



# URSULINE EDUCATION



# THE TRUNK



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### **Core Values: Whole Person Education**

To develop an understanding of the core values of Ursuline Education, it is helpful to use as a framework the concepts related to the study of culture. These core values form and define the culture present in our Ursuline schools and institutions.

The core values of religious education and the spirituality of St. Angela Merici, a curriculum integrated with Christian values, academic excellence, social consciousness/service, the development of the whole person, personal care for the individual, and encouragement of women as leaders are the essential components of our Ursuline educational culture. This paper is focused especially on the development of the whole person. A good approach for the understanding of this value is borrowed from the anthropological study of culture. This approach uses a two-pronged perspective, the “emic” perspective which is the interior viewpoint of a culture, and the “etic” which is the external perspective. In discussing the development of the whole person we can use the lens of intrapersonal development as the “emic” perspective and interpersonal as the external or “etic” perspective. These two perspectives combine to form a holistic view of the complete person. Both perspectives must be developed to form a balanced and well-adjusted individual.

Beginning with the “etic” perspective, the external or interpersonal aspect of development of the whole person focuses on the following areas:

- The development of interpersonal skills and relational skills. This value would cultivate a sense of belonging to family, church, school, community and other social groupings.
- Psychological and emotional wellness.
- Physical development of the person in the areas of physical education, health, fitness, sports skills and sportsmanship.
- Ethical development which would foster a sense of caring for and love of others as lived out in voluntary service and commitment to the well being of others.
- The development of skills and qualities necessary for attaining a chosen career is another essential element in the exterior growth of the person.
- The intellectual advancement of the person, fostering the knowledge, skills, intellectual acumen and talents to enable the person to engage in professional work and become a contributing member of society.
- Aesthetic development, another essential component to the development of the whole person, so that the artistic abilities, creativity, imagination and appreciation of art, music, poetry, literature, drama and dance can be encouraged, for the development of a well rounded individual.
- Development of leadership and the skills needed to guide, lead and motivate others.

This completes the characteristics of the “etic” perspective. The other side of the development of the whole person focuses on the “emic” or the interior side, the character of the per-

son. This encompasses the inner world of the person, involving faith formation, the contemplative aspect and the character development of the person. This is the development of one's inner values, sense of self worth, self esteem and interior persona, most important for the future success and well being of the individual and society in both the private and public spheres. Interior development emphasizes the qualities of faith, integrity, honesty, virtue, generosity, consideration of others, humility, responsibility, selflessness and other attributes which constitute character. Another aspect includes an ability to recognize and appreciate differences in one self and in others.

From this awareness and acceptance of differences flows an appreciation and recognition of the diversity of the world in which we live. This quality also contributes to a global awareness, appreciation of other cultures and lessening of bias and ethnocentrism.

The development of the whole person should also foster an awareness of meeting students "where they are" and encouraging in them their sense of self confidence, self discipline, responsibility for one's actions and the acceptance of responsibility. In tandem with an acceptance of responsibility the person must be encouraged to make decisions based on truth, integrity, empathy and the common good.

In conclusion, it is the core value of the development of the whole person which serves as an umbrella to encompass the other core values of Ursuline education. All touch in some way the development of the whole person. This harmonious development of all dimensions of the human person is the culture we strive for in Ursuline education. Development of the whole person is essential so that our students can learn, acquire virtue, and seek truth and a broad base of knowledge and a solid understanding of, and a living out of, their Christian faith. This sentiment is stated so well in the letter to the Ephesians: *I pray that according to*

*the riches of his glory, he may grant that you be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. (Ephesians 3: 16)*

Elizabeth B. McAdams osu

United States



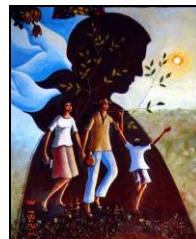
### **Ursuline Education: Education for Life**



(1) *One day old*



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)

In reflecting on our Ursuline fundamental values in Education, in our own cultural context today in our country of MEXICO, we need to focus on the value of LIFE.

We are experiencing in our country, as never before and all of a sudden, a devaluation of LIFE. Laws are being passed accepting the right to abort, the children's abductions in order to sell their organs, trafficking of women and killing almost as a game in the north of our country. But it is not just happening in our country, nor is it happening without the participation of other countries.

Our Ursuline Education is a means of Evangelization by defending the value of Life and promoting its integral development towards its completion: life that begins, as valued, as a joyful experience; life that is created by God, life that is the gift of Christ's resurrection.



So how can we be educators of a child as it begins to know what the gift of Life is all about? (1)

St. John the Baptist said of Christ *that I may decrease and He may increase*. Humble simplicity is a basic attitude of the Ursuline Educator whether working with children, adolescents or adults or helping to form new educators.

On the feast of the Epiphany we read in the Gospel that the wise men had to find out where the Child was born. They went to Herod who said to them: *find out about that child and let me know*. Yes, we too have to find out about our children or adolescents or adults ... who they are, where they are today, what are their needs, where do they want to go and where do we need to lead them. (2) We can't educate without the integration of the family in our process and programs of education. The parents, more and more, need to be involved in the education of their children and in the education of the true value of Life itself.

What a surprise it was for many migrant worker parents to see in a documentary of life before birth that the unborn baby already looks like a human being from a very early moment of its development and how it moves; it sucks its thumb and can hear the voice of the mother quite soon.

Parents, who understand and appreciate the value of LIFE, will be interested in the integral development of the baby. They will cooperate both in school and in the home in their child's growth. (3)

Today we need to understand our world, what values it presents to our students, and to parents, so we can guide them towards the true values that we have learnt in the Gospel and in the Counsels of St. Angela. The value of LIFE and the value of Community.

Following St. Angela (4) and the values she has left us: Love, the Person, Freedom, Joy, Hope, Unity and Peace among others, we are invited to become: **Servants of the Spirit**.

As Ursuline Educators, we are invited to SERVE (5): first of all, the parents who should be the first Educators of their children, the new human beings, as they prepare themselves to be born and as they begin to live among us, in this world. We are here to help to bring forth the truth that is within and to help it develop.

Today more than ever we need to realize that we are not alone in helping the development of children, and that we need to be contributors to the development of all children by defending the gift of life and the rights of children wherever and whenever we can do so. When we educate, we are revolutionaries since we are turning things around, which is the meaning of revolution, and we are contributing to the building of a more just and peaceful society.

To become an educator or to form educators following our Ursuline tradition we need to develop: **Love and Knowledge**. These characteristics deal with the **how to be** and the **how to act** = loving and knowledgeable.

We can set up a list of the main abilities that we need to develop to become educators in this sense: to become a person who

- loves life and sees life as a joyful experience
- is committed to nature, others, and to a sense of transcendence
- likes to search for truth and is a life-long learner
- is capable of being silent and therefore in peace with him/herself
- is creative, flexible, and open minded
- can listen patiently and is simple in manner and in communicating

- is cheerful and warm towards others and has a good sense of humour
- is not looking to work in school as an escape from dealing with other aspects of the world
- sees students as positive beings
- is humble, acknowledging that the student has his/her own inner guide
- can perceive the student as “a glass half full rather than as half empty”
- sees the child/student on his way to be, rather than already formed or deformed
- accepts the student as a legitimate other, no matter how different he/she may be
- is capable of relating as one who desires to be with, who observes and responds, who accepts *to diminish so that the other one may grow*
- we could almost say, is in the process of becoming *a scientist and a saint*.

**Life**, a central theme in this kind of education, can be considered as the process of awakening, of becoming AWARE of ourselves, aware of everything around us and aware of our place in society and in the universe: aware of our role in the development of the human race and of its future; awareness of our mission in our own life: that is, to find what I need to do in my life **as a mission** not only as a job. As we become more and more aware, our experiences become a way of seeing reality, and a way relating and communicating. Experience and language are both main elements of CULTURE.

**Culture** is a way of seeing and of communicating, therefore of relating with reality. We do not see reality as the other one sees it. We do not speak as the other one speaks. We do not relate as the other one relates.

**Education** has been a way of transmitting and modifying culture. But our Ursuline Education is an approach to education based on Angela’s way of discerning the signs of the

times and thus based on a somewhat scientific and Gospel way of observation, which respects what is observed, and tries to see the truth within.

Through **Observation** we can learn to see as the other one sees, and therefore respect differences, and relate more peacefully. We must learn to observe not only the object, not only the action, but the inter-relationships, knowing that all in life is change and that we are assisting the development of persons who throughout life go from a relationship of dependence to independence to interdependence.

- Relationships of dependence that can lead to slavery.
- Relationships of individualistic independence lead to anarchy.
- Relationships of domination lead to oppression, disorder, and violence.

Interdependence is the relationship of the parts within a whole in a systemic holistic manner. The outcome is order, cooperation, harmony, and PEACE. Through harmony we can attain true inner freedom and build community.

I believe that our main characteristic as an educator should be, first of all, that we have freely chosen to become an educator as a contribution and a service to society, to the future of the human race, and to build PEACE, through JUSTICE. For this we need to learn to develop two main characteristics: **PRESENCE AND TRUST**.

**Presence** is the ability to BE there, right there and nowhere else, in the presence of the other, the parent, the other staff member, the student, whoever is in front of me. To BE, here and now, to be responsible, capable of responding because I am present now.

**Trust or confidence** means being confident and trustful both of myself and of the person in front of me, especially the young child; trustful that there is an inner guide that is helping him/her to grow to his/her own full potential. I am there not necessarily to be a model

to be copied, not even as a guide, but to respond, and to accompany.

Education is in itself an act of trust: trust from the parents who leave their child, adolescent or young adult with me; trust from the Directress in the School, who, finally is responsible; trust in society which expects me to help to develop creative and responsible citizens.

The child needs to have complete confidence that he/she is safe in my presence and that the giftedness within will be respected and allowed to develop. Thus I need to create a safe environment where all feel **SAFE and WELCOME**.

One of my students, working among very poor children in Peru, told me: “our environment needs to be like an **oasis** in a world full of suffering and violence”. It is through this ability to concentrate, **to be totally present**, that we help the other to develop attention and concentration, which is the essence of any approach to education. It is in this ability to be present and to trust, that we are capable of recognizing, accepting and respecting what is different, and at the same time capable of knowing, through love, what my response should be in order to assist the student in the right way at the right moment.

The **Formation** of such an educator needs to follow the same pattern. We need to be present and responsible: being there, focused and capable of responding to the needs of each student. For this we need to trust their own development so that we can then help them develop their own ability to be present, fully responsible, and trustful of their own self-development. We all learn better through our own experiences rather than by listening to someone else’s experiences.

For the development of the students preparing to become educators, in my 30 years of contact with training centers, I would say that the best experience I had was the training of

Mexican migrant workers in the state of California in the United States. Besides a fully-prepared environment with all the children's activities, there were also activities for the adults, and we saw the difference they made. The activities were:

1. beginning with an assignment of writing a 10-page autobiography guided by about 10 questions, to help them become aware of their motivations for wanting to become an educator and of their own process of development.
2. beginning and ending with 15 minutes of silence: training for developing attention, concentration, and respectful observation, and, in the afternoon, to make a synthesis of what insights they gained that day.
3. what is called interactive listening to classical music which we use today both in training educators and also with the children in Kindergarten and Elementary school; for the same purpose mentioned above.

In all our formation of educators we must stress the need to become a very joyful person, full of love for life, so that he or she can witness, before the new human being, that LIFE IS AN EXPERIENCE WORTH LIVING, in spite of suffering. Life being the greatest free gift that we have all received.

As a Mexican native poet, Nahuatl, said:

**Only once do we live,  
Only once do we walk on this earth,  
Only once do we exist,  
Walking among the flowers and the songs of life.**

And I would add:

**And we, who are “servants of the Spirit”  
Of the creative Spirit within the human person  
We help to develop the capacity to choose: Life or death.**

Carolina Gómez del Valle osu

Mexico



## **The Fundamental Value of Merician Education The Education of the Person as a Whole**

Among the fundamental values of Merician education, the education of a person in her entirety has a central place. Let us start by returning to Angela and be attentive to her words and to her way of living relationships, then we shall stop briefly at our educational tradition and we shall finish by highlighting three ways that are offered to us in order to work for the education of a person in all the facets of her identity.

### **I – Listening to Angela and her way of relationship**

Deeply rooted in God, Angela acquired an interior stability which gives her a great liberty to take persons and circumstances into account and adapt herself to them.

#### **a) Humanity and solicitude in relationships**

Angela's entire life was a humble working life: in the fields of Desenzano or domestic work in the houses where she found a home. This simplicity of life made her accessible to all. She was available to all kinds of different people<sup>1</sup> who knocked at her door or whom she met

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<sup>1</sup> See L. Mariani, E. Tarolli, M. Seynaeve, *Angela Merici, Contribution towards a Biography*, Ancora Milano, 1986, p. 170-175



on her way. She allowed the other with their trouble to burst into her life. She was close to each person, listened to them, accompanied them adapting herself to their pace and their needs. She spoke to everyone from her heart and offered a word of consolation, advice, opening the way to hoped for peace, giving life. Deeply human, Angela helped everyone to reach their deepest humanity, their true identity.

Through the testimony of her life and her Writings, Angela gives very concrete means to care for others: to know each person personally with all their characteristics, to pay attention to their human and spiritual needs, to hold them in consideration and have them engraved on your mind and heart one by one and all together, to have recourse to tenderness and kindness rather than to rudeness and reproaches, to be moved by the love of God which helps us to discern what is good for each one, what leads us to be human, kind and gentle and at the same time courageous and vigorous, benevolent without being afraid to be sometimes firm and demanding<sup>2</sup>. It is about developing a quality of relationship, which is attentive to the person, treats the person with respect and sensitivity in order to promote life and growth.

**b) Trust in the human person and in what she carries within**

Angela invites us to *hold* (the other) *in consideration* (Second Legacy, 1), to *consider each one as good* (Seventh Counsel, 19). This helps us to discern and to see each person as Angela did. She invites us to look beyond appearances and she bases this on the fact that all are children of God and that nobody knows what he wants to make of them (Eighth Counsel, 1-6)

Angela invites us to have a deep respect for the freedom given by God to all, refusing

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<sup>2</sup> Angela Merici, Writings, Ursulines of the Roman Union, 1995, see especially Second Legacy, 1-4; Fourth Counsel,1; Counsels Prologue, 11; Second Counsel, 3-5; Rule Prologue, 29-31.

any inclination to constraint: *And above all, be on your guard not to want to get anything done by force, because God has given free will to everyone, and wants to force no one, but only proposes, invites and counsels.* (Third Legacy, 8-11).

