

# Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart



Now that we have moved into the Easter season, our April Heart to Heart focus turns to the theme of Easter JOY! We are happy to share with you excerpts from a reflection given by M. Colette Lignon in 1997 when she was serving as Prioress General of the Roman Union Ursulines. Today she is residing in her home province of France/Belgium/Spain. We also include some Easter thoughts from Pope Francis.



## The Joy of St. Angela

M. Colette Lignon, OSU

[The] invitation to joy threads its way through all the writings of St. Angela; it is a keynote of her spirituality, and she seems to have used the entire range of vocabulary possible to express it:

joy	<i>gaudio</i>	happy	<i>beati</i>
gladness	<i>allegrezza</i>	joyous	<i>lieta</i>
jubilation	<i>giubilazione</i>	contentment	<i>contento</i>
consolation	<i>consolazione</i>		

It is not that she knows nothing of the pains and difficulties of the route. She is too much a realist not to know them. But she has the firm and unshakeable certainty that if we try to live [in a close, personal relationship with Christ], “not only shall we easily overcome all dangers and adversities, but also, to our great glory and jubilation, we shall defeat them. We shall even spend this very short life of ours in consolation, and our every sorrow and sadness will be turned into joy and gladness” (*Rule, Prologue, 25-27*). St. Angela returns to this paschal experience in the 5<sup>th</sup> *Counsel*: “Although at times they will have some trouble or anxiety, nevertheless this will soon pass away and be turned into gladness and joy” (29).

### Where do we find the source of this joy of St. Angela?

Without any doubt her vital, vibrant experience of having been chosen to be [in a heart-to-heart relationship with Jesus] is that source. “Be willing first of all to

recognize what such a thing implies, and what a new and astonishing dignity it is” (*Rule, Prologue, 8*). Angela struggles to find words forceful enough to express her wonder, her thankfulness for this gift, so singular and so absolutely unmerited. A genuine amazement runs through her writings.

This amazement leads to a total, radical response. Angela gives everything, she hands herself over freely, completely, with impetuous joy. She will walk with decided, consistent, realistic steps, attentive in seeking and desiring “all the ways and means necessary to persevere and make progress to the very end” (*Rule, Prologue, 10*). And all the realism of her love is what St. Angela expresses in her *Rule*. She is a woman concrete,



true, simple and direct in her love. She takes no detours, proposes no half-measures, is not divided. In her, everything is lucid and clear.

Her jubilation springs both from her amazed admiration at the love with which Christ first loved her, and from the perfect clarity of her response – a jubilation which she wants to communicate to all...

In closing, I would like to invite you to contemplate the icon of St. Angela, Pilgrim (see the image above on page 1). The progression of colors mounting toward a joyous brightness invites us to keep before our eyes the blessed goal of our pilgrimage: the heavenly Jerusalem, “city where all together become one,” and where the Lamb will be our lamp, our “joyful light.”

Angela precedes us and walks with us, calm, serene, clear, sure.

Her very last words, in the last *Counsel* as in the last *Legacy*, are again words of joy:

*“Encourage [them] to continue courageously the task they have begun. And at the same time, rejoice, because without doubt, what I say to you will be so.”*

—Last Counsel, 21-22

*“Rejoice, go forward willingly...Be consoled; do not doubt...Persevere faithfully and joyfully in the work you have begun.”*

—Last Legacy, 14, 17, 20

---



---

## Easter Thoughts from Pope Francis

“The dominant sentiment that shines forth from the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection is joy full of wonder, but a great wonder! Joy that comes from within! And in the Liturgy we relive the state of mind of the disciples over the news which the women had brought: Jesus is Risen! We have seen him! Let us allow this experience which is inscribed in the Gospel also to be imprinted in our hearts and shine forth from our lives.

Let us allow the joyous wonder of Easter Sunday to shine forth in our thoughts, glances, behavior, gestures and words...If only we were so luminous! But this is not just cosmetic! It comes from within, from a heart immersed in the source of this joy, like that of Mary Magdalene, who wept over the loss of her Lord and could hardly believe her eyes seeing him Risen.

Whoever experiences this becomes a witness of the Resurrection...”

### For Prayer and Reflection

*How do I experience and share the JOY of the Risen Jesus?*

*How can I be “a witness of the Resurrection” in my own life and relationships?*

