

Heartbeats

The Company of St. Angela in the 21st Century

Vol. 6, No. 5

May 2021

St. Angela Merici, Woman of Unity and Harmony

These past months we have been reflecting on St. Angela as a Women of Unity and Harmony. In doing so, these words from Angela's Last Counsel have been guiding our reflections: "My last word to you, by which I implore you even with my blood, is that you live in harmony, united together, all of one heart and one will. Be bound to one another by the bond of charity, esteeming each other, helping each other, bearing with each other in Jesus Christ. For if you strive to be like this, without any doubt, God will be in your midst...See then how important is this union and concord. So, long for it, pursue it, embrace it, hold on to it with all your strength; for I tell you, living all together thus united in heart, you will be like a mighty fortress, or a tower impregnable."

We are grateful to our readers who have shared reflections on how they are hearing the call and the challenge to live Angela's spirit of unity and harmony in their own lives today.

Finding pockets of prayer throughout my day gives me Peace with the Listening Heart. Thus, meeting those in my marketplace, I bring ANGELA's spirit of Unity and Harmony.

—Regina Marie Fronmüller, OSU,
New Orleans, LA

"Be bound to one another by the bond of charity...God will be in your midst." We, with other Sisters from USA religious congregations, are experiencing this in Laredo, TX, as we welcome migrants who have been given temporary asylum. Our service is to connect them with their sponsors here in the USA. Even behind masks, their gratitude is seen in the smiles evident in sparkling eyes.

—Maria Teresa de Llano, OSU, and
Karen Schwane, OSU, San Antonio, TX

I have found these words of St. Angela a challenge as I engage in the political process which so often promotes systemic injustice, and to do so in a respectful manner is a challenge. I find that to be able to separate the issue from the person(s) is something I can only do with time for reflection and reevaluation.

—Mary Dostal, OSU,
Billings, MT

"Union and concord...long for it, pursue it, embrace it..." Our life has something of constant longing for God...we long for God, we pursue God, we want to embrace God. The closer we are to God, the closer we become to each other. The more united we are, the more "God will be among us," St. Angela said. It works both ways.

—Maria Małgorzata Woźniakowska, OSU,
Rome, Italy

We have learned much through the experience of the pandemic. With those around us we have learned to live in harmony and love realizing that we were thankful for our and their mere existence. Family prayer became more vibrant and in St. Angela's words living, existing and bearing with each other in Jesus Christ. This has been an experience united in heart.

—Rosa Maria Vida, Laredo, TX

St. Angela, I can understand that you need all your blood to ask us to grow in unity, harmony! Charity is a question of blood, of life given day after day. In the depth of my heart, I always feel the call of binding my own life to each person around me by the bond of charity. But at the same time it is always a kind of fighting because jealousy is at my door. So, please, Angela, give me the joy of building with each one and with your help a tower of love strong against violence, a tower for joy, peace and service.

—Brigitte Brunet OSU,
Paris, France

Our society is being hit by competition in various fields of life, division and segregation due to differences. We are called to faithfully strive for unity and harmony, to cooperate with people of different religions, cultures, histories, nations, etc. We are different in certain things, but we are sisters and brothers in the humanity we share. Our differences are to enrich one another.

—Mariana Ita Batmomolin, OSU,
Malang, Indonesia

For me, the isolation of this past year has certainly reinforced the importance of being connected. The challenge for me is to be connected to those who may be outside my normal sphere and to understand that we all have the same basic human desires for respect, happiness and love.”

—Ellette Gibson,
DeSoto, MO

Angela, blessed and consecrated, I hear the call of your challenge! What a joy to confirm your appeal! In our 21st century world, help us to grow in a singular, unique way, by our gestures - Just For Today - all of us, in every way!

