

Good morning everyone and Happy St. Angela Day!

Today in the Gospel we read, *“Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, came to Nazareth where he stood up to read from the Prophet Isaiah...’the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God, the Holy one has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. [She, Ruah] has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, give sight to the blind, free the oppressed and proclaim that God is Love.”*

This was a profound, powerful experience of the Spirit. In that moment Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph and Mary had a glimpse of the **why** of the Incarnation- of why he became one of us. It was a moment of consciousness where he knew himself to be the Christ – the one who *“in the beginning was with God, was God”* - the one called to pitch his tent among us- called to proclaim a new Reign of Love - called so that we might know and see the Shekinah, God’s Glory present among us.

Angela had a similar experience as a young woman. After a morning of hard work in the vineyard, and I understand that work in the vineyard is very hard, Angela sought out a space where she could rest ... probably under a tree where eventually she dozed off. In Theresa Ledochowska, Volume 1 we read:

“Angela withdrew to rest and pray ... while dozing she had a dream... she saw heaven open and a glorious procession of angels and virgins advancing...” p.6

Like Jesus’ experience in the temple underlined for him the why of his Incarnation, so Angela’s dream, was a powerful experience of the Spirit, an experience that was pivotal to her sense of who she was – of who she was to become... of her call, her vocation. This experience I believe was the source of the confidence we experience in Angela – a confidence that gave rise to her great sense of freedom – of her ability to act and decide for herself. Angela was a woman governed by the Spirit. There was no great fanfare, no trumpets blaring, just a deep intuitive sense in the depth of her soul that the Spirit was with her, guiding her in every way. So much so that she urged us, her followers to listen, to trust the Spirit at work in our hearts. This vision, this dream, which I like to imagine as a great circle of women journeying together, supporting one another, was what determined the course of her life. From everything that I have read about Angela I don’t think she ever veered from this path, this belief that she was called to form a community of women. She may not have known **how** it was to happen she just knew it **was** to happen.

These powerful experiences of the Spirit are not given for the individual alone. They are experiences that call us to be for others. Jesus, as he experienced the power of the Spirit calling him *“to bring good news to the poor...to proclaim freedom for those imprisoned ... to give sight to the blind, to free those oppressed and most importantly to proclaim that God is Love”*, realized he

needed others to help him carry out his mission. And so he began to gather people -friends, disciples, the poor and the excluded. He formed community.

Angela, a woman rooted in reality, knew the dream was not just for her. She knew intuitively that if it was to become reality it had to have a focus and it had to involve others. Jesus knew that he was called to proclaim the Good News to everyone, and he chose to focus particularly on the poor, the oppressed, those on the margin of society. Angela chose to live and proclaim God's love to all those who came into her life, and chose, in a particular way, to proclaim it to women. She knew with all the fiber of her being that the seed sown in her dream would eventually become a great company of women. And so it did! This vision, this dream was to evolve over the years, into certainty and into action, into the Company of St. Ursula. This vision of her adolescence, of a Circle of Women, never left her. She knew that this Circle of Women, the Company of St. Ursula "*was chosen to spend itself in the work of announcing God's reign*". This dream, this vision is being realized today by us as we strive to live in community where together we are empowered to struggle for justice, freedom, dignity and equality for all especially women.

Angela, in her prologue, calls us to bring good news to one another – to respect one another, to love one another, to care for one another and in this way to become signs of God's Reign among us.

Angela experienced in the depth of her soul the power of the spirit in her, in her sisters and friends – the power of the Spirit at the Heart of the Universe. It gave her the unshakeable certainty that the Company was from God and that together we could do great things - for nothing is impossible with God. Angela's invitation to us today is to take time to reflect on our call to be announcers of God's reign of Love, to take time to reflect on those moments when we have experienced the presence and power of the Spirit within us - perhaps in a dream or while walking, or in the early hours of the morning as we slowly come awake. A moment where we know God is with us calling us to live with intention - to proclaim the Good News that God is Love. Angela invites us to, "*thank God heartily for having chosen us to spend ourselves in the work of announcing God's reign. This treasure is grace and inestimable blessing.*" Like Angela we are called to live passionately – with hope and courage. Like Angela, we know that the Creative Spirit present at the heart of the Universe is also present within each one of us – is the Spirit that moves among us today, holding us close, teaching us, comforting us. This is the source of our hope, of our freedom. And we believe that this Creative Spirit of the Universe is always with us –as Angela's spirit also is always with us -accompanying us on our daily living of our call to Love.

And so Angela, sister, mentor, friend - we pray: "guide every step of our sacred journey so that together we may create a future full of promise for all ..." St. Angela pray for us!