

January 4

Angela of Foligno (ca. 1248-1309) witness

Angela of Foligno, a Third-Order Franciscan, died on this day in 1309, surrounded by her disciples. She was born in Foligno, Italy around the year 1248. It was a time of extraordinary spiritual reawakening, and in Angela's Umbrian town there were religious houses belonging to all of the mendicant orders that had arisen in southern Europe: the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Augustinians, and the Servants of Mary. As a wife and mother, Angela led a life far from the remembrance of God. Then, mysteriously but deeply moved by the penitential climate of the day, she gradually fell into despair at the discovery of her sins, and began to seek out increasingly inhuman means of expiation.

During this tormented journey, Angela experienced an additional blow when she lost her husband, mother and children over the course of several months. Faced with tragedy, she intensified her penances still further, but it was when she discovered Christ's gentle and merciful presence among Foligno's leprosy patients that she found true peace.

She sold all of her belongings, convinced that only extreme poverty would allow her to identify herself with the poor God who had revealed himself in Christ, the "passionate God-man," as she calls him in her *Book of Divine Consolation*, a literary masterpiece of medieval mysticism. For Angela, Christ's passion is the only path to meaning in the face of the evil that assails humanity.

Angela took vows as a Third-Order Franciscan and lived an almost reclusive life in Foligno, with a companion named Masazuola of whom nothing is known. By the end of her life a small group of disciples had gathered around her, including Ubertino da Casale and the greatest Franciscan spiritual figures of the time.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Phil 3:8-14; Mt 11:25-30

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (25 kiyahk/tahsas):

John Kama (d. 858), monk (Coptic Orthodox Church)

Cheremon, bishop of Nilopolis, martyr during the persecution of Decius (Coptic Catholic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Fritz von Bodelschwingh (d. 1946), witness to the faith in Westfalia

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Synaxis of the 72 holy and glorious apostles

Theoctistus of Cucumio (8th-9th cent.), igumen