

Angela Merici was born March 21st, 1474 in Northern Italy a little over 25 miles east of Verona, the famous setting for Romeo and Juliet. Even as a child, Angela took her faith very seriously. At the age of 9, she made a vow of virginity and asked her older sister to do the same. Tragically, her parents died the following year. An uncle welcomed the two sisters into his home and tragedy struck again. Angela's sister also died suddenly and unexpectedly.

One day while alone in the fields, Angela experienced a vision that put her mind to rest about the eternal fate of her sister. "The heavens opened and angels and young women came toward her singing a melody, surrounded by light. One of the young girls was Angela's sister and she spoke, telling her that God wanted her to establish a company of consecrated virgins."ⁱ

When her uncle died, Angela returned to the hometown she knew from early childhood and opened her home as a school to teach the faith. The school was very popular, and Angela was invited to open a second school in the neighboring city of Brescia.

In 1524 at the age of 50, Angela made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land that only strengthened her faith. In Crete, she was suddenly blinded. She continued on her pilgrimage and was cured on her return while praying before a crucifix at the same place where she had lost her sight only weeks before. Angela continued to teach and draw others into a life of holiness by her personal example.ⁱⁱ

In 1535, Angela chose twelve virgins to start a new religious order known as the Ursulines. Angela founded the new order in honor of Saint Ursula, a virgin and martyr from the 4th century. Mother Angela and the Ursuline Sisters helped to teach others about Ursula and her virgin companions who all gave their lives for the faith in Cologne, Germany.ⁱⁱⁱ The Ursuline Sisters were the first teaching order especially devoted to poor young girls. They sought to evangelize families through the education of future wives and mothers.^{iv}

"Angela died on the 27th of January 1540 at Brescia and was buried in the ancient church of Saint Afra (now Saint Angela's sanctuary), where she still rests. She left 150 spiritual daughters."^v After Angela's death the Ursulines grew rapidly establishing communities in France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and in the new world.

In today's gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the sower and the seeds. Angela's lifelong concern for young women demonstrates a love that wanted no seed to fall on rocky ground. Her success in teaching the faith, helped many a child to grow in their love of God thirty, sixty and a hundredfold.

In her own way, Angela Merici was also a sower of seeds. She is often quoted for these words of wisdom:^{vi}

- Do not lose heart, even if you should discover that you lack qualities necessary for the work to which you are called. God who called you will not desert you, but the moment you are in need he will stretch out his saving hand.
- Reflect that in reality you have a greater need to serve [the poor] than they have of your service.
- We must give alms. Charity wins souls and draws them to virtue.
- You will accomplish more by kind words and a courteous manner than by anger or sharp rebuke, which should never be used except in necessity.

ⁱ saintangelamerici.org/stAngelaMerici.html

ⁱⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-ursula-and-the-virgins-of-cologne-27

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} Ordo, January 27.

^v saintangelamerici.org/stAngelaMerici.html

^{vi} vaticansite.com/10-quotes-by-saint-angela-merici/