

## ***Celebrating our Foundation Day November 25th, 1535***



Statue of Saint Angela in Desenzano Italy

Angela Merici lived in a time very similar to our own. Wars were raging everywhere, and the church, including some religious orders, was mired in scandals and corruption.

Transcending the disarray all around her, Angela, late in her life, and after embarking on several spiritual pilgrimages to the Holy Lands, Rome, etc., was able to summon the inspiration, energy and courage to call into existence a new way of living the gospel.

Breaking out of the mold of solemn public vows, uniform dress- habits- and cloister, she invited the women with whom she was engaged in all sorts of community and educational works to come together and form the first Company of Saint Ursula.

Living in their own homes or with those with whom they worked, dressing as usual, and making private commitments, the women agreed to meet once or twice a month for mutual support and spiritual sustenance and to visit each other whenever they could.

Angela's writings make very clear the innovative *modus operandi* and spirit of this new group: it was to be rooted in a profound respect for each person within a communal approach emphasizing harmony, unity and peaceful living.

In our turn today, may we too find the inspiration, energy and courage to be about the work of creating and welcoming the new expressions of consecrated life which are struggling to emerge in our contemporary society.

As we come together to celebrate may we, as Angela enjoined us, "comfort and encourage one another to be of good heart" as we face together the challenges of our own troubled times.

*Jean Ann for the Leadership Circle*