

Saint Angela of Foligno 'Teacher of Theologians' **Feast Day: January 7th**

OFS Monthly Formation

January 2023



Saint Angela of Foligno, mystic and Patron Saint of widows

Saint Angela of Foligno (1248 – 1309) was born in Umbria, Italy. Married, wealthy, with several children, she eventually put aside all worldly attractions and upon the death of her husband and children, she joined the Third Order, drawing many women of her time to follow her example, eventually forming a religious community. She was renowned for her love of God and neighbour, “especially the poor, and for her humility, patience, and poverty”. She received many heavenly graces and had a special devotion to the mysteries of Christ’s life. Her writings on spiritual topics were so remarkable that she earned the title of ‘Teacher of Theologians’.

Sources: Franciscan Media and the Proper Offices of Franciscan Saints and Blesseds.

Reflection:

Having recently celebrated the great Feast of our Saviour’s birth it may be helpful to contemplate the words of Saint Angela of Foligno, quoted below with respect to the Incarnation, a devotion very dear to Saint Francis and at the heart of our Franciscan charism. Let us consider what might our response be to so greater love?

“O Love that emptied itself! You abased yourself to make me when you took on our human nature. You did not abase yourself to diminish yourself or your divinity. It is the unfathomable mystery of your Incarnation that causes me to use these expressions. You who surpass our understanding have become understandable! You who are uncreated have become a creature! You who surpass our power of thought have become comprehensible! You who cannot be touched can now be felt by physical contact!

Lord, make me worthy to plumb the depths of this profound love which you manifested to us in this most holy Incarnation. Make me worthy, uncreated God, to know the depth of your love and glowing charity. Make me worthy to grasp the unspeakable love that you communicated to us when you showed us your Son, Jesus Christ, in the Incarnation, and the way the Son in turn showed you to us as Father. Make me worthy, Lord, to recognise and grasp your love toward us when you created me.

You, who surpass man’s understanding, make me capable of recognising and grasping your inestimable burning love by which you emptied yourself. From

all eternity you chose to let the human race see you face to face, even as you, Most High, willed to see our face. Supreme being, make me worthy to understand this the greatest of gifts, that all the angels and saints have no other gift save to behold you, the object of their love, and to love and contemplate you.

O gift surpassing all gifts because you are love. O greatest Good, you condescend to have us recognize you who are love, and to bring us to love such love. All those who come into your presence will be filled according to the love they have. And there is nothing else that could lead the blessed to contemplate you, nothing else but genuine love.”

Source: M. Faloci Pulignani, *Autobiografia e scritti della B. Angela da Foligno* (Citta Di Castello 1932) 394 – 402.



St. Clare and St. Francis of Assisi in adoration before the Child Jesus. Artist: Gerard Seghers 17th C.
Source <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

The Holy Gospel – John 1:13, 16

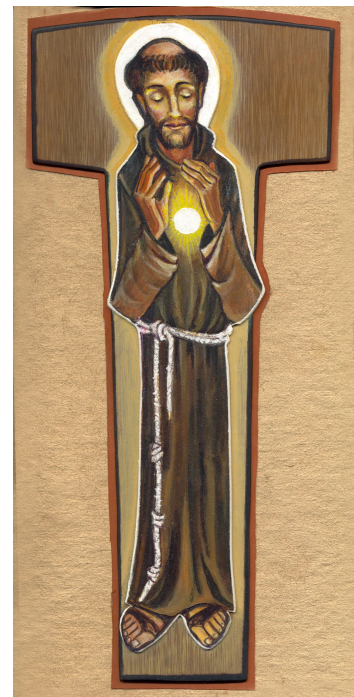
“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father. ... And from his fulness have we all received, grace upon grace.”

OFS Rule, 5:

In reference to Secular Franciscans, Rule 5 states that “the faith of Saint Francis, who often said ‘I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except his most holy body and blood’, should be the inspiration and pattern of their eucharistic life.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.1380:

“Since Christ was about to take his departure from his own in his visible form, he wanted to give us his sacramental presence; since he was about to offer himself on the cross to save us, he wanted us to have the memorial of the love with which he loved us ‘to the end,’ even to the giving of his life. In his Eucharistic presence he remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us...”



Saint Francis and the Eucharist
Source: <https://www.vocazionefrancescana.org>

Let us consider:

That in Holy Communion, the Word made flesh, who dwelt in Mary’s womb, comes to dwell within us, enabling us to be in an intimate loving union with God. What a marvellous grace.

Let us pray to our heavenly Father: that we may (as Ss. Francis and Angela recommend) partake of the Eucharist with utmost love and devotion, embracing those precious moments, when the one who is love, dwells within us. Amen.