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On this day: St. Ursula

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NCR Today

On this day we celebrate the feast of St. Ursula, patron of the Ursuline Order.

St. Angela Merici, who founded the Company of St. Ursula in 1535, "created a religious community of women which was fundamentally different in its self-concept from other Orders existing then, e.g., Benedictines or Poor Clares. The basis for this was the spirituality which she explained in her writings--the Rule, Counsels, and Legacy. Angela combined open-mindedness and religious commitment in a way which had hardly been possible for women until that time.

"Unlike other nuns of that time, the first Ursulines did not live cut off from the world. Instead, they remained integrated in their families or stayed at their workplaces."

--from *"Follow the Spirit": Angela Merici and the Ursulines*, English language edition by Sister Mary Cabrini Durkin, Editions du Signe, 1998.

This beautifully illustrated book, a quarto-sized paperback, 56 pages long, can be found in these libraries and at AbeBooks. There are chapters on St. Angela, the foundation of the order, St. Ursula, and on the Ursulines who came to North America. There are stories of Ursulines like Bl. Blandine Merten, Bl. Ursula Ledochowska, and Dorothy Kazel.

After St. Angela's death, various churchmen insisted that the new Company follow a more traditional way of life. Angela's Rule was replaced with Augustine's. The women were cloistered and required to wear habits. But with all the changes imposed upon them, they held on to the charism of educating girls. Ursulines were the first nuns to come to North America -- Venerable Marie of the Incarnation to Quebec in 1639, and Mother St. Augustine to New Orleans in 1727.

--*Religious Orders of Women in the United States: Accounts of Their Origin and of Their Most Important Institutions*, by Elinor Tong Dehey, 1913, pages 21-27.

For information about the Ursulines of New Orleans, click here for *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834*, by Emily Clark, University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Click here for "Charlestown Convent Lies in Ruin," an article about the burning of the Ursuline Convent in 1834. The article points out the fact that the drunken mob was enflamed not only by hatred of Catholics, but by anger at rich Protestants who sent their daughters to nuns to be educated.

Click here to see an Ursuline nun doll. The Ursuline is at the left. The other doll is dressed as a Sister of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament.

(Blessings, the company that produced these dolls is out of business, but this site shows pictures of the dolls. The habits were very well done, but the faces were not.)

Click here to see a group of Ursuline Sisters in 1962 wearing the habit.

A very happy feast day to all Ursulines, to their friends and families, to their alumnae/i, to their Associates, and to all who have benefited from their centuries of service.

Soli Deo Gloria!

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