in being connected with those suffering much more than we do.

*Zorica Blagotinšek, osu
— Klagenfurt, AUSTRIA*

I drink in hope from the people around me - residents, staff, those who request prayers, some working extra shifts, the cheery voice any time of day, a frequent exchange of “thank you.”

*Ann Marie Owen, osu
— St. Louis, MO*

Have you ever heard the expression, “You’re not driving the bus; you’re just another bozo on it.” I first heard it while on a retreat many years ago. I am often reminded of it when I pray for God’s help as we try to navigate safely and sanely through this year of so many struggles. The expression helps me surrender my worries to my faith in Jesus’ promise moments before His Ascension, “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

*Russell Weil
— Fenton, MO*