

Daily Homily

St. Clare of Assisi; Abbess, Foundress of the Poor Clares

Memorial

Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time, Tuesday

11 August 2020

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St. Clare was thirteen years younger than St. Francis of Assisi. She was much aware of the nobleman and his rather influential family, their town of Assisi was small, people talk, people talk a lot. She would see him as he passed by on the streets, as he rode his horse out in the open countryside. She would notice him from afar at church. Initially, she was uninterested because she found Francis Bernardone uninteresting. He pursued what every immature, young man of her day wanted. He pursued wine, women, and song. His purpose was privilege, to be popular, noble. He wanted riches and titles. His family certainly did not discourage this either. They pressed him forward to the lofty goals and visions of the day. One guaranteed way of gaining all this, become a Crusader. It was the adventure of a lifetime. It was the dream of every young man. It was the call of the Romantic period in which they lived. The Crusaders would come back to Assisi, and they would be placed on a pedestal. Clare saw through all this. She pursued other things.

God was stirring in Clare a summons, a call. Christ was courting her to be his own friend and bride. She fell not for the madness of the young men of Assisi. She desired to live the Gospel proclaimed at church. She wanted to simply be in the presence of the Eucharistic Christ and know there a sense a deep relationship and real love. In those early days, Francis was just another boy, like all the others. Clare, however, found Christ and Christ found her. They were inseparable.

All that changed, however, when Francis came back from the Crusades. He did not finish what he had set out to do. He abandoned his regiment, and it would seem he was a deserter. He in fact was, but it was due to severe illness from being imprisoned for so long. Even his jailers did not want him anymore. They sent him home to his parents. The applause of Assisi were never heard. The fickle eyes of neighbors fell in judgement. Even Francis' own father could not reconcile with having a son who came back home in shame. Francis was a mess. However, in this time, Jesus' voice could be heard. Jesus' life could work on him. Francis was finally responding to a new way, a new adventure, a new love.

Clare finally noticed Francis. She resonated with him because of the same person she pursued in Christ, Francis now pursued. Christ brought them together. Francis began his work in the Church, along with men who came back from the Crusade rather broken by war's affects. They came back wanting more depth, more clarity, more purpose and meaning. Clare at the age of eighteen, much to the outrage of her family, joined this band of brothers and moved into a convent to pursue her life according to Francis' religious rule. Several attempts were made by her family to kidnap her and bring her home. In time Clare's sister and mother and several other noble women of Assisi would leave their luxurious life behind and join her. This was how the Poor Clares came about, no Hallmark movie could capture such romance, such depth of relationship, such pure love.

Clare is known as a saint of the Eucharist. When the Crusades came deep into the Italian hillsides and came knocking on the threshold of Assisi, a Saracen army was about to ravage Clare's convent which was located outside the walls of Assisi. Clare, relying on the protection of her Christ, placed the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance and stood at the gate of her convent before the military might of Fredrick

It's army. She held the monstrance up and a voice could be heard, "My protection will never fail you." The foreign army took flight. The convent was spared.

Frequently ill, Clare was often resigned to her room. This was the case one Christmas Eve. She was too sick to attend Christmas Mass. This caused much remorse on her part. However, God gave her a terrific grace. Her wall opened up in a vision, and she was able to view everything going on in the chapel for Christmas Mass. When the sisters came back to the convent to retell what the Mass was like, Clare, instead told them what happened. They were all amazed. This is why she is known as the patroness of television.

Today this wonderful woman from Assisi comes to pray with us and intercede for us. Christ summons us and pursue us, do we respond or ignore or walk away? The Eucharist speaks, do we hear the words of Christ at adoration or in the Mass knowing that even now he says, "My protection will never fail you?" Nothing can keep us from His love, do we recognize Christ removing every obstacle just to be with us in a relationship of seeking the good of the other?

Fr. Mike and Fr. Tom in front of the incorrupt body of St. Clare in Assisi, Italy; 2019.

