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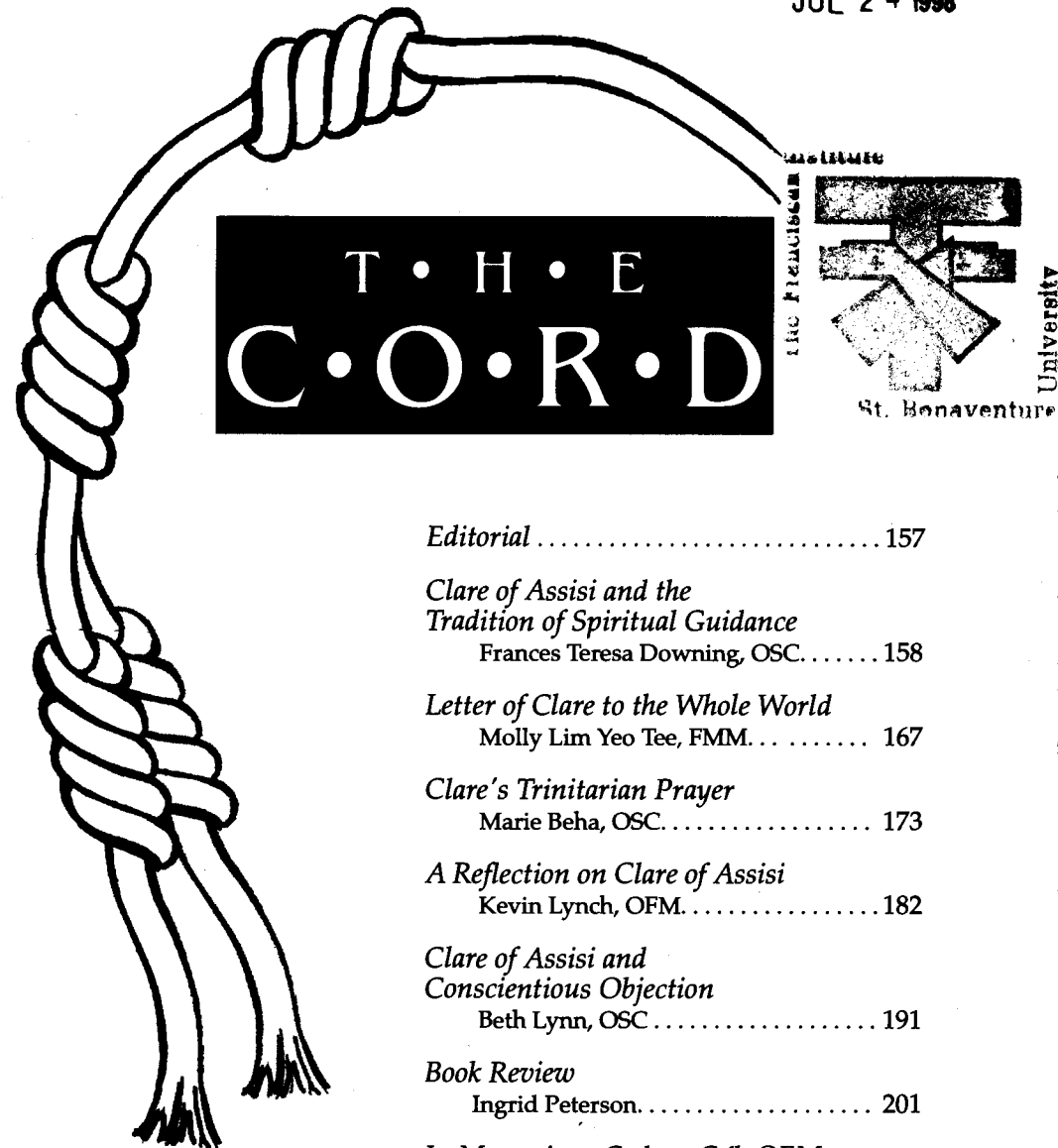
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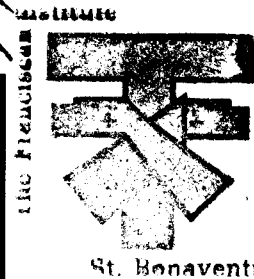
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1. MSS should be submitted on disk or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced.
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
(1Cor. 13:6). (2Cel 5:8).
(RegNB 23:2). (4LAg 2:13).

A list of standard abbreviations used in *The Cord* can be found inside the back cover. The edition of the Franciscan sources used should be noted in the first reference in a mss.

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The Cord, 48.4 (1998)

Editorial



*I do not wish you to marvel that the jar was filled with oil;
but should you marvel, it would be better to marvel at the One
Who filled the jar because He filled with an ever-flowing oil
Clare's mind which He sprinkled with a blessed dew,
and immediately spread her name throughout the world.*

(Versified Legend of the Virgin Clare, 490)

The Franciscan tradition contemplates God as self-diffusive Good. God's creative activity is a continual outpouring of Self, which is Good, which is Love. The Franciscan spirit lives in continual amazement at this reality—that out of the “nothing” that we are of ourselves, God makes something quite extraordinary, even effective. The image of the empty oil jar in Clare's Legend reflects this experience. The empty jar waits to be filled by the goodness and kindness of the almsgiver. Mysteriously and inexplicably, it is found to be filled to overflowing. The storyteller sees in this an image of Clare, who, hidden away and empty of self, became an impressive vehicle for the overflowing abundance of God's mercy throughout the world. The great “Almsgiver” lavishes Goodness upon the earth and its inhabitants—no holds barred, no strings attached—through those unique persons who come closest to the image of God in their self-emptying love.

This is a challenge for all of us who fear any threat to our self-possession and sense of personal importance. Our faith and hope are sustained by those brothers and sisters who, in their lives, have somehow come to mediate God through self-emptying. We look to them; we try to follow them; and in our own way we learn the lessons they learned. Through our own empty vessels the Spirit of God flows mysteriously into the world.

In this issue of *The Cord* we read the reflections of a number of writers for whom Clare of Assisi is an unparalleled model. As they share with us their “oil,” we are personally enriched by this sister and mother whose fragrance has permeated the world.

A note: Because in *The Cord's* files we have a number of artistic contributions which cannot be identified by the name of the artist, we will sometimes use artwork without attribution. If, at any time, you can identify the artist, please notify the editor so proper credit can be given. Thank you.

Clare of Assisi and the Tradition of Spiritual Guidance¹

Frances Teresa Downing, OSC

In an order which lacks any overt tradition of giving direction to others and whose foundress was born eight hundred years ago, leaving us only four letters, a Rule, and a Testament, it might seem rash to try to talk about our tradition of spiritual guidance—especially when many readers of this article will be well-versed in other traditions. On the other hand, a great deal of spiritual guidance has certainly gone on in Poor Clare parlors over the centuries. There are undoubtedly attitudes and insights rooted in Clare's life and writings which reveal themselves through phrases like: "Clare says . . ."; "Clare taught . . ."; "Clare found . . ."

Although there is much study yet to be done on Clare's letters, they do seem to have been written for the purpose of giving guidance. They were only discovered relatively recently, by Achille Ratti, later Pius XI, when he was librarian at Milan. It was he who somehow established that the parchment in his hand had been written in Prague between 18 January 1283 and 8 November 1322. Scholars are still finding their way into the theological universe of the letters and there is much to be learned, not least about the thirteenth-century conventions governing correspondence between two educated, aristocratic women in positions of leadership. Yet a great deal can be said with confidence, and language barriers are falling as we realize how deeply rooted in Scripture Clare was and how steeped in Francis's writings. Certainly her letters are not just mystical outpourings of little relevance, though at first they can seem fairly impenetrable.

The fundamental insight of Clare, as of Francis, is that God has, freely and out of goodness, called us all into the life of the Trinity as sisters and brothers of the Son and of each other, and through this movement we repair the Church. The specific contribution of Clare is her profound awareness of

the kenosis of the Word made flesh. The focus of this kenosis is Paradise. Franciscan thinking, at least since Scotus, has maintained that Christ would have become human even had there been no sin, and today the call is still the same: to come to the glory of God by treading the way of Christ's poverty—a reverse journey, so to speak. Bearing in mind the disadvantages of separating a "spirituality" from a "life," we can say that from this Clare developed a spirituality of glory which was remarkable and remarkably incarnational.

Co-workers of God

The gift of God for which we have most cause to give thanks, said Clare, is our vocation, our call (TestCl 2).² Here she is talking not only about a vocation to religious life in the restrictive sense but also about the universal call to be the recipients of God's gifts. We are all invited to experience how good God is, and this optimistic approach is summed up in Clare's image of the mirror. The Word mirrors the Godhead to us and we have been set by the Lord as mirrors and examples to each other, reflecting what we ourselves have seen (3Lag 12; TestCl 19). Her stress was always on experience rather than on concepts: we discover for ourselves how good God is, and Clare can urge us to do this with confidence because of her own experience. So any kind of guidance, to Clare's mind, must be able to call on the experience of the guide. Put like that, it sounds a basic requirement of common sense, and certainly she and Francis used their experience as a paradigm. The basic act of God was to give them brothers and sisters, not by way of a trial but as the beginning of the restored kingdom and the start of a whole new way of living human life. The initiative was God's.

Everything else followed from this. All her life Clare maintained that Francis had taught her about Jesus Christ (Proc 12:3), especially about Christ poor and humiliated on the cross. Christ is the way, she said, and Francis showed it to me (TestCl 5); and as a result, she and her first sisters "willingly bound ourselves to our Lady, most holy Poverty" (TestCl 39). Poverty, as Clare understood it, was a deep dedication to Christ as well as a personalization of the only one who actually shared the cross with him (SC 21).³ Then on this Christ-centered canvas she drew unique lines of spiritual guidance by examining our relationships with God and people.

This relational approach gives her thought a very feminine character. Her images are often women's images, to do with nurturing and tending, with mirrors and sensitivity to beauty, with motherhood in God, with nourishing each other, with grieving over the pain of others. Her thought is very coherent, less idiosyncratic than Francis's, as if her Palm Sunday flight from home had generated such a degree of commitment to Christ that the rest of her life was

simply a deepening of insights already perceived.

Although Francis influenced her greatly, her main ideas were undoubtedly her own, and she was well able to differ from him (over money, for example, and clothing—which may mean hygiene). She constantly reflected on what had happened to her, not assuming that others' paths must be the same but learning from it about the workings of God. Her insights into poverty in particular were all-embracing. She took it for granted that the gifts given were to be shared and not only with the sisters (Proc 1:9), for we are told that she "begot many sons and daughters in Jesus Christ, as is seen today" (Proc 20:7).

One of her outstanding characteristics was her love for the world and everything in it. She also believed that the "treasure without equal is hidden in the field of the world and in human hearts" (3LAg 7). This meant that she saw the ordinary details of human life as filled with God. People are good and God is hidden in them, and just as God works from within to strengthen those who find it all too much, so must we work from without (3LAg 7, 8). She developed this from Paul's statement that we are co-workers of God. This is a call to be life-givers, like God to be examples and mirrors to everyone and especially to those who stumble (TestCl 19, 20). As co-workers of God we are at God's disposal and in this way those early sisters expressed and experienced their mendicancy. On the most profound level, they were true pilgrims, traveling light.

In one sense Clare saw everything as a matter of exchange, as the admirable *commercium* of the Christmas liturgy. Christ "chose to appear despised, needy and poor in this world so that those who lived in utter poverty and destitution, and in absolute need of nourishment from heaven, might become rich in him" (1LAg 19, 20). It was an exchange of love: let us love him totally who gave himself totally for us (3LAg 15); or in the words of the Song of Songs: "I will not let you go until . . ." With time and reflection, poverty gained even greater depth as Francis and Clare pondered on the self-emptying of Christ's passion. For Clare the process went still further when she saw the features of Christ's passion in the stigmata on Francis's own body, those mysterious wounds on his hands and feet and in his side. These wounds bled and were painful and, for those close to Francis, it seemed as if they were actually watching redemption at work in their midst, as if the passion were being enacted before their eyes. They were profoundly affected by what they saw and the incarnation of Christ gained that immediacy which has marked Franciscan spirituality and theology ever since.

Mothers of Christ

Like the early friars, the Poor Ladies of San Damiano set out to live as

much like Christ as possible, obeying the gospel literally and sometimes quixotically, imitating Christ in every detail, taking Mary as a model for the inner attitudes of their hearts. Clare, particularly, found in Mary a well of contemplative tenderness, and seems to have felt a certain spiritual parallel between what Mary was to Christ in his public life and what she herself was for Francis. This deepened and intensified when they brought Francis's ruined body for her to see. The echoes of Mary receiving her Son's body from the cross could not have passed Clare by, nor did they fail to resound throughout her spirituality.

From their admiration for Mary, Francis and Clare developed a remarkable theology. Mary was the model Christian. She was invited into a generative union with the Spirit which issued in the birth of the Word made flesh, and it is this birth which regenerates the Church and the world. Mary was therefore the bride and the spouse of the Spirit and the mother of Christ. She became—in Francis's surprisingly Vatican-II-sounding words—the virgin made Church (SalBMV 1). In other words, she was the prototype of the Church whose mission is to bring Christ to birth in the world through union with the Spirit. When we imitate Mary, we walk this same road. We are all, men and women alike, "virgins made Church" when we are drawn into this union with the Spirit and bring Christ to birth in new hearts. So the apostolic fruitfulness of Mary is ours, individually and collectively; we, though many, work together at the one work of bringing forth the one Christ in many lives.

