

Heartbeats

The Company of St. Angela in the 21st Century

Vol. 2, No. 7

November 2017

As we continue to explore St. Angela's contemplative spirit, we focus this month on discernment and gratitude.

We who treasure the charism of St. Angela know that her life was, at every moment, filled with awareness of God. Contemplation was her way of being, relating, and serving. With God as her center, everything in daily reality was an occasion of love, growth and grace.



That doesn't mean life was easy. After the early death of her parents and sister, she had to find a home. It took many years for her to discover what God was really calling her to do. On a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, she wanted to see the places Jesus had lived, but when they arrived, Angela was suddenly blind. None of these trying life experiences would shake her trust. Grounded in contemplation, she saw inwardly that God was with her in everything.

To have a contemplative spirit means to be a discerner. "Discern" comes from a French word that means "to sift." A discerner *sifts* and reflects on what's going on in her life, notices what brings peace, energy and hope, asks the Holy Spirit for guidance, and makes choices to move ahead with confidence.

Discernment is not only about making decisions. It's a way of being, of tuning in to God's Spirit. Alert to God's presence in both the ordinary and extraordinary events of life, one recognizes God's abundant gifts and is ready to share them generously with others.

This month, as we celebrate Thanksgiving and the 482nd anniversary of St. Angela's founding of the Ursulines (November 25), we might ask Angela to help us be more fully attuned to God with contemplative and discerning hearts.

"Above all, obey the Holy Spirit who speaks to you in your heart." (St. Angela)

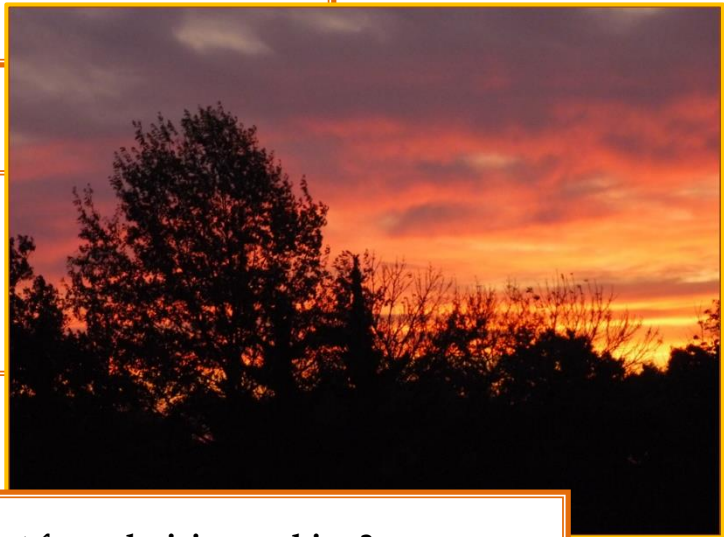
For pondering:

Discernment, like contemplation, involves paying attention to what is *of God* in our lives.

- What about *ME* is gifted and good, created in God's own image? How grateful am I for my personal blessings?
- As I *sift* through my life, just as it now is, where do I discover God's peace, energy and hope? How might this awareness be leading me?
- What distracts or prevents me from being more *tuned in* to God in daily life?

**If the only prayer you ever say
in your entire life is thank you,
it will be enough.**

Meister Eckhart



How is discernment different from decision making?

Sr. Kathleen Bryant, RSC, illustrates:

"Decision is the act of weighing the facts to see which choice is most reasonable, practical, convenient--a rational exercise.

Discernment is the act of listening to my deepest self, to others, and to God to see where I am being called to give, to love, to become.

Decision is something I go for!

Discernment is something God moves me to go for!

With decision, I choose now and go ahead.

With discernment, I listen carefully and am moved forward.

Decision is a choice about what I'll DO.

Discernment is a process about who I choose to BE."