—Margaret Mary Cain, OSU,
Alton, IL

I did not attend an Ursuline school, but the charism of St. Angela has been touching and guiding my heart since I was introduced to Ursuline Academy as a parent over 20 years ago. I have grown in my knowledge of and appreciation for Angela. Her deep understanding of the need to be bound together by esteeming, helping and bearing with one another – in Jesus’ name – speaks to me today in ways it has not in the past. The model she created so long ago is simple, yet increasingly challenging; and when we reflect upon and share her wisdom with others, we can more intentionally find ways to esteem, help and bear with one another. It is when we do this in Jesus’ name that the Holy Spirit can form our unity into mighty fortresses in our communities and our world, and to have so many connections with others devoted to continuing St. Angela’s mission is a profound gift.

—Michelle Hogan,
Wilmington, DE

As I write these words, I have the privilege of sitting beside Sr. Anne Therese Mayol as her breathing slows and pauses during what could possibly be the last night of her beautiful, fully given earthly life. Now that I am retired from the responsibility of salaried parish ministry, I have more time to spend each week visiting a different place where our sisters who need assistance are living and with members of the parish who are facing challenging personal and family issues. I recall Angela’s words, “From time to time visit . . .”

—Chabanel Mathison, OSU,
St. Louis, MO

For me the call to harmony is ringing loudly and clearly through the political and social unrest our nation has been experiencing over this past year. I ask myself daily, “What can I do in my small circle to encourage harmony among the people I encounter?” Sometimes it is as simple as a good morning greeting.

—Catherine Talia, OSU,
Brentwood, LI, NY

Jesus' prayer "that they all be one" and Angela's words "esteeming each other...bearing with each other" have haunted me during these years of political turmoil. Seeking unity, answering the call to healing and harmony, trying to bring together two polar opposite views of our fractured world continue to be such a difficult task. My conversations with friends and family "on the other side of the aisle" have led me to believe that our job is not to convince each other of the truth but to respect each other's unique journey to the truth. Allowing the longing for unity to reside deep in our hearts is, in itself, an unceasing prayer for healing and harmony.

—Kathy Collongues,
Hillsboro, MO

On Sunday April 18, having "distanced" for a year, our central Illinois Ursuline community came together at my home in Decatur for our community budget 2021-2022 planning meeting, a "creative" noon meal, and a lively afternoon reminiscing about our past six or so decades of Ursuline life. Angela's Last Counsel for unity and harmony was clearly reflected in our serious, joyful and even hilarious day together! Deo Gratias!

—Rosemary Skelley, *osu*,
Decatur, IL

Last fall, I joined a Zoom group whose members strongly identify with a different political party than myself in order to hear their opinions, stories, and the life experiences that shape their perspectives. I continue to meet with this group in respect and friendship. I also became a member of a national organization called Braver Angels whose mission is to depolarize American politics through grassroots organizing and respectful listening and dialogue. Our local group of Ursuline Associates has been meeting once a month to discuss our response to Angela's call for unity and harmony.

—Barbara Aston,
Moscow, ID

How did she do it? Angela's Church was in crisis; yet she was a loyal, loving member of the Church, intelligent, reflecting, far from naive. And I, today, in 2021, struggle to deal with and in a Church where a polemic of "we vs. you" attacks the very heart of loving relationships in the Body of Christ.

—Pauline Lorch, *OSU*,
St. Louis, MO

God of love, help me to love as You do!

—Loretta Kilby,
Hockessin, DE

Harmony comes from within; embrace your own strength and weaknesses, then you will see differences as a richness that creates beauty.

—Vero Andayani, *OSU*,
Surakarta, Indonesia

"Esteeming, helping, bearing with each other" continues to be a challenge in this time of pandemic. Enforced isolation and separation can mitigate against unity and harmony. When we are called to "bear with one another," it can be particularly difficult. Finding ways to show esteem and to reach out can bring us to communion with one another and Angela.

—Mary Sullivan, *OSU*,
New Rochelle, NY

I hear the call to foster a listening heart with which to truly hear others, especially those who see things differently than I do. "What you see depends on where you stand."

—Madonna O'Hara, *OSU*,
St. Louis, MO