

Thursday 4 January 2024

Angela of Foligno



St Angela was born in Foligno, Italy, in 1248. She married and had several children. She was wealthy and took part in the social events of the city until 1285, when she had a vision. Following that mystical experience, Angela became a member of the Franciscan Third Order.

Angela gave away all her possessions when her husband died and started a community of tertiaries who were devoted to the care of the needy.

Her visions, which were recorded by her confessor, demonstrated a mature mystical union with Christ and the gift of revelation. She is sometimes called 'the Mistress of Theologians.'

Her tomb is located in the church of St Francis in Foligno.

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Prayers of intercession © Angela of Foligno.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

All the hymns are hosted on YouTube. Please click on the links to hear them.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 I love you Lord, and I lift my voice [\(click here to hear the hymn\)](#)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ calls us to share the heavenly banquet of his love with all the saints in earth and heaven. Therefore, knowing our unworthiness and sin, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almight Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for The Collect for Angela of Foligno

Gracious God,
we give you thanks for the life and work of Angela of Foligno,
and all mystics, who,
passing through the cloud of unknowing, beheld your glory;
help us, after her example,
to see you more clearly and love you more dearly,
in the Name of Jesus Christ our Saviour;
who with you and the Holy Spirit
lives and reigns, one God,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the book of Ruth

Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, 'My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing-floor. Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing-floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do.' She said to her, 'All that you tell me I will do.'

So she went down to the threshing-floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came quietly and uncovered his feet, and lay down. At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! He said, 'Who are you?' And she answered, 'I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you

are next-of-kin.' He said, 'May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not be afraid; I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman. But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I. Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin for you, good; let him do so. If he is not willing to act as next-of-kin for you, then, as the Lord lives, I will act as next-of-kin for you. Lie down until the morning.'

So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before one person could recognize another; for he said, 'It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing-floor.' Then he said, 'Bring the cloak you are wearing and hold it out.' So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and put it on her back; then he went into the city. She came to her mother-in-law, who said, 'How did things go with you, my daughter?' Then she told her all that the man had done for her, saying, 'He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, "Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed".' She replied, 'Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today.' *Ruth 3*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the First Letter of St John

Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters. *1 John 3:7-10*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Beautiful, isn't he?

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

The next day, [after called James and John to be Apostles], John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter). *John 1:35-42*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

We remember Angela of Foligno chiefly because of her visions. She may have struggled to verbalise their detail but the actual content was obvious: God wanted her to serve Him and to be His in every way. But that's never easy ...

Angela's journey of approach followed a familiar path. She started as a person of nominal faith and was in middle age (37 years old) at the time of her great faith breakthrough. The first stage in that growth occurred in 1279 when something caused her to recognise the relative emptiness of her life: she saw that her striving to possess ever more wealth and influence did not give security but, rather, was making her progressively self-centred. In context, she was questioning at a time of national insecurity: her country was living through a long war against Perugia and both a violent earthquake and huge hurricane occurred the same year.

Given the era in which she lived, it was perhaps inevitable that she began to seek the help of God rather than agencies that were more secular. She feared the horrors of hell if she should die but, nevertheless, delayed responding. Her own writings say, 'shame prevented me from making a complete confession and for this I remained in torment.'

An internal pressure grew until she eventually went to a nearby Franciscan friar for confession. The priest helped her seek the pardon she felt impelled to offer for her previous life and thence re-dedicate herself through prayer and works of charity. That moment of conversion changed everything.

Shortly after Angela's conversion, her mother, husband, then her children died in close succession. Maybe they were ill before her crisis of faith and became an additional factor causing her to seek help—again, we simply do not know. Anyway, Angela sold all her goods and distributing the proceeds to the poor. She went on a pilgrimage to Assisi 'in the footsteps of St Francis' and, in 1291, entered the Franciscan Third Order.

As a Franciscan, Angela was alternately absorbed by meditating on the crucified Christ and by serving the poor of Foligno as a nurse. She also begged for their needs. Soon other women joined her to create in effect a new religious community.

