

Heartbeats

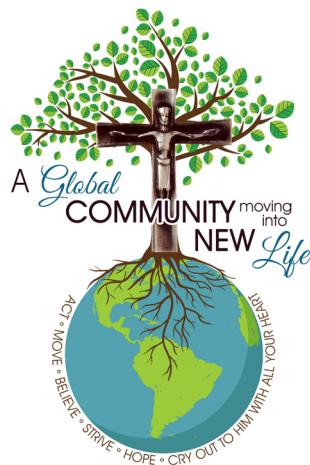
The Company of St. Angela in the 21st Century

Vol. 5, No. 4

April 2020

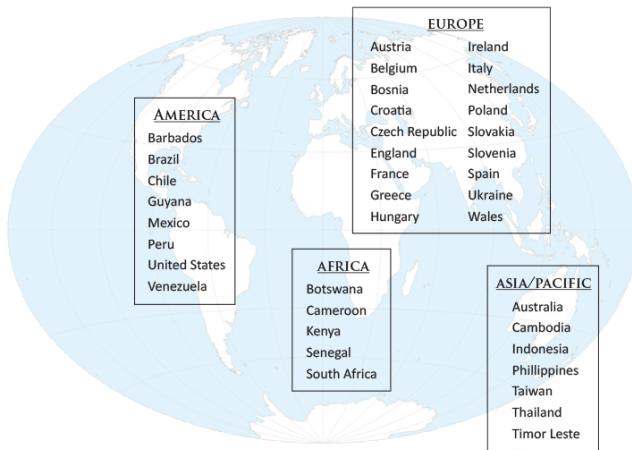
Angela's Charism of Hospitality

When Ursuline Sisters from around the world gathered in Rome for their 2019 General Chapter, they delved deeply into who they are as a global community moving into new life. Pope Francis encouraged them "to bring a breath of new life to the ends of the earth." Indeed, all who carry the Ursuline story share in this world-wide family, alive with the charism of St. Angela Merici. As we continue to explore the hospitality



facet of Angela's charism, we are reminded of the words of Ursuline Saint Mary of the Incarnation (whose feast is April 30), "in spirit I go around the whole world," and poet Rainer Maria Rilke's "I live my life in widening circles." Angela's dream has expanded over five centuries to many corners of the earth, and her spirit of welcome extends ever outwards. It is up to us to cherish and strengthen our world-wide communion today.

Ursulines of the Roman Union
and their collaborators today
serve in 39 countries.



Interfaith Education at
Ursuline Mater Dei School
in Thailand

Ursuline Mater Dei school in Bangkok, Thailand, welcomes a student body of 1,960 students, of which about 500 are Catholic, 10 Muslim, 20 Protestant, 20 Sikh, and 1,410 Buddhist. Read about this Ursuline ministry of education characterized by hospitality and respect:

<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/world/ministry/news/ursuline-sisters-thailand-exemplify-service-through-interfaith-education>

Reaching Out in Venezuela

For more than 55 years of its 65-year history, *Academia Merici* of Caracas, Venezuela, has committed to help another school, *Corazón de María* in Campo Rico, Petare, one of the largest and poorest barrios of Caracas. This “sister school” (how they refer to Corazón de María) operates two shifts, morning and afternoon, for 742 girls and boys from pre-school to high school. The relationship between the two schools is one of mutual help, hopeful solidarity, bridge-building between different levels of society, and supportive relationships from pre-school on.

Hospitality is offered daily with the 800 arepas (traditional breakfast for Venezuelans) made and distributed to all students, teachers and workers at Corazón de María. Before this initiative began, some students would faint for lack of nutrition. Now,



their health has improved; they are more enthusiastic and have a greater capacity for learning.

Students from Merici go once a week to practice SERVIAM, teaching English to pre-school and primary. All levels of Corazón de María, from youngest to eldest, come to Merici at least once a year to share their facilities for educational, sporting and recreational activities. Corazón de María does not have science laboratories, so high school classes share experiments with them. Mothers prepare breakfast for all to share together. At Christmas, parents of Merici contribute gifts for each child from pre-School to 6th grade, and some families personally deliver the gifts. In June, Merici students invite those of Campo Rico to a cinema to enjoy a film and share refreshments.



Continuing the Hospitality of Angela Where It All Began

Le Grezze is the name of the farm and house where St. Angela spent more than half her life. Nestled in the lovely hills of Desenzano in northern Italy, it has been a hallowed place of pilgrimage for centuries. (Click here for photos of Desenzano: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdbDAOk3MPc>). Ursuline Sisters Annunziata (Italian), Patrizia (Polish), and Marie-Bénédicte (French) live there and welcome individual pilgrims, families, school groups, religious and others who come from Italy or all over the world, as the “golden” guest book attests.

Visitors notice the house come alive as they cross the courtyard, walk from the well to the kitchen, enter the bedroom or pray in the chapel. Each space holds memories of *Madre Angela* for whom hospitality was so important and who continues to touch hearts. Guest comments include:

- *What a pleasure to discover this simple, sympathetic and radiant Saint.*
- *St. Angela, live in our hearts forever and protect our future.*

- *Teach us how to listen to the cries of the earth and the poor.*
- *May the Madre help us turn our eyes to the One she loved so much, Jesus.*

Hospitality continues outside, too, as the Sisters meet their neighbors in supermarkets, offices, or on the street. Struggling mothers, elderly, sick, lonely, widows, divorced, poor, immigrants and others in need are nourished by the kindness of this community of hospitality. Some are put in touch with other sources of help: Caritas, St. Vincent's, etc. The Grezze is located in the parish dedicated to St. Angela, and so the sisters also help prepare children for sacraments, share adoration and Gospel reflections, play the organ, and participate fully with the ecclesial community.



For Reflection:

- > How might you be called to expand the “circles” of your life and widen your hospitality?
- > St. Angela was known for her “piacevolezza,” a pleasant kindness that shows respect and gracious welcome to each person. Do you see this quality in yourself?
- > “Be hospitable to one another without complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another.” (1 Peter 4:8-10) What gifts do you have to be shared with others, including the least fortunate?

Happy Easter!

Our featured writers in this edition of Heartbeats were asked to share before the coronavirus became pandemic. In this time of global crisis, we join them and all in our Ursuline extended community to pray for God’s healing power, wisdom, and courage.