Institute is Beginning of Felician Sisters

By +Sister Rose Mary Wolak, CSSF

“You dear Lord, have singled me out almost as you did Zaccheus. True, I did not hear the exact words or see you in person, but I did sense your awesome presence. You drew me through Holy Communion. You urged me to get ready for your coming. Then you entered my heart and took it for your own. That was the moment of my conversion.”

This was Sophia Truszkowska’s experience on June 14, 1848, when she was 23 years old. It had a profound effect on the remainder of her life. This conversion gave her “a new awareness of her unique part in God’s plan” and transformed her life between 1848 and 1854.

Through long nightly vigils of prayer, frequent adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, daily Mass and the sacraments, Sophia developed a deep and intense spiritual life and desired to dedicate herself to Christ by joining the Visitation Sisters.

However, her father’s progressive illness and deafness prevented Sophia from entering a religious community. She remained at home to care for her father; and when his health deteriorated further, she accompanied him to Salzbrunn, Germany, for the cure recommended by the doctor, probably from the years 1849-1851.

Before returning home, Sophia and her father visited the larger cities in Germany and England. Among them was Cologne. Here in a Gothic Cathedral, Sophia, steeped in prayer, clearly understood that God was not calling her to join the Visitation Sisters. She was to abandon her desire to live a quiet cloistered life devoted to prayer and dedicate herself to serving Christ in others, especially the disadvantaged.

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Institute is Beginning of Felician Sisters (cont.)

When she returned to Warsaw, Sophia spent her time caring for her father and reading to him. Eventually, her father, seeing Sophia’s goodness and devotion to God, agreed with her desire to enter the convent. Uncertain of which group to enter, Sophia sought advice from her spiritual director, Father Paul Rzewuski. He advised her to remain with her father.

Besides caring for her father, Sophia began to spend much time in charitable works, seeking out and helping the forsaken children of Warsaw’s inner city and the homeless or abandoned elderly. It was in these activities that Sophia learned much about the plight of the unemployed and came into contact with physical poverty and moral deprivation. Realizing that bringing sporadic help to the poor was not enough, Sophia undertook the permanent care of two children, then six, with her father’s financial assistance.

In 1854, when the St. Vincent de Paul Society was established at Holy Cross Church, Sophia became one of its most active members. Father Ozarowski, the director, introduced her to organized works of mercy. With others, Sophia visited the poor in their dilapidated clay huts, small attics and cold basements. She took care of both orphans and aged adults who were casualties of wars and insurrections. She distributed alms, nursed the sick and consoled the suffering, discovering that in serving others, she was serving God.

The enormity of human destitution which Sophia saw daily compelled her to greater action, and she knew that only a charitable institution could provide effective care for the neglected.

With the help of Father Ozarowski and the support of Countess Wrotnowska, Sophia rented two small attic rooms in the vicinity of the Church of Our Lady in Nowe Miasto, a suburb of Warsaw. This center for the care of the most needy children and elderly women became known as “The Institute of Miss Truszkowska.”

Still living at home, Sophia hired an elderly lady to care for the orphans and to act as their housemother and teacher. Sophia, however, worked all day at the Institute, planning its educational activities and formulating its regulations. Her aim was to raise the children according to religious principles and to provide them with an education which would enable
them to live independently in the future. Sophia was soon aided in this work by her cousin, Clothilde Ciechanowska.

The Institute expanded rapidly and attracted public attention. Seeing the good it was doing, the people of Warsaw were generous in giving alms and providing volunteer services. Sophia’s skill and devotion also won for her many devoted and influential friends.

When the Institute became overcrowded, Sophia rented a larger building on Mostowa Street, owned by the Dominicans. On July 18, 1855, she and Clothilde left their families and moved in with their charges.

Little had they realized that the Spirit was leading them to establish a new community, the Felician Sisters.

A Pause for Reflection

By Sister Andrea Rita Marie Kowalczyk, CSSF

As I sit here gazing at a statute of Blessed Angela, I recall how God led her, step by step, to develop the Institute for the needy, and then so much more.

At this time, our struggle with the Covid-19 virus threatens our familiar way of life, leaving many in desperate need or worse.

This is a defining time for our cities, our countries, our very lives. Yet this situation, as grim as it sometimes appears, gives us the opportunity to reflect, to pray and to discern choices we have.

Many are on the front lines working in healthcare and other essential services

- Many are asking: “What can I do if I can’t leave the house?”
- Some are grieving the loss of someone special
- Some are struggling with their own health

Yet just as God led Sophia through her discerning times, so too is our God leading us, encouraging us to serve as we are able, through:

- Prayer
- Involvement with the essential services
- Calling a friend, neighbor, family member, etc., to encourage and support them
- Finding ways to meet a need in our community, in our parish
Calling someone for one’s own support, so we can continue to practice the measures that will defeat this virus.

