

Ursulines of Cincinnati Visions

Christ-Centered Women in a Changing World



Autumn 2025

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF SAINT ANGELA MERICI

In June, a group of educators from six Ursuline Education Network (UEN) schools embarked on a pilgrimage to St. Angela's Italy. "The Life and Legacy of Saint Angela Merici" was an opportunity to retrace the footsteps of our founder and honor the 500th anniversary of St. Angela's personal pilgrimage to Rome in 1525.

Over ten days, teachers, administrators, family, and friends experienced the sights and sounds of the Lake Garda region, Desenzano, Salo and Brescia, the cities of Angela's formation and bedrock of her spiritual life. Stops included Le Grezze, St. Angela's childhood home, churches Duomo di Santa Maria Maddalena, Duomo di Santa Maria Annunziata, San Clemente and of course, her

Shrine located in the Church of St. Angela Merici, a deeply spiritual moment for participants.

After stops in Florence and Assisi, pilgrims arrived in Rome for the Jubilee year Pentecost mass in St. Peter's Square, celebrated by Pope Leo. UEN was one of several groups who participated in a pilgrim walk through the holy doors of Saint Peter's Basilica. From outside St. Peter's Square, groups process,

each following a special pilgrim cross carried by group members.

UEN pilgrims took turns reading aloud the words of St. Angela's Legacies and Testament while processing to the holy doors.

The pilgrimage concluded with a visit to the general archives of the Ursulines of the Roman Union. Welcomed warmly by the Ursuline sisters and their

archivist, educators were able to view historical documents, including the official decree of St. Angela's



UEN pilgrims under statue of St. Angela, Desenzano town square



LeGrezze, Angela's childhood home

canonization from 1807. Over the next few months, teachers will continue to meet virtually to create classroom curriculum based on their experience. The pilgrimage was a profound opportunity for educators, charged with bringing Angela into the classroom. Through their experience, the pilgrims can testify that St. Angela is, indeed, "more alive" than ever!



Dear Friends,

"Peace be with all of you!" These first words of Pope Leo XIV as he addressed the throngs in Vatican Square after having been elected by the Cardinals echo the



words Jesus often spoke to His disciples, especially in his post resurrection appearances. The Pope goes on, "I would like this greeting of peace to resound in your hearts, in your families, among all people, wherever they may be..."

In the same time frame as the election of our new pope, the Cincinnati Archdiocese welcomed Archbishop Robert Casey as the new shepherd of the local church. Both leaders signal their commitment to promoting Catholic social teaching, as emphasized by Pope Francis during his papacy.

This focus aligns with our Ursuline mission of living out St. Angela's call in her Last Counsel to "...live in harmony, united together, all of one heart and one will." This issue is packed with information! Peggy Platz, Director of the Ursuline Education Network, shares details of this summer's UEN-sponsored pilgrimage to Italy which focused on important sites connected to St. Angela Merici. Intended primarily for Ursuline educators, the Sisters sponsored participation by one administrator from St. Ursula Villa and one from St. Ursula Academy. Together, the two schools had seven pilgrims participate. The potential benefit to the schools' missions is endless! You will read also about how our Ursuline Companions are helping to carry forward our Ursuline mission through study, prayer, ministries and more. You won't want to miss the event they're planning for this October in collaboration with UEN! Finally, but not least is an article about the collaborative project between the Sisters and the Companions to commission an original portrait of Servant of God Thea Bowman, an intentional expression of the Sisters' and St. Ursula Academy's commitment to racial equality and justice.

As we go forward in faith, let us help to build a world modeled on the Divine Community of the One God in Three Persons. Know that you and your loved ones remain in our prayers.

Sr. Margie Efkefman and Sr. Sandy Sherman

Our Mission Statement

We, the Ursulines of Cincinnati, are a community of Christ-centered women transforming lives with compassion and creativity. We pledge to respond to the needs of our times through our diverse ministries and in collaboration with the laity. We will respect the dignity of each individual, nurture their unique gifts, and be present to them as we all seek a deeper and more personal relationship with God.