This request of Angela is rooted in the importance that she gives to the individual conscience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit<sup>3</sup>. Angela considers conscience as a sure guide. This leads her to trust to each one and is expressed in the freedom left to the other, in great sensitivity and humility in the exercise of authority, choosing rather encouragement and discretion in order to allow the other to develop who she is and accompanying the other on their personal journey<sup>4</sup>.

**II – In the course of our history this human quality in relationships has blossomed into an educational tradition expressed in very different ways.**

Angela's deep humanity and the delicacy of her counsels blossomed into a rich educational tradition. Today, *education for the sake of evangelization is the special form of our mission.* (Constitutions 94). After several centuries when the teaching of Christian doctrine and the school were the places where Ursulines carried out their mission, today, according to the situation, this *share in the educational mission of the Church* (Constitutions 99) takes different forms: schools and catechetics certainly, but also students' hostels, human and spiritual accompaniment, spiritual centers, chaplaincies, medico-pedagogic institutes for young or adult disabled people, solidarity and educational projects with the young, participation in educational associations, centers of basic education and human promotion, dispensaries, orphanages, parish services, work for the promotion of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

In all these places, Ursulines and lay people in mission in the Merician spirit want to ex-

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<sup>3</sup> Rule Chapter VIII, 8, 16

<sup>4</sup> First Counsel

perience a profound attention to the human dimension. This is expressed by:

- the development of the meaning of the human person in uniqueness and attention to their personal journey,
- the will to create, in the places where we live and carry out our mission, a climate of human and evangelical simplicity,
- the choice of being available and finding ways to welcome every person, with a special care for the poorest,
- vigilance that our relationships are simple, marked by goodness and trust, respect for conscience and freedom,
- the provision of personal accompaniment.

In all this, we are the posterity of Angela. In fact, by the quality of her relationships *she reflected in a unique way the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour* (Constitutions 79), she led everyone towards what was best in themselves and sometimes, one or another was opened to discover the Lord. All this human dimension constitutes *a vital part of our announcing Jesus Christ*. (Constitutions 100).

### **III – What are the ways offered to us to develop this education of the whole person?**

#### **1) The way of humanity, a way of evangelization**

When we look at the challenges of the contemporary world, marked by globalization and secularization, we see the importance of paying attention to the human person and to relationship. Following in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth and of Angela Merici, our way of envisaging the mission should be founded on the human quality of our relationships.

This relational capacity can mature in our heart when we allow ourselves to be transformed interiorly by Christ, Jesus' way of being in relationship progressively transfiguring

our own. In this way, humanized by Christ, we will be pushed by the Spirit towards others, desiring that each one, and all together, have life in its fullness. Our interest in each human person will lead us to weave ties with all kinds of people in the different contexts in which we find ourselves. Through the path of companionship, through the quality of our presence, we will be able to awaken young people and accompany their growth. Starting from lived experience, through dialogue full of respect and friendship for them, we shall be able to help them take a new look at themselves, to discover their aptitudes, to recognize their limitations, to free themselves of their fears in order to grow gradually in confidence, so that they will dare to risk being themselves.

If this is a challenge for everyone, it is even more so for those who live in a situation of violence, suffering or exclusion. We are called, in a very particular way, to become close to these people and to let them know that we are there for them so that they are not afraid to ask help of us. At their request and by our friendship, we shall be able to accompany them step by step towards the path of life, to help them to persevere in adversity and to accept what they have to experience, then, perhaps, to regain hope and gradually pick up their life again.

In this way the mission, through a human approach, allows each unique person to be open to life. From this will result a pluralist humanity, rich in the gifts and contributions of each one. In this perspective, the mission is first to share the life of our contemporaries.

In this relationship, with its slow journey to maturity, some people, touched by this experience of new life in them, will desire to move towards a more articulate faith: our explicit word of the Gospel and Jesus Christ will then be inscribed within a relationship, on the basis, first of all, of this human experience.

Through suggestions and initiatives we can encourage an encounter with Christ and

accompany the awakening of a life of faith. This is basically about giving the opportunity to live the Gospel with others, inviting them to evaluate their experience and through this to let themselves recognise Jesus Christ present in the heart of this experience.

This can take different forms:

- a suggestion to read the Gospels with others and to learn to pray from the Bible,
- finding opportunities to encounter those who have experienced life with Christ,
- an invitation to live a commitment of solidarity in a way adapted to the age and the life journey of each one,
- a suggestion of an experience of church with others from different states of life, involved in different aspects of church,
- making known the meaning of the sacraments and suggesting preparation for them with others.

These possibilities will allow the development of links with Christians, the discovery of the plurality of the ways of faith. These encounters can be inspiring and awake in certain people the desire to go further in friendship with the Lord, to join those who follow Christ and to become disciples in their turn. We can support those who have already started to grow in faith on their journey towards a unification between a confession of faith and everyday life and we can help them to persevere. These stages will perhaps lead some towards commitment as an apostle, taking on a commitment in the name of the Gospel.

The human quality of our relationships will thus allow us to accompany each one in their personal faith journey – faith in life and faith in Jesus Christ – and to discern what we can suggest according to the stage they are at. This will lead us to open many different possibilities, many different doors to enter by so as to reach everyone with their own personal and

ecclesial preferences, with their expectations and aspirations. Our human encounters are thus the door through which they can come to an experience of encounter with God.

## **2) To make heard the call to happiness**

Our contemporary world has an intense aspiration to happiness, to a full life. Mass consumerism, extreme sports, new religiosities, hyper-stimulated affectivity, and met mainly on the register of the ephemeral, all this might stifle the real desire of humanity. Following Christ, we must proclaim people “happy” and announce, like Saint Angela, that the thorny paths will be blossoming for us<sup>5</sup>. We are called to help to discover a happiness offered to all even now.

Recognising this vocation to happiness supposes that we are also committed against all that distorts what is human.

First of all, let us be near to the most excluded and go to their school in order to enter their way of seeing the world *from below*.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps this will fill us with wonder at their force of life, their ability to fight against adversity. In contact with them, we shall learn to understand the history of the world as a giving birth to a new life, we shall enter into hope.

Our mission consists also in awakening consciences against injustice, in rejecting the spiral of violence, in taking part in the struggle for justice, and this not only on the international level, but also in our relationships nearer home. Let us think, for example of situations among pupils of the same class, where contempt, abuse of power and marginalization can exist and must arouse our vigorous commitment. So, it is not a question of denying present difficulties, but to develop a quality of presence to people, which gives credibility to the promise

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<sup>5</sup> Rule Prologue, 27

<sup>6</sup> According to D. Bonhoeffer

of life in its fullness.

Nevertheless, this is not sufficient. It is also necessary that everyone hear, from the interior of their own heart, this “happy” pronounced by the Father on their life and dare to believe that the promise of life in its fullness will be fulfilled. In order to encourage this interiorising, we must create, in our school and in our educational structures, spaces where young people can tell the story of their life or the more painful episodes, when their journey was especially chaotic, spaces where they learn with guidance to discover that their own growth and that they are able to traverse obstacles. We will be able to accompany some until they make connection with the Pascal experience of Christ. At one particular moment, the person becomes capable of believing that they are called to happiness, that their life is beautiful and unique. This gives strength to continue the journey.

This wonder at one’s own existence opens the door to an education in esteem and respect for human life. Helping to discover life as a beautiful and precious gift strengthens the freedom of each person and invites them to take the responsibility not to destroy life, but to protect it and help it to blossom (in us and around us). Such a word is very necessary in our society where so many young people have difficulty finding the meaning of their existence, are tempted to suicide or indulge in destructive practices and other dangerous games. Our sensitive presence with these suffering young people will undoubtedly contribute to helping them recognize that God values the life of every person.

### **3) Create a dynamic of creation; enter the dynamic of the sower**

In their lives both Christ and Angela were part of the dynamic of creation, the dynamic of the sower. The sower of the Gospel (Mk 4: 1-34) sows with an extraordinary generosity, with an unshakeable trust which already sees the harvest, which believes in the strength

of life in the seed/‘Good News’, whatever the obstacles. Neither Jesus nor Angela put themselves into the dynamic of control. They are open and allow themselves to be filled to overflowing, to be moved by the Holy Spirit. If it is good for them to be rooted in the tradition which precedes them, it is with freedom, audacity and realism, in order to open ways to new life.

Following them we are called to listen to the contemporary world, to look at it with respect and with clarity in order to discern new challenges and calls, to let ourselves be pushed by the Spirit, to sow abundantly, to be free to leave the forms and structures that have become obsolete, to risk boldly for the sake of the Gospel, daring to continue to advance, even if the complex reality does not make easy reading. So, life will circulate, without our knowing, growing and awakening still unknown capacities for new life.

So our mission is similar to the act of creation: it aims at opening up a person, it wants to serve the life which grows in everyone and among people. For this we must create an atmosphere of freedom and trust, encourage the bonds with all of humanity and of faith, work in collaboration with diverse bodies in the service of the human and spiritual growth of young people and of those who come to us.

We should also think of inviting them to become authors and actors in their own existence: suggest meetings with witnesses who can inspire young people, invite them to make personal choices, invite each one to make their own synthesis between culture and faith without imposing a prepared answer, challenge young people to trust and to go beyond themselves. Probably we will have to support newborn initiatives, help them to cope with fear, invite them to be patient and good to themselves.

Our fundamental disposition, ours also, to be on our way, desiring God and a life



more consistent with the Gospel, will put us in solidarity and close to every person who desires life, to every believer who seeks God. We are all in labour, giving birth. There, in our mission of education, the Gospel is being incarnated.

In conclusion. We have just highlighted one of the fundamental values of education in the Merician tradition. Our mission is revealing itself as a way of marrying the love of God for human persons, his respect and his goodness towards each one of them, his zeal to approach them and find his happiness with them<sup>7</sup>, so that nothing really human, nothing that touches the poor especially, leaves our hearts indifferent<sup>8</sup> and that the encounter with others awakens in us the desire that all together, we may have life in its fullness<sup>9</sup>.

So, our mission calls us to take the way of humanity, with particular attention to our ties, until we discover God who emerges from within our human histories and relationships. Each one of us can thus look with confidence at our own world, at the present age, a look of confidence and hope and see a promise of happiness and of encounter with the Lord, whatever the challenges that face us.

Laure Blanchon osu

France

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Wisdom 8: 29-31

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World, n°1

<sup>9</sup> John 10: 10



## Values of Ursuline Education in Senegal

### Introduction

We are used to talking about Saint Angela's many human qualities which make her *a woman of her time for our time*<sup>1</sup>, gifted with pedagogical qualities rare at her time. She put at the center of her concern the human person of any age or social condition. In her writings and according to what history teaches us about her, we can see certain characteristics, even if she did not have any academic diploma which would make her as we call nowadays an "Educator".

The core value of the Merician educational tradition can be seen from different aspects, according to our context. In the African context we will present aspects relative to person to person relationships, the meaning of "insieme", joy, the tradition of giving to each one the opportunity to reach the height of their abilities.

We will make a tour of the landscape looking at the educational experience of Ursulines in SENEGAL. It is a short tour in comparison with the centuries of educational experience of Ursulines across the world. Nevertheless it is rooted, innovative and liberating for

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<sup>1</sup> Title of a booklet by Marie Seynaeve osu on Saint Angela Merici, edited by the Ursulines of Sénégal.

those who have benefitted from it. This journey is a little ambitious but it leads us to meditate on social and cultural facts, which respond positively to the needs of the people that Ursulines lived beside in the “Collège”, in their boarding schools, clinics, their Centre of promotion, in parish pastoral work and in movements of Catholic action...

## **I –Person to person relationships at all levels**

### **Adult-young person relationship**

When we consider the relationships between adults and young people, we spontaneously think of what they have in common: education. It has its influence in the family as well as at school. It puts people of different ages in relationship. This concept of “education” is the object of several definitions but we mention only one from Emile Durkheim, 1911. According to him *Education is the action exercised by adult generations on those that are not ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and to develop within the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states required from them, by political society in its entirety and by the particular surroundings to which a child is first of all destined*<sup>2</sup>. We note that education is a matter for the whole group, for a community, for the collectivity. The group takes care that each one has a profile corresponding to the expectations of the group to which they belong. In this context, the adult-young person relationship is made concrete. The adult helps the young person to open up and educates him/her for liberty and for love<sup>3</sup>. Through a series of “exercises” the young person can grow and assume their responsibilities in society.

It is not rare to hear from the alumnae of the “Collège Sainte Ursule” in Thiès details of their good memories. Nothing has been left to chance: secular subjects as well as religious

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<sup>2</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Education and sociology*, p.411

<sup>3</sup> Theme of the General Assembly of the OIEC which took place in Dakar, 1990.

subjects, leisure and time for different services which increase generosity, singing and outings...in the schedule prepared for pupils: before classes at 8 a.m. and at 3 p.m., during recreation time, at the end of classes, during free time and weekly evenings at the boarding school. It is a kind of search for a balance in the life of a young person which would facilitate interaction and participation.

In traditional African life, the relationship between the adult and the young person is also educative. A young person learns a lot from the adult who prepares them to become adult in their turn. This happens through endurance at the initiation ceremony and through the ability to listen and to observe. It comes from an age of models to follow, where each one's role was defined by the positive norms of behaviour, in order to make a success of their life. We valued youth.

The image that we liked to give to young people was an identity, not split up but coherent, and fidelity to what one believes, to what is true and beautiful. Bonds and forms of socialization were chosen with a view to the growth of the person. We built unity on solid foundations and not on the dispersion with which many young people cope nowadays. Religious values provided an ethical and cultural framework for different parental and generational roles.

Nowadays *the obligation of personal realization, which results in the preoccupation of self as a central value, is felt everywhere*<sup>4</sup>. The consequence is that integration in the group becomes more difficult. Personal aspirations come first. According to Rémy le Guingou, a sociologist, *the Self you would like to be*, takes the place of *become what you are*. When the relationship between the adult and young person is broken, we can see that building a positive

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<sup>4</sup> Alain Touraine, *Sciences Humaines*, HS, September 2001 – in *Economy & Humanity*, n° 367, December 2003

image of self replaces integration within the group. The models proposed are very different from those of our time. Here, everyone wants to resemble modern heroes: young, beautiful, active, without any fetters. Even in our villages, we meet young people who are drowning in these illusions.

