

Founder's Day - November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018

by Dolores Senay, osu



**CELEBRATE      FLOURISH      NOW**

These words taken from our 2017 Chapter Logo speak to me of our festivities today.

We gather this morning to celebrate Eucharist where we enter closely into the love of Jesus, a love which draws us together. On this Feast of Christ the King we are also celebrating the Feast of St. Catherine of Alexandria on the very day St. Angela Merici, our Founder, chose to form her company.

Today we recall what began so long ago in the Renaissance period by an ordinary, daring woman, Angela Merici, who was willing to take risks to attend to the needs of her time. It began when this spirit-filled woman, while at prayer on a farm in Brudazzo, Italy, in 1504 had a vision, dream or we may think of it as a seed experience which was very profound and was to have a great effect on her life and the lives of her followers. It is not known exactly what the vision was but it was pictured as a ladder on which women, accompanied by angels, were ascending to the throne of God. Through prayer and discernment over many years the meaning of her vision became clear; that she was to found a new company of women, to work in challenging circumstances and needs.

In 1530 Angela the pilgrim, who as you well know, was not a-stay-at-home person, returned to Brescia from Varello, laid down her pilgrim staff and began to work towards her life's project.

It was not until November 25<sup>th</sup> 1535, over 480 years ago, that the seed planted in her heart took root and Angela gave birth to something new in the Church, which at that time was a bold and revolutionary move. Her beliefs were very different from the image of what Renaissance women should be.

On the feast of St. Catherine of Alexandria following the celebration of Mass, 28 women gathered with Angela to sign the legal document forming the Company of St. Ursula, which was her choice of name for the group. She envisioned her mission and that of her Company to be a presence of Jesus Christ in their world. This seed was to flourish and affect the lives of many all over the world. Angela not only changed lives but changed worlds by her Contemplative Stance, her love of each person she met especially oppressed women and children, and above all her strong faith.

Today we celebrate this story of our Founder, Angela, an adventurous woman with a vision, whose spirit lives in us, encouraging and inspiring us to be listening women, mobile, and flexible as we move on in our journey into that vision, struggling to understand the path that lies ahead in our time NOW knowing who we are and what we should do, being open to connecting with each other and to the needs of our time.

In the spirit of Angela, celebrating each other on this our special anniversary may her words and her Charism resonate with us today as they have echoed down through the ages.

We are grateful to the many women who have gone before us and left us such a faithful legacy. We celebrate our heritage and look with Hope and Trust beyond the obstacles and limitations which confront us.

We continue Now to Celebrate her vision with a strong desire to Flourish in whatever our future holds for us. We trust that the Spirit will continue to guide and direct us as she did Angela, sending us on new journeys into new visions. Let us look beyond ourselves to hear and be aware of the many needs of our world and the loud lamentations of our earth.

As we celebrate this our Founder's Day may all here present realize just as Angela did that:

All our dreams have no limitations  
Everyone is special in their own way  
We make each other strong  
We're not the same  
We're different in a good way  
Together is where we belong  
When we stand hand and hand we  
Make our dreams come true...

These words from the movie *High School Musical* say it all for me.

As we begin the celebration of Mass joining with all our Ursuline Sisters, Companions, Lay Community in Peru, Seeds of Hope, and you our friends here present and throughout the world, let us rejoice and carry Angela's spirit and vision to all, being grateful for our Past and Present and hopeful for our Future.

It's all about love.