

# 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 Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union, Angela's spirit of unity and harmony is at the heart of our identity and our mission. This issue of Heartbeats welcomes reflections from Sisters in our international Roman Union community.*



### From our Roman Union Generalate (Headquarters) in Rome, Italy

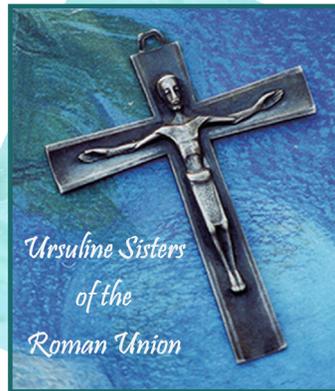
The words “unity and harmony” are found frequently in St. Angela’s Writings and she speaks them with urgency: “My last word to you, by which I implore you even with my blood, is that you live in harmony, united together, all of one heart and one will” (Last Counsel 1). We know that, in practice too, she was a woman of peace, a reconciler: Antonio Romano tells us how she was often requested to settle disputes among the citizens of Brescia (Nazari Process). This way of living, which we have inherited from her, is needed more than ever in our world today.

The Roman Union of Ursulines was born of a desire for union among daughters of Angela and from a readiness to act in solidarity.

Through the history of the Roman Union, the appreciation of the implications of internationality, of unity, and of diversity in unity has grown.

In my 20+ years of living at our Generalate, I have seen many expressions of our diversity in unity: in the visitors from all over the world who pass through; in the General Chapters and other international meetings where discernment, mutual listening and sharing lead to decisions for the future; in the renewal programs where sisters from many different countries build community together. All these experiences show a desire to know

each other better and to understand different cultures and ways of living Ursuline life. During these years, there has also been an increase in international and interprovincial communities where sisters experience in daily life what internationality and diversity really mean.



It is clear that there is a great appreciation of diversity in unity in the Roman Union: when we visit another province we might experience a different way of living and be enriched by it, but we experience also that we belong to the same family, that we have the same roots. This is also apparent to those with whom and to whom we minister and it is a sign, in our divided world, of the possibility of people of different

backgrounds living in union and communion.

The challenge today is to move from our understanding of internationality to interculturality, where my culture and the culture of the other(s) interact and where we see that both our cultures are enriched by this interaction. If we can develop this within our community life in the Roman Union, we will be able to give an even greater witness to the post-covid world, but it has to be done with intentionality; it requires an intentional commitment.

Pope Francis has made strong statements that after the pandemic it will not be possible to return to the past;

he calls on us all to build a new world of solidarity and interconnectedness, to come closer to one another. In the Roman Union, we have the challenge and the opportunity to use our internationality intentionally to model this solidarity and interculturality to a world in need of new ways of living.

“Loving each other and living in harmony together are a sure sign that we are walking the path right and pleasing to God” (10<sup>th</sup> Legacy 12).

*Armida Veglio, OSU*



## From South Africa

Each year on 24 September all South Africans celebrate Heritage Day in recognition of our cultural wealth and diversity as a nation.

It is a day for the ‘rainbow’ nation to pause and take time to remind ourselves about what unites us. It is an opportunity to reflect on our common journey as a people, and how we, together, can do more to build that South Africa of which our Constitution speaks so eloquently and for which we yearn.



It is about celebrating South Africa’s rich tapestry of people which the apartheid regime sought to divide and rule on the basis of race and our endeavour for Ubuntu, human dignity, human decency, unity and harmony.

It is about observing what unites us, what makes us stronger to withstand testing times, as we build a truly non-racial, non-sexist, united and prosperous nation.

Let us recommit to increasing our efforts to root out the ills still plaguing our society. These include:

- the violence which continues to cast a pall of fear on the people of our beautiful land – our women and children in particular;
- the inequalities still prevalent in our society: access to electricity, sanitation and water, education, employment, gender discrimination, housing, medical care, race discrimination, security, wages.

Let us also work together to change the environment which allows corruption, violence and other social ills to flourish.

We must become one another’s keepers, looking out for one another, not looking away.

Let us, united in our diversity, build that prosperous South Africa in which the quality of life of all is improved and the potential of each person is freed. We owe it to ourselves, to those who sacrificed so much to bring about our democracy and to the generations who will follow us.

*Diane Granger, OSU*

## From Indonesia

Indonesia is a predominantly Muslim country. However, other religions also have their place. Our Ursuline schools here are Catholic schools, but we welcome all students, whatever their faith. The students study together and enjoy their activities without considering what another’s religion might be. The students and faculty live in harmony and with respect for one another. We also encourage and provide opportunities to work together with students from other schools so that all have the possibility of meeting many different people. This is a way for our students to learn and to live tolerance. We are one in our humanity, all children of God, and part of the family of St. Angela.



*Moekti Gondosasmto, osu*