

Heartbeats

The Company of St. Angela in the 21st Century

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St. Angela Merici, Woman of Unity and Harmony

This month's *Heartbeats* on St. Angela as a woman of unity and harmony centers around the theme for Earth Day 2021, **Restore Our Earth**. After her initial reflections, Sr. Mary Lapping has invited her colleagues and friends from the St. Louis Intercommunity Ecological Council to share their reflections on this theme.

Angela Merici was a woman who embraced the diversity she saw around her. As a Renaissance woman she had remarkable breadth of vision, encouraging her followers to get to know others and to learn as much as possible about them. "I ask you to take all. . . into account, having each and every one deeply fixed in your hearts and minds, not just their names, but their background and character, and everything concerning them" (2nd Legacy).

Angela knew that she lived in a web of life, indeed, that her life was very dependent on the others in the web. She encourages us to recognize that we can actually do more, be more, by being united and by being mutually supportive and helpful. "Live in harmony. Be bound to others by the bond of charity, treating each with respect, helping all, bearing with all" (Last Counsel).

It is this attitude of openness and mutual respect that draws us into a deeper awareness of the community of life that supports us. I believe that for us to "restore our Earth" we must be aware of the web in which we live and without which we cannot live. As we become increasingly engaged with this wider community of life, we will make the changes necessary to restore what has been lost or damaged.

—Mary Lapping, OSU

We will help to "Restore Our Earth" when we replace coal, gas and fossil fuels with alternative sources such as solar, wind and biogas. "The earth is God's" (Ps24:1) and to God belongs "the earth and all that is within it" (Deut 10:14).

(Mary Pat Rives, RSCJ)

Given the truth that everything is connected, it is my hope that all my/our connections are conscious and generous enough to help mend and heal what we humans have allowed to be abused.

(Martha Jaegers, OP)

"Restore Our Earth" means reaching out to the entire Earth community with love, actions for healing, Earth-based spirituality, desire for intimacy, and practice of mindfulness.

(Maxine Pohlman, SSND)

Restore Our Earth challenges us to an asceticism of letting-go of a whole lifestyle of consumption that has been written into our DNA as Americans.

(Denise Sausville, RSM)

Picture again the images of the attack on our Capitol Building on January 6, 2021. See the vandalism, the violence, the disrespect, the mess left for others to clean up. I think about our beautiful Earth, our home, the planet that sustains us all. I have participated in the destruction, the vandalism, the looting, the disrespect. Picture the landfills, the dying ocean life, the violent storms, fires and flooding. In the midst of all this there are those who see more clearly and urge me to find new ways to restore our Earth.

(Jeannine De Clue OP)

Earth is a “storehouse” of wonders, now depleted and devastated by the greed and carelessness of our human species. As we clean our air and water, restore healthy soils for vegetation, and preserve safe, natural ecosystems for all animal species, the entire community of life on this living planet will again clearly reveal the faithful divine presence.

(Paulette Zimmerman, SSND)

At the time of a sister’s funeral liturgy and burial, we have a tradition of singing “This is Holy Ground” when the procession gets to the cemetery. While one might draw the conclusion that the ground is holy because this is where our ASC “cloud of witnesses” are laid to rest, I think that the meaning has to be broader. It is not just about the “cloud of witnesses” but about us, the living. God has entrusted to us 450+ acres of precious earth—how do we honor its sacredness each day?

(Barbara Jean Franklin, ASC)

Restoring our earth means to support and unite with those who are actively supporting, defending, and renewing our earth. I am in spiritual connection with the earth people (the aboriginal people) who are struggling to preserve their surroundings and therefore ours. I am connected to all those who are planting trees and working to renew our earth and soil and waters as I care for my yard and garden.

(Roberta Hudlow, SL)

I have always believed that my presence at any place on this earth was to be left “a little better than when I arrived.” I strive to make as little of a footprint wherever I am. I encourage others to do the same.

(Jan Stocking, RSM)

Restoring our Earth means working towards restitution—to return and give back to Earth. This is a collective “human vocation” to which we are all bound as incarnate beings; a summons we heed for the survival we need.

(Diza Velasco)

Restore the earth means restoring the integrity or equilibrium of Earth’s ecological systems—
Restoring hope for the future
Restoring dignity to the suffering and poor
Restoring a sense of awe and wonder of all God’s creation.

(Cheryl Kemner, FSOLPH)