

Celebrating St. Angela Merici

"LIVE IN HARMONY, UNITED IN ONE HEART AND ONE WILL"

Our feast day celebrations of gathering, rituals, sharing, singing, eating, speaking of Angela's life and her influences on us will be different this year. We will be thinking of her with no less fervor in phone calls, reading about her, reflecting privately, "zooming" with others and as Angela says – ***"see how important is this union among you; for that reason long for it, embrace it, and hold on to it with all your strength."***

We each bring our own personal experiences to our thoughts of Angela- as Ursulines, as Companions, as members of Seeds of Hope, as students, staff and trustees of Brescia University College, and as members of The Mother St. Anne Lachane Society, Canonical Sponsor of Brescia. Therein lies the strength of which Angela speaks. She uses verbs – ***"see," "long for," "embrace," "hold on,"*** verbs that resonate in this 2021 as strongly as in her years of the late 1400's and 1500's. That's hard to believe!!! What isn't hard to believe is the wisdom she gave us in those words and the knowledge she had that they belonged to us.

Angela was a small but mighty young Italian girl who spent many years in search of her place in the scheme of life. She went on pilgrimages to find her place, she had strong, vivid dreams and visions to understand her role and she worked with many people to find her place. She chose a life much different than that of marriage or the religious life. After a very long time – in her forties, Angela realized her role was to gather women who would work with her in helping all those in any need in their community. These women lived in their own homes and came from all paths in life. Angela and these women – 28 of them in the beginning formed the Company of St. Ursula (a favourite saint of St. Angela). They met, spoke together and acted in their community to help and work to make better lives for everyone. Further events happened over time and they grew to be The Ursulines.

Each of us admires and has heroes among saints and famous people of the present and past. So what makes us see Angela as a hero and follow her? It is again how we know her in our own stories. We may live life in a special community of Ursulines, we may gather in circles of Companions and form bonds, we may carry on the strong work of Seeds of Hope with women of the country of Peru, we may be a student, staff or trustee of Brescia, seeing how Angela influences our values, and we may be a member of the newly formed Canonical Sponsor of Brescia and be learning about Angela. It is the power of each of our own stories that makes Angela live so strongly for us. She whispers to us, she invites us to live with values she and her "daughters" lived – cultivation of community, spirit of inclusivity, compassion, commitment to social justice and commitment to the dignity and potential of every human being.

Angela invites us to be conscious of those values in her name as we interact each day with every person and she promises to actually help us! – ***“You must understand that I am more alive than when on earth, and I see better and hold dear all that you do.”*** What a gift she has given us – to be able to commit ourselves daily with others of like mind and action to carry on her respect for and love of others and of our earth.

To really make Angela alive begs us to learn as much as we can about her, to engage in speaking with others about her, to find common ways to bring her example to all interactions we have. How satisfied we will feel as we act individually with the collective strength of others. It is easy to imagine Angela’s smile and those of the twenty eight women of the original Company of St. Ursula as they guide us with their presence.

We are especially challenged since last March to let ourselves feel Angela’s guidance as we deal with all the ramifications of the global pandemic in our own lives. Our world is full of poverty, injustice, inequity, disrespect for our earth, racial strife,... And yet when you read about Angela’s times of war, poverty, famine.... you will see her and her followers listen and affect the lives of people in Brescia to communicate with each other and to care. We don’t have to think Angela’s charism was unique - each of our personalities can be Angela’s to fulfill a positive connection to others in simple and complex ways.

So, let Angela whisper to us all every day as we take care of ourselves and all those we meet. Translate those whisperings to our daily tasks, no matter how difficult or large. Angela and all of us as her followers can make the path forward visible for each one of us and others.

HAPPY ST. ANGELA’S FEAST DAY!!!!!!!

With caring and respect,

Pauline Nanni

Barbara Fontana Companion Circle , London Middlesex

With the Musings, Thoughts, Writings, Remembrances:

Patricia McLean OSU

Theresa Campeau OSU

Theresa Mahoney OSU

Sheila McKinley OSU Come, Open Your Heart

Kathleen O’Mara OSU Homily for Foundation Day, Nov 25, 2017

Frances Ryan OSU – Angela Merici Lectures January 2003

Mary Cabrini Durkin – Angela’s Story

Legacies, Counsels , Rules of Angela Merici