We, like the Church, are the mother, sister, and spouse of God, like Mary. These three roles, which are the calling for each of us, focus on our relationship with Christ; but we enter them through the Holy Spirit, through what Francis called God's "holy manner of working." We carry Christ, he said, in our hearts and bodies and we give birth to him through his holy manner of working (1EpFid 1:10). Mary was like Christ's doorway into human nature just as she is our doorway into the Trinity. In herself she gives us a model for our own relationship within the Trinity. Francis first spoke about this with the sisters very early on, saying in the short *Formula vitae* which he wrote for them: "By divine inspiration you have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse" (FormViv).⁴

That this became a basic insight of wide application is borne out by the fact that Francis developed the idea in a further letter, not to the sisters but to all the faithful. Twenty years later, we find Clare saying it in one of her letters in almost the same words (1LAg 12). Between them they weave into our relationship with God a tapestry of insights through which we become his dwelling place and his throne (Clare). We are spouses when we are united to Christ by the Spirit. We are brothers and sisters when we are united with him in doing the Father's will (Francis). But if spouse, then mothers also. We are

mothers when we give birth to him in the lives of others by example (Francis). This fruit is given to our single-mindedness, for when we bestow our affections on the transient, we lose the fruit of love (Clare, playing off *diligere* and *caritas*).

Speaking about this universal vocation to fruitfulness, Meister Eckhart, writing some years later, has a symbolic passage of wondrous confusion:

If man were to be virgin always, no fruit could ever come from him. To become fruitful it is necessary for him to be a woman. "Woman" is the highest attribute that can be given to the soul, and is much higher than "virgin." That man receive God into himself is good, and in this receptivity he is virgin. But it is better when God becomes fruitful in him. This becoming fruitful through the gift is alone the thankfulness for the gift. In this, the spirit is a woman in reproductive gratitude, where Jesus is reborn in God's paternal heart.⁵

In an age which was far less hung up about sexuality than ours, this kind of preaching seems to have been possible. What appears to be happening for us today is that we hunger for teaching about these matters because God's holy manner of working goes on, the Spirit continues to invite us to union and fruition, and we are experiencing a need for guidance. We are not finding it in Victorian spiritual writers but it is to be found, when unwrapped, in writers from a simpler and less neurotic age. This is surely part of the reason for the great popularity of writers like Meister Eckhart, Julian of Norwich, Hildegard of Bingen, and others. Certainly this theology of spiritual motherhood gave Clare a language to express her own experience. At the same time it is interesting to note that she was never maternalistic with her sisters but remarkably consultative—by any standards. In the Rule alone she spoke of herself as a sister some sixty-six times and as an abbess only a handful of times. To be sister was her basic relationship; to be mother of Christ her spiritual calling.

Developing that, she says to us: "If a mother love and nourish her daughter according to the flesh, how much more lovingly must a sister love and nourish her spiritual sister" (RCl 8:16). Motherhood has been replaced by the nurturing and self-sacrificing love of Christ as the ultimate in human love. "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you" (John 13:15)—something far more challenging. Now we are not only to love like a mother feeding and looking after her children (1Thess. 2:7) but much more. Nor will it do to hope that this is just for the Poor Clares, because Clare knew that the Lord had called her to be a mirror and example to all the world. This is the kernel of her teaching: the example of Christ's total self-giving is the standard for us all.

Clare's realization that she was to be an example and mirror for everyone in the world follows logically from the example of Christ. Nor is she using the

phrase "in the world" in contradistinction to religious life, which until recently was apparently "out of this world." Clare means, quite simply, everyone. It is our calling, she says in her Testament, to demonstrate how to work with "talents" (TestCl 18) and not bury them in the ground. Those who are called to observe the gospel by living in obedience, without anything of their own, and in chastity are to be exemplars, but everyone is called to live the gospel. There was a whole series of such exemplars in Clare's universe in which Christ looks to the Father and is an example for us; Francis looks to Christ and is an example for Clare; she looks to Christ and Francis and is an example to us, as to her sisters. We in our turn look to Christ so as to be an example to others in the world, and they in their turn . . . This is what she means by standing together with the one by whom all things are held together (3LAg 36).

A Spirituality of Glory

The essence of Clare's vision of spiritual living is total love (cf. 3LAg 22, 23; 4LAg 11). Poverty is another way of saying this because it imitates the total self-giving of Christ. He made himself poor for us in this world, he emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave (Phil. 2:7), and Clare saw that we are all invited to share this glory by sharing in this emptying of ourselves. To possess or to have power over anything is to shore ourselves up against the pain of this emptiness. It is the possessing, not the thing possessed, which wounds us, because possessiveness precludes glory. To appropriate anything to ourselves, Francis taught, is to exalt ourselves and thereby to remove ourselves from the true exaltation of Christ. It is to generate a hollow and false kind of "being lifted up" which is quite other than being lifted up with Christ on the cross which is our true glory. On the cross, glory came to Christ; it was his hour.

One of the areas where Clare gives us really helpful teaching is in her example of how to hold the Godhead and the wounded humanity of Christ in a right tension. She never lost sight of the full stature of Christ but encompassed both the pain of his humanity and the glory of his Godhead in the one perspective. As she saw it, both are offered us, shared with us, a precondition and a consequence of being led into the richer meaning of the incarnation. As we learn to see the world transformed and to shed our more materialistic values, we come to John's recognition of the glory in Christ's hour on the cross. This is no esoteric teaching for the few, but the result of God's loving and generous outpouring of grace. She advises us:

Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!
Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!
Place your heart in the image of the divine substance!

(3LAg 12, 13)

"Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance," or, as it could be translated: Set your heart on the image of the divine substance, namely Christ. We become Godlike and Godly but not God, not the divine substance itself. The image of the divine substance is Christ, the brilliance of glory and the mirror of eternity. Clare's spirituality and her theology are a lovely example of the fruits of prolonged reflection on the incarnation and the way in which the whole universe is transformed because the Word became flesh. If she learned from the Letter to the Hebrews and from Paul about the glory on the face of Christ, she seems to have learned from John to see this glory on the wounded face of Jesus. Her letters are filled with most tender phrases about the passion of Christ, even while they overflow with words like brightness, radiance, beauty, the fire of love, splendor, brilliance of eternal light.

The wounded humanity of Jesus is our way. "Christ is the way and Francis showed it to me." Jesus was lifted up on the cross like a mirror hung at the roadside. The wonder is that the reflections of this mirror lead us to reflect upon it and so to reflect it. We cannot gaze on Christ without becoming Christlike, without, in Clare's words, carrying him spiritually in our body (3LAg 25). Such a maternal possession reveals the transitory nature of all other ownership. Through pondering in our hearts as Mary did, we place our minds before the mirror of eternity and are made bright in its brightness, we are transformed into the image of the Godhead itself. We share in God's own fruitfulness and taste the hidden sweetness which God has reserved for those who love him.

She learned this, it seems, from her own experience, but found its articulation in St. Paul: "We, with unveiled faces reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, grow brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image we reflect" (2Cor. 3:18). Could anybody named Clare, Clara in Latin, be impervious to a text which read: *in eandem imaginem transformemur a claritate in claritatem, tamquam a Domino Spiritu* (2Cor. 3:18)? It was like a definition of her life and spirituality, the image reflected in her daily life refracted by contemplation, making her more and more herself, *a claritate in claritatem*.

Guidelines for Prayer

If there is any one text in Scripture which encapsulates Clare's attitude to Christ and Christian living, it is surely John 13:15: "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you." How in our prayer are we to do this? How are we to bring this quite "high" teaching of Clare's down to the gravelly path of ordinary life? Clare was even more of a pragmatist than Francis, and she knew quite well that daily life is the sterling experiment of our

spirituality. Francis used to say that what we are before God is what we are—in short, not much. He also said that when those who we think ought to be nice to us fail to be so, then the truth of ourselves is revealed to ourselves (and to others, perhaps). The experience of let-down, anger, rejection, and so on, surfaces the hidden truth in our hearts just as heat brings an abscess to a head. If we seriously want to live Christ's life, then we shall be pleased at this because it reveals to us what work we need to undertake.

Clare was of the same pragmatic turn of mind and, in all spiritual guidance, would certainly have asked questions about relationships in daily life. She talks about them in her Rule and, as abbess, advises her sisters and her successors not to be disturbed or angry by another's sin, because the sin of others does not prevent love in us as much as anger and disturbance do. She gives strong advice about asking for and giving forgiveness (RCl 9:7). She warns us to be on our guard against pride, empty glory, jealousy, greediness, care and anxiety about temporal things, taking away the characters of others, muttering, being out of harmony with others, cherishing divisions—quite a realistic list (cf. RCl 3:4; 7:2; 8:1; 9:5, 7; 10:6, 8, 9).

She also insists that we take full responsibility for ourselves, copying Francis in saying that if we are commanded to do something which we believe to be "against our soul" (RCl 10:3), then we should not do it. This is all part of her conviction about personal responsibility, which also led her to require a meeting "at least once a week." There, beginning with the abbess, everyone is to ask for forgiveness. All these injunctions are to do with relationships because, in depth, it is to this that we are called. This is where the Trinitarian prototype finds its expression in our lives. In an ideal world, all our human relationships would mirror Trinitarian ones, and we would reflect the glory of God to each other. The power of Francis and Clare is that they truly believed that our obedience in Christ can begin to effect this. Their magic is that sometimes they can almost convince us of this, too.

The heart of Clare's teaching on prayer is summarized in one passage of her last letter, written only a few months before she died. She starts by repeating that what God wants is to give us joy, not as a reward for good behavior but as a gift. The one who has been given this, she says, is indeed a happy person, for the more we glimpse of God's beauty, the more rapt in it we shall become until gradually all our wayward heart falls into line. Her words are: "How very happy is the person who has been granted to cleave with every fiber of her heart to one so beautiful that the heavenly hosts of the blessed never grow weary of wonder" (4LAg 9-10). This is gift to us from God but it is also a gift from us to God. It is God's love which awakens love in us just as it is God's glory that glorifies us and makes us the *claritas* on the face of Christ. She goes on:

By such contemplation we are renewed,
by such kindness, flooded,
by such sweetness, filled,
We are gently enlightened by such a memory.
God is a fragrance to bring the dead to life again,
a vision of such glory as to make all the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem blessed (4LAg 11-13).

She then gives us a whole program of prayer summarized in a series of verbs:

Clare Ellen, OSC



St. Clare

look into this mirror of Christ daily,
ponder there your own face,
see what you need to become ready for God,
contemplate in this mirror Christ and his stupendous poverty,
look at his work on our behalf,
consider his humility,
contemplate his love,
consider, look and contemplate (4LAg 14-18).

Consider, look, contemplate—a program for prayer and for life. We have already seen the connection she made between reflecting upon and reflecting, and here it is at work again. Looking at Christ, we see how to imitate him. Imitating him, we become like him. Like him, we reflect him and bring him to birth in the lives of others. This is what is meant by observing the gospel.

Endnotes

¹This article is a reprint of "Clare of Assisi," first published in *The Way*, July, 1995, Freedom, vol 35, no 3, by permission of the Editors, Heythrop College, Kensington Square, London W8 5HQ.

²The translation of Clare's writings throughout is my own, and the numbering follows that of the Latin text of Pecker, Godet, and Matura: *Écrits* (Paris: Les EDITIONS du Cerf, 1985). All Francis's and Clare's writings can be found in Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., trans. and ed., *Francis and Clare, the Complete Works* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1982). Documents relating to the early Poor Clares as well as Clare's own writings can also be found in Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., trans. and ed., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1988).

³The full text is in M. A. Habig, ed., *Francis of Assisi: Omnibus of Sources* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 1549.

⁴This Form of Life was probably written in 1212 or 1213.

⁵Meister Eckhart, "Sermon on St Matthew," unpublished translation.

Letter of St. Clare of Assisi to the Whole World

Molly Lim Yeo Tee, FMM

What is Clare's message to the people of our world as we move into the new millennium? If Clare has a message for the world today, I believe it is something relevant, helpful, and inspiring. This imaginary letter draws from her actual letters, her Testament, and other writings, using her words where appropriate. It includes her message on living the Gospel, on contemplation, on Mary as our model, on the privilege of poverty, on seeking goodness, on perseverance, and on gazing always upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It concludes with her farewell and her blessing. May the Lord use me as her instrument in sharing her message.

(Because of the nature of this document, the many references to Scripture and to Clare's writings will be found in the endnotes, rather than in the text.)

Date: 7th June, 1997, Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

To: All my dearly beloved Sisters and Brothers in the whole world

From: Clare of Assisi, your faithful servant, the most lowly and unworthy handmaid of Christ

Dearly Beloved Sisters and Brothers:

Greetings of Peace and Love!

I greatly rejoice and exult in the Lord¹ for the progress you have made in the world as you search for a better life, better communication, and more happiness. Many of you are making great efforts to do what is best with all the possible means at hand. I love you very much and I am concerned that often you find yourselves restless and unsatisfied. As a handmaid of the Lord and

your servant I am offering you some of my thoughts which may be helpful to you now and in the coming millennium. Hopefully you will enjoy walking on these stepping stones towards the road of true joy and happiness in life. I wish the year 2000 and beyond to be for you a time of great peace, joy, and love.

Many of you remember my affluent family, which lived near San Rufino Church in Assisi. My mother was a holy woman. She liked pilgrimages and often went to the nearby church to pray. When I was born she was inspired to give me the name Clare which means "light." From my youth, God guided me to love goodness, compassion, daily prayer, and respect for my parents. When I grew up God led me to find and understand true joy in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord inspired me to take a new step of contemplative Gospel life, instead of the normal arranged married life of the time.

The love of God drew me and the Holy Spirit inspired me, giving me the courage to leave my home to follow the path taken by Francis of Assisi towards the perfection of the Gospel and union with the Most Loving and All Good God, our Creator and our heart's greatest desire. In the monastery at San Damiano with my Sisters, the Lord expressed through me new feminine virtues, a new culture of common life, a new style of being sister and bride, a new freedom for women. He taught me to hold fast to the privilege of poverty, to be a servant, and to express a new way of Gospel living in the monastery. I experienced the gift of contemplation and mysticism. I felt the growth of a new body of Christ and the newness of life that was attractive to many sisters and brothers. I thank God for creating me and for blessing my life. It was a long and narrow road but Francis and I found a true treasure—the perfection of joy and total happiness in God.

