

Heartbeats

The Company of St. Angela in the 21st Century

Vol. 4, No. 12

December 2019

Risking for Hope

In this issue of *Heartbeats*, our focus is on Angela, risking for hope, a fitting Advent theme. Angela's writings are permeated with hope. In the Prologue to her Counsels, we read:

*"Have hope and firm faith in God, for God will help you in everything."
"Act...move...believe...hope...you will see marvelous things."*

Angela's hope was active. Joanna Macy describes active hope: "This is about desire, knowing what we hope for, and what we would like or love, to take place. It is what we do with this hope that really makes the difference. Active Hope is about becoming active participants in bringing about what we hope." Our December *Heartbeats* focuses on how Angela's active hope is alive today.



Serviam Academy, Wilmington, Delaware

Peggy Heins, President of Serviam Girls Academy, describes its story:



In January 2006, a conversation about inner-city education

among Wilmington's Ursuline Academy colleagues sparked discussion on the formation of an Ursuline-inspired school for under-resourced girls. This group of dreamers turned founders had the audacity to believe that the larger community would be willing to provide for all children what they had always provided for their own -- a quality education designed to prepare for high school, college, and the workforce. Further, against the wisdom of any sound business model, this group of founders designed the school to operate almost exclusively on the largess of the greater community, believing that fundamentally, a community that upholds such educational ideals will also support the school that brings them into reality.

Early on, the audacity of Serviam's founders proved well-founded, as they raised the school's requisite two years of operating funds (\$1.6 million), set up a facility, and hired staff before Serviam Girls Academy opened its doors in 2008 to a pioneering group of 5th and 6th grade students. Now in its 12th year, Serviam

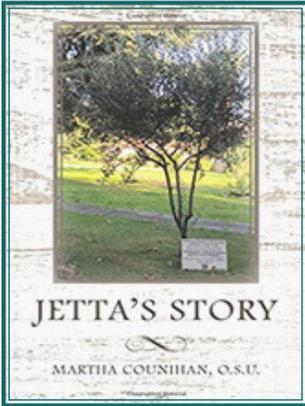
proudly educates 60-65 girls in grades 5 through 8 and supports 88 alums, 98% of whom are currently enrolled in or have graduated from high school. Further, over 80% of Serviam's college-aged graduates are enrolled in college.

At Serviam, every student is on scholarship and every operational dollar is raised through the support of donors and foundations. The benefits of Serviam's high-quality, safe, and productive outlets help prepare the girls and their families for high school and beyond, opening doors that may otherwise be inaccessible. At Serviam Girls Academy, risk and hope are intimately intertwined; the risk of relying on others to open our doors provides hope to those who walk through them.



The Ursuline Generalate in Rome: International Center of the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union

World War II



Sr. Martha Counihan, in her book, *Jetta's Story*, writes about 17 year old Jetta who with her seven year old sister came to live at the Generalate until the war ended in 1944.

Mother Magdalen Bellasis, then superior of the Generalate Ursuline community, welcomed Jetta and told her that the Sisters were already sheltering several Jewish families and Italian anti-fascists. An underground of women and men religious in Rome collaborated in sheltering thousands of hunted men, women, and children.

Mother Magdalen's diary of the war years describes in detail the privations that the war caused to the Ursulines and their hidden "guests" – bombing, hunger, "visits" of police, thefts, curfews, blackouts, etc.

Jetta's Story was published in 2017 using the diaries and archives at the Generalate and interviews with Jetta herself who has never forgotten her "mothers."

Today



In the fall of 2015 as refugees were flooding Europe, Pope Francis encouraged all parishes as well as religious houses to welcome refugees. Once again, the Ursulines at the Generalate responded. Presently, the Ursulines have an agreement to welcome refugee women long-term at the Generalate (1 year or more if needed). Another agreement with the Rome-based Community of Saint Egidio is in place to welcome the refugee families short-term (1 week up to 2 months.)

Sr. Maria Jose, from the Generalate community reflects that the Sisters have tried to find a balance between being available to help their guests and leaving them the space to grow and to have their own privacy. She shares: "At first the Sisters had a bit of fear related to respect for their privacy. All worked together to develop shared rules. All the fear went away, and the reality was far better than we had expected. We have shared daily life with great simplicity, and the community has had the opportunity to welcome refugees while sharing dinner or lunch, washing clothes, in the garden or a 'good morning.' Life has been simpler than all the fears."

The refugees share: "I was truly welcomed by the Sisters. Sr. Maria Jose always called to see how I was feeling." "Thanks to the year I lived with the Sisters, I managed to save some money to rent a house on my own where I still live."



For reflection

- In your own life, where has "risking for hope" been alive?
- Watch on YouTube "The Man Who Planted Trees" by Jean Giono. It offers a vision of hopefulness that our suffering planet badly needs.
- Consider actions you might take to accompany refugees "risking for hope."