Adults can do a lot for young people and vice versa. But it takes concrete steps which address all generations. They can share history and memory, wisdom and trust on the one hand, strength and spontaneity, creativity and joy in life on the other. In this way we can facilitate the coming together of the generations.

### **Adult-adult relationships**

In the educational context we see several situations related to relationships among adults. On the one hand, they concern educators between themselves and, on the other hand, educators and parents of the pupils. In certain structures, these relationships go well. In others, there is much to do in order to encourage them. St Paul's hymn to love gives the ideal to live out in our relationship: *Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited, it is never rude or selfish, it does not take offence and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes!* (1 Cor 13) This is a source from which we can draw. Saint Angela totally agrees with this when she says to her daughters: *Be bound to one another by the bond of charity, esteeming each other, helping each other, bearing with each other in Jesus Christ.* (Last Counsel, 2)

Educators make this love concrete by support and mutual encouragement within and outside structures. They are close to people during events which are part of everyone's life.

We often hear that the education of young people is first of all the responsibility of

parents. But quite often we can hear from a parent that she or he is overtaken by his son or his daughter and that he relies on the educators: *I entrust my daughter to you, I can't do anything for her...* Recognition of giving up or a cry of confusion? In this case, the educator is at the same time a formator in his specific subject and a social worker. To be an educator is a vocation, before being a source of livelihood. In the relationship there is a contract of trust. Communication and dialogue are indispensable in this contract. Parents do not always give the necessary information for a better accompaniment of the young person who arrives in a school. Often it is when a problem arises in the classroom or in the playground that one can, with difficulty, pick up some information about the young person and their family. Senegalese tradition is such that *one does not sprawl out in a public place*. But the educational milieu is not a public place. There is an effort to be made in this direction. Information should be updated regularly with the parents or those in charge. Every new piece of information that could contribute to helping the young person should be written down.

Information meetings, correspondence and circulars from the school to facilitate links with the parents are a means that to help build up this relationship. Some have understood their usefulness, others are on the way. The school should always be on the look out for new ways to reach the parents. The parents should look for ways to stay in contact with the places where their children are educated. This is the challenge of responsible participation on both sides.

It is worth asking the question: "What drives our relationships?" A phenomenon that presents itself more and more in our society, is the triumph of materialism. We had societies which were traditionally marked by a strong presence of spirituality, of solidarity, of the sense of the common good, of sharing, etc. By existing, the individual had the right to possess.

In other words, in these societies, the accent was put more on *being* than on *having*<sup>5</sup>. In our contemporary societies, the accent is more on *having* than on *being*. It is those who have who are; those who do not have are as if they do not exist. It is those who give who call the orders. When in a society people act according to this register, the financial resources drive interpersonal relationships. Beware of building relationships in this register.

This phenomenon hides other values which are dying and which adults should agree to propose to young people in the family and in educational contexts. If adults work in the same direction, pulling the boat in the right direction, young people will have more chance of being guided towards an opening that leads to the construction of a strong and responsible person.

### **Young person-young person relationship**

First, we are tempted to ask a question: what sense of fraternity is there among young people? We ask with a view to helping them to live as brothers and sisters. This fraternity is not of blood, but of “case” (house), as traditional African initiation suggests to us.

It does away with individualism and individual autonomy which are the vices which spoil the milieu of young people.

In our classes the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, townspeople and villagers, Christians and Muslims are side by side. Services organized for the maintenance of the class, for a healthy environment, are the concern of everyone. Positive or negative sanctions are for all categories of pupils. The young people are put on the same footing of equality. With these means we struggle against evil. We want to promote justice in the relationships

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<sup>5</sup> The idea is similar to that given by Pope John Paul II in a speech at the end of his visit to Senegal, February 1992: *Man is more valuable for what he is than for what he has.*

between young people.

The young people in our schools try to be open to values such as peace: “School, instrument of peace”<sup>6</sup>, respecting the other in their difference.

Young people are capable of a great enthusiasm for solidarity. Nevertheless “solidarity” misunderstood can lead them to be party to a crime under the pretext of not being a traitor to the group, so they need to be encouraged to live in freedom and responsibility.

Sometimes certain pupils use the group for strictly personal interests. P. Meirieu and M. Guiraud warn us: *It is a mistake to seek to satisfy the private interests of everyone; on the contrary, it is urgent to give collective values which constitute a reference point strong enough to prevail over the strategic calculation of the one and the other*<sup>7</sup>.

## **II – Together**

*Insieme... Bennoo*<sup>8</sup>

This word comes up several times in the Writings of Saint Angela. It reminds us of “Social Africa”. Life in Africa, especially in the Senegalese context that we know best, brings us close to certain traits of Angela, a woman who approaches and reconciles. We know that in the words of Angela, unity and concord often occur: *My last word to you... is that you live in harmony, united together, all of one heart and one will. Be bound to one another by the bond of charity, esteeming each other, helping each other, bearing with each other in Jesus Christ... See then, how important is this union and concord. So, long for it, pursue it, embrace it, hold on it with all your strength...living all together thus united in heart, you will be like a mighty fortress...* (Last Counsel, 1-20) One topic at the international symposium, organ-

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<sup>6</sup> A club *School, instrument of peace* has existed in the “Collège Sainte Ursule” since 2006.

<sup>7</sup> P. Meirieu and M. Guiraud, *School or civil war*, Plon 1997

<sup>8</sup> *Bennoo* means: *united(together)* in Wolof, the national language of Senegal



ized by UNESCO, at Beijing from November 27 to December 2 1989, was “Qualities necessary for education”. What emerges from these discussions, is: *the fundamental objective is positive socialization of young people. In this sense, education must first be action, knowledge comes second only. It is appropriate to accustom the pupil to live in community, in mutual respect and cooperation...*

As for traditional education in the shadow of the sacred wood, an educator will remember that actions done in common, emotions felt during certain experiences, words exchanged, gestures and attitudes, choices made together strengthen and form the group. Those who are initiated feel strong together, united by the bonds of belonging to one group which nothing can separate. A young person is not encouraged to develop their self but the identity of the group, community spirit, the sense of responsibility towards others. Competition is not discouraged, but it must work for the common interest.

The educational milieu is one which unites. How many opportunities to come together, to share about life! Angela suggests meetings in order to experience *insieme*, such as she did with her daughters. She recommended them to come together for meetings as sisters who love one another, to talk about temporal and spiritual things, rejoicing and encouraging one another: *You must take care to have your daughters come together from time to time...so that, together like this, they might also meet each other as loving sisters, and together encourage one another.* (Eighth Legacy, 1-5)

In order to facilitate *bennoo*, it would be appropriate today to emphasize certain points that Angela proposes to us in order to promote dialogue and co-responsibility. These are the steps: *mutual information, evaluation in common, making decisions together according to*

needs.<sup>9</sup>

The step of mutual information is one of the most important in the work of collaboration. There are many ways to create a climate of dialogue at any level, as we have said above: between adult and adult, between adult and young people and between young people themselves. Today, means of communication give incredible possibilities, more and more efficient with the use of NTIC (New Technologies of Information and Communication).

Evaluation in common merits being taken more into account. We have quickly forgotten how to evaluate experiences together. This evaluation is necessary to encourage participation in team work.

In a general way, we work sharing responsibilities with those around us. There are instances of decisions for important things where all those concerned should contribute: teachers' council, school council, parents' association, administration committee, etc. In certain circumstances, we are tempted to make decisions alone, but the best way remains consultation before making a decision.

There is a new ethic that it would be good to develop in the world of education in order to change attitudes and behaviour. We can *commend the reconversion, as it were, of entire communities where this involves modifying the norms and practices established to improve intergroup attitudes*<sup>10</sup> Usually it is necessary to appeal for the support of resource persons, animators of a community or of a group in order to bring about changes in any structure or group.

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<sup>9</sup> Sr Marie Seynaeve: Conference about Saint Angela: *Dialogue and co-responsibility*

<sup>10</sup> Pascal Bernardin, *Machiavelli pedagogue or Minister of psychological reform* Editions Notre-Dame des Grâces 1995.

### III – Joy

To speak about joy in the Ursuline educational tradition I shall cite the words of a song well known to the first generation of pupils of the “Collège Sainte Ursule” à Thiès, which opened in 1963. Up till today some pupils have jealously guarded their notebooks of songs as a souvenir of this period when there was such joy on the faces of the educator and of the girls. Sr Marie Dominique Bouchez, nicknamed *Mada Thiam*<sup>11</sup> is known for her nightingale’s voice. She handed on her love of good singing to many young people. At the celebration of her 50 years of religious life, in March 2009, one of them made a photocopy of her notebook of songs from that time as a gift for her. These are the words of the song:

*What is there this morning?*

*There are many refrains in the air*

*But what is there in my heart*

*That makes me want to sing my happiness.*

*I want to sing because my heart is happy,*

*I want to sing for my God*

*I want to speak to you of the joy of my heart*

*And sing for you, Lord!*

*I am so filled with happiness today*

*That I want to say thank you*

*In the light of day you took me by hand*

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<sup>11</sup> Sr Marie Dominique Bouchez came to Senegal in 1964 from France as a teacher in the “Collège Sainte Ursule” in Thiès. She still helps there in spite of being 76 years old. *Mada Thiam* is an artiste/singer from 1970.

*And I sing all along the way.*

*It is because my happiness comes from you*

*And your love is my only joy.*

*Lord, allow me to sing for you*

*Because in singing I like to pray to you.*

*Keep my heart always free as a bird*

*And clear as a source of water.*

*Give me your love and allow me to sing*

*So as to tell all my brothers and sisters to love.*

*Because all our human hearts are only a spark*

*Of the fire of eternal love*

*And when death will come we shall still sing*

*Our joy will burst in heaven.*

These words suffice to explain that the ambiance of Ursuline education comes from shared joy. This joy does not come only from the company of others, but first of all from a relationship with God in prayer. This theme is found in Saint Angela. *Joy, as proposed by Angela, is demanding. It demands faith and hope, love and faithfulness, union and communion. It is joy lived in constancy, serenity. It is communicative. Do our contemporaries not expect from us this witness of joy in a life that seems often gloomy and sad?*<sup>12</sup>

This joy is expressed in a love of choral singing, in dancing, in the preparation of

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<sup>12</sup> Sr Marie Seynaeve, Conference on Saint Angela: Herald of joy – Pau, Merici, Retreat.

feasts and different celebrations which mark the year. Who among the alumnae of the boarding school at Thiès does not remember Saturday evenings with the tomtom, except during Lent? Each one used her talents to play tomtom or to dance.

On feast days, to make a change from the ordinary blue overall, the pupils can wear their beautiful costumes. Joy is present on such occasions especially if the meal is shared among friends. Today we adapt to new generations and their taste. It is a kind of concretisation of the words of Saint Angela: *If according to times and circumstances the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice.* (Last Legacy, 2) So, there is the parade of Majorettes and Kermesses, as well as class retreats and celebrations at special times. Success at sports events, *Génie en herbe* or different inter-school competitions, are strong reasons for joy for educators and for young people.

#### **IV – The tradition of giving each one the opportunity to reach the maximum of their capacities**

We are in *The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development - 2005-2014*. This offers us the chance of a retrospective look at our Ursuline educational practice. It opens perspectives to cultivate proper values with a view to making progress in this dynamic. Its intention is to promote a quality education for a viable future.

The tradition of giving each one the opportunity to reach the maximum of their abilities is not unknown to Ursuline educational policies in Senegal. Testimony gathered from alumnae or ex-collaborators confirm this affirmation. From the time of their arrival they have not ceased to work for the promotion of women, first in the “Collège Sainte Ursule”, then in different activities entrusted to them: the center for the promotion of women, the clinic with prenatal consultations and Mother and Infant Protection. The first reason for their arrival was

to open a “Collège” for girls in order to give the opportunity to girls from Thiès and its surroundings to receive an education and good quality secondary teaching. This aspect has been part of the life of the school up to today.

The future challenges us. Let us be ready for what we can improve in the three main areas proposed to us by the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development: the environment, society and the economy.

We are on the way in the area of the environment: the protection and restoration of the environment with a view to creating a healthy and secure educational environment. We are awakening consciences so that in society there might be more equality between the sexes, social tolerance, less poverty, as well as a just and peaceful society. We are concerned to know each pupil better: their social milieu, their aptitudes, talents, tastes, rather than their good or bad marks. The area of the economy is taken into account in conserving natural resources. We talk about the harmful consequences of certain practices on the body, e.g. the *xessal*<sup>13</sup> which is bad for health. As for the economy, we educate in the good use of water and electricity. In a developing country like Senegal we should promote professional training. At the moment young people need competences allowing them to adapt to changes throughout their life. Education is a means of emancipation, of harmonious political, economical and cultural development of the human person and of societies. *The domain of education is for every society the corner stone of the construction of its future. Education explains the present trends and options in society and at the same time it constitutes a process of projection in the*

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<sup>13</sup> *Xessa*: depigmentation of the skin, in Wolof

future”<sup>14</sup>.

Areas such as NTIC serve in the realisation of the objectives of a good education for all. It is an area yet to be explored, like that of artistic education: to educate young people for beauty. According to Thérèse Monniaux (official of a center of formation in civic and cultural action), *learning to see is learning to love. Beauty is linked with the good and the true. To get a young person used to judging, to ask him to justify his judgment in order to help him take things into consideration and to express judgments that are really personal without being purely subjective. This will help him cultivate the sense of a more complex beauty than that of first appearances or impressions.*

There is place to form young people in a real openness to the world. The Congregation for Catholic Education says this: *The communion lived by the educators of the Catholic school contributes to making the entire educational sphere a place of communion open to external reality and not just closed in on itself. Educating in communion and for communion means directing students to grow authentically as persons who gradually learn to open themselves up to life as it is, and to create in themselves a definite attitude to life that will help them to open their views and their hearts to the world that surrounds them, able to see things critically, with a sense of responsibility and a desire for a constructive commitment. Two orders of motivation, anthropological and theological, form the basis of this opening towards the world.”*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Pascal Mukene, *L'ouverture entre l'école et le milieu en Afrique noire. Pour une gestion pertinente des connaissances*, Editions universitaires de Fribourg – Suisse, 1988, p. 253.

<sup>15</sup> Document published by the Congregation for Catholic education, N° 43 – title: *Educating together in Catholic Schools, a shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*, Rome September 8, 2007

This document is worth reading and studying.

