

Saint Angela Merici,

You were generous and joyful in answering God's call, and you happily shared the gifts you had been given. When you recognised the need for education, you overcame obstacles and prejudice by your prayer and your commitment to those living in poverty.

Open our eyes to the needs of others; remind us that Jesus calls us to serve our sisters and brothers, and to bring joy to those around us.

Amen.

A thought to take away

Angela saw a need in her community, and decided to get a group of people together who could do something about it.

It doesn't have to be dramatic, but an action, a word, a smile, a sign of concern and respect, can make all the difference to those around you.

An action to complete

- Choose one day this week and try to be positive all day, rather than negative. It's not easy... but it could be transformative!

Saint Angela Merici
Pray for us



Feast Day

27 January

Birthplace

Desenzano, Northern Italy

Born

21 March 1474

Died

27 January 1540

Canonised

1807

Patron saint of

Education of the young,
especially girls



*Put yourselves
in the service of
others.*

”

On the feast of St Angela, the first reading comes from the first letter of St Peter, and makes it clear that each one of us has something unique to offer...

“Each one of you has received a special grace, so... put yourselves at the service of others.”

Think for a moment and acknowledge the gifts which we have been given. How can we use these gifts to be of service...

- to our families, who we sometimes take for granted;
- to our fellow students, especially anyone who is isolated;
- to our local and global neighbours who are experiencing injustice?

The life of St Angela Merici

St Angela Merici is a true saint for CAFOD! She used her gifts and talents to support, train and guide women, who, in their turn, went on to use their skills to help many other people to help themselves.

As a young woman, Angela was deeply affected by the poverty around her, the lack of opportunity for those who were not wealthy, and the lack of education – particularly for women and girls. Nuns were the best educated women – but they were in the cloisters, and unmarried women were not allowed to go out or work independently.

Angela always tried hard to see what God was asking her to do with her life and her gifts. She turned down an invitation from Pope Clement VII, to commit her life to a group of nursing Sisters, and instead responded to the need for education. She gathered a group of like-minded women around her, and together they went out and began to teach young girls.

Angela and her followers were bound together by their dedication to God and their commitment to education. She was a woman of action and prayer – she saw that her true vocation lay in combining both, in the work of education.

Like CAFOD and our partners, St Angela believed that the dignity of each individual is paramount in supporting people to make something of their own lives as well as contributing to the common good of society.

Angela's approach was quite radical, but she was convinced that God was calling her to serve others through the ministry of education, and was not afraid to try something new. She even told the Sisters that they should not feel tied to doing the same thing in the same way all the time, and that if something needed changing, they should make those changes – but only after much prayer and reflection. Angela spent many hours in prayer herself, and this ensured that she centred her life not on herself, but on God and those she was called to serve.

She placed her companions under the patronage of St Ursula, who has traditionally been regarded as a protector of women, and her Company, the Ursulines, dedicated itself to the education of women – which it continues to do today, over 450 years later. Like CAFOD and our partners, St Angela dedicated herself and her Company to enable and empower those in most need.

CAFOD's work with young women

Many of our partners are working in ways that St Angela Merici would have no doubt approved of, helping to improve girls' access to education. Our partner Caritas Bangladesh helps people adapt to their changing climate by supporting them in setting up businesses that will thrive in the local conditions. One side effect of people earning more money is that many more families are now able to choose to send their daughters to school.



Tunpa (right) with her niece.

Caritas Bangladesh helped Tunpa's mother, Tapati, build a raised vegetable garden that won't get destroyed by floods. Tapati can sell the vegetables. She says, "I have seen so many changes in this area since I was a girl. I am illiterate because I had to leave school at age 10. I got married when I was 14 because my family couldn't afford to support me any longer. If they had more money I wouldn't have had to get married and I could have continued studying, but it wasn't possible. Today my daughter Tunpa is studying for a degree in commerce."

Before Tunpa started her degree, she taught private tuition classes. At the time, she said, "I teach three children but only one of them pays me. The other two are very poor so I do it for free."

"I do this because I like to support them and help them to become successful in their lives."

Tunpa hopes to continue her studies and get a Masters degree in Business. She says, "Things have changed since my mother's day. There used to be no schools or colleges around here, and women were not encouraged to go into higher education. Girls and women can travel more easily these days, and we are encouraged to study and can choose what we want to do. We also have access to mass media, which has increased our knowledge of local and national news, as well as of education, science and of different cultures. My mum got married when she was 14. I don't want to get married yet."

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