

Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart

Angela Merici

Living Legacy

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Heart to Heart continues its focus on St. Angela's creative spirit. This month we share reflections and art from several visual artists on their own experience of the creative process and how they experience St. Angela's creative spirit at work in them.

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We begin with a reflection from Annette Zobel. When Annette, then an art teacher at Ursuline Academy St. Louis, was asked to design and create a statue of St. Angela for the school's outdoor piazza, she immediately said, "Yes!" But once she had accepted this challenge, she knew she needed help. What was this sculpture going to look like? She began reading everything she could find about St. Angela, studying other artistic images of her, and talking with Ursuline Sisters and others who were grounded in St. Angela's life and spirit. Eventually she was ready to sit down with her notes from her study and from her conversations with others. Annette shares with us how the process developed from there:

"My conclusion? Angela was a pretty neat person. But how was I going to make a sculpture out of words written on a piece of paper? Was I in over my head? I decided I needed more help. I started talking to Angela. I asked her to use me as a vessel to create an image of her, to use my hands to create her image. Sometimes my prayer sounded more like a plea for help. 'Help me, Angela – I really don't want to embarrass either one of us.'

I tell you this story because I was asked to share how I came to know Angela. The truth is I am not exactly sure how I came to know her. But I do know that somewhere in the process of creating a model of her, she became a model for me. She is a model of a woman I want to know and to be like. To me, Angela is:

Strong in her conviction,
Graceful in her movement.
She is not still.

Grounded in earth,
Rooted in nature,
Reaching out to the world and to heaven,
Her branches continue to grow
Through her mission of *Serviam*
To all.

She is spiritual and alive.

I like to think that Angela's own vision was the seed for the sculpture that has grown and now stands in our school's piazza.

To quote Angela's own words: '[D]o your duty...with love and charity...and NEVER CEASE TO CULTIVATE THIS VINE THAT HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO YOU.'"

—Annette Zobel, St. Louis, MO



Angela Statue
designed/sculpted
by Annette Zobel

We continue with reflections from three current visual arts teachers in Ursuline schools:



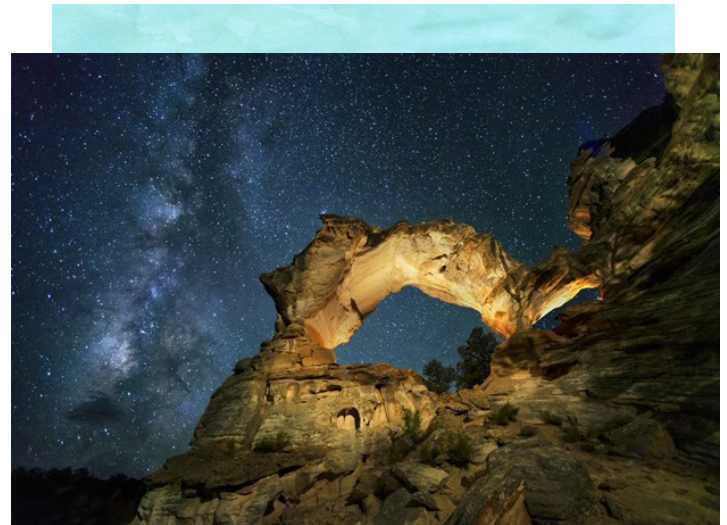
“My community inspires me as an artist: other artists, students, culture, neighborhoods, the collective trauma and joy shared by my fellow human beings...Observing how others are present in their world using the lens of empathy and vulnerability fuels my passion and direction for any given project. Weaving my memories from growing up in Queens, New York, to my life as a social worker treating abused children through art, to my current journey in New Orleans as an art teacher. I am constantly learning and engaging in new opportunities to attend a workshop, museum, or summer art course. I delve into new mediums that challenge me as an artist. God is at the center of my artistic compass and challenges me to see the beauty of my world in all circumstances and spaces. Angela’s spirit of movement and change lives in my ever-evolving creative process. Risking new things and experimenting, being fearless and persistent like Angela would be the best ways to describe my approach to creativity.”

—Maureen Cremaldi, Ursuline Academy, New Orleans



“I am inspired by landscapes, particularly the sculpted landscapes of the Southwest. I am also inspired by mundane objects of utility and purpose, finding beauty in places not normally associated with beauty. It seems I am always on the lookout for what (I think) is visually beautiful. I am inspired by the processes I choose to make art: photography and various forms of printmaking. I seek inspiration by looking at what other artists do, and I also find inspiration through teaching and sharing with my students. I receive support for my creative endeavor from Ursuline Academy of Dallas. My most recent professional development was a Utah workshop on star-scape photography. I experience St. Angela’s creative spirit throughout. Her perseverance: to reconcile the adversities in her life; to utilize and refine her God-given talents; to hear and answer God’s calling later in life, is a story that inspires me, with faith and hope – in both God and in myself, to continue seeking God’s purpose in me.”

—Bill Thompson, Ursuline Academy, Dallas



Photograph by Bill Thompson, www.billthompsonphotographic.com



“I have been teaching at Ursuline for 42 years and I have experienced St Angela’s creative spirit guiding me in my work over the years in different ways. When the school or the Ursuline Sisters would hand me a creative art task, often I would know exactly the design I wanted to do to accomplish this creative task, whether it was designing a program, a shield or a design image for a pamphlet. However, sometimes, the inspiration for the design just would not come to mind, it eluded me. I would sit and ponder, worry on the design, and then I would pray to St. Angela to help me. I would allow St. Angela to take over, take control of my hand and guide me. And then, the idea for the design would come to me, it was her creative spirit that guided me. There are so many times I have called on St. Angela’s creative spirit to help guide me through a creative process. Whether I am teaching students to obtain a deeper dive into developing ideas for themselves or developing ideas in my own work, I always have known St. Angela is looking over my shoulder in approval. I feel her presence as if she is standing there and I remain open to her guidance. When helping a student through a difficult or challenging time in her young life, I read the words of St. Angela’s *Counsels* and she has never failed to guide me. In my personal experiences, as a teacher, an artist, and a member of this wonderful Ursuline school, I have been guided by the St. Angela’s creative spirit in all I do. She will continue to inspire me.

—Leah Schlieff-Freese, Ursuline Academy, Dallas

Visio Divina

Visio Divina is a way of praying with art. You might wish to choose one of the images shared in this newsletter or another image of your choosing and use the following guide for your prayer:

- **Pray** in quiet with your eyes closed. Bring yourself towards stillness.
- **Gaze** at the image. Let your eyes rest on the characters and objects. Note your feelings as you examine the whole and parts of the work.
- Gaze at the work again. **Imagine that you are in this scene.** What do you see from your vantage point? What do you hear? smell? sense?
- **How is the sacred present** to you in this experience?
- How does this **Visio Divina relate to your life** now?
- **What insight** from this experience do you want to retain? How will you do that?
- Complete the Visio Divina by offering a **prayer of thanksgiving.**

<https://carfleo.com/2016/04/06/visio-divina-praying-with-art/>



Mixed Media by Regina Marie Fronmüller, OSU

For more information about the USA Roman Union Ursulines
— who we are and what we are about:

www.usaromanunionursulines.org