## **Conclusion**

Quality is not in the matter but in the manner of doing. Everything depends on childhood and youth. If young people receive a good education, drawn from true values, they will live it out and remember it. This is an ambience where relationships are refined in an atmosphere of healthy joy and *insieme*. In these conditions, they will know that they are offered an education in order to give each one the opportunity to achieve the maximum of their capacities. In our cultural context where one of the greatest challenges is that of education, we have already done a great deal, but there is still a long way ahead of us.

The core value of Merician education is dynamic. Ursulines became aware of this in drawing from the educational gifts and pedagogical advice of Saint Angela. This education has a precise goal: to allow a person to live a harmonious balance with self and with others.

Christine Faye osu

Senegal





## **My Experience as a Male Psychology Teacher at an All Girls Ursuline High School**

Fourteen years ago, I first stepped into a world I was surprised to enter, and of which I had no previous knowledge. I began teaching at a private, Catholic all-girls' high school—Ursuline Academy of Dallas. The environment I was entering was about as far removed from my roots as one could get. I was a public school, Methodist, sports-loving young man who had been raised in a family of all males—my wonderful mother excluded. My previous career had been in the agriculture business—working the truck scales at a major mill, and then entering the rather insane world of commodities sales, one which did not take to me too kindly. After bouncing around for a while and somehow convincing a very smart girl to do something as foolish as to marry me, I took the advice of my wise mother-in-law (yes, it can happen), and gained my teaching certification. Prior to landing at Ursuline I had already been teaching for 10 years, mostly at community colleges in the area, (the “migrant workers of academia” we called ourselves, as we moved as a pack from campus to campus as part-time “hired guns”)—and teaching a couple of university courses along the way.

Even with my previous teaching experience, my first year at Ursuline was a tough one.

The environment was alien to me—from the student crying in the hallway because “someone said something mean to me,” to an organizational structure and set of expectations that were not always evident. Thanks to the kindness of a few of my colleagues, I managed to make it through that first year without knocking over every unspoken rule like the proverbial bull in a china shop. It was during that first dizzying year that I ran into someone else...Angela Merici. At first I had very little understanding of who she was, and why people kept talking about her. Her name would be repeated in numerous prayers and contexts, but I usually sat blankly when she was mentioned, wondering why a school called Ursuline focused so intently upon someone named Angela. My knowledge of her grew dramatically in the middle of my second year. At a required trip that the school called an “Angela Retreat” I was exposed to her story for the first time. As with most tales, the credibility of the source was a key factor to my view of its veracity. We had a retreat leader who was irreverent enough to bring Angela’s story to life. Now I began to get it. The school itself was an extension of her teachings, and she had named her first educators after a female Catholic martyr known as St. Ursula.

As the years began to zip by and I became more at ease with my surroundings, the Angela story started to make more sense. And each time I heard more, I became more interested in what she had to say, and more importantly what an Ursuline Education was supposed to be. Many smart people have stated some version of the old proverb-“find a job that you love and you will never have to work a day in your life.” I had found that place. I had found a place where I enjoyed teaching students that even the most jaded instructor would love.

The idea of all-female education, and of “educating young women for a global society,” made sense to me as well. I was raised by a father who demanded that my brothers and I treat women with respect, and by a mother whom I can only hope that my students will emu-

late. I know that it made her proud that I became a teacher, and that I was “making a difference” in my student’s lives.

The fact that I have always felt welcomed at Ursuline is a tribute to the school and its leadership. At no time have I ever felt unease as a male in a predominantly female environment, nor have I felt pressured to conform to the Catholic faith, nor have I ever felt any pressure related to the school being private. Instead, I believe that the school itself reflects the views of Angela, her teachings, and her life.

As a teacher of both history and psychology, I have marveled at Angela’s story, and even more so her at her wisdom. Obviously, many of her ideas were rooted in her strong sense of Christian faith; a faith which permeated her life. Yet many of her ideas and thoughts are as forward-looking and relevant today as one would find in any modern development plan. Angela strikes me as a woman with common sense. When today’s psychologists study the concept of intelligence they often differentiate between “book smarts” and common sense. Angela was filled with the latter. The fact that she flourished in a culture where women were expected to marry or be cloistered as nuns, yet did neither, was a tribute to her ingenuity.

She also illustrated a type of intelligence that is at the forefront of today’s psychological research, an intelligence of the heart. It’s obvious from the comments of all whom she met and also from her ability to survive and prosper as a “free-radical” woman in the male-dominated society of the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy, that she possessed an extraordinary ability to understand others. The fact that she was in great demand as a mediator in war-torn Italy illustrated this capacity.

Her work was also rooted in the second great aspect an intelligence of the heart, the ability to know one’s own emotions and feelings. Where did she gain such mastery? It is ob-

vious from her story that her years of prayerful contemplation brought her to the calmness that both her Rule for the company and her Counsels and Testament exude. Reading her words and considering their timeless meaning brings to mind the concept of “self-actualization,” which is the pinnacle of what psychologist Abraham Maslow called his “hierarchy of needs.” Maslow describes self-actualization as a transient state that occurs when one reaches their ultimate potential. Any fair reading of Angela’s life story would have to support the notion that she achieved that potential, although she waited until she was age sixty to do so.

This calmness and the fact that she achieved it after long years of contemplation rings true to many of the great philosophies and religions of world history. It is the basis for all Angela brings to us as Ursuline educators. In a version of the adage “know thyself,” she suggests that doing so is the basis for becoming the best person (and teacher) you may possibly be. Building upon this she offers many other cogent theories that have relevance to current psychological thought. As she suggested, when teaching, one should: *regard yourselves as ministers and servants, reflecting that you have more need to serve them than they have to be served by you.* (First Counsel, 3)

Angela’s words here ring true for all who actually enjoy teaching as a vocation. It is the intrinsic value of the effort that motivates many teachers, as the extrinsic motivation is usually not the key factor. Popular culture laments the low pay most teachers receive, yet as Angela points out, the reward we feel when a student has that “Eureka” moment has the potential to offer more personal benefit than that received by the CEO of a major corporation when the company’s stock price rises.

Another of her amazing directives was offered to her company when she knew her

time on earth was short. While giving direction on how she believed the 28 women of her company could best move forward, she offered words of advice that many modern day Americans spend great amounts of money to hear from today's top motivational speakers: *Do not lose courage, then, if you feel yourselves incapable of knowing and doing all that such a special charge demands. Have hope and faith in God, for God will help you in with everything...*(First Counsel)

Here Angela reflects much of the research in psychology that revolves around “positive thinking.” Thanks to today's brain scans, we are capable of seeing the neurons in the brain at work, and measuring the “chemicals” (mainly neurotransmitters and hormones) that are released by the brain. Positive thoughts, such as those suggested by Angela, cause your brain to release chemicals that allow you to perform at your peak efficiency. Negative thoughts (pessimism) are accompanied by a decrease in such chemicals, and a slowing of brain functioning. In a sense, both of these patterns of thought can become self-fulfilling prophecies—supporting Angela's notion that hope and faith make success more likely. She went on to add that her company should, *in everything, willingly be gentle....And above all, be on your guard not to want to get anything done by force, because God has given free will to everyone, and God wants to force no one, but only proposes, invites, and counsels.* (Third Legacy)

Here Angela puts forward what many laypeople call “reverse psychology.” It is the belief that people are more likely to act when they believe that a choice of action is their own rather than one that is forced upon them. Not surprisingly, psychological research supports this theory, and goes even further. The key concept here is ownership. The more ownership one feels of an action, thought, or situation, the more connection one has to it, and the more

dedicated one is to it. In a famous study examining “the bystander effect,” researchers found that bystanders who were asked to watch another person’s property were many times more likely to chase a would-be thief than those who were **not** asked to watch it. Those who did not respond to the thief felt no ownership of the situation. The same phenomena works in reverse, as those in a large group feel no individual ownership of a situation, and the anonymity they feel allows for the potential of mob behavior.

Angela’s suggestion concerning the folly of “forcing” things is also illustrated in the next quote: *Be gentle and compassionate...For you will achieve more with gentleness and kindness than with harshness and sharp rebukes, which should be reserved only for cases of necessity, and even then in the right place and time, according to the person.* (Second Counsel, 1-5)

In this notion Angela is followed by the great Behaviorial theorists of psychology, such as Ivan Pavlov, John B. Watson, and B.F. Skinner. It almost seems as if she is quoting current theory on punishment as a method of conditioning or training. Numerous studies have shown that punishment is a method of training that should be used only as a last resort. I sarcastically refer to it in my Psychology classes as the “nuclear bomb” of conditioning of training. Why?

Because people often misuse punishment. They often use it out of frustration rather than for its true purpose, which is to teach the subject a lesson. But even if used correctly, it is not the best way to train or condition someone. Unlike reward, punishment never tells the subject what **to** do, it instead only tells them what **NOT** to do.

And, as Angela had wisely deduced, the misuse of punishment can lead to even bigger problems. If it is not timely, the subject learns only to fear the person or situation, rather than

to change their behavior. If it is not consistent, it angers the subject because of the lack of fairness. And if it is too harsh or lenient, the message is again lost. As she said, it should be reserved for cases of necessity.

But in case anyone may have thought that Angela was eschewing the notion of giving students “direction” in their lives, her admonition was: *Never cease to cultivate the vine that has been entrusted to you.* (Eighth Counsel, 8)

This is my personal favorite of her Counsels, as it encapsulates the Ursuline method of education in a single sentence. Angela offers the fact that each student has been entrusted to us by their guardian, and we are always aiming at a single goal; to bring the vine to its maturity, while keeping it from growing in any direction that is not suitable. Each teacher along the way brings the vine closer to its goal. Yet each teacher may need to “prune” the vine occasionally, but only through a sense of charity, and remembering that we gain more from the experience than they do.

She also gives the following suggestions that any teacher who wishes to be successful at their craft would be wise to follow: *...the more united you are, the more Jesus Christ will be in your midst.* (Tenth Legacy, 9) And: *My last word to you...is that you live in harmony, united together, all of one heart and one will.* (Last Counsel, 1)

There is no need for a psychological study to prove that groups can accomplish more than an individual may. Yet these statements, akin to the sports adage that **“there is no “I” in team,”** are as relevant today in any field of human endeavor as they were for Angela’s company of women who served the people of Brescia in 1540. It also reminds us that as a faculty, our behavior is scrutinized through the process of social learning. Our students watch our interaction with our colleagues, and **learn from what they see.** If we are to serve ourselves as

we serve our students, we must be constantly aware of the need to model the behavior that we demand from them, as Angela reminds us.

These examples of Angela's knowledge of the world, and her directives for those who would follow in the role of Ursuline educator are but a few of those that can be connected to modern psychological theory. It is fascinating to me that each time I hear more about her I see more connections to the world of today. Angela's was an impressive journey, one which continues on its path in the persons of today's Ursuline educators - and I count myself lucky to be among them.

Fred Schneider

United States





## St Angela's Pedagogical Intuition

### Introduction

I would like to share with you how I see St. Angela's educational presence and the way I wish to live it. I believe very strongly in the necessity of living the prophetic educational presence in our Ursuline education in today's world.

### Intuition, education, pedagogy

Why do I prefer to talk about intuitions rather than the Merician educational model?  
What do I mean by intuition, education and pedagogy?

By intuition I mean: *direct perception, perception of the essence of something, independent of rational analysis, inspiration.*<sup>1</sup> I also mean the necessary orientations of the heart which are creative and personalized to facilitate the overall personality growth. The West has a weak connection with intuition.<sup>2</sup> This fact is a strong argument for emphasizing intuition.

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<sup>1</sup> SAZU, Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika, Ljubljana, Državna založba Slovenija, 2000, 309; (Dictionary of the Slovene language by the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lahad Mooli, Creative Supervision. The Use of Expressive Art Methods in Supervision and Self-Supervision, 2002, London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 11.

Another point is also femininity and the associated approach to life. The definition of education that I use in paper is as follows: Education is an individual and community assistance in the growth and quality of life and the lives of others, focused on the people in development and directed to reach the unity and the totality of a person. Emphasis is put on the promotion of the skills of awareness, freedom, responsibility and solidarity.<sup>3</sup>

Speaking of pedagogy I understand it as an art and science of formation.<sup>4</sup> For me it is more than just a set of methods. Pedagogy that is seen as the art of education requires "intuition, creativity, improvisation, expressiveness."<sup>5</sup> The process of education can also be illustrated by the continuum between two poles: intuitive on the one hand and technical-operational on the other. In the continuum center there is the ability of coherent, intelligent and responsible decisions for the good of those who are in the process of education within a complex context.<sup>6</sup> How well St. Angela understood this! Education is always geared to concrete persons and is meaningful only if the educator manages to live deep humanity and succeeds in entering into a relationship with the specific person.

### **St. Angela's intuitions**

I understand her pedagogical intuition<sup>7</sup> as:

- faith/trust in God and trust in the human being/person
- attention to the person, respect and freedom

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Nanni Carlo, *Appunti per Filosofia dell'educazione*, Roma, Università Pontificia Salesiana, 2003/04.

<sup>4</sup> Pellerey Michele, *Educare. Manuale di pedagogia come scienza pratica progettuale*, Roma, Università Pontificia Salesiana, 2002, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Gage Nathanael Lees, *The Scientific basis of the art of teaching*, 1978, New York, Teacher, College Press, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Pellerey Michele, *Educare. Manuale di pedagogia come scienza pratica progettuale*, Roma, Università Pontificia Salesiana, 2002, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Blagotinšek Zora. *L'intuizione pedagogica di St. Angela e la sua attuazione in Slovenia*. 2006. Roma. Università Pontificia Salesiana. Tesi di licenza.

- a pedagogy that desires to educate the whole person
- a pedagogy based on human relations
- a pedagogy which emphasizes educational community and solidarity
- a call for the authenticity of the educator
- a call for self formation, ongoing formation of the educator
- the work for the education of women
- a dynamic respect for tradition and openness for the signs of time.

Of course, with a certain classification I take the risk of leaving out some aspects.

**a. faith/trust in God and trust in the human being/person**

Each human being needs trust and hope to grow as a person. Our hope as Ursuline educators, is based on the certainty of being loved and supported by the Lord. He conquered us and He continues to do so. To be faithful to St. Angela, to her roots, to live in harmony with her and her prophetic pedagogy means to be in love with Him, to be like “a married land” of Jesus Christ as sisters. To be brides also means to live with a passionate heart involved in His concerns. For all of us, Ursuline educators, it means following Him. Hope and strong faith must be present in us as dynamic principles of action.<sup>8</sup>

Those whom we educate are God's treasures, belonging to him which is why we are called to live in the secret presence of the Inner Teacher. He knows the ways to the heart, how to enkindle the heart. Our words can only echo in the hearts of others when they come from unity with Him.

