

# Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart



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*In past years, our Heart to Heart team has shared reflections with you for the Sundays of Lent and Easter Sunday. This year we are using our February and March issues of Heart to Heart to offer you some Lenten reflections. The focus of our February issue is "Prayer and Fasting in the Spirit of St. Angela." The content is adapted from a booklet of monthly reflections shared by the Ursulines of the Roman Union in 2007 in preparation for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Angela's canonization.*



**D**uring Lent, we focus on the spiritual practices of prayer and fasting. How fortunate we are to have Angela who has much to teach us about **prayer**, and about the fasting that supports and accompanies prayer.



We learn from Angela that prayer is about a relationship with God. She speaks of Jesus as *the One who loves me, or rather, loves us all*. She tells us that *our only refuge must be at the feet of Jesus*, that he is to be our *only treasure*. Angela's special relationship with Jesus gave rise to a prayer that was living and constant. A mystic and a contemplative, she had extraordinary prayer experiences, but she was also immensely humble in her prayer. (*Last Counsel; 5<sup>th</sup> Counsel*)

In Chapter V of the *Rule*, Angela speaks to us of prayer: *You are reminded...be diligent in prayer, both mental and vocal, which is the companion of fasting... Pray unceasingly with mind and heart because of the continual need we have of God's help*. She also says: *If you wish to pray at length, go into your room, close the door, and pray in the way and for the length of time that the Holy Spirit and your conscience dictate*.

This Lenten season, in your own prayer, *beg God to enlighten you, direct you, teach you what you have to do for love of God*. (*cf Counsels, Prologue 7*)



Ask yourself:

**What is my relationship with Jesus? Is He the center of my life?**

**What is my prayer like? What is my next step to grow in prayer?**

As to the **fasting** that accompanies prayer, Angela instructs her followers about fasting in Chapter IV of the *Rule*.

*Each one must embrace* this practice of fasting. That means I, in imitation of Angela, must *embrace* fasting. Do I? What is God asking me to fast from? Angela tells us that *we should want to*. She teaches us that it is a *necessity*. *The whole life of Jesus*, she says, *clearly invites us* to fast.

Jesus modeled deep prayer and fasting in the desert as he prepared for his ministry. Can I imitate him as I serve others in his name and for love of him?

Angela invites us to fast as a way of praying for our world and its struggles. The fasts she names are many, but in her usual way she encourages us to fast wisely. She does not excuse us from fasting, but she indicates the need for thoughtfulness and prayerfulness in our choices.



**What am I being called to fast from?**

**What situations (personal, local, global) call for my intense prayer at this time?**



*St. Angela, please intercede for me this month.*

*Like you, I want to be a person of genuine prayer.*

*I desire a deep love relationship with the God who first loves me.*

*I hear your words about the value and necessity of fasting.*

*Let me be open to this message.*

*Continue to teach me, daily, as you taught your first followers.*

*Pray that I have the strength and perseverance to be faithful to what I hear.*

*Let me, like you, follow the prompting of the Spirit for my life.*

*Amen.*