

Heartbeats



The Company of St. Angela in the 21st Century

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St. Angela Merici, Reconciler and Peacemaker

With Easter opening this month on the 1st and the feast of St. Marie of the Incarnation, Ursuline missionary, ending it on the 30th, it's good to remember Jesus' words: "I am sending you. Go out and proclaim the Good News to all creation." His desire that all be one is mirrored in Angela's plea for unity, "long for it, pursue it, embrace it," and Marie's wish to go in spirit "to every part of the earth" to bring the Gospel. We also are sent to build communities of peace wherever we are.



Marie Guyart, born in France in 1599, felt called to religious life from an early age, yet accepted the arranged marriage proposed by her parents. Married to Claude Martin, they had a son, and six months later her husband died, leaving her a penniless widow. She went back to live with her father and raise her son while working for her brother-in-law in his transport business on the road and on the river Loire.

In 1631, she entered the Ursulines, taking the name of Mary of the Incarnation. In 1633, she dreamed of a rugged country covered in snow, realized it was Canada, and knew her missionary call. Leaving France in 1639, she arrived in Quebec with several companions. She learned the Algonquin, Iroquois and Huron languages to educate Indian children, whom she called "the delight of my heart." For 33 years she was a foundress, educator and pioneer in the evangelization of New France. Her writings reveal her mystical prayer and intense missionary zeal. "My heart spoke to God unceasingly," she said. Pope Francis canonized her in 2014.



"Marie and Angela are like two beautiful instruments of God vibrating in harmony. They did not meet in time but in their sense of being called, even urged, to spend themselves in service, they are kindred spirits. Both were pioneers in the ministry of women, ahead of their times. Both had unbounded trust in God. Both could be kind and tender, firm and courageous. Both respected the God-given personal freedom of others and knew the meaning and value of deep interior liberty. Both were gifted with discernment, which enabled them to counsel others and bring them peace.

Angela and Marie are our sisters of whom we should have the pride one knows for family. We can be sure of their love and interest in us. Each of us can aspire to respond to God's love in our own unique way. This love bonds us and makes us effective channels of God's creative action."

—Excerpts from writings of Sr. Elizabeth Ann Kearney, OSU

We are all sent to be the *face of Angela* today, to be *missionaries* of peace and reconciliation. Some, like Marie of the Incarnation, have also left home and country to bring this spirit to distant lands. Meet a few:

Sr. Patrice Clifford
(30+ years in Cameroon)

“I’ve resisted the traditional sense of the word ‘missionary’ as someone who tries to convert non-Christians to Christianity. In my experience with secondary students, including Catholics, Moslems, Protestants and young people who still follow traditional religions, I counted on God to help me give them a solid foundation in English and, especially, to realize how happy I was to be with them and contribute to their education, to sense that I loved them and wanted my love to reach all of them.”

Sr. Brenda Ferreira
(Currently in Venezuela)

“I have never thought of myself as a missionary, but yes, I have lived and worked for many years in countries other than the one in which I was born. To be missionary is to be pilgrim, to leave the comfort of the familiar and venture into the unknown. It often means packing up and moving out, travelling light, leaving behind, as one hymn puts it ‘the seeds that you have sown, the crops that you’ve grown, the people you have known, to follow Me.’ It demands an openness to new situations and cultures, the learning of another language and adapting to other ways of doing things. It sifts essentials from inessentials and opens one to a wider world. It’s an experience of personal growth – not without its pain – but with great rewards and with the assurance that Jesus is always there beside you.”

Sr. Margaret Mary Cain
(in Brazil since 1956)

“This song has been an inspiration since my teens: ‘I love life and I want to live and drink of life’s fulness, every moment must count. To glory in its sunshine and revel in its fount.’ My recent ministry has included the care of individuals in difficult situations. Adriana was two months pregnant, had no birth certificate and no prenatal medical care--the doctor refused to see her. I was able to help her use her baptismal document to get her birth certificate! Another 72 year old man had no birth certificate -- not a single personal document of any kind! For two years we made regular trips to the Municipal Justice Department to appeal to the judge to register him. The whole family is illiterate, having lived in a rural area. We now count on a certain lawyer to settle the problem, and this good-hearted man is confident that the defense of life will win out! *This is how the inspiration of Angela carries on today!*”



*“God has never led me by the spirit of fear,
only by the Spirit of trust and love.”*

—Marie of the Incarnation

To Ponder:

- How are you called to be *missionary* by bringing God’s peace to others?
- Which qualities of Angela and Marie of the Incarnation do you see in yourself? Is there one that you really want to develop more?
- Are there *missionaries*, at home or abroad, whom you’d like to encourage and support? Take a few moments to let them know this.