I hope you will all understand why I am focusing my message on the great graces received when one lives according to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.² As you know, many great saints throughout the centuries have found the essential key that enabled them to reach the climax and fullness of life and joy in the All Good and Loving God—the heart's greatest desire and peace par excellence.

I am inclined to start by praising those who are persevering in contemplative prayer, in the love of God, love of neighbor, and love of all creatures. Your holy conduct and irreproachable life is a great joy, consolation, and blessing for many brothers and sisters on earth. In knowing and meditating on the Gospel, many of you have chosen to live like "Christ, Poor and Crucified"³ and to serve the needy of this world. You have rejected all earthly riches, fame, and security and chosen a life according to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. You were inspired when you saw how he gave himself willingly and totally in redeeming love for all creatures. You started by giving your whole heart, mind, and soul to love Him in return. Pray and always be vigilant.⁴ The

work you have begun well complete progressively, and the ministry you have accepted fulfill in holy poverty and sincere humility.⁵

May I urge you, dearest brothers and sisters, to meditate frequently upon the Scriptures so that you might know Christ deeply.⁶ Follow the footprints of Mary and always hold Christ spiritually and possess Him in your chaste and virginal bodies. God became human because Mary said "yes." The Word became flesh. Feminine nature and virtues hold a privileged place before God in the example of Mary⁷ holding Jesus in the cloister of her womb and on her virginal lap. She was attentive, she pondered on the Word, she responded to the Spirit, she was dynamic and firm. In her relationships she was gentle, tender, caring, and innovative. Mary is your model; learn from her and your reward will be great in heaven!⁸ You will truly merit to be called a brother, sister, spouse, and mother⁹ of the son of the Most High Father and of the glorious Virgin Mary. Indeed by choosing poverty like Mary and Jesus, you inherit the kingdom and enjoy the fruit of love.

O blessed poverty,
who bestows eternal riches
on those who love and embrace her!
O holy poverty,
God promises the kingdom of heaven
and, in fact, offers eternal glory and a blessed life
to those who possess and desire you!
God-centered poverty
whom the Lord Jesus Christ
Who ruled and now rules heaven and earth,
Who spoke and things were made,
condescended to embrace before all else.¹⁰

All brothers and sisters who cast aside the garments of earthly riches will overcome the one who fights against us. Be strengthened and persevere from good to better, from virtue to virtue,¹¹ through continuous contemplation of the poor Christ. In his love for us, he was the greatest and poorest of all servants and was obedient unto death, even on the cross. He purchased for us eternal life by entering through the narrow gate.¹²

What a great and praiseworthy exchange:
to leave the things of time for those of eternity,
to choose the things of heaven for the goods of earth,
to receive a hundred-fold in place of one,
and to possess a blessed eternal life!¹³

I give thanks each day to the Giver of Grace, from whom every good and perfect gift proceeds, for all you good people, dearest brothers and sisters

dwelling on earth. The Father of Perfection¹⁴ has adorned you with splendors of virtue and illuminated you with marks of perfection. Hold fast always to the holiest poverty, great humility, and most ardent charity, and keep your steps close to the Lord Jesus Christ.

What you hold, may you always hold,
What you do, may you always do and never abandon.
But with swift pace, light step.
Unswerving feet,
so that even your steps stir up no dust,
may you go forward
securely, joyfully and swiftly,
on the path of prudent happiness,
not believing anything,
not agreeing with anything
that would dissuade you from this resolution
or that would place a stumbling block for you on the way,
so that you may offer your vows to the Most High
in the pursuit of that perfection
to which the Spirit of the Lord has called you.¹⁵

Seek good and right counsel and walk securely in the way of the All Good God. If anyone would hinder your perfection, though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel. Gaze upon the Lord, consider Him, contemplate Him. For your salvation He became the lowliest of humankind—despised, struck, scourged. He suffered and died on the Cross.¹⁶ If you suffer with Him, you will reign with Him. If you weep with Him, you shall rejoice with Him. If you imitate Him, you shall possess heavenly mansions in the splendor of the saints and, in the Book of Life, your name shall be called glorious among all humanity forever.¹⁷

In the world, pride destroys human nature and vanity infatuates human hearts. But humility, faith, and poverty are the treasures hidden in the field of the world and of the human heart.¹⁸ By special gifts of wisdom, the word of Christ, and the grace of God, you will choose the treasure and always rejoice in the Lord. Do not let bitterness or sadness overwhelm you, dearly beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, joy of the Angels, and Crown of creation.

Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!
Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!
Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance!
And transform your entire being into the image
of the Godhead Itself through contemplation.
So that you too may feel what His friends feel

as they taste the hidden sweetness
that God Himself has reserved from the beginning
for those who love Him.¹⁹

This is affirmed in the Gospel when Jesus said: "Whoever loves me will be loved by My Father and I too shall love him, and We shall come to him and make Our dwelling place with him."²⁰ It is clearly shown here that the faithful person, the most worthy of all creatures because of the grace of God, is greater than heaven itself. The heavens and the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator, and only the faithful soul is His dwelling place and throne, and this only through the charity that the wicked lack.²¹

I beg of you, my dearest brothers and sisters, to gaze upon the Lord Jesus Christ, your mirror, each day. Study your face within it. Allow Him to transform you into His likeness. You will then become worthy sons and daughters of the Most High King, with the flowers and garments of all the virtues. Indeed, blessed poverty, holy humility, and inexpressible charity are reflected in that mirror. With the grace of God you can become like the mirror. From this moment on let yourselves be inflamed more strongly with the fervor of charity.²² Contemplate His ineffable delights, eternal riches and honors. Long for them in the great desire and love of your heart; seek and never be tired till you have finished the race and happily won the prize.²³

In your contemplation, may you always remember the poor, the sick, and the suffering. Pray to God for one another, for by carrying each other's burdens we will easily fulfill the law of Christ.²⁴

I beg you to receive my words with kindness and devotion, seeing in them the motherly affection that in the fire of charity I daily feel toward you.²⁵

Farewell until we meet at the throne of the glory of the great God.²⁶ In as much as I can, I recommend to your charity the bearers of this letter, the Beloved of God. Amen.

I, Clare, a servant of Christ, a little plant of our most holy Father Francis, a sister and mother to you, although unworthy, pray for you and bless you through our Lord Jesus Christ, through His mercy and the intercession of His most holy Mother Mary, through blessed Michael the Archangel and all the holy angels of God, through our blessed Father Francis and all men and women saints. May the heavenly Father give you and confirm for you this most holy blessing in heaven and on earth. On earth, may He multiply you among His servants in His grace and in His virtues. In heaven, may He exalt you and glorify you among His men and women saints.²⁷

May the Lord always be with you²⁸
and may you always be with Him. Amen.²⁹

¹Hab. 3:18

²Cf. RCI Prol; 1:2; 2:7, 24; 6:3, 7; 8:2, 6; 9:4, 7-9; 10:3, 6, 9, 12; 12:13; 1LAG 2, 3, 4, 12, 13, 17, 18, 24, 27, 31, 34; 2LAG 18, 20; 3LAG 2, 4, 17-18; 4LAG 2, 37; LER 1, 9, 11; TestCI 5, 35, 37, 46, 48, 59; BCI 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16. All references to Clare's writings are from *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993).

³Cf. Gratien de Paris, OFM Cap., *I Know Christ* (Franciscan Institute Publications, 1957), 66; 2Cel 105.

⁴Cf. Matt. 26:41, LER 13.

⁵Cf. 2Tim. 4:5; LER 14; 1LAG 31; 3LAG 4, 25; 4LAG 18, 20, 22; RCI 4:18, 10:1; 12:13; TestC 46, 56, 69.

⁶3LAG 14-17; RegNB 23:1-7; 2EpFid 48-53, 63-71; Mk. 1:15; Phil. 2:5.

⁷Clare in many ways imitated Mary, and she is referred to as the "footprint of Mary."

⁸Matt. 5:12.

⁹2Cor. 11:2, Matt. 12:50.

¹⁰1LAG 15-17.

¹¹Cf. Ps. 83:8.

¹²Cf. Matt. 7:13-14.

¹³1LAG 30.

¹⁴Matt. 5:48.

¹⁵2LAG 11-14.

¹⁶Cf. 2LAG 20-23.

¹⁷Cf. 2L Ag 21-23.

¹⁸Cf. Matt. 13:44.

¹⁹Cf. 3LAG 12-14; for the theme of mirror cf. Brian Purfield, OFM, "Reflections in the Mirror—The Images of Christ in the Spiritual Life of St. Clare of Assisi," thesis (Canterbury: FSC, 1989), 166; Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., "Clare of Assisi: The Mirror Mystic," *The Cord* (July-August, 1985): 195-202; Cf. Heb. 1:3; 2Cor. 3:18; Ps. 30:20; 1Cor. 2:9. This mirror method of contemplation is further developed in 4LAG 15-32.

²⁰John 14: 21, 23.

²¹3LAG 21-22.

²²Cf. 4LAG 27.

²³Cf. 4LAG 27-32; cf. also Cant. 1:3. Insights into these passages should be sought in the rich spirituality of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which delighted in commenting on the Canticle of Canticles.

²⁴Cf. James 5:16; Gal. 6:2; LER 17.

²⁵Cf. 4LAG 37.

²⁶Tit. 2:13.

²⁷BCI 6-10.

²⁸Cf. 2 Cor 13:11, Jn 12:26, 1 Thess 4:17.

²⁹BCI 16.

*Let Mother Church rejoice because she has
begotten and reared such a daughter!*

(Alexander IV, Bull of Canonization)

Clare's Trinitarian Prayer

Marie Beha, OSC

In a previous article on Clare's prayer,¹ we focused on its liturgical and Christological aspects, describing how in her Rule she prescribed the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours and the reception of the Sacraments, while in her Letters she advised, "Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus," especially the Jesus of crib and cross.

But the Jesus of all Christian prayer is One in Three. Though Clare did not write explicitly of the Trinity in the same way that Francis did, her prayer was necessarily Trinitarian, because growing in loving relationship with God always means becoming more intimate with Father, Son, and Spirit. That this was the direction of Clare's prayer is clear in her writings as well as in her life.

We see an example of this as she begins her Blessing of all the sisters "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (BCI 1)² and goes on to anticipate that the "Heavenly Father [will] give you and confirm for you this most holy blessing" (BCI 8). It is even more touchingly witnessed to by one of the sisters at the process of Clare's canonization: "One evening a few days before her death, she began to speak to the Trinity and to say very softly other words to God many educated people would hardly understand" (Proc 14: 7). Her heart was speaking what her life had first articulated.

As our own life of prayer develops, we move beyond Old Testament monotheism into an interpersonal relationship with Father, Son, and Spirit. We no longer relate to God generically, but rather respond to each Person of the Trinity as gloriously unique. Similarly, Clare's lived theology of the Trinity issued in a different naming of, and a specific way of relating to, God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Praying to God the Father

When Clare prayed to God the Father, she addressed her petitions to the "most high, heavenly Father" (RCl 6: 1; TestCl 24) or "heavenly Father" (RCl 6: 3; TestCl 14; BCl 8). Aware of her own poverty and neediness, she also prayed to the "Father of Mercies" (TestCl 2, 58; BCl 12) and, preserving her Christological emphasis, to "the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (TestCl 2, 77). She acknowledged this same Father as the "Giver of grace," the "Author of Salvation," (3LAg 2) and the "Father of all perfection" (2LAg 3, 4). Whatever Clare "had" she had received, and so her heart overflowed in praise and gratitude to the one "from Whom every good and perfect gift proceeds" (2LAg 3).

In her writings, Clare goes on to specify some of these gifts, emphasizing her vocation (TestCl 2). She seems to have associated this particularly with God the Father and with "our most blessed Father Francis," indicating that her "vocation and choice" had come initially from God through Francis (TestCl 16). This same patterning of divine initiative through the instrumentality of Francis is reflected when she speaks of moving to San Damiano, "by the will of God and our most blessed father Francis" (TestCl 30), and of the rapid growth of the Poor Ladies during Clare's lifetime through the grace and mercy of the Lord who "made our number increase so that He would fulfill what He had foretold through His saint" (TestCl 31). Finally, she summarizes this whole vocational gifting of the Father by praying at the conclusion of her Testament that "the Lord Himself, Who has given a good beginning, will also give the increase and final perseverance" (TestCl 78). This strengthening action of the Father was a matter of daily experience for Clare. She counted on it, especially in that very difficult time "after the passing of our holy father Francis, who was our pillar [of strength] and, after God, our one consolation and support" (TestCl 38).

Clare also seems to have delighted in imaging the relationship between God and her soul in terms of King and Spouse. She reminds Agnes that she is "spouse of the Most High King of heaven" (3LAg 1), "the spouse of the King of all ages" (4LAg 4), and "the most chaste bride of the Most High King" (4LAg 17). The imagery is essentially Biblical but is also a very a natural way for a noble lady of her times to relate to the "most high" Father.

What Clare does in all of this is to challenge us, not to reproduce her specific ways of naming and imaging God the Father, but to discover Who God is for us, here in our twentieth century and now at this point in our lives. How do we name the first Person of the Trinity whom we have traditionally called "Father"? How do we see our relationship to this giver of all good gifts?

Praying to God the Spirit

Just as everything begins with God the Father, so the power of the Spirit continues this divine work in the world of Clare and her sisters. Most often she refers to the Third Person of the Trinity as the "Spirit of the Lord" (2LAg 14; RCl 9:9); an emphasis that flows naturally from her Christology. She also speaks of the Holy Spirit more conventionally, reminding her sisters that they have "taken the Holy Spirit as . . . Spouse" and done so "by divine inspiration" (RCl 6: 3).