Surely the educational task is beyond our powers. Angela encourages us: *Do not be afraid of not knowing and not being able to do what is rightly required in such a singular*

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<sup>8</sup> L. Mariani, *I Ricordi di Sant'Angela Merici. Note di spiritualità*, Brescia, Pavoniana, 1991, 31.

*government. Have hope and firm faith in God, for he will help you in everything. Pray to him, humble yourselves under his great power, because, without doubt, as he has given you this charge, so he will give also the strength to be able to carry it out, provided you do not fail for your part. Act, move, believe, strive, hope, cry out to him with all your heart,...(Counsels Prologue, 14-17)*

Angela does not get tired of repeating: *Love your daughters equally; and do not prefer one more than another, because they are all creatures of God. And you do not know what he wants to make of them. For how do you know, you, that those who seem to be the least and lowest are not to become the most generous and the most pleasing to his Majesty? And then, who can judge the heart and the innermost secret thoughts of any creature? And so, hold them all in your love and bear with them all equally, for it is not up to you to judge the handmaids of God; he well knows what he wants to do make of them, Who (as Scripture says), can turn stones into children for heaven.* (Eighth Counsel, 1-6) In an era of intolerance and indiscretion, Angela expresses her doctrine about the deep value of a human being. This intuition of trust in God and in the human person, to go beyond what can be seen and to discern the divine action is still topical. We really need God to be able to achieve this.

***b. Attention to the person, respect and freedom***

Angela's method of education is expressed by the verbs that speak of a great attention to the freedom of people: to show, invite, advise, hope, comfort, support. Angela tells why a person is to be respected: *because God has given free will to everyone, and wants to force no one but only proposes, invites and counsels...*(Third Legacy, 8-11) Great respect is expressed in gentleness. With true love we keep in their hearts those entrusted to us, as they are, and we try first to learn about the person in front of us. We try to listen to God and not follow our

own expectations. The Merician approach encourages us to seek a unique path for each person. To be interested in the person, to nourish relationships and spiritual development; to be present, wishing well with a basic confidence in the ability of the human person, with courage, and ready to risk are the features of Angela's education. For example: entry: taking into account the age, relationship with the family ...

**c. A pedagogy to educate the whole person**

Angela sees the person as body, soul and spirit. Through careful observation we arrive at a better understanding: *You will be careful and vigilant to know and understand the behavior of your daughters and to be aware of their spiritual and temporal needs. And then, as far as possible, you yourselves provide for them if you can, because you must give the matrons as little trouble and bother as possible. But if you cannot provide for them yourselves, go to the principal mothers, and quickly, and without any hesitation explain to them the needs of your lambs.* (Fourth Counsel, 1-3) A concept of harmonious education presupposes attention to body, mind and spirit. The horizon of Angela's education is a harmonious development of the life of an individual and a group. She wants to create a rich and responsible personality. In a special way she targets the heart where creative freedom is born, where we open to others, to humanity, to the community, to God, values and growth. Angela's great desire is the growth of her daughters. This focus on integrity can also be found in our Constitutions: *...Whatever our apostolic commitments, we shall always keep in mind the development of the whole person.* (Constitutions 99)

**d. A pedagogy based on human relations**

Personal relationship has always been one of the fundamental methods of Ursuline education. The educational relationship is the result of the very intense spousal relationship,

which grows towards motherhood for sisters and can also be the result of unity with Christ for all educators. Our educational power lies in the relationship: *First of all then, my most loving mothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, strive, with the help of God to grasp and keep in yourselves such conviction and good sentiment that you are moved for this care and government by the sole zeal for the salvation of souls. Because all your works and actions as governors, being thus rooted in this twofold charity, can bear nothing but good and salutary fruits.* (First Legacy, 1-4) Knowing that I have a place in the heart of my educator is infinitely valuable. Angela's love is not superficial, but very practical. Certainly, this ability to make room for another is the fruit of love. Love is the DNA of all Angela's activity. *So also, you must consider in what manner you must esteem them, for the more you esteem them, the more you will love them; the more you love them, the more you will care for and watch over them. And it will be impossible for you not to cherish them day and night, and to have them engraved in your heart, one by one, for this is how real love acts and works.* (Counsels Prologue, 9-11) As mentioned before, the characteristic of our educational relationship is the mother-daughter relationship.

**e. A pedagogy emphasizing the educational community and solidarity**

Angela's call to unity could be translated as : You, parents, educators, adults who have accepted the risk of formation in your family, school, parish, *be in harmony in your educational efforts, united together, all of one heart and one will. Be bound to one another by the bond of charity, esteeming each other, helping each other, bearing with each other in Jesus Christ... See then how important is this union and concord. So, long for it, pursue it, embrace it, hold on to it with all your strength; for I tell you, living all together thus united in heart, you will be like a mighty fortress, as a tower impregnable, against all adversities and perse-*

*cutions and deceits of the devil. And moreover I assure you that every grace your ask from God will infallibly be granted to you. And I shall always be in your midst, helping your prayers...*(Last Counsel)

**f. A call for authenticity of the educator**

As educators we freely sacrifice for the good of others. The more I know myself, the more I can live with others in an appropriate manner, in accordance with my life decision. The less I know myself, the greater the need to defend myself. I have probably more problems with others, the more I feel less or more worthy than others. I do not feel well in my skin and thence come many problems. Our confidence comes from within. We are called to discover what is already within us. For positive relations and educational relations, one of the most important things is to grow as a person. If we are ourselves and at the same time we live our vocation in an authentic way, we become a blessing for the people around us.

I see the next step as being rooted in our teaching charism, in nurturing it, because it is like the life lymph of our education; to be genuine as a person as well as an educator gifted with her charism.

**g. A call for self formation, ongoing formation of the educator**

I could say that Angela has given us the concept of self responsibility for ongoing formation: *then, that you strive with all your might to remain as you are called by God, and to seek and desire all the ways and means necessary to persevere and make progress to the very end.* (Rule Prologue, 9-10) Taking care to be good educators is a characteristic in our tradition. This prophetic spirit of ongoing formation is present also in our Constitutions: *Every religious is personally responsible during the whole of her life, for her human and spiritual growth for the glory of God and the service of others. Each one must strive to re-*

*main open to necessary adaptations and renewal. (Constitutions 149)*

**h. Work for the education of women**

Our contribution to the promotion of women is visible throughout the history of our Order. Parents entrusted their children to the Ursulines to help them continue the education that the children had received at home. A well educated girl can be a better wife and a mother. In this context, girls' education is part of a global process of human growth and moral regeneration of society.

The decisions of our Order made in recent years show a strong dedication to the education of women.

**i. A dynamic respect for tradition and openness to the signs of time.**

Being realistic, Angela says: *Keep to the ancient way and custom of the Church, established and confirmed by so many saints under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And live a new life. (Seventh Counsel, 22)* and continues: *And if, according to times and circumstances, the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice. And always let your principal recourse be to gather together at the feet of Jesus Christ and there, all of you, with all your daughters, to offer most fervent prayers. (Last Legacy, 2-4)*

Newness of life comes from within, where God lives. It is necessary to find the resources of our inner growth so that we can live in the changing world. We can contribute with new initiatives, by arousing interest and teaching prudence in the selection of experiences offered by contemporary society. These words of St. Angela allowed us throughout history to make the necessary adjustments and creative responses. They also encourage us to find a pedagogy, meaningful for the present time.



## **Conclusion**

We should ask ourselves:

What signs of God do we wish to leave in this world?

What should children, young people and adults see in us as educators?

What message of God becomes recognizable through our lives and education in this world?

Zorica Blagotinšek osu

Slovenia



## Wisdom Shines in Every Age

### Introduction

The mystics and the prophets appear to have insight and wisdom which is not limited by space and time. In their quest for union with God or the Transcendent being—the one who is beyond all names, they enter a realm of knowing which provides access to eternal truths. Angela Merici a “santa viva” (living saint) of the 16th century is a woman of the mystical prophetic tradition. She was attributed the title of “living saint” by virtue of her mysticism, sacred knowledge, human qualities and participation in civic life (Querciolo Mazzonis 2007). However the essence of her writing holds a truth that speaks with relevance to educators of the 21st century.

The purpose of this essay is to show how in Angela’s life and her Writings, known as her Legacies and Counsels, there is an understanding of the human person which is foundational to the theory of Multiple Intelligence espoused by Howard Gardner (1983). This type of exploration draws its validity from the concept of intertextuality where the meaning of one text is shaped by another text. In this particular case it is hoped that another level of meaning

will emerge from Gardner's Multiple Intelligence profiles as they are linked to many of the core statements in the writings of Angela Merici.

The essay is primarily intended for educators in Ursuline schools or schools where the mission of education is grounded in the Ursuline tradition. However, as is widely recognised, Angela Merici's understanding of the human person is deeply anchored in the respect and dignity Jesus expressed in his human encounters in the Gospel narratives. Hence it is possible for this work to find meaning and application in all schools especially those which aspire to live by the values of the Gospel.

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Gardner's work urges us to focus on the person in order to understand his or her potential for learning and acquiring life skills. He rejects the concept of measuring a student against a standardised intelligence test because he claims that an intelligence "is the ability to solve problems or to create products, that are valued in one or more cultural settings." (1983). This definition Gardner notes, says nothing about either the sources of these abilities or the proper means of testing them.

Angela Merici's statements about the person invite us to this same starting point. In the first Counsel we hear her say.....

*Consider the respect you owe them, for the more you respect them the more you will love them and the more you love them the greater care you will have of them. Then it will be impossible for you not to have them graven on your hearts night and day, each one individually.*

This imperative ensures that we begin to understand the student from the perspective of each one's uniqueness. In doing so we discover each student's potential. Our subsequent

educational endeavours are about awakening this capacity and ensuring there is scope for the creative development of each one's potential.

Gardner's work is situated within a growing milieu of researchers who are moving away from the belief that intelligence is a single inherited entity. Instead there are an increasing number who claim that there exists a multitude of intelligences, quite independent of each other; that each intelligence has its own strength and constraints, and that the mind at birth is not a blank slate which can be trained to do anything. Instead there is a growing respect for the inherited natural lines of force within an intelligence. These place distinct limits and strong constraints on human cognition and learning.

Angela Merici recognises the breadth and complexity of this human diversity. In her Fourth Counsel she urges educators to *be keen and observant in getting to know their behaviour*. Then in her Eighth Counsel, Angela calls for openness of mind and heart: *welcome them all and bear with all of them impartially, because they are all God's children and you do not know what God wishes to make of them*.

Gardner supports the influential work of Robert Sternberg who emphasises the importance of context in speaking about intelligence. Rather than assuming that one possesses a certain intelligence independent of the culture in which one happens to live, many scientists now believe that intelligence is an interaction between, on the one hand certain abilities and potentials and on the other, the opportunities and constraints that characterise a particular cultural setting. Hence an essential part of intelligence is one's sensitivity to the varying contexts in which one is immersed.

There is strong evidence in the life of Angela Merici of her ability to change and adapt to varying social and cultural contexts. She was so conscious of the importance of this

way of being in a particular cultural context that she writes about the necessity for flexibility in her last legacy. Here Angela clearly states, *and if according to times and needs new rules should be made or any change introduced, do it wisely and with good advice.*

Gardner's work demonstrates that there is a growing body of persuasive evidence for the existence of several relatively autonomous human intellectual competencies which we know in their abbreviated form as human intelligences. It is difficult to define the exact nature and breadth of each intellectual competency. Furthermore the precise number of intelligences has not been firmly established. It is a pathway to discovery which Gardner leaves open ended. In his breakthrough work recorded in his book, *Frames of Mind* (1983) Gardner outlines seven intelligences.

These are:

**Linguistic Intelligence:** involves sensitivity to spoken and written language; the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to accomplish certain goals. This intelligence includes the ability to use language effectively to express oneself rhetorically and poetically. Writers, poets, lawyers and speakers exemplify this intelligence.

**Musical Intelligence:** involves skill in the performance, composition and appreciation of musical patterns. It encompasses the capacity to recognise and compose musical pitches, tones and rhythms. It generates a capacity to think in music, to be able to hear patterns, recognise them, and perhaps manipulate them.

**Logical-Mathematical Intelligence:** consists of the capacity to analyse problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, investigate issues scientifically and understand the underlying principles of some kind of a causal system. It entails the ability to detect patterns, rea-

son deductively and think logically. This intelligence is most often associated with scientific and mathematical thinking.

**Visual-Spatial Intelligence:** involves the potential to recognise and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas. It enables the representation of the spatial world internally in one's mind - the way a sailor or aeroplane pilot navigates the large spatial world, or the way a chess player or sculptor represents a more circumscribed spatial world. Visual and graphic artists display a high degree of this type of intelligence.

**Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence:** entails the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems. It is the capacity to use mental abilities to co-ordinate bodily movements. The most evident example of this intelligence is found in sports people or those in the performing arts especially dancing and acting.

**Interpersonal Intelligence:** is concerned with the capacity to engage others and to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people. It allows people to work effectively with others. Educators, salespeople, religious and political leaders and counsellors all need a well-developed interpersonal intelligence. Those who have the capacity to build community have a high degree of interpersonal intelligence.

**Intrapersonal Intelligence:** entails the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's fears, feelings and motivations. It involves having an effective working model of ourselves and to be able to use such information to regulate our lives.

In recent years an eighth intelligence has been identified and added to Gardner's original list. It is the intelligence which relates to one's ability and competency with the natural world. This naturalist intelligence designates the human ability to discriminate among



living things like plants and animals. It includes the way they engage with the natural world, as well as their sensitivity to other features of the natural world, like clouds, stars and rock formations.

We can only glean from the biographical details of Angela's life and the interpretation of her writings to discover the nature of her intellectual profile or what particular human intelligences Angela possessed. The strength and excellence of Angela's intrapersonal intelligence is widely recognised and celebrated. She devoted much time in prayer and reflection to engage with her inner self. She honoured and listened to her dreams and constantly asked God to enlighten her and to teach her what had to be done. Angela was confident in her quest as she dedicated all her energies to *have Jesus as her one and only treasure*. Her self knowledge was strong. She knew what she could do, and grew in clarity about what she wanted to do, so much so that she even refused to do the work offered her by the Pope because she knew this wasn't her call.