Historic Women of the Church

a workshop hosted by



Monday, October 20, 2025

6-7:30 pm

St. Ursula Academy

featuring **Dr. Margaret Gower**
Vice President for Mission and
Associate Professor in the Department
of Religious Studies and Theology at
St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN



Join us for Dinner and Dialogue with
Dr. Gower

Arlene Fox Keller Center
1322 East McMillan Street
Cincinnati, OH 45206

For more information or to RSVP, email
ursulinecompanionscincinnati@gmail.com

CELEBRATING A HOLY WOMAN IN A SACRED SPACE

The campus that is home to Saint Ursula Convent and Academy expanded and changed many times over one hundred and fifteen years. The one space that remained constant is the Chapel and Chapel Hall area. The Ursuline Sisters professed their vows and celebrated their eventual home-going to God in the chapel. Generations of young women prayed, laughed, cried and celebrated in that space. Some made their marriage vows there. The Chapel area is the heart of Saint Ursula.

Several years ago, a grandmother of one of our African-American seniors was on a private tour, and very much taken with the holiness of the Chapel area. Not being a Catholic she asked, "Don't Catholics have any Black saints?" For the sisters that comment came as an inspiration from the Holy Spirit. With the support of the Companions, the Sisters commissioned an original bas-relief sculpture of Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman. It was to be a gift to the Saint Ursula Family and a recognition of the universality and diversity of the Church. In addition, it was a response to the call of Pope Francis at the 2024 International Conference, "Women in the Church: Builders of Humanity". He highlighted the ongoing struggles faced by women worldwide, including inequality, and injustice while emphasizing the trans-

justice activist and a bridgebuilder saying – "Be a woman, be a man, be single, be married, be a priest, be Italian American, be Native American, be African American, but be one in Christ!" She grew up in racially segregated Canton, Mississippi experiencing all the interconnected dimensions of oppression. At the age of 15 she bravely traveled to Wisconsin to enter the all-White convent of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration who were her beloved teachers at the segregated Catholic grade school in Canton. Eventually, she became a college professor, teaching and giving workshops around the world. She joyfully shared her Black spirituality in word and song trying to heal societal divisions. Her words are relevant today. "We unite ourselves with Christ's redemptive work when we reconcile, when we make peace, when we share good news that God is in our lives, when we reflect to our brothers and sisters God's healing forgiveness, God's unconditional love."

Fr. Maurice Nutt, C.S.S.R., Diocesan Promotor for Servant of God Thea Bowman's cause for sainthood and author of the book, *Thea Bowman: Faithful and Free*,

recounted that when Thea received a diagnosis of breast cancer in 1984 she made a decision: "I'm going to live until I die." She kept up her speaking engagements and outreach ministry while in her wheelchair. She



Sculpture of Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman (Images within the work include: Thea as a child with her parents, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration convent; the thick roots beneath the dwellings speak of being grounded in the deep faith of her family and religious community. At the bottom where individuals join hands singing are the other five African Americans up for canonization.)

recorded songs and helped compile the African American Catholic hymnal, *Lead Me Guide Me*, gave numerous interviews including a "60 Minutes" segment, and spoke to the United States Catholic Bishops Conference in 1989.

Sr. Thea would pray "that God will heal my body. If God will heal my body, I'll say Thank you Lord. But I also know that if God doesn't give me what I ask of him, God will give me something better." That something better was to call her home on March 30, 1990.

"Going Home Like A Shooting Star," a documentary on Sr. Thea Bowman, can be viewed at <https://www.fspa.org/content/about/sister-thea-bowman>.



SUA students and guests gathered for dedication liturgy

formative power of education for young women in promoting overall human development.

Sr. Thea was a contemporary woman with whom the girls can identify. She was an educator, writer, musician, a



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Meet the Artist

Sheleen P. Jones, MFA, is one of the most prominent visual artists in New Orleans where she lives and teaches at Xavier University. She is known for public figurative sculptures, many depicting African American pioneers in civil rights and cultural ambassadors. Her commissioned works are displayed throughout the New Orleans Metropolitan area including on the grounds of the Louisiana State Capitol in Baton Rouge.

Regarding the bas-relief of Sr. Thea, Sheleen states: "This image was designed to capture the spirit of Sr. Thea Bowman. She had a contagious smile, strong will, and purpose filled life. She was known for wearing Africa diaspora traditional garments. Thea was also revered for her sensitivity to the struggles and sacrifices of those who lived in her community...Thea's life inspired me to create an image that would resonate and connect with viewers' experiences – be it their perception of the gravity of historical events or for them to place themselves figuratively within the context of those events."