Clare's experience of the Spirit gives to her prayer and her life a sense of being "inspired." With a theological accuracy that could only come from a heart formed in the ways of the Lord, she speaks of the Spirit who gives her joy (4LAg 7) and who empowers her warm expressions of love for Agnes. "What more can I say? Let the tongue of the flesh be silent when I seek to express my love for you; and let the tongue of the Spirit speak" (4LAg 36).

It is the Spirit who, at the beginning of her conversion, "enlightened" Clare's heart to "do penance" (TestCl 24), and it is the same divine inspiration that will move others "desiring to accept this life" (RCl 2:1) and "choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel" (RCl 6:3).

In her *Rule*, Clare urges her sisters to "devote themselves to what they should desire to have above all else: the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity" (RCl 10:9). As a consequence of her confidence in this maturing power of the Spirit, Clare dispenses with detailed prescriptions of personal conduct, trusting her sisters to discern wisely as to how they should act. For example, rather than legislating silence as an absolute as was done in other rules of this period, she permits the sisters "to communicate whatever is necessary always and everywhere, briefly and in a low tone of voice" (RCl 5:4). She leaves the decision as to what is necessary to each individual. With similar breadth of spirit, she makes the common sense determination that "Should anything be sent to a sister by her relatives or others, let the Abbess give it to the sister. If she needs it, the sister may use it; otherwise, let her give it lovingly to a sister who does need it" (RCl 8:10). Again the responsibility is the sister's, not the abbess's. This is the kind of trust that creates trustworthy individuals, free to respond in flexible and highly personal ways to the inspirations of God's Spirit.

Because divine inspiration is not the prerogative of age or rank, Clare expects that the Spirit will be alive and active in each and all of the sisters, "revealing what is best to the least among us." As a consequence of this faith, she prescribes that the most important decisions will be made not by the abbess alone but by the total community acting collegially. Decisions about who will be admitted (RCl 2:1), who will be elected as abbess (RCl 4:1), her fitness

to continue in office (RCI 4:7), how poverty will be observed (RCI 4:20), and whatever else involves "the welfare and integrity of the monastery" (RCI 4:17) are to be made by all the sisters. What concerns all is decided by all, since all are inspired by the same Spirit.

Allowing ourselves to be formed by this Holy Spirit of the Lord will have the same happy consequence in our lives, enabling, even impelling, us to live in increasing truth and unity, joy and peace. Inspired by the Spirit of the Lord we will continue to mature, both as individuals and as communities, till we grow into full stature in Christ.

This is what happened in Clare's life. Sustained by the Spirit in her dying moments, she was heard speaking to her own soul: "Go calmly in peace, for you will have a good escort, because He Who created you has sent you the Holy Spirit and has always guarded you as a mother does her child who loves her" (Proc 3:20). It was a fit summary of a life that had been "inspired by the Holy Spirit from the beginning" (Proc 20:5).

Praying to God the Son

Just as Clare's prayer showed an increasingly personalized relationship with the "most High Father" and the "Spirit of the Lord," so too did she grow in intimacy with Lord Jesus Christ, "the Son of the Most High Father and of the glorious Virgin" (1LAg 24). She also proclaims Jesus as "King of all ages" (4LAg 4) and "King of angels" (4LAg 21). Expressing her heart's devotion, she prayed to Jesus enfleshed in the crib and suffering on the cross, naming him the "poor Christ" (2LAg 18), "the Poor Crucified" (1LAg 13), and the "Lamb" (4LAg 3). As we shall see, Incarnation and Paschal mystery were the double focus of her heart's devotion; her life and prayer were essentially Christological. Christ was her "Way" (TestCl 5) and the "Truth" of her gospel form of life (3LAg 23).

Clare summarized her personal relationship to the "Son of the Most High" as "spouse and mother and sister" (1LAg 12, 14, 24). The metaphors are audacious yet familiar. We all share a basic referent to these fundamental human experiences; we know what they mean. But when applied to the Son of God! Only the reassurance of Jesus' own gospel usage could justify such boldness. "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matt. 12:50). Since the whole "form of life" of both Francis and Clare was to "live according to the holy gospel" and to do this in the closeness of fraternal community, it was only natural that their prayer would be shaped by the familial intimacy of Jesus' promise.

Though Clare sometimes spoke of being queen and spouse of God the Father, imaging herself and her sisters as spouses of Jesus seemed especially

dear to her. It is a title that reappears frequently in her correspondence with Agnes, as when she reminds her that she is "Lady because of the Lord, your Spouse" (2LAg 24), and "Bride of the lamb, the eternal King" (4LAg 2).

In lyrical prose she shared with her friend: "When you have loved him, you are chaste; when you have touched him, you become more pure; when you have accepted him, you are a virgin. Whose power is stronger, Whose generosity more abundant, Whose appearance more beautiful, Whose love more tender, Whose courtesy more gracious" (1LAg 8). Though writing in the safe anonymity of "you," Clare revealed what long hours of contemplative gazing had taught her heart. She knew from personal experience how the human desire to "love" and "touch" and "accept" is sublimated in the self-gift of chastity, purity, and virginity.

Clare also used the title "spouse" to encourage Agnes who had "been beautifully adorned with the sign of an undefiled virginity and a most holy poverty" (1LAg 13) and whose life of sacrifice was inspired by "Your Spouse," who "became for your salvation the lowest of men, was despised, struck, scourged untold times through his entire body, and then died amid the suffering of the Cross" (2LAg 20). It is a theme to which she returned in her last extant letter written shortly before her death, when she again referred to Agnes as "espoused to the Lamb" (4LAg 8) and "chaste bride of the Most High King" (4LAg 17), revealing once more how enamored her own heart had become of this divine spouse, "Whose beauty all the blessed hosts of heaven unceasingly admire, Whose affection excites, Whose contemplation refreshes, Whose kindness fulfills, Whose delight replenishes" (4LAg 10-12). Clare goes on and on; she can never say enough just because there is always more to be said. It is our promise of fullness as well.

But none of this is empty romanticism for Clare. For forty years she gave concrete expression to her desire, not only to live with Jesus, but also to live as Jesus did. As spouse she would share in the hardship of her "Lord" and count it all as nothing. So at the end of her life she could say: "After I once came to know the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ through his servant Francis, no pain has been bothersome, no penance too severe, no weakness has been hard" (CL 44). Those are the words of a lover who had come to know her beloved in bridal union. The oneness she experienced so fully is offered to each of us. The question is: do we really want it, want it badly enough to embrace the whole reality of Jesus' living, laboring, suffering, and dying?

Going on to the next of Clare's ways of relating to Jesus, we may ask how did she "mother" Jesus and how can we? The answer is essentially the same—by consenting to enflesh him in our own lives and laboring to bring him to birth in the lives of others. Like every mother, we must give of ourselves, our very being, discounting the pain for joy that Christ comes anew into our world.

We do this every time we incarnate him in the dailiness of our own lives, every time we choose the will of the Father over our own self-will, dying to self to live more fully in Him.

This mothering of Jesus Clare quite naturally associates with devotion to the Virgin Mary, so she encourages Agnes to “cling to his most sweet Mother who gave birth to a Son whom the heavens could not contain and yet she carried Him in the enclosure of her holy womb and held him on her virginal lap” (3LAg 18, 19). Agnes, too, “by following in Mary’s footprints, especially those of poverty and humility, can without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in [her] chaste and virginal body” (3LAg 25). What she seems to be encouraging is far more than the piety of good intention; this is as real as the imitation that translates gospel values into personal circumstances. In this way we continue the incarnation, allowing Jesus to be born in the only way he can come into the world of our time and place.

But Clare’s spirituality was never individualistic; it was always realized in a communitarian context. We see this especially in terms of her mothering of Jesus, which found rich expression in her relationship with the sisters at San Damiano. It led her to nurture Jesus in her caring for the physical and spiritual needs of her growing community. Once when there was only one small loaf of bread to provide dinner for fifty sisters, her powerful blessing multiplied it to ensure that everyone would receive a generous portion (Proc 6:16). At another time, through her intercession, an empty jug was found to be filled with the finest oil, much to the astonishment of the brother who was to have replenished it (Proc 1:15). Most of all it was her own undaunted faith and trust in God’s provident care that fed and encouraged her sisters’ perseverance. They saw how she lived, they observed how she prayed, and they wanted for themselves the “more” that she obviously experienced (Proc 1:7; 2:9).

Conceiving, giving birth, nourishing—these are the rewarding if arduous aspects of motherhood. Letting go, giving back the life given to us, is still more demanding. Clare’s maternal life and prayer included all of these. From the eighteen-year-old who hurried down Assisi’s hills eager to join Francis and, who gave birth to a new way of living for women, she grew into the abbess who daily laid down her life for her sisters at San Damiano. We have only an oblique hint of the cost of such maternity when she admonishes anyone elected to the office of abbess to “reflect on the kind of burden she has undertaken” (RCI 4:8).

For Clare, being abbess was less a matter of honor and more an opportunity to live out Jesus’ role as Suffering Servant. It seems no accident that washing the feet of her sisters became one of the repeated maternal rituals at San Damiano (Proc 10:11). This was no mere ceremonial. These feet really needed washing—sometimes because the sisters who served outside had wandered the

dusty streets of Assisi seeking alms to sustain the community, at other times because the sisters had just come in from working in San Damiano’s muddy cloister garden. I am touched by the simple account of how one of the serving sisters, returning from a begging tour, accidentally kicked Clare in the face as her abbess bent over to wash and then kiss her feet (Proc 2:3). Clare simply went on with her motherly service, undoubtedly the kindest response she could have given to the embarrassed sister.

The sisters also revealed how Clare took special care of the sick sisters making certain that they were clean and comfortable (Proc 1:12) and how she would go through the dormitory to be sure that the sisters had enough warm covering (Proc 2:3). Her motherly heart saw all such small services as labors of love.

These were a few of the daily ways in which Clare mothered Jesus in concrete service to her sisters. They expressed her willingness to die to herself and to live for others. These experiences prepared her for her willingness to lay down her life when a horde of Saracen soldiers attacked the monastery. The sisters were understandably terrified, but Clare reassured them: “Do not be afraid, because I am a hostage for you so you will not suffer any harm” (Proc 9:2). Clare met the invaders at the door and they fled before the power of her prayer.

Though our own mothering of Jesus might lack the high drama of Clare’s defense against the Saracens or the miracles of food multiplication, it can be just as real. Whenever we give of ourselves to nourish the lives of others, whenever we respond to real human need, we consent to mothering the Jesus identified with each of our brothers and sisters.

This brings us to the last of the ways in which Clare described her relationship to Jesus—that of being “sister.” In her repeated use of “spouse and mother and sister of my Lord Jesus Christ” (1LAg 12), Clare gives a prominent place to “sister,” perhaps because the quality of sisterliness dominated her relationships both in early family experience and later within the community of the Poor Ladies. Clare’s closeness to her own blood sisters is amply attested to by the fact that both followed her into the community. Even her mother later on became one of Clare’s sisters. We also find evidence of this close bonding within her family in a touching letter written by her sister Agnes to “her venerable mother and the woman beloved in Christ beyond all others, to the Lady Clare . . .” and which goes on to speak of Agnes’s “great distress and immense sadness . . . because I have been physically separated from you and my other sisters with whom I had hoped to live and die in this world” (Letter of Agnes to Clare 1, 2).

What does it mean to be a sister? Clare realized that it meant a life-long relationship based on having the same parents. The bond between sisters (or

brothers) was mutual and implied equality in the relationship. It also included genuine affection that issued in a real care for each other. Consequently, being sister to Jesus implied the same characteristics—belonging to the family of God, having a share in the one divine life, being united in a mutual love that sees every other person as equally sister or brother to Jesus.

Just as Clare's maternal relationship to Jesus found concrete expression in her loving service to her sisters at San Damiano, so too her being "sister to Jesus" sustained her as "sister and mother" (BCI 6) during the forty years she served as abbess. Unlike the powerful matriarchs who ruled many medieval monasteries, Clare remained one of the sisters, sharing with them the common life of "church, dormitory, refectory, infirmary and clothing," even accusing herself in chapter of her faults and negligences (RCl 4:13, 16). This emphasis on the common life for all was unheard of in Clare's time and for one in her position. Rather than claiming the status of noble lady or the privileges of office, she gloried in the title of "sister," living the common life as do sisters in a family.

As one of the sisters Clare delighted in doing her share of the common work, preferring for herself "those tasks which were more degrading" (Proc 2:1). It was a labor of sisterly love that she continued to the very end of her days even when ill and confined to bed, contributing by her careful needlework to the charity of the community (Proc 6: 14).

Since the abbess at San Damiano was one of them, the sisters in their turn could be so "familiar" with her that they could "speak and act with her as ladies do with their servant. For this is the way it must be: the Abbess should be the servant of all the sisters" (RCl 10:4, 5). Though most of us have little difficulty embracing the concept of service, being treated as a servant might be more than we would bargain for.

The motivation for all this was the genuine mutual love of the sisters. In the summary statement of her Testament she reminds them to love "one another with the charity of Christ" and to show "the love you have in your hearts . . . outwardly in your deeds" (59). It was what she did with all the tenderness of a sensitive heart. Not only did she minister to them in illness and sometimes cure their affliction, but she even seems to have known instinctively when someone was troubled or depressed "as is natural," and "she called her in secret and consoled her with tears" (Proc 10:5).

This sisterly kindness of their abbess was not lost on the community. Following the injunction of the Rule, each was encouraged to "manifest her needs to the other" (8:16). To make this possible, they were also allowed to speak to each other, the absolute silence of many monastic rules made subservient to the greater good of familial charity. Because they were sisters, they prayed for each other (RCl 9:8) and were encouraged to share what they had received

from families or friends (RCl 8:10). They looked out for each other and had recourse to the abbess "at any hour, as they [saw] fit, both for themselves and their sisters" (TestCl 66).

