

Heartbeats

The Company of St. Angela in the 21st Century

Vol. 4, No. 1

January 2019

Happy 2019! As **Heartbeats** continues to focus on facets of St. Angela's charism and spirit, our attention for the next few months will be on **Angela, a woman in dialogue with the signs of her times.**

Sr. Martha Buser, a Louisville, KY Ursuline, offers her reflections on Angela in dialogue with her times:

"Angela Merici was a woman of her times and she was a woman in dialogue with her times. By this I mean that she did not flee her world but rather stayed in her world and brought the gospel message of Jesus to bear upon it. Likewise, we her [followers] remain in our world and try to bring the gospel to fruition in it."

Angela, it seems, knew and lived so well these words which would later be at the heart of the documents of the Second Vatican Council:

"The church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel... The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men, [women and children] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in our hearts." ("Gaudium et Spes", #1 & 4)

As followers of Jesus and of Angela, how are we called today to be in dialogue with our times? In his influential theory of education, Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) reflects that both reflection and action are essential to true dialogue. Is this not the same "contemplation in action" in which Angela's own life was so deeply grounded?

Freire goes on to say that "dialogue is an act of naming the world," in its reality and in hope of transforming it. Integral to this dialogue and transformation, he says, are

- ❖ a profound love for the world and for people;
- ❖ humility;
- ❖ faith in humankind;
- ❖ mutual trust;
- ❖ hope;
- ❖ critical thinking.

Perhaps these reflections offer a starting-point to our ponderings on Angela as a woman in dialogue with her times and our own call and response to be in dialogue with our own.

Continued →



Responding to the Signs of the Times

God of mercy and compassion,
We recognize the signs of our times
Through the affirmations of our Pope and our Church
Of the value of life and the human dignity
Of mothers, fathers, and children at the U.S./Mexico border,
Of all migrants and refugees around the world,
Of prison inmates on death row,
Of those who are “throw away” people at the margins,
Of all who struggle for decent housing and decent work.

God of mercy and compassion,
We recognize the systems and structures of sin
That impede human flourishing,
That deny people of their rights,
That put up barriers to voting and being heard,
That encourage racism and fear of the other,
That dismiss the value of solidarity.

God of mercy and compassion,
We recognize the signs of hope you send,
The willingness to stand up for the stranger,
The vision and commitment of our youth,
The call to end the death penalty around the world,
The new vocations to public service,
The growing sense of the common good,
The concerns and care for Creation.

May we all be engaged in the “continuing conversion”
To your way of justice and peace
As we recognize and respond with mercy, compassion,
Commitment, and solidarity
To the signs of our time. Amen.

(Jane Deren, Education for Justice, a project of Center of Concern)