Coupled with Angela's strong intrapersonal intelligence was her keen interpersonal intelligence. Her advice on how to relate with other people reflected the way Angela engaged with all those she encountered. In the Prologue to the Counsels she gives this critical rela-

tional attitude: *Consider the respect you owe them, for the more you respect them the more you will love them and the more you will love them the greater care you will have of them.*

Then in the Second Counsel Angela speaks about approaching the other in a positive manner, *You will achieve more with gentleness and kindness than by harsh and cutting rebukes.*

Biographical details of Angela's life recount how she was known as a peacemaker. We are told that two Brescian men challenged each other to a duel. They were planning to fight with swords until one or both died. Their wives visited Angela and asked her to bring about a peaceful reconciliation between the two men. Angela went and spoke with the men and finally they ended the argument. It was recorded that the whole city was amazed that such a peaceful outcome was achieved through the negotiating skills of Angela.

We do not have any recorded evidence that reveals Angela's musical intelligence. However, we know that she used a metaphor which captures the nature of music to assure us of the best way to live as a human community. In her Last Counsel, Angela urges us to *live in harmony united together in one heart and one will.* When one recalls the profound beauty of the harmony of a symphony orchestra transcending space and time, we glimpse something of the deep desire of Angela's heart for the good of humanity. Whether Angela expressed her musical capacity in a tangible way or not, the use of such an image reveals that she understood at a profound level the capacity of music to transcend physical limits and move us to the realm of the spiritual.

It is difficult to make comparisons between the people of the 16th century with those of the 21st century regarding manifestations of Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence. The body was a major means of transport at the time Angela lived. Angela as a pilgrim was faithful and en-





ergetic as she walked around the town of Desenzano and the city of Brescia. Through her writings she encourages us to keep active and on the move because then we will see wonders!

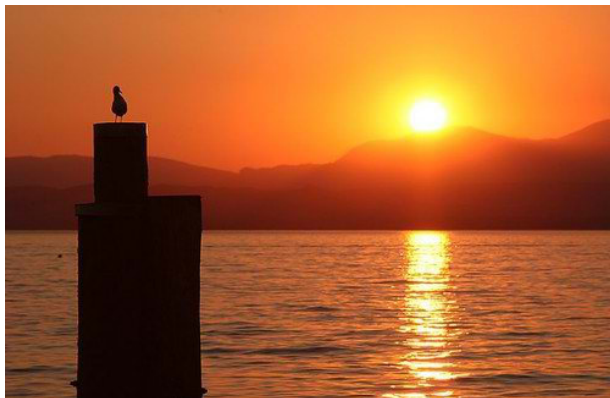
We have no evidence of Angela's mathematical ability so it is not possible to speak of her Logical- Mathematical intelligence. However, we know that she inherited the family farm and through her careful management of this valuable fertile land and its income she was able to provide a financial source to

support her charitable work.

Similarly with Angela's visual-spatial intelligence we have no evidence to speak of Angela's capacity in this area. One link we can make with Angela regarding this intelligence is that throughout the centuries



she has inspired many artists to express their visual-spatial intelligence as they capture for us, Angela herself both in portrait and sculpture, her significant dream, and aspects of her mystical experiences. It is highly likely that Angela had a strong naturalist intelligence. Her spirit



was shaped by the natural beauty of Desenzano and Lake Garda. In a literary sketch of Angela, written in 1969 we hear, "the clear sunlit beauty and the deep silence of the countryside found an echo in her soul

and awoke in her a need for light and for the infinite; a need for God. When she speaks of

obedience, truth, knowledge of God or the happiness of heaven all alike are expressed in terms of light. It seems to fascinate her.” Also from the fields around her she was inspired to find words of encouragement about being faithful to the work we have chosen, *never cease the cultivate the vine entrusted to you.*

Finally we claim and celebrate Angela’s outstanding linguistic intelligence. While it is recognised that she had a scribe, Gabriel Cozzano, to document her words, it was nevertheless



the genius of Angela who crafted such a short but magnificent body of writings which have inspired people of faith throughout five centuries and is our inheritance today. Angela had the ability to use language

effectively to communicate that which is often described as inexpressible: the experiences of our heart, our spirit and the nature of God.

## *To the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

Returning now to Howard Gardner of the 21st century we hear him say that his intention in formulating the human intelligences in the way of claiming them as multiple, was not just to be part of describing the world. Instead his desire was to create the conditions which transform the world.

*I want my children to understand the world, but not just because the world is fascinating and the human mind is curious. I want them to understand it so that they will be positioned to make it a better place.*

Those of us who embrace the vision of Angela Merici and nurture our spirituality from the inspiration of her writings, do so because of our desire to be involved in the transformative process of education. History has shown that down through the centuries Ursuline education has played a significant role in transforming the world. As we continue to draw on our rich educational tradition we hope that as educators of the 21st century we can continue to make our world a better place.

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## **A Postscript from the Writer**

I have been an Ursuline educator for over forty years. When the pathway to Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligence opened for me in early 1990, I immediately saw the footprint of Angela Merici in such breakthrough work. I have been drawn to understanding students within

this framework for nearly two decades. For me it is an authentic way of watching and listening to the uniqueness of each student. It is a very practical way to follow Angela Merici's advice *be observant of each one!* Furthermore intrinsic to the Multiple Intelligence Theory is that there is no hierarchy of intelligence. One intelligence is not rated better or higher than another. Instead it is about the capacity or the potential that is needed at a particular time in a particular cultural setting to creatively solve problems. The theory underpins a framework which has the capacity to create a society where the "discipleship of equals" is realised. This is surely a sign of the reign of God in our midst.

Patty Andrew osu

Australia

The following page was developed for St. Angela's Primary School Castle Hill, Sydney, NSW, Australia. The school was established in 2001 and took the framework of Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory as a major educational paradigm. With the younger children (5-12 years) rather than use the language of intelligence, the word "smart" is used to describe the multiple abilities, capacities and potential of children. The Student Award and Affirmation system is built around the language of the Multiple Intelligences ensuring that each child is celebrated for their own unique gifts and potential. The language of the following page celebrates Angela's multiple intelligences. It is a creative way of honouring St. Angela by awarding her a Smart Award in every aspect of the Multiple Intelligences. Such a page could be used in liturgies or prayer times to honour and celebrate Angela Merici.



## **Celebrating the Multiple Intelligences of Angela Merici**

### **Music Smart**

*For encouraging us to live like music, in harmony, united together*

### **People Smart**

*For teaching us that the more we respect others, the more we will love them.*

### **Body Smart**

*For being a faithful and energetic pilgrim who walked around the town of Desenzano  
and the city of Brescia, and encouraged us to keep active and on the move  
because then we would see wonders.*

### **Self Smart**

*For having Jesus as her treasure. Living with confidence in God.  
Praying and asking God to enlighten her and to teach her what had to be done.*

### **Picture Smart**

*For inspiring so many artists through the sharing of her dreams, words and stories.*

### **Nature Smart**

*For looking at the fields around her and encouraging us  
to keep on with our work of “cultivating the vine”.*

### **Word Smart**

*For generously sharing her natural wisdom and insights from her prayer with us,  
through her writings.*

### **Number Smart**

*For carefully managing the inheritance of her farm to provide the money she needed.*



## **Principles of Pedagogy in Ursuline Schools**

Generally speaking in all our schools, Ursuline education is marked by what our traditions have handed down to us over the centuries. It reflects the common characteristics of Ursuline pedagogy worldwide, inspired by the legacy received from Angela Merici. This legacy has been explored and described in Mother Marie de St. Jean Martin's *Ursuline Method of Education*. She wrote the book in 1946. It comprises the reports made during the Ursuline Educational Convention of 1940. Over 50 years have passed since Mother Marie de St. Jean's book was first published; no other significant publication for Ursulines worldwide has appeared since then. Global society may have undergone a sea change but what was written at the head of the preface to *Ursuline Method of Education*: "Education consists of a well-made synthesis of tradition and progress" (Pius XI) remains sound. Sound tradition needs to be jealously guarded. For that reason, some of the cardinal traits of our Ursuline educational tradition which remain valid today are briefly analyzed below.

### ***Respect for the Individual Person***

A fundamental attitude is one of reverence for the individual person created as unique

by God with a special destiny. Through faith, Ursuline educators believe that each student has a unique dignity and mission in life which cannot be replaced by anyone else. St. Angela requires of educators to *have them engraved on your heart one by one – you do not know what God wants to make of them* (Second Legacy, Eighth Counsel) All our students must be helped to be themselves as God made them, entirely themselves in all that is good. Respect for individuals and their personal culture as well as for the culture of the society from which they come is a core value of Ursuline education beginning from a very early age in our kindergartens to young adulthood in our colleges.

### ***Joy and Family Spirit***

A consequence of reverence for the individual is that the student must be led to God and the fullness of life by exhortation and example, never by force or fear. This creates an atmosphere of freedom and trust in which everyone can express and be their true self. St. Angela reminds us: *above all, be on your guard not to want to get anything done by force because God has given free will to everyone and wants to force no one but only proposes, invites, counsels.* (Third Legacy 8-11) A climate of joy and family spirit, a sense of belonging and an awareness of community is evident on an Ursuline campus. This climate or atmosphere is beneficial as an environment for forming students for true human growth and sound human relationships. Our students need a sense of happiness and a taste for joy. It is the *fruit of a gift of God multiplied a hundredfold by a true Ursuline educator.*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mother Marie de St Jean Martin osu, *Ursuline Method of Education*, New Jersey, 1946, p.232

### ***Bonds of Unity***

A further characteristic emphasized by St. Angela is that of communion and strong bonds uniting the members of a body among each other. It is another aspect of the freedom and trust which must reign if students can become their true selves and be respected for who they are. On a campus, bonds of esteem and sincerity become real when professional ethics are understood and practiced to the full. Such ethics preclude damaging criticism of faculty members among each other or to students. We support each other and protect good names. On occasion it may be essential to criticize or challenge authority but there are ways of doing so which build up rather than tear down. Such strategies bear the best witness of the presence of God in our mission of education. St. Angela recommends this attitude in two ways: first, the teachers must be the best examples for the students. *Live and behave in such a way that they may see themselves mirrored in you. And whatever you want them to do be sure to do it yourselves first.* (Sixth Counsel, 1-2) Then she says: *be all of one heart and one will. Living together in this unity of heart, you will be like a mighty fortress or a tower impregnable against all attacks, assaults and deceits of the devil.* (Last Counsel, 1, 15-18)

### ***Professionalism of the Educator***

Ursuline education also demands professionalism of its educators. We must do all possible to prepare ourselves for our work and be enthusiastic about developing our professional skills individually and in partnerships. We prepare our students for their future whatever it will be. Academic standards are as high as they can be, adapted to the potential of those who come into our schools. Across hundreds of years of education, Ursulines have not been afraid to make demands on students to think rigorously, to develop intellectually and to



make effort to become the best of themselves. This is their right. They, and we, are reminded that “excellence honours God”.

### *Adaptation to Times and Circumstances*

A final characteristic, among others which could be described, has relevance to the world in which the students live, a world which is new every day. Ursuline educators must be open to change, reflecting the past but looking into the future, keeping themselves aware of trends and needs to offer the best they can to their students, challenging a world which sometimes appears to threaten their existence. Willingness to adapt to times and circumstances is essential. Our schools constantly make effort to look to the future, doing what they can to enrich pedagogy for the young, updating curricula to meet the needs of the times, always aware that in the current rapidity of change what they plan for next year may be overtaken before then. We listen to what St. Angela said: *If according to times and circumstances the need arises to make new rules or to do something differently do it prudently and with good advice.* (Last Legacy, 2) How ahead of her times this 16<sup>th</sup> century woman was!

How shall this brief exposition be concluded? What is the synthesis of tradition and of progress which will constitute prudent, necessary adaptation? The needs of students today are as universal and vast as they have always been. As far back as 1946, Mother Marie de St. Jean Martin proposed a way to meet the needs of young people, a way which has been developing like seed in the ground over a number of years and now is coming to fruition. Like St. Angela, Mother Marie de St Jean Martin was ahead of her times. In the conclusion to the *Ursuline Method of Education* she already recognized the contribution being made by our lay collaborators. Now, even more so, they are the ones who form young people to be the leaven

in the yeast, transforming society as much by who they are as by what they do. Like St. Angela, they will be counter-cultural, reacting vigorously against untruth, against the pagan humanism of our century. Ursuline schools will be beacons of excellence in education, sources of joy and inspiration for the young, institutions to which parents will willingly entrust their children for whole person education. The torch is being handed on. May all our lay collaborators grasp it and carry it into a blessed future.

Ellen Mary Mylod osu.

Taiwan



## **Ursuline Education in Hualien**

The Ursulines arrived in Hualien 50 years ago and following on from very modest beginnings have founded one high school, one junior high school, one elementary school and three kindergartens. Their educational objectives are represented by a “person” symbol, illustrating the core values of the Ursulines’ educational commitments: Life Education and Whole Person Education. Each part of the body corresponds to different aspects of those values:

### **The Head**

The head represents the knowledge, skills, life perspective, enthusiasm and physique that each student will be able to develop at every stage of life. The student will also learn to cultivate good manners, establish healthy interpersonal relationships, and develop the ability to detect and solve problems. Courses are designed to meet these demands and provide a diverse and multi-disciplined education.

### **The Heart**

The heart represents our efforts to cultivate professionalism in all our teachers and enable them to pass it on. It also stands for their ability to recognize the diverse needs of stu-

dents, and to appreciate, cherish, and respect life. Through selfless giving on the teachers' part, life will be carried on, empathy and kindness cultivated. Teachers grow together with all living beings in the educational scene—they empower and inspire.

### **The Hand**

The “SERVIAM” on our school badge represents the spirit of service, literally meaning “I will serve.” The hand symbolizes the helping out among all teachers and students; moreover, it envisions a reaching out to surrounding communities and the socially disadvantaged. With this concept, students will realize that only when they are able to apply knowledge acquired in school to the services of others will that knowledge be valuable and life be meaningful. In giving out and reaching out, they will come to appreciate the true meaning of life.