The community at San Damiano radiated love and joy despite the austerity of the life. The prayer-filled union of the abbess and of the sisters bore the practical, everyday fruits of unity in heart and mind. It was a sisterly love difficult to fake, especially in the confined space of San Damiano, validating their life of prayer. Only the reality of being sister to Jesus could have motivated this kind of caring in the day-to-day life of the enclosure. It is the same kind of sisterly love that we are invited to show to each sister or brother of ours in the family of God.



Clare Ellen, OSC

At the heart of Clare's relationship to Jesus as spouse, mother, and sister, was the realization that in relating to others, especially within the community at San Damiano, she was truly responding to Jesus, so complete is his identification with us. In the same way, when she gave herself to Christ-centered prayer, she was also giving of herself to others. Because the love of Jesus and the love of others are really one love, Clare's life and prayer came together. This simple unity of lived experience was at the heart of her Trinitarian prayer.

In summary, Clare's prayer transformed her life; her life authenticated her prayer. In the end, they became one. Both began with God's initiative; both returned in fullest measure that love which had first been given. Trinitarian contemplation formed Clare into a "see-er," whose keenness of vision found God everywhere, always. The God she discovered was both One and Three, a community of Persons. It was a Trinitarian theology she lived all the days of her life. Now God must teach us how we can do the same.

Endnotes

¹See "Praying with Clare of Assisi," *The Cord*, 47.4 (July-August, 1997), 185-193.

²References to Clare's writings and the early biographical sources are from *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. Regis Armstrong, OFMCap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993).

A Reflection on Clare of Assisi

Kevin Lynch, OFM

When what we are to be
comes to light
We shall be like God,
for we shall see God as God is.
(1John 3:2)

Introduction

Recent studies occasioned by the celebration of the eight-hundredth anniversary of Clare of Assisi's birth shed new light on her struggle to be faithful to the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ in her life. In the words of Regis Armstrong:

On closer examination, Clare emerges more clearly as one who accepted the charism of Francis, expressed it in her unique feminine way, and, at a period of medieval history in which the role of women was also undergoing change, shattered many of the traditional religious stereotypes.¹

This reflection looks at her struggle—especially with family and Church hierarchy—to be faithful to her initial inspiration and examines some of the characteristics of her spirituality.

Clare's life is well known to readers of *The Cord*. Her family was part of the *maiores*, or nobility of Assisi; women were a strong influence in her home life; she shared her food and her dowry with the poor; her departure from her parents' home was upsetting to the class structure of the times. Clare persevered in a lifelong journey that remained a light, though often hidden under a bushel,² for Franciscans of future generations.

The Struggle on the Journey

Once Clare left her family home, her personal conversion became irreversible and in its authenticity had its moments of insecurity and social consequences. First of all the brothers, whom she joined at the Portiuncula on the evening of Palm Sunday, 1212, were themselves suspect,³ and now they had received a woman from the upper class. The immediate crisis was resolved by having Clare stay in a well-established Benedictine monastery of nuns at San Paolo delle Abbadesse in Bastia. However she came there not to be part of the upper class nuns, but as a servant, a *minora*, which was unacceptable to her family. Neither the nuns nor Bishop Guido of Assisi was "anxious to oppose a family as powerful as the descendants of Offreduccio."⁴

Francis himself was not present at that time. Clare, having moved on her own the heavy doors at home, took up the struggle to pursue her conversion among the lesser ones. She went through a period of some confusion as she left the Benedictine monastery to live at San Angelo di Panzo, "a monastery of Beguine recluses,"⁵ where her sister Catherine (later Agnes) joined her. It was here that Clare made "contact with the new forms of religious life which other women than herself were also striving to realize at that time."⁶ It was here also that her prayers stopped the "twelve armed men" from physically removing her sister Agnes. Shortly after, with assistance from Francis, she and a few sisters settled permanently at San Damiano. A clearer form of life was emerging for both Clare and Francis.

In an endnote Bartoli, quoting M. Sensi, summarizes the situation as follows:

The vocation of Clare of Assisi developed out of two antithetical currents, when Benedictine monasticism and the urban, penitential movement of reclusion were already in existence. The movement of *Poor ladies* guided by Clare transcended even as it synthesized these two movements: that is, traditional monasticism and the new style of religious life.⁷

This new form of life found its home at San Damiano, the birthplace of Francis's own vision to repair the Church. According to Armstrong in his study of Thomas of Celano, the official biographer of Francis, San Damiano remained vital to the Franciscan mandate to rebuild the Church. "What is so striking, however, is Thomas's view that Clare and the Poor Ladies fulfilled the mandate in symbolic ways that deepened the work of Francis and brought it to a more profound level."⁸

This mandate to rebuild the Church was to be a lifelong struggle for Clare and focused mainly on her determination to live without anything of her own.

Sine proprio was the expression of her time. Bartoli paradoxically calls it "the privilege of living without privileges."⁹ Clare lived through the creative tension between institutional security and a community of love. She and Francis, along with their first followers, were determined to live without anything of their own, either individually or corporately, despite efforts by Church authorities to the contrary.

In an attempt to put some order into the various movements of renewal in the Church of the time, the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 decreed that there were to be no new religious orders. Francis already had verbal approval from Pope Innocent III in 1209 for his rule or form of life. For the women at San Damiano, however, the situation became problematic after 1215. They were required to accept the Rule of St. Benedict which implied a more established form of life. In 1216 Clare successfully appealed to Innocent for the privilege of poverty—a total dependence on Providence for the sisters' livelihood along with the insecurity of the lower class. By this time the sisters were working "with their own hands," probably in the cloth industry, as a way of being identified with "those who were working out a new spirituality and seeking to encourage a new attitude to work within the Church."¹⁰

During these struggles Cardinal Hugolino (later to become Pope Gregory IX), as Cardinal Protector of the Poor Ladies of San Damiano and with the mandate of Pope Honorius III (1216-1227), wrote a special rule for them "to safeguard what he understood to be Clare's best interests."¹¹ As Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) he attempted to persuade the sisters to abandon the privilege of poverty. Further, according to the *Legend of Saint Clare*, when he offered to absolve Clare from her vow she said: "Holy Father, I will never in any way wish to be absolved from the following of Christ."¹² The pope eventually reconfirmed Clare's privilege of poverty in 1228.

In the meantime Francis had died (1226), and the friars were not as firm in their support of Clare or in their living without anything of their own.¹³ They became very clerical under the Minister General Haymo of Faversham (1240-1244) and began to accept papal privileges when Crescentius was Minister General (1244-1247). In 1247 John of Parma was elected Minister and became "a breath of new hopefulness"¹⁴ for Clare. A new pope, Innocent IV (1243-1254), gave the sisters another rule in 1247. However, it too "failed to grasp the fact that radical poverty was the essential foundation of Clare's life and charisma,"¹⁵ and it was never enforced.

Clare's Rule

Eventually, after a long struggle to have the privilege of no privileges and with many years of experience in living the enclosure,¹⁶ Clare decided to write

her own rule, the first woman to do so. It was approved by Innocent IV on August 9, 1253, two days before Clare's death. Her struggle was summarized by Philip Endean, general editor of *The Way Supplement*: "Like many other prophetic women in the Church, Clare had to cope with the incomprehension of hierarchs and to live with juridical rulings which suppressed rather than fostered her charism."¹⁷

At this point, a note from Bartoli is in order. He quotes a recent study in Italian by G. Gennaro: "This group . . . had lived for years without feeling the need for a rule: the *formula vitae* which Francis had given them . . . placed the Gospel and Francis's own care for them right at the heart of the venture at San Damiano."¹⁸ Thaddée Matura intimates that Clare's concern by this time was to assure that her form of life endure and she was diplomatic enough to know that using Francis's inspiration would serve her well.¹⁹ She was original in her use of the juridical language of previous rules and freer than Francis in her interpretations.²⁰ Clare's spirit was unique for her era.

Margaret Carney illustrates well how Clare characteristically used the language of love in her rule. When Hugolino legislated how a candidate was to enter religion, he always spoke in the third person, whereas Clare used the personal pronoun saying: "Let the tenor of *our* life be thoroughly explained to her." Carney comments: "The simple addition of 'our' to 'life' betrays a world of meaning, a love for the form of life so faithfully treasured and advanced. With one small stroke of the quill it separates Clare's perceptions from Hugolino's far more dramatically than the enclosure walls could ever separate outer perceptions from inner realities."²¹

As well as being more personal, Clare was also more democratic in her legislation than were previous efforts to regulate her life. Frances Teresa Downing points out that

there is a document from 1238 concerning the sale of some land which has the signatures of the entire community on it. It is an important document to us because it indicates that, even though officially sailing under Benedict and Hugolino's flags, Clare practiced what she taught, and that major as well as minor decisions at San Damiano were reached by way of consultation involving all the sisters.²²

Other examples of this spirit in the Rule include the acceptance of novices (chap.2), approval of taking on a debt and the election of the abbess (chap.4) (for which latter Clare did not seek confirmation from any higher authority other than to say she must "first profess our form of poverty"), and the daily work of all the sisters (chap.7).

Clare's view of authority was insightful as well. In chapter ten of the Rule the sisters are "to obey their abbess in all things they have promised the Lord

to observe and which are not *against their soul and our profession*" (RCl 10:3; emphasis mine). Conscience was to be respected. In the writings of Clare, the abbess's position was more often called servant or mother than abbess—a title that had been imposed on Clare in keeping with the efforts to institutionalize this new movement.²³ She was to be attentive to the sisters "as a mother is to her daughters," and the sisters "are to obey her not so much because of her office as because of her love" (TestCl 62, 63). The abbess acts "with the sisters" (RCl 2-12). This was a clear movement away from the more matriarchal/patriarchal monastic tradition.

Finally, Clare's sense of the value of each voice in the community is highlighted in chapter six of the Rule, "the chapter which holds the heart of the experience of Clare and her companions."²⁴ Quoting Francis, Clare says that a sister is not to depart from this way of life "by reason of the teaching of anyone." The sister has her own voice in this "most holy life and poverty." The whole of chapter six and the two subsequent chapters break away from legal language. In Armstrong's words: "Clare inserts in [these] three chapters the heart of the 'life and poverty' of Jesus Christ that is the cornerstone of the Order. This section of the Rule possesses a dramatically different autobiographical tone than [sic.] occurs again in the *Testament*. This particular chapter [six] comes directly from Clare and forms the heart of the Rule, thus providing a principal font for the new form of life in the Church."²⁵

Some Characteristics of Clare's Spirituality

Clare's charism, or at least some of the characteristics of her spirituality, are being rediscovered through recent literature as an integral part of the Franciscan tradition. Besides the strong sense of personal worth and social change to which Clare and Francis witness, her Rule or form of life already give a flavor of what she brought to the tradition. In the words of Downing: "Traditionally her Rule is considered to be a faithful reflection of what actually happened at San Damiano, following the usual Franciscan approach of acting first and thinking later."²⁶ It is noteworthy that the late Eric Doyle makes a related point when describing Franciscan spirituality in *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*: "St. Francis of Assisi did not found a school of spirituality, nor is there a systematic Franciscan spirituality."²⁷ Clare is like Francis "who coined the phrase 'an understanding of faith': that is, a faith which, out of a life process, generates original reflection on the truth contemplated, yet without becoming a systematic theology."²⁸ The best that can be offered are some characteristics of Clare's way of life which can be described as (1) relational, (2) prayerful, and (3) personal.

1) Relational: Clare's was a relational spirituality. Her God was personal and less distant than Francis's.²⁹ As she wrote to Agnes of Prague in all four letters, her union was a nuptial one with Christ, the poor one (TestCl 56) revealed in the crib (TestCl 35, 45, 46) and on the cross (TestCl 45). God is a "Father of mercies," as was said in 2Cor. 1:3 (TestCl 2, 58; BCl 12). The Spirit gives joy and enlightenment (TestCl 11; 4LAg 7), is spouse (RCl 6:3), before all else is to be desired "with His holy manner of working" (RCl 10:9). Matura summarizes these sentiments well:

One could say Francis's spirituality is "traditional," closer to its biblical and liturgical roots, more theocentric, more objective; Clare's is "modern," in touch with the spiritual mood of her day, marked by St. Bernard and his movement.³⁰

2) Prayerful: Clare's life of prayer was intense, but difficult to describe. Armstrong speaks of her prayer as that of a woman passionately in love with Christ. "She offers," he writes, "very few intellectual or practical formulas for making progress in the life of prayer. It is almost as if Clare consciously wanted to teach her sisters that prayer was simply a matter of falling in love, a process that defies plans, methods, or well-defined approaches."³¹ There is one hint in her second letter to Agnes of Prague. In it Clare's "own deep bond with Christ breathes through."³² Clare wrote: "Gaze upon him, consider him, contemplate him as you desire to imitate him" (2LAg 20). In this gazing, "She herself became prayer as it were: the total response to God's longing for us."³³

By looking this way at Christ, who mirrors the God who is poured out on the cross, we become mirrors for others who in turn will be mirrors "for those living in the world" (TestCl 19-21).³⁴ This reflection is one of joy and light in which we "gain, with very little effort, the prize of eternal happiness (cf. Phil. 3:14)" (TestCl 23). Matura calls it a prayer style that represents "a spirituality of pleasure."³⁵

3) Personal: After Francis's death, Clare had a dream or vision of him, as witnessed at the canonization process, which involved a mirror as well.³⁶ It was a dream reported in the language of the time and touches "one of the most intimate and personal aspects of Clare's personality."³⁷ It is a language of feeling and desire. In the dream Clare saw herself coming to Francis up a stairs, carrying a bowl of hot water and a towel. When she reached Francis

the saint bared his breast and said to the Lady Clare: "Come, take and drink." After she had sucked from it, the saint admonished her to imbibe once again. After she did so what she tasted was so sweet and delightful she in no way could describe it.

