

# Heartbeats

## The Company of St. Angela in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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### St. Angela Merici, Woman of Unity and Harmony

*As Heartbeats continues to explore “St. Angela Merici, Woman of Unity and Harmony,” juniors and seniors at Ursuline schools reflect on how the schools strive, through their efforts towards diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, to create communities where being united, together in one heart (Insieme), and accepting each one’s differences with respect is a lived reality.*

“Sisterhood and *Serviam*” is how Chinue Kinsale describes unity at Ursuline Academy of Wilmington which allows students “to serve in their communities and around the world while connecting with each other.” The diverse student body at Ursuline Academy of New Orleans is taught from the early childhood program through high school to remain united through their diversity since they share more similarities than differences. Bailey Haynes recognizes and appreciates these differences which allow unique perspectives “to create a diverse environment full of culture and creativity.”

Ursuline schools ensure that efforts towards unity permeate the school communities in a variety of ways. The curriculum at The Ursuline School in New Rochelle “inspires students to speak out against injustice and bridge polarization with compassion” according to Hailey Dorsainvil. The World Religions class at Ursuline Academy of Dedham stresses the importance of recognizing and respecting each other’s differences while celebrating similarities. Maria Nader reflects on learning in class that, “Pope Francis’ *Evangelii Gaudium* emphasizes the duty of all Christians to engage in dialogue with those who are different from them.” Marcela Toscano says the Student Diversity Leadership Conference at Ursuline Academy of Dallas “has motivated us to continue to find ways to make girls of different ethnicities and backgrounds feel included and have a sense of belonging through things like global

week activities and the possibility of creating affinity groups on campus.” Annabella Ritter-Pleitez appreciates that the Diversity Conference encourages all to listen and appreciate each other in order to grow as a whole.

Chinue Kinsale and Hailey Jones reflect on diversity and cultural awareness clubs at the academies in Wilmington and Dallas which show respect for different cultures and celebrate ethnic events. They provide a place for important opinions to be expressed, an opportunity for people to grow and feel comfortable expressing one’s self, and encouragement for all to have a willingness to embrace each one’s uniqueness. Both the Diversity Team and Diversity and Inclusion Committee at Ursuline Academy of St. Louis, according to Josie Broun, “work closely with staff and students to facilitate discussions and information sessions to bring awareness and spark involvement within the school and the St. Louis community to make a real difference in the world.”

St. Angela’s spirit of unity and harmony continues to live throughout Ursuline schools where “the true value is placed not in conforming with one belief, but in acknowledging and inviting unique and differing perspectives. It is ultimately through this appreciation of diversity that Ursuline students will grow into perceptive and empathetic young women who are capable of mending the violent animosity which plagues much of our world.” (Hailey Dorsainvil)

## Strength of Unity

UNITY  
This word  
is  
like a cry from the heart;

Unity  
received and woven  
into every heart,  
for it is born of love, of course,  
in the caring  
of each person for every other person,  
but born also of the firm decision  
to desire, embrace, and hold it  
with all one's strength;

The sweet and gentle strength  
of the "one on one"  
in the  
"all together."

*"Living Angela Merici's Educational Vision"*  
The Ursulines of Trois-Rivières, Quebec, Canada

## Prayer for Kinship\* and Community

(Jane Deren, Ph.D.)

God of Light who moves us forward,  
You call us to kinship and community.  
In this time of growth and greening,  
We pray that we may grow  
In our compassion and care  
For all our sisters and brothers:  
Those around us at our tables,  
Those in all parts of our local communities,  
Those across our nation, in power or in pain,  
Those at our borders  
Seeking safety and solace.

May we be inclusive, and  
May our circle of care ever widen.  
May we practice being fully present,  
Listening with respect and attention,  
Especially to those at the margins.  
May we be moved to serve and to advocate,  
Seeking to create a beloved community,  
Where even the faintest voice can be heard.

God of Light, we give thanks for your call  
To kinship and community.  
Re-energize our spirits so we may respond  
And become part of the growth and greening  
of the people of God, building your kingdom,  
Healing the earth and welcoming all your children.

\*Thanks to Fr. Greg Boyle for declaring this call.

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UA New Orleans'  
celebration of St. Angela's  
Feast Day in January focused  
on Angela's call to "Live United."

*dreamstime*

## Reflection Question

As we approach the Lenten Season and consider the disunity we find in so many areas both locally and nationally, how do you hear St. Angela's call to live in unity and harmony in your own life -- truly bound to others by the bond of charity, esteeming and respecting others, helping others, and bearing with them in Christ Jesus?