

St. Angela of Foligno, O.F.S. (1248 – 1309) Feast Day, January 7

Born into a wealthy family in Foligno, Italy, in 1248, Angela grew up taking part in the social events of the city. Married, perhaps at an early age, she had several children. Around the age of 40, she reportedly had a vision of St. Francis and recognized the emptiness of her life. From that time, she began to lead a life devoted to higher perfection.



After her conversion, Angela's mother died, followed, a few months later, by her husband and children. With one serving woman, Masazuola, as her companion, she began to divest herself of her possessions and to live as a penitent. Angela joined the Franciscan Tertiaries (now the Secular Franciscan Order), probably in 1291. She placed herself under the direction of a Franciscan friar named Arnolfo, who would serve as her confessor. She was alternately absorbed by meditating on the crucified Christ and by serving the poor of Foligno as a nurse and beggar for their needs.

At her confessor's advice, Angela wrote her *Book of Visions and Instructions*. In it, she recalls some of the temptations she suffered after her conversion; she also expressed her thanks to God for the Incarnation of Jesus. She was known as a mystic because of her writings about her mystical revelations. This book and her life earned for Angela the title "Teacher of Theologians."

Later she established at Foligno a community of other women tertiaries, who added to the Rule of the Third Order a commitment to a common life without, however, binding themselves to enclosure, so that they might devote their lives to works of charity. Between around 1296 and her death in early 1309, the fame of Angela's sanctity gathered around her a number of other tertiaries, both men and women, who strove under her direction to advance in holiness.

At Christmas 1308, Angela told her companions she would die shortly. A few days later, she had a vision of Christ appearing to her and promising to come personally to take her to heaven. Angela died surrounded by her community of disciples. She died in her sleep on January 3, 1309. Her remains repose in the Church of St. Francis at Foligno. Many people attributed miracles to her, which were accomplished at her tomb. She was beatified in 1693, and canonized in 2013 by Pope Francis.

Reflection

People who live in the United States today can understand Saint Angela's temptation to increase her sense of self-worth by accumulating money, fame or power. Striving to possess more and more, she became more and more self-centered. When she realized she was priceless because she was created and loved by God, she became very penitential and very charitable to the poor. What had seemed foolish early in her life now became very important. The path of self-emptying she followed is the path all holy men and women must follow.