Realizing the worth of every single person as precious in God’s eyes.

Blessed Mary Angela (Sophia) followed her heart in supporting others in their need.

Where is God leading me, leading you?

We need each other.

Thank you, Blessed Angela, for your response, and pray for us as we discover our way.

The Myriad Influences of Blessed Mary Angela

The spirit of Blessed Mary Angela lives on in those individuals who are inspired by the books and other writings about her. Many persons have a sincere devotion to her and believe that through her intercession, their prayers are answered. We want to share with our readers the myriad influences of Blessed Mary Angela in the lives of those she has touched.

From a letter written to Sister Mary Brendan Bogdan, CSSF:

Thank you so much, Sister Mary Brendan, for sharing with me the book entitled On Earth as in Heaven by Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, CSSF. What an experience! Sophia was the owner of an exquisite soul. It was a real treat to read how the beauty of her work touched so many lives in need of a compassionate hand, and how easy it was for her to give so much of herself to others. Her perseverance and dedication to the ones in need and her faith in Her Beloved Jesus have inspired me immensely. I admire her belief in LOVE!

Her relationship with her father touched my soul profoundly. The best part of her is just how incredibly human she was. She found a perfect balance between being human, and being completely committed in trusting that God had a plan for her. I specifically enjoyed reading her letters, so full of human will and good intentions. It made me smile how her strong will transpired through her writings, keeping a harmonious contrast between what she wanted and what she knew she would not receive.

Again, thank you for sharing Blessed Mother Angela with me. I will treasure her example and share her story with my loved ones.

Diana Rios
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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The Myriad Influences of Blessed Mary Angela (cont.)

I am so grateful to Sister Mary Lorene Pivinski, CSSF, for introducing me to Blessed Mary Angela. Sister Mary Lorene also graced me with a relic and statue of Blessed Mary Angela. I put the statue, relic and a candle in a special place, where I go and pray to her every day. Through her grace, I believe I have received special favors.

I had read that through Blessed Mary Angela, a woman was freed of her diabetes. My son has suffered from diabetes since he was 30 years old. When I received the relic and statue I began praying for my son. He was hospitalized twice due to complications. Just recently he went to the doctor and his A1C is almost normal. For some reason it went from 13 to 8 (normal is 7.5). I believe that Blessed Mary Angela heard my prayers.

The next grace received happened when I began praying for an inmate in the local jail. I knew from news articles that he had problems. I prayed that he would be taken care of with respect. I repeated his name to Blessed Mary Angela. I continued my prayers, and then in the local news it said that he was declared incompetent to stand trial. This was really a good thing, because he will be treated by a psychiatrist regularly, and will be transferred to a psychiatric facility rather than a jail. Thank you, Blessed Mary Angela.

My daughter had breast cancer; she suffered greatly and had many treatments. She is now cancer free and her tests continue to come back clean. I believe that Blessed Mary Angela watches over her as I say her name.

One morning as I was praying, my daughter called me and told me how hard she has been working on a special project to reinstate the organization called “Big Brothers, Big Sisters.” She is working diligently. We spoke about the fact that she may need some political intervention or assistance to get it rolling. At that time I was at my prayer place so after the conversation I prayed to Blessed Mary Angela about the issue.

Later that day my daughter sent me a text message saying that a woman entered her office to talk about a student and during the conversation my daughter mentioned the project to her. The woman told her that her son is an assistant to the Governor and proceeded to call him and tell him about the project. Thank you again, Blessed Mary Angela.

Blessed Mary Angela showed a boundless love of God and continually surrendered to God’s will. I am grateful for her graces and will continue to have devotion to her daily.

Gene Nettle
Lake Katrine, New York
Blessed Angela devotional materials are available as follows:

- Holy card with a prayer to Blessed Mary Angela
- Litany of Blessed Mary Angela
- Blessed Mary Angela medal
- Blessed Mary Angela rosary - wooden beads
- Blessed Mary Angela brochure

There is no fee attached to these items.

Other items are as follows:

**Blessed Mary Angela rosary or chaplet bracelet** – these are created by the young women of the Felician Sisters Mission in Jacmel, Haiti. A donation for these items will provide funding for the education of these women in the Haiti mission.

**Blessed Mary Angela Rosary** – made in Italy. A donation for this item will support the Felician Sisters Mission in Haiti.

Contact the promoter nearest you to obtain any of the above listed items.

Pray to Blessed Mary Angela for your needs and those of others. You are invited to send in your prayer requests and the sisters throughout North America will join you in prayer. Please notify us when your prayers have been answered.