### **The Foot**

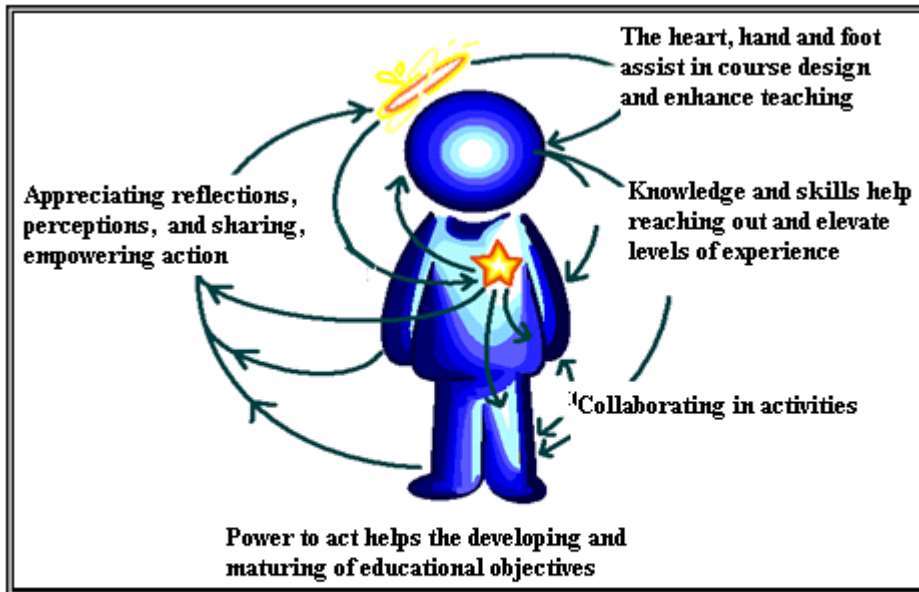
The foot exemplifies the process through which knowledge is put into practical use—through experiencing, sharing, reflecting, and acting out, in various kinds of non-official courses. Through these courses and activities, the meaning of Life Education and Whole Person Education is demonstrated and realized, manifesting the core values of Ursuline schools.

### **The Halo**

The halo represents the care bestowed on each living being in the school regarding their spiritual uplifting and nourishment.



## THE INTER-RELATIONSHIPS OF EACH DEPARTMENT:



*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ.*

*Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

*But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. (1 Corinthians 12)*

The concept here accurately describes the love and care manifested in our Ursuline schools. For Ursulines, each school, each department, and each task has its own significance and necessity.

Programs	The inter-connectedness amongst each program
The “Head” Program	The head is the center of the neural system. Courses in this program aim at giving value to acts of service, making continuation possible. They also help to elevate the experiences gained through school-held activities—it’s more than merely participating and having fun; more importantly, these life experiences are internalized and expanded through reflection and sharing.
The “Heart” Program	The heart is an important organ in the circulation system. The heart represents empowering energy. Teachers exhibit love and set up examples, constructing models for education initiatives. The heart also boosts the developments of other bodily organs so that they develop to their fullest and perform to their best.
The “Hand” Program	The hand represents the activities inside campus, while the foot represents those that are outside of campus (for instance, service learning courses).
The “Foot” Program	These activities provide the students with diversified life experiences in different depths, and allow them to take on missions that both match their current states of being and establish a sense of belonging for each of them.
The “Halo” Program	The head, heart, hand, and foot are all tangible body parts; however, the spiritual aspect of human beings is greater and more appealing. It is how we can transcend our human nature, realizing love in the face of obstacles and learning forgiveness through suffering.

## Conclusion

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)*

God created us in his own image. The breakdown of relationships between God and our first parents initiated the limitations of the human race: limited life, limited control of emotions, and limited wisdom. However, our Father made the rainbow the sign of His covenant with us, so that we can restore relationships with God through continual repentance and communion with God.

Constantly relinquishing the self and following Jesus are part of the learning process

through which personnel in Ursuline schools seek to fulfill their mission in accompanying young persons along their path of life. Through Ursuline education, each one will be able to comprehend the value and meaning of being a human. As our students continually strive for self-improvement, they are also embarking on the ongoing process of learning the spirit of service. This process will ultimately lead to honest responses to God, bringing everyone back to the state of being as He first created all, perfect, faithful, joyful, and unique. Everyone will glorify, with his or her own life, this beautiful world of ability, mercy, peace and wisdom

Teresa Ku osu

Taiwan



### **“Insieme” Together**

Together. A word dear to St Angela which occurs frequently in her Writings. Behind this word is hidden a certain anthropological vision which is always topical.

We can see that Angela wants to escape, even in the period of Renaissance, from two evils that we know nowadays under the term of individualism and of totalitarianism.

- Individualism, which under the pretext of taking into account each person, comes no longer to see society, the group, except in the service of each individual and so the notion of the Common Good disappears.
- Totalitarianism which, under the pretext of legitimatising the life of the whole social body, comes to deny the importance of and the respect for particular individuals.

This is what is extraordinary with Angela: to have at the same time concern for each particular person and concern for life together; but it is only at this price that it is possible to have community.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Edith Stein, philosopher, university professor, who became in Carmel Sr Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, had a special love for Saint Angela. She even wrote



a playlet where she presents Saint Angela coming to comfort an Ursuline educator, Mother Ursula, one evening when she is very tired, at a moment when she is being asked anguishing questions about the future. Towards the end of the dialogue, Mother Ursula, comforted, turns to Saint Angela with these words:

*If I have in my heart each one of the souls that God will entrust to me, with a great love such as you desire and recommend so strongly to every mother, then for each one at the right moment, the Spirit will show me what is needed.*

In this last affirmation we can see the theme which was that of Edith Stein's doctoral thesis in philosophy: "Einfühlung" or empathy, the human ability to put oneself in the place of the other, to feel what the other feels, respecting his otherness, to experience what the other experiences in his conscience, in a union without fusion and that is why Edith Stein dared to define "Einfühlung" as "act of love"; charity, Angela would say.

Empathy characterizes the relational beings we are, capable of creating a union between "alter-ego".

Alter-ego: the other is similar to me; he is an ego as I am ... and, at the same time, the other is different from me; he is alter, other...

In fact, Angela did not cease recommending to the "Mothers" to know their "daughters".

*I beg you that you willingly hold in consideration and have engraved on your mind and heart all your dear daughters, one by one: not only their names, but also their condition, and character, and their every situation and state. This will not be difficult for you if you embrace them with an ardent charity... If you love these dear daughters of ours with a burning and passionate charity, it will be impossible for you not to have them all depicted individually*

*in your memory and in your heart. (Second Legacy)*

Or from her Counsels:

*You will be careful and vigilant to know and understand the behaviour of your daughters, and to be aware of their spiritual and temporal needs. (Fourth Counsel, 1)*

This respect and care for the other means, for Angela, recognizing the freedom of each person.

*Be gentle and compassionate towards your dear daughters. (Second Counsel, 1)*

*And above all, be on your guard not to want to get anything done by force, because God has given free will to everyone, and wants to force no one, but only proposes, invites and counsels. (Third Legacy, 8-11)*

Yes, empathy prevents the use of violence to achieve the ends that one accords to the other.

Nevertheless, if Angela insists on knowing each person in her particularity, at the same time, she does not reject the necessity of seeing the whole picture because empathy is the hyphen between individuality, the relational and the community in the sense of people understanding each other. This gives the feeling of a rapport, of a solidarity, in a word, of belonging to the same group.

*There will be no other sign that you are in the grace of the Lord than that you love one another and are united together, for he himself says: 'In hoc cognoscat mundus quod eritis mei discipuli, si diligeritis invicem'; that is, by this the world will know that you are mine, if together, you love one another. (Tenth Legacy, 10)*

Angela will “hammer out” this theme of union till her “Last Counsel”: *My last word to you, by which I implore you even with my blood, is that you live in harmony, united to-*

*gether, all of one heart and one will. Be bound to one another by the bond of charity, esteeming each other, helping each other, bearing with each other in Jesus Christ... Living all together thus united in heart, you will be like a mighty fortress, or a tower impregnable against all adversities, and persecutions, and deceits of the devil.*

The devil is “diabolic”, etymologically, the one who divides.

Empathy and charity are “symbolic”: they unite and Paul Claudel, poet and playwright of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, made a clever pun (in French): *connaître l'autre c'est naître avec....* (to know the other is to be born with).

In every relationship, in fact, the growth of each person is reciprocal, and this is for the common good of all.

It is this empathetic communication that makes possible the educational relationship. As Edith Stein said: *One cannot educate if one does not communicate a passion for what is most important in one's own life*: the ability of the educator to manifest to the other what gives them life and the capacity of the one being educated to receive and understand the “experience” of the educator. For Saint Angela and for Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, to educate, in the strongest sense, is to become “the instrument of God”. As Edith Stein says – and Angela would not disagree: *I desire to lead the one who is mine to Him (the Christ)*.

In fact, the complicity of thought between the Ursuline and the Carmelite is based on:

- the same faith in the Trinity; Trinity, or the plurality of persons, and the Divine Unity are not incompatible, even more, where there is relationship between Persons who constitute the Life itself of God-One as a movement of Love.
- one same Christian faith which rests on the particularity of Jesus and which gives us hope in the realisation of the body which is the Church: the visible Church and the in-

visible Church, that on earth and that in heaven. Empathy goes as far as this: it brings together in one same communion in God all the members of his body and this is why Angela can have the boldness to affirm: *I shall always be in your midst*. (Last Counsel, 20)

This is precisely the affirmation repeated by Edith Stein in the title of her playlet – but in the present tense because personally experienced: *I am always with you*.

Jacques Ducamp

France



### **Ursuline Student Profile in Barbados**

Anyone who reads the writings of Angela Merici will realize her profound sense of what it means to be created by God and to be loved by Him. This belief is revealed in all she says and does and, in turn, not only influences all those who come into her orbit, but has been transmitted down through the centuries to all Ursuline students. It is the basis of the respect and courtesy, the tolerance and generosity, gentleness and kindness shown in their relationships with others whether they are consciously aware of it or not. It also gives birth to a greater sense of self-worth and personal dignity, and above all, a realization of the transcendence of their lives.

To make these traits second nature for our students, they have been given a special badge – the Serviam badge – which embodies the high ideals which, it is hoped, will be theirs. The stars remind them of the loyalty and constancy needed in all their contacts and decisions.

Above all, the constellation pointing to the North Star must be reflected in their search for Jesus, the Truth, that must underlie and determine all their decisions and actions. The Cross on their badge speaks of Christ's suffering and victory which will always be a source of courage and strength for them in all the difficulties and pains of their lives. Finally, the word

itself – Serviam – must be lived in their deeds, the consequence of their belief in the Fatherhood of God making us all keepers of our brothers and sisters along the journey through life. Furthermore, the very colours of the badge – green and silver – indicate the hope and sincerity that should accompany all they do.

Equipped with this rich inheritance of the centuries, our students are prepared for all the eventualities of all times. Their choice of careers, their ultimate goal in life, their daily plans for their families, the solutions to problems, will, hopefully, be influenced by the values and ideals acquired from their years of formation as Ursuline students. Their fundamental quest will always be for the truth of Jesus. Loyalty and constancy will help them to be faithful in all things to God, their companions, and themselves. Their familiarity with the Cross of Jesus will stand them in good stead in all their trials; while the respect and courtesy which characterize their everyday dealings with others will certainly make them centres of peace and harmony in their society.

Every Ursuline school can take pride in the great number of their students, who have carried this formation into their adult lives and have become leaders in their community whether on a national or parochial level, or simply, and more importantly, as wives and mothers. Our former students take their quest for truth and their great desire to serve wherever they go and are happy to inspire others with the ideals and values acquired as Ursuline students. Little do they realize that in so doing they are disseminating the inspiration and teachings given by Angela over 475 years ago.

Valerie Ngui osu

Barbados



## **Ursuline Student Profile in Peru**

Here at Santa Ursula School in Lima, we begin our interviews with the parents who want their daughters to study here, with this question: What is the reason that you want to come to our school?

Many answer with the words: We come here because we know a student who attended your school and we really like her way of being; she is different.

In many of our staff meetings when we plan, organize and make the correct adjustments to our programs and projects, we ask ourselves: How are our efforts, our ideas about education today, reflected in our students' lives when they leave our school? It is hard to measure accurately what elements will be useful for their lives in the future, lives which we know will be exposed to constant changes.

Our former students often come back and they tell us about their achievements at university, their joys and sorrows, but are they all really prepared for tomorrow's challenges? From the day of the students' first evaluation, when we propose a profile to the parents who are looking for a school to prepare their daughters for the future, until the graduation day

when our students are able to be independent, we work to accomplish our mission.

Our school's vision is reflected in the educational plan that covers different aspects.

#### Santa Ursula School

- offers a high quality education centred in the person, in order to develop her individual potentialities and achieve a complete multilingual formation;
- educates students who are committed to Gospel values and the Ursuline principles which are based on Saint Angela Merici's work, living "SERVIAM" and acting with social and ecological responsibility in family, work and social settings;
- prepares students to understand and give effective answers to the world's changing settings, in accordance with technological advances.

In the entrance of our school you can see the testimony of Karla Verástegui , class of 2005. She has put in very clear and simple words, what for us is difficult to show in a measurable way.

*In these five years since I left school, I have understood the meaning of being an Ursuline student. It is an indelible and distinctive seal that one carries throughout life. The values that we learned at school and SERVIAM are the most explicit examples of what it means. This inner giving that we learned since we were little girls with the monthly contribution of the "kilo" (a kilo of food), help in fundraising efforts, living with our classmates of San José of Miramar school (a daily outreach to poor students from nearby Miramar), and many other activities, are among the most valuable tools that our school gives us to be sensitive, loyal, honest and helpful people in all aspects of our lives....My relationships with the teachers, sisters of the Ursuline Order, the administrative and service personnel are other*



*beautiful memories I keep, and my gratitude towards them is unlimited. That is why I live thanking God because my parents chose this school, which put the seed of Christ in my heart which made me able to overcome difficult moments I have lived.*

Our school is going to be 75 years old this year, a date that not only fills us with pride, but also demands us to continue working with the spirit of our Sister, St. Angela, whose teachings are always up to date. We do not always know if what we plant is going to give the fruits we expect, but with Angela on our side we are always hopeful.

Karla's testimony finishes in the following way: *As Saint Angela used to say: "Do not ever lose courage or confidence: God will arrange it all in an admirable way" and surely He has done it...*

The students are received at school with a very simple welcome from their teachers, and we always prepare carefully the way they leave our school. We make sure we have two important aspects in mind. We want them to understand clearly what we expect from them once they leave; and we want them to always know that Santa Ursula School is their second home.

The Graduation speech, which is the official farewell from the school's principal, reminds them of the following: *...always be aware of your roots, have a strong faith and do not stay away when someone else needs you. Be strong enough to know how to say no at the right moment and find in your personal success the way of looking for the advancement of our society toward a more fair and fraternal world. Do not ever forget that we are always here for you waiting with open arms....*

Birgitte Nyken

Peru



### **Ursuline Student Profile in Senegal**

A survey made among the pupils of the “Collège Sainte Ursule” in the school year 2010-2011 and among the alumnae, on the basis of three important questions, allowed us to measure the impact of values given through education on the lives of those who went to this school.