After she had imbibed, that nipple or opening of the breast from which the milk came remained between the lips of blessed Clare. After she took what remained in her mouth in her hands, it seemed to her it was gold so clear and bright that everything was seen in it as in a mirror.³⁸

Bartoli puts this vision in its cultural context and concludes: "The totally human love of Clare for Francis, which this dream places so well in high relief, characterizes to a great degree her love of God."³⁹

I cite the above to illustrate how Clare's spirituality is highly personal. She has a strong sense of the dignity of the person as a reflection of the divine image. E. van den Goorbergh concludes that for Clare a person is truly human when "she radiates Christ's love to others."⁴⁰ Such radiance is what gives dignity to persons—ourselves and others. Clare puts it this way to her soul-friend, Agnes:

Indeed, it is now clear that the soul of a faithful person, the most worthy of all creatures because of the grace of God, is greater than heaven itself, since the heavens and the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator and the faithful soul is His dwelling place and throne, and this only through the charity that the wicked lack (3LAg, 21-22).

Clare has a profound sense of God's abiding presence. More like Julian of Norwich and "unlike many other mystics, Clare was not moved by fear and despair. Nowhere is there evidence to suggest she ever felt abandoned by God who called her by name."⁴¹

Clare's sense of the other is so strong that she respects all. Despite her struggles with the Church's hierarchy, she wrote in her Testament that she expected them "out of the love of the God Who was placed poor in the crib, lived poor in the world, and remained naked on the cross" (TestCl 45) to look after her sisters. Her sense of herself gave her "the liberty necessary to gain perspective on the limits of the Church's authority as well as her own. This perspective enabled her to remain hopeful and humble."⁴²

Conclusion

Clare of Assisi was a hopeful and humble woman who, in her lifelong process of conversion to live without anything of her own, began a new form of life for other sisters and brothers that was to be mirrored in society. Her character, transformed by gazing at the Christ naked in the crib and on the cross, was relational, prayerful, and personal. To this day she inspires courage for the journey of God's pilgrim people living beyond the walls of San Damiano.

Endnotes

¹Regis J. Armstrong, ed. and trans., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 10. Translations and dates are Armstrong's, unless otherwise noted. Marco Bartoli's work *Clare of Assisi*, trans. Sr. Frances Teresa [Downing] (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1993) and Margaret Carney's *The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and Her Form of Life* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993) are two such typical and recent studies.

²See Margaret Carney, "Franciscan Women and the Theological Enterprise," in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. Kenan B. Osborne (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1994), 333. Carney analyses how this light does not always shine. She writes: "When we look at the beginnings of the theological developments with the Franciscan school we can see, then, that women had no hope of formally participating in the work of articulating a new way of looking at these fields through the Franciscan lens. . . . Women who entered into the various forms of Franciscan life . . . could not participate in the apostolic work of formal evangelizing because this was increasingly limited to ordained clerics in the wake of the Lateran Council and the culmination of the Gregorian reform."

³Bartoli, 42.

⁴Bartoli, 51.

⁵*Early Documents*, 12.

⁶Bartoli, 55.

⁷Bartoli, n.20, 213.

⁸Regis J. Armstrong, "Clare of Assisi, the Poor Ladies, and the Ecclesial Mission in the *First Life of Thomas of Celano*," *Greyfriars Review* 5 (1991): 424.

⁹Bartoli, 53-75.

¹⁰Bartoli, 60.

¹¹Margaret E. Guider, "Going Forward on the Path of Prudent Happiness: Perspectives on Liberty and Obedience," *The Way Supplement*, 80 (1994): 34.

¹²*Early Documents*, 205.

¹³Carney, 187.

¹⁴Carney, 196.

¹⁵Guider, 35.

¹⁶Parallel to Clare's struggle for the privilege of poverty is that of the form of her enclosure or cloister. In her time it was customary for women in religion to be cloistered. Clare's choice in this matter is ambivalent. See Bartoli, 92; Carney, 213; Pat Howes, "Solitude," *The Way Supplement*, 80 (1994): 61-69.

¹⁷Philip Endean, "Editorial," *The Way Supplement*, 80 (1994): 5.

¹⁸Bartoli, n.24, 214.

¹⁹In Marie-France Becker, Jean-François Godet, and Thaddée Matura, *Claire d'Assise Ecrits: Introduction, Texte Latin, Traduction, Notes et Index* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 30.

²⁰Carney, 77; *Ecrits*, 42.

²¹Carney, 168-169.

²²Frances Teresa Downing, OSC, "A Globe of Mirrors," *The Way Supplement*, 80 (1994): 9.

²³Bartoli, 70.

²⁴Bartoli, 6.

²⁵*Early Documents*, n. 34, 68-69.

²⁶Downing, 9.

²⁷Eric Doyle, "Franciscan Spirituality, Franciscans," in *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Gordon S. Wakefield (London, SCM Press, 1983), 159.

²⁸Bartoli, 117.

²⁹*Ecrits*, 64.

³⁰*Ecrits*, 29; translation mine.

³¹*Early Documents*, 15.

³²Edith van den Goorbergh, "Clare's Prayer as a Spiritual Journey," *The Way Supplement* 80 (1994): 52.

³³van den Goorbergh, 51.

³⁴Bartoli points out that mirror "is a key word in the spirituality and culture of men[sic.] of the Middle Ages. In his systematic study on the theme of the mirror, H. Graber indicates more than 250 works in whose title the word 'mirror' appears (or its popular equivalent)." See Bartoli, "Historical Analysis and Psychoanalytic Interpretations of a Vision of Clare of Assisi," trans. Madonna Balestrieri, *Greyfriars Review* 6 (1992): 208.

³⁵*Ecrits*, 58.

³⁶Bartoli, "Historical Analysis," 190.

³⁷Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, 142.

³⁸*Early Documents*, 144.

³⁹Bartoli, "Historical Analysis," 209.

⁴⁰van den Goorbergh, 59.

⁴¹Guider, 37.

⁴²Guider, 38.



Christine Therese Schneider, SSJ-TOSF

Clare of Assisi and Conscientious Objection¹

Beth Lynn, OSC

The topic for this paper came from a friars' retreat that I was preaching on Clare. During a conference, one of the older friars raised his hand and announced: "I don't like Clare." I waited and he added: "Why didn't she just obey the Pope?" I responded: "Good question."

In this paper I will present evidence of the relationship between Clare of Assisi and Pope Gregory IX, showing how Clare was a foremother of what is perhaps the highest form of religious obedience, namely conscientious objection.² In accord with the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on Religious Freedom," an individual with appropriate reflection and prayer must follow the dictates of conscience, even if these conflict with the teachings of the Church.

Background

In the thirteenth century, Clare and Francis of Assisi, together with their companions, inaugurated a new form of religious life for men and women in the Church. The Gospel came alive for them as it met the needs and questions of their time. The late tenth to the early thirteenth century was a period of great change in western Europe.³ Such periods of shift allow for the restructuring of society and give the underclass an opportunity to emerge into new roles of responsibility.

Francis came to his role of spiritual leadership from the newly emerging merchant class. He was not a cleric and never received priestly ordination. He did receive the diaconate, apparently for the purpose of preaching according to the norms of Lateran IV.

Clare was a woman of the noble class who audaciously pursued her desire for a new type of community for women. She did not follow any of the former models, but took elements from the monastic tradition as well as the emerging

lay feminine movement often referred to as the Beguines.⁴ These she combined with her own unique vision. Thus Clare created an alternative to the prevailing models for women which were being encouraged by the reforming hierarchy working for a restoration of religious life.

Francis experienced his conversion in 1206 and, with a small group of companions, received verbal approbation for his form of life from Pope Innocent III in 1210. Clare left her family home in 1212, received the habit and tonsure from Francis and the brothers at the Portiuncula, and took up community life at San Damiano, a chapel outside the walls of Assisi belonging to Bishop Guido II, the ordinary of Assisi.⁵

Role of the Bishop of Assisi

Bishop Guido had been appointed to the see of Assisi by Innocent III in 1204. The year before, Assisi had been placed under interdict by the pope for choosing as its first podesta, Girardo di Giliberto, an excommunicant.⁶ Guido was, as we would say today, "tough on crime," the chief crime being disturbing the order of Christendom, politically or ideologically (which were often mixed together). If Guido was a friend of Innocent III, he was frequently censored by Innocent's successor, Honorius III, for his bellicose, litigious behaviors and in particular for "his insatiable appetite for new income and revenues."⁷

Guido was friendly to Francis from the beginning. It was Guido who tried the case of Pietro Bernardone against his son.⁸ When Francis gave all his possessions, including his clothing, back to his father, Guido clothed Francis in his own mantle. Francis confided in Guido and looked to him for advice and support. This was effective for the early Franciscans both in Assisi and in their affairs in Rome. This is attested to in many of the earliest documents.⁹

Specialists suggest that Guido must have been in collaboration with Francis and Clare to effect her escape from her family home. Early testimonies make much of the Palm Sunday liturgy of 1212 at the cathedral of San Rufino when the bishop left the sanctuary to give Clare a palm, a possible signal that "this was to be the night."¹⁰

To escape alone from her family home on the piazza San Rufino and most especially to get through the locked and guarded gates of the city to arrive at the Portiuncula three kilometers down the hill, required help. Guido was likely a co-conspirator in this instance.

After receiving Clare into the order, Francis sent her to the Benedictine Monastery of San Paula della Abbedesse four kilometers west of the city.¹¹ She was received there as a servant. Having already given away her own dowry and half of her sister Beatrice's, there was no way that Clare could have been received as a nun, even if she had wanted it. San Paulo had a standing army and great possessions. When her Uncle Monaldo and his brother knights came

and tried to take her back to the family home, she withstood them by claiming the right of sanctuary. Without Bishop Guido's support, Clare would have been considered a fugitive and her reception by Francis a canonically irregular situation.

It was Guido who, from the extensive holdings of the bishopric of Assisi, provided a refuge for Clare and her sister, Agnes. The church of San Damiano became the home of the first community of the Poor Ladies, and they became known as Damianites.

The Role of Innocent III

Of importance to our topic is the timing of the Fourth Lateran Council called by Innocent III in 1215.¹² The Council brought together more than four hundred bishops and eight hundred abbots and priors for the purpose of "regaining the Holy Land and the reform of the whole Church." Much of the legislation from this Council directly affected the Franciscan movement. Among the decrees promulgated from the Council was one which prohibited the founding of any new religious orders "lest too great diversity lead to grave confusion in the Church of God" (Canon 13). Any new groups would be required to accept one of the existing rules—Benedictine or Augustinian. It was at the Second Council of Lyons (1274) that Canon Thirteen was actually put into effect. All religious groups which had not received approbation by that time were suppressed.

As Clare began her Franciscan project at San Damiano in 1212, she had a short form of life given to her by Francis. Clare tells us this in both her Rule and her Testament. In 1216 she was given the "privilege of poverty" by Innocent III. This allowed the community to live without lands or dowries or any form of stable income. The Damianites would not be on the road with the Friars, but they would live as "strangers and pilgrims"¹³ in their monasteries, dependent on God and the generosity of their neighbors. Their life would be one of prayer wedded to poverty, an ever fruitful marriage in the history of spirituality. At the same time Clare accepted the title of abbess, which to that point she had successfully resisted. This may have been a trade off for the "privilege of poverty" and on-going support by Pope Innocent, who died in 1216 and was succeeded by Honorius III.

The Character of Hugolino, Gregory IX

The community had been living together for five years when Cardinal Hugolino came on the scene in 1217 as envoy to Lombardy and Tuscany, which included the Umbrian Valley. At that point Guido's influence diminished.

Cardinal Hugolino dei Conti di Segni, the future Pope Gregory IX, was born in Anagni in 1170, the nephew of Innocent III. (There was a popular saying in the thirteenth century: "God gave us popes and the devil gave them sisters.") He was educated at Paris and Bologna. Honorius III, successor to Innocent, appointed Hugolino as cardinal bishop of Ostia and Velletri. It was after the Franciscan Chapter of 1217 that Francis met Cardinal Hugolino for the first time in Florence. As Francis was on his way to France, the Cardinal warned him that there was grumbling in the Curia against the brotherhood. He demanded that Francis remain in Italy where he could be accountable for the Order. Thus began an informal relationship with Hugolino as "friend of the Order." When Francis returned from the East in 1219, he was greatly disturbed by the changes enacted by the vicars he himself had appointed to lead the Order in his absence. Francis appealed to Honorius III to have Cardinal Hugolino officially named Cardinal Protector of the Order. This meant that Cardinal Hugolino was also Cardinal Protector of the Poor Ladies of San Damiano.¹⁴

Hugolino became Pope Gregory IX in 1227 and led the Church until 1241. He canonized Francis of Assisi on July 16, 1228, and he commissioned Brother Thomas of Celano to compose the official biography of Francis. He also sponsored the building of the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi.

Salimbene de Adam, a Franciscan chronicler, tells us that when Gregory heard of the murder of the bishop of Mantua, he wept, for "he [Gregory] was a most compassionate man."¹⁵ Other witnesses indicate that he was easily moved to tears. He was also a composer of music. In his legislation for the Sisters of San Damiano, he directs that the Sisters shall sing the Office. Clare writes that they shall "recite it after the manner of the Friars Minor."

In 1227, Gregory issued the first of what was to be a series of excommunications of Emperor Frederick II. The ensuing years saw Gregory and Frederick in continuous conflict. Salimbene tells of a proverb attributed to Jacopo Torrello: "L'asen da per la pare: botta da, botta receve," that is, "the ass kicks through the wall when he is fractious; he gives a kick, and he receives one." According to Salimbene, "The common people thought this a very profound saying, because they took it to be about the Pope and the Emperor . . . who were continually at odds with one another."¹⁶

Gregory inaugurated the process of the Ecclesial Inquisition in 1233. Through this institution, members of heterodox movements were apprehended and interrogated and then handed over to the secular authorities for punishment. "In 1231 Pope Gregory had set death by fire as punishment for Cathars in the papal states."¹⁷ At the same time he commissioned Raymond of Penafort, his personal secretary, to collect and systematize legislation in the form of the Code of Canon Law called the Decretals which remained in effect until 1917.