All this time, Angela was regularly receiving visions of varying length and intensity but seemed to struggle when asked to describe the mystical experiences and ecstasies. In one vision, she 'saw an immense majesty, which I can not say, but it seemed to me that it was all good ...' In fact, it is difficult to follow almost all her visions; but describing anything about God is inherently difficult, for many reasons. In most respects we have almost nothing with which to compare Him because He is infinite in scope and intent and we are bounded; He is eternal and we are mortal; He is a Spirit and we are all-too-physical most of the time. While description was difficult, the fruit of these experiences was soon obvious:

Firstly, her deep-seated fear of damnation soon gave way to an awareness that she could not save herself through her own merits but only through a thorough repentance and complete change of heart. She saw clearly how the initiative was God's and His alone was the power needed to effect the necessary changes. She therefore sought Him with great tenacity. Soon, she did not fear God any longer but wanted Him with increasing urgency.

Second, she saw that God's actions were infinite, merciful, and loving. Her own language at this time makes it sound like she was falling in love with God; in a very real sense she was. She sought to share the love she received so, in addition to constant prayer, Angela conducted charitable activity that including caring for the sick, especially lepers, with a remarkable tenderness 'as though she were tending Christ crucified'.

And thirdly, using her visions as examples and proof, Angela described the idea of growth into holiness using the language of progression and perfection. In typical medieval style, she divided that journey into 'steps' or stages—thirty in all. In context, a great many other writers of the same period used imagery that suggest

growth into holiness is akin to climbing the many steps of a ladder. And the key to that improvement involved the dwelling in her soul of the Holy Trinity.

The message of Angela of Foligno for us today becomes very clear. Through a process involving repentance and prayer, all of us can grow toward God, and anyone can become holy, and very holy indeed. That process of becoming holy often starts with a crisis of sorts, and its growth is usually slow, gradual, progressive, and never comes to an end. There are always further nooks and crannies in a soul that can be transformed further. But the power that sanctifies a soul comes through prayer and meditation, and is available to everyone.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

No one can be saved without divine light. Divine light causes us to begin and to make progress, and it leads us to the summit of perfection. Therefore if you want to begin and to receive this divine light, pray. If you have begun to make progress, pray. And if you have reached the summit of perfection, and want to be super-illuminated so as to remain in that state, pray. If you want faith, pray. If you want hope, pray. If you want charity, pray. If you want poverty, pray. If you want obedience, pray. If you want chastity, pray. If you want humility, pray. If you want meekness, pray. If you want fortitude, pray. If you want any virtue, pray ...

Pray that we will be blessed with a true understanding of the plight of the poor and suffering, fight for their human rights and freely share our worldly riches with them.

Without humility of heart all the other virtues by which one runs toward God seem—and are—absolutely worthless.

By virtue of love is the lover transformed in the beloved and the beloved transformed in the lover.

O my soul, how can you refrain from plunging yourself ever deeper and deeper into the love of Christ, who did not forget you in life or in death, but who willed to give Himself wholly to you, and to unite you to Himself forever? *Angela of Foligno*

Merciful Father,

All **accept these prayers**
 for the sake of your Son,
 our Saviour Jesus Christ.
 Amen.

The peace

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All **And also with you.**

HYMN 3 **Beautiful, beautiful; Jesus is beautiful**

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,
who has transformed those we remember today,
raise and strengthen you that you may transform the world;
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Veni Creator Spiritus [\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And now we give thanks, most gracious God,
surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses
and glorified in the assembly of your saints.

The glorious company of apostles praise you.

The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.

The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.

We, your holy Church, acclaim you.

In communion with angels and archangels,
and with all who served you on earth and worship you now in heaven,
we raise our voice to proclaim your glory,
for ever praising you and saying:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Angela and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

All **Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

God of truth,
whose Wisdom set her table
and invited us to eat the bread and drink the wine of the kingdom:
help us to lay aside all foolishness
and to live and walk in the way of insight,
that we may come with your servant Angela
to the eternal feast of heaven;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.