*I. How and by what means did your confidence in your self and in others develop?*

*II. In what areas do you feel independent in the search for the truth and how does it show as a value necessary for a better moral vision?*

*III. How has this education in values developed in you a deep interior life?*

The answers given to these questions and the personality traits which emerge have made us respect the originality of each answer, even if they evoke the same means and values.

*Meeting others in the ‘Collège Sainte Ursule already produces an effect of increasing confidence in oneself and in others. My entry to the “Collège Sainte Ursule” helped me a lot, because I learned there to have more confidence in myself. The fact of seeing the faces of my friends every morning, of being beside people that I did not know and hearing them helped me to understand them better, to get to know them and to trust them.*

*The truth that I hear every day, the advice and the consolation given by all those with whom I live, developed a great confidence in myself and in others, thanks also to shared classes and the education I received, confidence which became more developed because I know that without it one can accomplish nothing.*

*A place at the “Collège Sainte Ursule” is already an additional reason to have confidence in oneself and in others. Moreover, there were other reasons for these girls’ growth in confidence. Educational outings, cultural days and all the other organized activities opened me up to others and helped me to develop ties of friendship and of work with them in a perfect fraternal communion.*

*The “Collège Sainte Ursule” is an exemplary school where one learns to be honest, to tell the truth and to behave in truth whatever the circumstances. All that is done there is done for the greater glory of God, with faith and trust, as is suggested by the theme for the year 2010/2011: *Together, let us live in reality and in truth* and by the Ursuline badge *Serviam* (I will serve).*

*At the “Collège Sainte Ursule” I met an extensive educational team, of teachers, the principal, secretaries, staff and pupils, united as one body, without distinction of race, religion or ethnicity. The work dynamic of the educational team and of the pupils encourages even more confidence.*

*The “Collège Sainte Ursule” is a family where we spend half of our time, so all the body of educators are like fathers or mothers for us. They support us, give us advice and offer us the space to be at ease and to learn.*

*Thus, the confidence acquired during our stay in the “Collège Sainte Ursule” enables us to overcome fear and to create really friendly relationships, but above all to feel better*

*placed in society.*

*All in all, the “Collège Sainte Ursule” remains a receptacle of knowledge and of education, where, thanks to the encouragement, advice and support of the whole educational team we blossom intellectually, morally and spiritually.*

An education in confidence necessarily involves values which will manifest themselves in a better moral vision. ***The values that our teachers inculcated in us enable us to blossom, to grow harmoniously in all confidence. These values are rigour in work, discipline, respect, love and tolerance.***

*For me, it is a great opportunity to have such a wonderful school and such a competent staff of educators, so devoted to our education.*

*The “Collège Sainte Ursule” is a home in which pupils and educational staff live side by side, with respect. They show a special attention and great respect. My teachers consider the pupils as their children. Finally, attendance at classes, perseverance, hope to be able to serve one day and the time spent with others are all means of strengthening **confidence** in oneself and in others. This confidence in oneself and in others opens inescapably into the **search for the truth** which is seen as a necessary value for a better moral vision. The areas of expression of this autonomy remain friendship and social relationships where people accept one another as they are, without judging. ***I feel independent in the search for the truth, in friendship and in social relationships where sincerity and faithfulness can be seen; we are educated according to these values at the “Collège Sainte Ursule.”****

*These values are seen in my relationships with others by the fact that I give them my opinion about their behaviour and their way of life, but I also ask them not to hide anything from me. This is why **listening and “knowing how to forgive” seem absolutely necessary***

**for a better moral vision.** If there is no listening or forgiveness, there can be no way to achieve reconciliation. That's why to speak out against injustice and cheating, to struggle against these vices is to participate in the harmonious development of an honest and responsible citizen. All this has to be rooted in the constant search for peace, in an active and sincere solidarity. This value finds its basis in the truth. This independence in the search for truth shows itself also in service, in hope, but especially in the love of work and in perseverance through religious and moral teaching. This education in values inevitably influences the interior life. In this way it contributes to the formation of human development. *When the Almighty taught me through my teachers, my parents and my friends, I noticed in my deepest self that I had changed a lot, because I have become a more responsible girl, able now to participate in the development of the nation. My life has become simpler, I love and I respect others better. I am more in solidarity, more polite thanks to this education that I received in the Collège.*

Finally this education teaches how to live. It develops the desire to go further in the search for knowledge and being. ***The teaching given at this eminent school forged my personality, my character.*** *I was able to build an Ursuline character: I know how to be strong, helpful and always deserving.* The "Collège Sainte Ursule" is an eminent place of education which strives to remain faithful to the "Serviam" badge. All those who have had the experience of Ursuline life, pupils as well as educators, remain marked by it. All the values received in the Collège remain indelible.

Krystyna Młynarz osu and Victor Sene

with a group of pupils and alumnae of the "Collège Sainte Ursule" in Thiès.

Senegal



### **The Merician Educator in Senegal**

Following Saint Angela, the Merician educator will say “Serviam”. Paraphrasing the psalmist we can say: *I will serve the Lord and others always and everywhere.* “Why are you going to the Orient, fearless virgin? To pray. Yet, what could you admire with your blind eyes? I will love. She went by the farthest roads with nothing, with courage in her arms and in her hands a staff!” This is the spirit that should be incarnate in every formator in contemporary Ursuline education. To serve implies certain human and spiritual qualities.

The Merician educator is **available** and remains at the service of those being educated. For there is more happiness in giving than in receiving. In all modesty and humility the educator is all things to all people. A family spirit, of simplicity and tolerance, and of respect, must be the cement which unites the members of the pedagogical team. The manifestation of these virtues is seen in solidarity. One can feel this understanding above all in mutual support, in happy or sad events. For example at the “Collège Sainte Ursule” at Thiès where there is a “cash box of solidarity”.

It is important to note that like Saint Angela, an educator witnesses their **Faith**. In giving catechetical lessons, with much love, we participate in the expansion of the Church

which is the duty of each baptized person. Did not Pope John-Paul II say: *Lay people have their natural role in numerous sectors of life within the Church, with their own responsibilities, not confused with the ordained ministers...*

The Merician educator must **put God at the center of her activities**. She has strong faith in God and in Jesus Christ. Prayer and the practice of the sacraments by teachers is an eloquent witness, considering the milieu (Muslims are in the majority in Senegal) where we are called to live Islamic-Christian dialogue. Do not forget that the “Collège Sainte Ursule” does not exclude any religion, accepts Muslim pupils and teachers and out of concern for equity gives classes on morality in the same way as catechetics.

As a model of life, the Merician educator is **responsible, a worker and conscientious**. She is persevering and punctual. What she expects from a pupil is even more valuable for her since she is also a formator, because the adolescents look at and observe her. She is attentive to others, especially to the young in her charge. She listens. She knows how to reassure and encourage confidence, to enhance the human person, because “every person is a sacred story”. She will be attentive to probity and social justice, because the world of pupils is very sensitive to equity, especially in marking or when it is necessary to settle a quarrel. The pupils are of all ages and from different worlds; we must create unity in diversity, and even with diversity.

Gifted as she may be, the educator knows how to recognize the talents of other colleagues or pupils: “not to put out the smouldering wick”. We must forgive because whatever the fault (chattering, indiscipline...) the pupil is not an adversary, but a human being who is developing and who must grow in age and in wisdom.

The educator must share her knowledge and her ability; for this she must have a heart

as large as the world and be armed with generosity and patience.

The educator is a **builder** of a world in growth, with and for young people. This world is called to **change** in a positive way as the World Social Forum of Dakar in 2011 reminded us: *Another world is possible*.

We teach what we are and what we do, before teaching what we know; this is the leitmotiv of the pedagogical team of the “Collège Sainte Ursule” in Thiès (Senegal). If we want to become professional educators, we need to display true qualities such as probity, respect for the human person, teamwork, because union is strength.

To educate in values is a noble task, and delicate at the same time. This is a continuous process. The field is vast and the journey is long. As the farmer in the fable of Jean de la Fontaine, we plough and turn the earth to find the precious Treasure kept for us by Saint Angela ...

Faye Marthe Nour

Jean Ndione

Claudine-Marie Ndione osu

Senegal





### The Merician Educator in Greece

The school is a place of learning, of transmission of culture, formation of character, a place where principles and traditional values are kept. Every day, in this place, the adventure begins which has as its protagonists teachers and pupils who reflect, create, give vent to their imagination, like or lose interest, agree or argue, struggle or give up, but in each case they undoubtedly act with passion and say “yes” to life.

So, what is the role of the teacher in this adventure?

She must

- be interested in each of her pupils personally, without isolating them from their background, *hold in consideration and have engraved on her mind and heart all her children, one by one; not only their names, but also their condition, and character, situation and all that concerns them. And this will not be difficult if she loves them with an ardent charity;*
- be always developing, having as criteria the needs of the pupils, and act without religious, social or racial prejudices, having the eyes of her mind and soul open;
- be open to new calls, adapt to changes: *if, according to times and circumstances,*

*the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice;*

- introduce new educational methods, be informed in current trends and make classes a pleasant experience;
- be clear-sighted and passionate about her work: *with a vivid and ardent desire, she must put all her intelligence and concern into assuring that her dear children are adorned with every virtue and with all regal and refined manners.....she must do all things with patience and charity;*
- face up to crises with modesty, with love, courage, tolerance, with determination and patience, avoiding excess; she must *accomplish her task and correct children with love and charity if she sees them make a mistake out of human fragility. She will achieve more with kindness and gentleness than with harshness and sharp rebukes;*
- set limits, define rules that apply first to her, be a model for her pupils; *she does not want to force anybody, but only propose, invite, advise;*
- have a transparent approach to the children, parents and colleagues; she must respect them and recognise their contribution to the school community;
- try constantly to improve, admitting her faults and learning from them;
- be concerned for the good of society and intervene with acts of charity;
- protect the environment and form the ecological conscience of her pupils.
- *the Merician teacher must act, move, believe, strive, hope, cry to God with all her heart.....God will never fail to provide for their needs, material as well as spiritual, so long as nothing is lacking on her part.....Jesus Christ will be in*

*our midst, and as a true and good master, he will enlighten us and teach us what we have to do.*

Nobody knows everything, but we must not know nothing! Perfection is not of this world, human wisdom should not give birth to a new Tower of Babel. This is why the Merician teacher must always be close to the real source of Life and Wisdom and must seek to do her best without losing courage.

In a world where knowledge quickly becomes old, the teacher must remain young, maintain her vision of a better future, cultivate her imagination, encourage creativity, nourish her faith with Christian principles. Love, knowledge, dignity are the values that she must serve and transmit to her pupils in such a way that:

- they learn to honour so that others might honour them,
- they learn to react so that others might listen to them,
- they learn to offer before they are asked,
- they learn to ask before somebody does them wrong.

*Live in harmony, united together, insieme, with all your dear children. To love one another and be united together is a sure sign that we are walking the path right and pleasing to God... Believe it, do not doubt, have firm faith that it will be so. I know what I am saying. Blessed are those who will take very good care of it. (Last Legacy)*

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M. Lyraki

D. Xenopoulou

Greece



### **Leadership in an Ursuline University**

Who can be considered competent to undertake the duties and responsibilities of a university president? What role should lay presidents play in an Ursuline university? How can national educational systems be adjusted to conform to St. Angela's educational philosophy? In responding to these questions I can only share my views based on the time I served in Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages and the experiences I underwent in becoming acquainted with St. Angela's educational philosophy.

First, I believe that university presidents serve as 'navigators' for the school and that such leaders must possess vigor and wisdom. *Act, move, believe, strive...you will see marvelous things.* (Counsels Prologue, 17-18) Not only do the presidents need to possess specialized knowledge within their domain of expertise and requisite academic status, but they should also have a clear view and understanding of the macro-environment and current standing of the school over which they preside. Navigators need a clear picture of their goals and directions; they should keep all the relevant situations under control in order to guide the school to its desired destination. This is comparable to the role of the Little Bear on the Serviam emblem of Ursuline schools signifying guidance to reach the Pole Star. Navigators also need to

know well all their crew members, machinery components, fuel status and so on in order to efficiently and effectively execute their navigation capabilities, thereby leading the school towards fulfilling its missions and goals. *You will be careful and vigilant to know and understand [their] behavior.* (Fourth Counsel, 1)

Next, what is required is a profound understanding of the spirit of St. Angela and Ursuline educational philosophy. Presidents should read her Writings attentively and be able to examine how the school will put the necessary spirit into its teaching and learning activities as well as into campus life for the students. They should pay attention to and reflect on whether the Ursuline spirit and philosophy are reflected in their management and leadership style. If the school is to have a good, traditional Ursuline spirit, presidents themselves must experience and practice it. If the school lacks this distinct characteristic, then the president should create and establish the required “climate” and “atmosphere” by acting out the role of navigator. Thinking back over my time in Wenzao, I made efforts to define the educational spirit of St. Angela for myself through visiting other remarkable sister-schools and another Ursuline university in the United States in search of inspirational models I could learn from, especially how to integrate Ursuline educational philosophy into the curriculum. Professional leaders should be wholeheartedly willing to make sacrifices. Their enthusiasm and professionalism should be the inspiration and model for all “crew members”. *Live and behave in such a way that [they] may see in you a model, and what you want them to do, do it yourselves first* (Sixth Counsel, 1-2) They must ensure that the team has a common vision and goal, and then work closely and vigorously with the team to achieve the goal. *United in heart you will be like a mighty fortress, a tower impregnable.* (Last Counsel, 15)

As for integrating Ursuline educational philosophy into the curriculum, leaders should cooperate with professional faculty members to ensure that respect for humanity and values related to Christian love are incorporated into the curriculum in order to foster students' spiritual and intellectual growth. *Charity directs everything to the honor of God.* (Second Counsel, 6)

Finally university presidents need to continuously improve their professionalism and capabilities in running the school. No one is born to be a president; each leader should be modest, seizing all opportunities to benefit from others' experiences and apply the insights gleaned accordingly to their navigation work. They need ability not only to assign and delegate tasks but, more importantly, to possess the abilities and power to give instructions, make judgments and solve problems for the mutual benefit of all. *After that, leave it to God; he will do marvelous things in his own time and when it pleases him.* (Eighth Counsel, 9)

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