Pope Gregory was frequently involved with the affairs of the Friars Minor. A precedent was set for this in 1230 with Gregory's interpretation of the Friars' Rule in the bull "Quo Elongati." He presided over the General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor in 1239. At the instigation of Haymo of Faversham and the Franciscans from Paris, Gregory asked the Minister General, Elias di Bonbarone, to resign from office, and when he refused, the Pope deposed him.

Hugolino and the Poor Ladies

In 1217 Pope Honorius wrote to Hugolino in response to a letter of the Cardinal. From the Pope's response we can infer that Hugolino had informed the Pope that he, Hugolino, had met with new communities of women involved in the poverty movement. These women "desire to . . . make homes for themselves in which they may live not possessing anything under heaven except these homes and oratories to be constructed for them."¹⁸ Hugolino asked that as papal legate he might receive these foundations in the name of the Church of Rome to protect them from interfering bishops or patrons. In this letter we see Hugolino with a perspective similar to Jacques de Vitry, who was an avid admirer of Marie d'Oignies in France, the Beguines of the Brabant, and the poverty movement in Italy. However, the following year Hugolino seemed to have changed his position.¹⁹ He imposed upon the Damianites his constitutions based on the Rule of Benedict. Hugolino thus attempted to insure uniform norms for the various groups. In particular he linked the women's religious movement with perpetual enclosure. When he became Pope in 1228 he also urged that the communities receive dowries sufficient for their support.

Mario Sensi, a contemporary Italian historian, interprets Hugolino's imposition of his constitutions as an effort to by-pass the legislation of Lateran IV requiring new communities to follow an existing rule (Augustinian or Benedictine).²⁰ As a matter of fact, however, the sisters were given the Benedictine Rule with Hugolino's constitutions.²¹

In Sensi's view, the most pertinent documents to understand the women's religious movement at this time are: a Letter of Jacques de Vitry, 1216, the Legend of Clare, written two years after her death in 1255, and the Legend of the Three Companions, cir. 1247.²² Missing from his list are the writings of Clare of Assisi, the most important figure in the history of the Damianites and a significant contributor to thirteenth-century religious life. Her corpus includes four letters to Agnes of Prague, 1234-1253, a Testament, 1247, her Form of Life, 1253, and a Blessing.

The thirteenth-century biographer of Hugolino writes: "He [Hugolino] founded new orders of brothers of penance and enclosed women, and he led

them to the heights.”²³ Sensi, following on this interpretation, writes: “This monastic network was commonly referred to as the Order of San Damiano (later the Order of St. Clare.) It should have gone by the name of Hugolino or Gregory IX, who was its organizer.”²⁴

Clare: A Different View

Let us hear, on the other hand, what Clare says about the foundation. Her Rule begins: “The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters that Blessed Francis established is this. . . .” In this Rule she writes of Francis eleven times; in her Testament she names Francis seventeen times; in her letters she cites him twice. Never in any of her extant writings does Clare use the name of Hugolino or Gregory.

We know that Clare did have interactions with Hugolino, both as Cardinal and later Pope.²⁵ Following the letter of August 27, 1218, from Pope Honorius to Hugolino, the Cardinal gave the Damianites a body of constitutions based on the Rule of Benedict. Hugolino begins his constitutions: “Every true Religion and approved institute of life endures by certain rules and requirements, and by certain disciplinary laws.” He proceeds to give the Sisters his rules. The way Hugolino and Clare introduce their respective documents gives some understanding of the contrast between Clare’s approach and that of Hugolino.

Clare, writing her own Rule later, will introduce it thus: “The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters that Blessed Francis established is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of one’s own and in chastity.”²⁶ She never uses the word “rule.” Rather, she describes a spiritually fertile environment in which she, “the little plant of Francis” as she calls herself, and her sisters may flourish.

Among the evidence of the personal relationship between Clare and Hugolino is this passage from the Legend of Clare.

Lord Pope Gregory had marvelous faith in her prayer. . . . When some new difficulties arose (both as bishop and later as pope) he would request assistance of that virgin by means of a letter. . . (CL 27).

Two of these letters survive. The first is tentatively dated 1220 and follows on a visit to San Damiano where Hugolino celebrated Holy Week:

. . . just as an overwhelming sorrow ensued when the Lord was taken away from the disciples and nailed to the gallows of the Cross, so I remain desolate by your absence from me. For that glorious joy, with which I discussed the Body of Christ with you while celebrating Easter with you and the other servants of Christ has forsaken me. . . . I

entrust my soul and commend my spirit to you, just as Jesus on the Cross commended His spirit to the Father, so that on the day of judgment you may answer for me, if you have not been concerned for and intent on my salvation.²⁷

In this letter, Hugolino addresses Clare as “My very dear sister in Christ and mother of my salvation, the servant of Christ, Lady Clare.” The second letter, in 1228, was written shortly after Hugolino’s election to the papacy and before his visit to Assisi to preside at the canonization of Francis. It is addressed to “my beloved daughter, the Abbess, and to the community of Enclosed Nuns of San Damiano in Assisi. . . .”

This second letter has a different tone from the first. It is as if the pope is attempting to assuage Clare’s ire. He writes:

We certainly hope and have confidence that, if you pay careful and diligent attention, those things which now seem bitter will become wholesome and sweet for you, what is hard will become soft and what is rough will become smooth, so that you will exult, if you merit to suffer these things for Christ Who endured for us the passion of an infamous death.²⁸

In relation to these words of Gregory, one might associate a quotation of Clare, uttered on her deathbed: “After I once came to know the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ through his servant Francis, no pain has been bothersome, no penance too severe, no weakness, dearly beloved brother, has been hard” (CL 44). Clare found no difficulty or burden in following her gospel vocation, believing as did Francis that this was revealed to her by God.²⁹ In her experience there was nothing “hard,” “bitter,” or “rough” in the life to which she was called. One imagines, however, the difficulty of holding fast to her vocation in spite of the Pope’s imposition of what he felt the sisters should be about.

In the sworn testimony of three of the sisters who lived with Clare, they recount how Pope Gregory could never make Clare consent to receiving property (Proc 1:13; 2:22; 3:14). In the Legend we read that the Pope attempted to persuade her and personally offered her property, saying: “If you fear for your vow, We absolve you from it.” Clare responds: “Holy Father, I will never in any way wish to be absolved from the following of Christ” (CL 14).

On September 17, 1228, Gregory IX renewed the “Privilege of Poverty” granted originally by Innocent III: “Therefore, we confirm with our apostolic authority, as you requested, your proposal of most high poverty, granting you by the authority of [these] present that no one can compel you to receive possessions.”

The following incident recounted in the Legend probably took place in 1230 in relation to the bull, “Quo Elongati,” which among other precepts

forbade the friars to go to the convents of the nuns to preach.

Once when Lord Pope Gregory forbade any brother to go to the monasteries of the Ladies without permission, the pious mother, sorrowing that sisters would more rarely have the food of sacred teaching, sighed: "Let him [Gregory] now take away from us all the brothers, since he has taken away those who provide us with the food that is vital" (CL, 37).

Clare sent the questers away and went on a hunger strike until Gregory remitted his prohibition.

Clare's struggles continued. She was concerned for the freedom of her sister monasteries. In particular, we note her words of advice to Agnes of Prague who had begun a community similar to San Damiano in her home city of Prague. In 1235 Clare wrote to Agnes:

Follow the counsel of our venerable father, our Brother Elias, the Minister General,³⁰ that you may walk more securely in the way of the commands of the Lord. Prize it beyond the advice of the others and cherish it as dearer to you than any gift. If anyone would tell you something else or suggest something that would hinder your perfection or seem contrary to your divine vocation, even though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel (2LAg 17).

Clare was referring to Pope Gregory, who in 1235 was insisting that Agnes retain the revenue from property to subsidize the monastery.

Between 1234 and 1238, there were sixteen bulls from Gregory IX to the petitioner, Agnes of Prague. On April 18, 1238, Agnes was granted the privilege of renouncing the revenue from the hospital which she had founded and to be free of such possessions. In quick response, Agnes wrote to the Pope asking to adopt for her community the same legislation as San Damiano, which observed a legal collage of the teachings and prescriptions of Francis,³¹ plus the Privilege of Poverty granted by Innocent III and renewed by Gregory. The Pope replied to Agnes on May 11, 1238, refusing her request. He cited as his chief reason the disturbance that this would cause other Poor Ladies who were still living under the Benedictine Rule of 1218.³²

Finally, in 1252, Clare's own Rule was approved, first by Raynaldo, the Cardinal Protector, and then, in 1253, by Innocent IV, just before Clare's death. Raynaldo, nephew of Gregory IX, succeeded Innocent in 1254, becoming Pope Alexander IV. In 1259 he granted the Nuns of Pansa permission to take the Rule of Clare. It is supposed that the same permission was granted to the monastery in Prague.

Conclusion

In his third admonition Francis writes: "But if the prelate should command something contrary to his conscience, although [the subject] does not obey him, still he should not abandon him."³³ Obedience for Francis was an essential element of his charism of poverty leading to union with the Absolute. "He has not renounced all for God's sake who retains the purse of his own will." The third admonition concludes: "Whoever chooses to endure persecution rather than be separated from his brothers truly remains in perfect obedience, for he lays down his life [for his friends]." The refusal to distance oneself from situations of conflicting perspectives is the beginning of the journey toward wholeness. One moves toward the center of Reality where everything is essentially One. Francis intuited and modelled this. Clare lived it in her relationship with Gregory IX. Clare had one view of her religious call; Gregory had another. Clare was faithful to her charism, but never severed the relationship with Gregory. Their differing views continued. Clare's fidelity bore fruit in a religious family that is still growing after eight hundred years.

Endnotes

¹This is an edited version of a paper delivered at the Conference on the History of Religious Women at Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee, June 18-21, 1995. Its original title is "Women and the Hierarchy in the Middle Ages."

²For further clarification on the "self" and the "individual" in the twelfth century, see Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual: 1050-1200* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972) and "Individualism in Twelfth-Century Religion: Some Further Reflection," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31.2 (April, 1980). See also Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

³For a short but excellent treatment of the pivotal shift from Antiquity to the Middle Ages see André Vauchez, *The Spirituality of the Medieval West* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1993).

⁴For a development of this theme see Ingrid J. Peterson, OSF, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993).

⁵Michael Robson, "Assisi, Guido II and Saint Francis," *Laurentianum*, 1-2 (1993), 109-138.

⁶A. Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1981), 174.

⁷Robson, 125.

⁸Fortini, 27.

⁹*Anonymus Peruginus*, ed. Lorenzo DiFonzo, *Miscellanea Franciscana* 72 (1972), 117-483. "Legenda trium Sociorum: Edition critique, ed. T. Desbonnets, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 64 (1974), 38-144. *Scripta Leonis et Angeli sociorum S. Francisci* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). Thomas of Celano, "Vita Secunda S. Francisci," *Analecta Franciscana*, X (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1926-1941), 12. Bonaventura of Bagnoregio, "Legenda major S. Francisci," *Analecta Franciscana* X (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1926-1941), 2:4.

¹⁰Francesco Pennacchi, *Legenda Sanctae Clarae Virginis* (Assisi, 1910).

¹¹Z. Lazzeri, "De processu canonizzazione di S. Chiara d' Assisi," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* XIII (1920).

¹²H. J. Schroeder, OP, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils* (New York: Herder Book Co., 1937), 236-296.

¹³Clare of Assisi, *Claire d'Assise: Ecrits*, ed. and trans. Marie-France Becker, Jean-Francois Godet, Thaddée Matura (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1985).

¹⁴For an excellent treatment of the earliest sources on Francis and Cardinal Hugolino see Edith Pásztor, "St. Francis, Cardinal Hugolino and 'The Franciscan Question,'" *Greyfriars Review* (Sept., 1987), 26-27.

¹⁵Salimbene de Adam, *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam*, trans. Joseph L. Baird, Guiseppe Baglivi and John Robert Kane (Binghamton, NY: University Center, 1986).

¹⁶Salimbene, 158.

¹⁷John T. Noonan, Jr. "The Canonists, Cathars, and St. Augustine," *Contraception, A History of Its Treatment by Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 211-244.

¹⁸*Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. R. J. Armstrong, OFM Cap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993), 87.

¹⁹R. Manselli, "La chiesa e il francescanesimo femminile," *Movimento religioso femminile e francescanesimo nel secolo XIII* (Assisi: Societa Internazionale di Studi Francescani, 1980), 248.

²⁰M. Sensi, "Incarcerate e Recluse in Umbria nei Secoli XIII e XIV: Un Bixocaggio Centro-Italiano," *Il Movimento religioso femminile in Umbria nei secoli XII-XIV* (Regione dell' Umbria: "La Nuova Italia" Editrice, 1984), 324.

²¹This so impressed historians that when the Bollandists began in the sixteenth c. to collect and edit the legends of the saints in their massive work, *Acta Sanctorum*, they refer to Clare of Assisi as a Benedictine.

²²Sensi, 320.

²³L. A. Muatori, "Vitae pontificum romanorum. Vita Gregorii IX papae," *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, III/I, 575-87.

²⁴Sensi, 326.

²⁵For another perspective dealing with these same sources see Patricia Ranft, "An Overturned Victory: Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth Century Church," *Journal of Medieval History*, 17 (1991), 23-134. See also Sigismund Verhij, "Personal Awareness of Vocation and Ecclesiastical Authority as Exemplified in St. Clare of Assisi," *Greyfriars Review* (April, 1989).

²⁶The vow formula was in use during the latter part of the twelfth century. The Roman Curia imposed it upon all new religious orders during the pontificate of Pope Innocent III.

²⁷Armstrong, 101.

²⁸Armstrong, 103.

²⁹Optatus Van Asseldonk, OFM Cap., "Sorores Minores': Una nuova importazione del problema," *Collectanea Franciscana* 62 (1992), 595-634.

³⁰Michael Cusato, OFM, "Elias and Clare: An Enigmatic Relationship," *Clare of Assisi: Investigations*, Clare Centenary Series, 7 (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993), 95-115.

³¹Margaret Carney, OSF, *The First Franciscan Woman* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993), 70.

³²Armstrong, 373.

³³K. Esser, OFM, ed. *Opuscula Santi Patris Francisci Assiensis* (Grottaferrata: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1978).

Always be lovers of your souls and those of your sisters. And may you always be eager to observe what you have promised the Lord.

(Blessing of Clare 14)

The Cord, 48.4 (1998)

Book Review

McKelvie, Roberta Agnes, OSF. *Retrieving a Living Tradition; Angelina of Montegiove: Franciscan, Tertiary, Beguine*. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997.

Roberta McKelvie's *Retrieving a Living Tradition; Angelina of Montegiove: Franciscan, Tertiary, Beguine* is a tightly argued presentation of the life and legacy of Angelina of Montegiove (1347-1435), a woman whose way of gospel life continues to influence Franciscans today. Roberta McKelvie's work is admirable in reconstructing a credible narrative from meager shards of historical evidence. Her approach is made clear at the outset: recognize the distortions and inaccuracies about Angelina in the existing sources, situate her in the context of the Italian beguine movement, and extend the story to include the development of her tradition. The title of the book names the three arenas of Angelina's story: the Franciscan, tertiary, and beguine movements.

McKelvie identifies the means she uses to overcome the interpretive problems found in deficient source texts about Angelina, the overshadowing history of the Friars Minor, the effect of the tension between the Spirituals and Conventuals over poverty, and the relation of the friars to the women in the penitential movement. As a tertiary, Angelina was embroiled in controversies with the friars over questions of governance and visitation. McKelvie sets out to demonstrate in Angelina's story evidence of a balance between the "loving care and solicitude" promised by Francis to women and their actual oppression by men.

The introductory interpretation of the tensions between Angelina's hagiography and history outlines the central issues of McKelvie's book. Chapter One describes characteristics of early Franciscan history, worthwhile reading for its own merits. Chapter Two interprets Angelina's early biographies (conveniently provided in an appendix). Chapter Three shows the influence of the Observant tradition on Angelina between 1395-1435. Chapter Four examines how Angelina's influence extends to Poland during this period. Chapter Five presents new research identifying the Regular Houses of the Observance. Chapter Six situates Angelina and her followers in the history of the Bernardine sisters, and Chapter Seven assesses the historical and theological implications of Angelina's story for her time and for ours.

Although the historical evidence about Angelina is sparse—McKelvie calls her an erased figure—her significance rests in the way her tradition has endured to the present time. For many readers of *The Cord*, McKelvie's conclu-

sions in Chapter Seven may seem to be the most interesting and relevant as we experience a contemporary evolution of the tertiary movement. Without getting into issues of feminist historical theology, the leadership of religious women in a post-Vatican II Church is undeniable. While Angelina's role in her time may not be known to us, her legacy and commitment is described by McKelvie as part of a living tradition of Third Order women. Attention to Angelina's past provides a significant historical model to empower individuals.

Besides learning about Angelina and through her the beginnings of the communities of tertiaries that evolved into present day congregations of women, even a casual reader is enlightened about current approaches to feminist historical scholarship. McKelvie meticulously plots her moves and articulates every step in the method of interpreting and reconstructing women's history. While McKelvie's self-conscious attention to her approach to history and theology will delight some readers, it may actually discourage others. Never is the process of the book more important than its content, however. In this case the process is an essential part of understanding Angelina's history and, McKelvie argues, our own. Why has the women's side of Franciscan history been so overlooked? McKelvie tries to help us understand how history has been constructed and now recently reconstructed. In accomplishing its stated goal as given in the title, *Retrieving a Living Tradition*, McKelvie's book takes a big step for the entire Franciscan family.

In addition to overcoming the difficulties of retrieving history from unreliable or limited sources, other scholarly heroics were demanded from McKelvie to tell Angelina's story: first, to dispel the confusion about her identity as Angelina of Marsciano and to distinguish her from the great Franciscan mystic, Angela of Foligno (1248-1309); then to dispel the frequent attribution that she "founded the enclosed third order life" or the certainty that she was married and widowed. McKelvie had to provide a wealth of background in order to tell Angelina's story: identify Angelina as a bizzoche, an Italian beguine woman; explain the political position of King Ladislaus, the king of Naples; give the origin of the convent of Sant'Anna where Angelina's remains are buried; recount the Franciscan tension over poverty represented by Paul Trinci and the Franciscan Observant movement; review canonical legislation regarding the tertiaries, their rights, and attempts at jurisdiction by friars minor or male third order groups; and trace the Church's perennial conflation of women religious and enclosure. Each of Angelina's ancient biographies serves to elucidate these entangled questions.

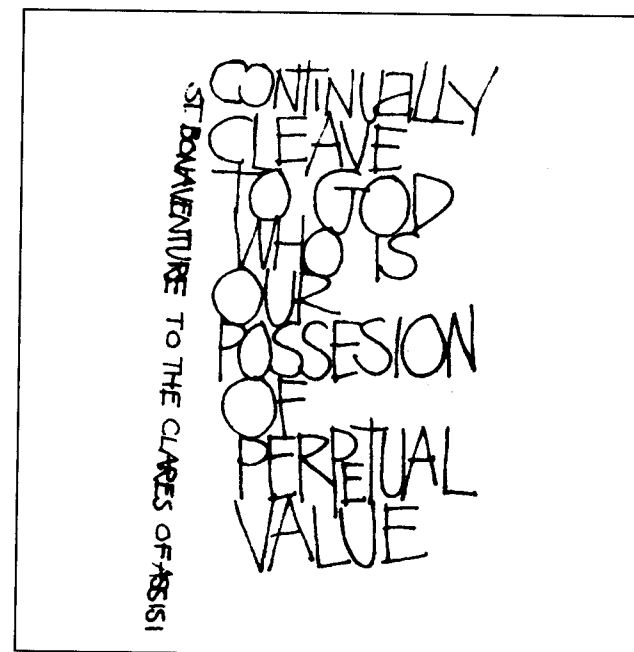
In the concluding chapter, McKelvie recapitulates the difficulties in proposing the old combined active-contemplative life as a model for religious life today. Angelina's life opens a newer symbol based on the choice of virginity and the common life as a fulfillment of her baptismal commitment. While her

refusal to marry was perceived as a rejection of patriarchy, which brought her condemnation as a heretic, it was her opportunity to join with others in living the gospel life.

Angelina courageously faced the restrictions of her society and culture to promote diverse expressions of religious living that were not dependent upon male authority. Angelina's story presents a new Franciscan vision directed toward sisterhood and brotherhood. Finally, Angelina can be viewed in the way that contemporary religious see themselves today—persons charged with the renewal of religious life by returning to the impetus of their founders. McKelvie argues that these components are the roots of Angelina's transformation and our own.

This book will be of special interest to Franciscan tertiaries, especially vowed Third Order members belonging to religious congregations. Yet, not to recommend it for a wider audience is to overlook the inclusive thrust of Angelina's life. She worked to overcome barriers in living the religious life. For this reason those who are in relationship with tertiaries, especially enclosed women and First Order men, will also be inspired by her renewal efforts. Angelina was not inhibited by Church, political, or societal categories. She did what was hers to do.

Ingrid Peterson, OSF



IN MEMORIAM

GEDEON GÁL, OFM
1915-1998

(Father Gedeon Gál, OFM, a member of Holy Name Province, died on May 25, in Ringwood, NJ. A world-renowned medieval researcher, he had worked at The Franciscan Institute for thirty-five years. His biographical profile appears in *The Cord*, Jan./Feb., 1998, pp. 34-35, together with a summary of his most recent work on "The Chronicle of Nicolaus Minorita," cf. pp. 18-25. Here follows a short reflection delivered at his funeral by his co-worker, Rega Wood.)

Father Gedeon was a surprising person, a paradoxical man. On one never-to-be-forgotten day, he told me to read both George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara* and Adolphe Tanqueray's *Manual of Dogmatic Theology*.

He criticized his chosen authors relentlessly, so that you could easily get the impression that he didn't think much of Ockham and company. Often enough he confided that Aquinas was the greater theologian. But he also thought that many of Ockham's criticisms of Aquinas were justified. And just ask his opinion of most modern authors; then you'd hear what real disapproval sounded like—words like 'obscure,' 'shallow,' and 'charlatan' were common.

Gedeon could never be persuaded that editorial work was much more than careful secretarial drudgery. Yet his were the highest standards in the world. In the twenty-three years we worked together, I only once got a transcription back with just the words, "good job," and that was less than a month ago.

Concentrating on works of theology which were out of date, Gedeon saw his as a second-rate occupation, even when the works were by some of the world's greatest minds. Yet for forty years, he attracted first-rate collaborators, from his early days at Quaracchi (Cesare Cenci) and the Franciscan Institute (Stephen Brown) to the last year of his life, when he worked with Allan Wolter, David Flood, and Jennifer Ottman. To all of his collaborators, he was supremely generous—offering his time, his ideas, and often enough works in progress, to be finished and published without mentioning his name. Yet Gedeon seldom understood much about people's lives apart from work. And he never managed patience—which may be why he achieved so much.

Gedeon preferred obedience to conflict. But his favorite strategy was the inspired side-step. That's probably how we should regard his passing. His doctor ordered him to live and told him that his own stubbornness was the problem. Raising no objections, Gedeon simply redoubled his prayers to Sister Death, and she heard him.

A humble person, Gedeon managed to work people pretty hard, often without noticing how much they did for him. How did he get away with it? Because he himself was never pretentious. He never boasted, asserted himself, or tried to exercise power.

He had a horror of accumulating material possessions. From the time he left home as a child of eleven, he always saw himself as a pilgrim and a wayfarer. The generosity he inspired in so many kind people—secretaries, librarians, and administrators, as well as scholars—came because he was so utterly unworldly in most practical matters, never really at home except reading medieval manuscripts.

Francis would have been proud of him; he enriched the lives of all who were kind to him.

28 May 1998, Rega Wood

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PETER OF JOHN OLIVI ON THE BIBLE

Edited by David Flood, OFM, and Gedeon Gál, OFM

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Edited by Gedeon Gál, OFM, and David Flood, OFM

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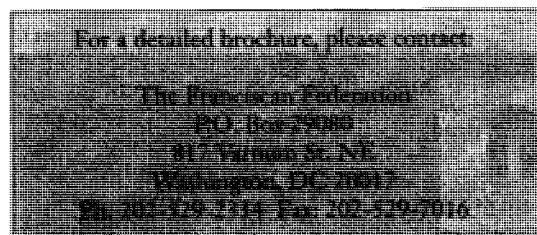
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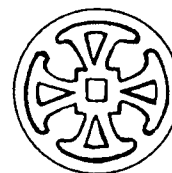


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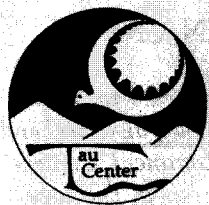
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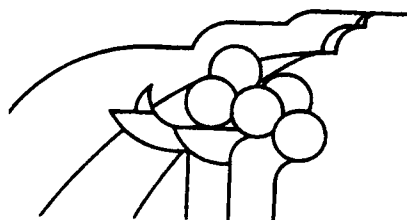
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Sunday, August 9-Saturday, August 22

LIFE Program, with Joseph Rayes, OFM, and Madonna Hoying, SFP. At Mount St. Francis, Colorado Springs. Contact: Madonna Hoying, 2473 Banning Road, Cincinnati, OH 45239, ph. 513-522-7516.

Friday, August 14-Saturday, August 22

The Soul's Journey Into God. A retreat with Andre Cirino, OFM, and Josef Raischl. \$400.00. At Stella Maris Retreat Center, Skaneateles, NY. Contact: Stella Maris Retreat Center, 130 E. Genesee St., Skaneateles, NY 13152.

Monday, August 17-Thursday, August 20

33rd Franciscan Federation Conference. At Hyatt Regency Hotel, Milwaukee, WI. Contact Franciscan Federation, P.O. Box 29080, Washington, DC; ph. 202-529-2334.

Saturday, September 26-Sunday, September 27

Earth Conference, '98. Sylvania, OH. See ad p. 211.

Saturday, September 26

The Rebirth of a Charism. St. Francis Academy, San Antonio, TX. See ad p. 208.

Saturday, October 10

The Rebirth of a Charism. Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee. See ad p. 208.

Friday, October 30-Sunday, November 1

The Book of Revelation: Its Message for the Millenium. A workshop with Jude Winkler, OFM Conv. The Tau Center, Winona. See ad p. 210.

Saturday, November 14

The Rebirth of a Charism. St. Joseph Church, Columbia, SC. See ad p. 208.

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions	ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo	FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
BenBern	Blessing for Brother Bernard	1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun	2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony	LaudDei	Praises of God
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy	LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours.
1EpCust	First Letter to the Custodians	OffPass	Office of the Passion
2EpCust	Second Letter to the Custodians	OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful	RegB	Later Rule
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful	RegNB	Earlier Rule
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo	RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
EpMin	Letter to a Minister	SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order	SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples	Test	Testament
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God	TestS	Testament written in Siena
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies	UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
		VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCI	Rule of Clare
TestCI	Testament of Clare
BCI	Blessing of Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2Cel	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
AP	Anonymous of Perugia
CL	Legend of Clare
CSD	Consideration of the Stigmata
Fior	Fioretti
JdV	Witness of Jacque de Vitry
LM	Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LMin	Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LP	Legend of Perugia
L3S	Legend of the Three Companions
Proc	Acts of the Process of Canonization of St. Clare
SC	Sacrum Commercium
SP	Mirror of Perfection