



Essential Evangelization

St. Clare of Assisi

The story of her life could very well earn a best selling novel or a Hollywood Oscar. This week we celebrate the feast day of the great St. Clare of Assisi. Clare was born in central Italy and was also a contemporary of the famous St. Francis also of the town Assisi. Born of a wealthy family, and tradition has it one of great beauty, Clare was also endowed with the rarest of virtues at an early age. She had a flame in her heart for a more spiritual life and grew in distaste for the world with every passing year. At the age of 18, Clare left home late one night after hearing a very stirring Lenten preaching by St. Francis in the church of San Giorgio in her home town. She went to a Benedictine Convent, cut her long hair, exchanged her jeweled belt for a rough woolen habit and pledged a life of poverty and to the service of Jesus Christ. Her father, who had marriage plans for his daughter stormed the convent to drag her away by force, but Clare remained firm in her resolve to remain faithful to Jesus.

Under Clare's leadership the "Order of the Poor Ladies (or Clare's)" held no property and subsisted only on daily contributions. Clare served the sick, waited on tables for her sisters and, it is said, that when she returned from prayer her face was so shining it dazzled those around her. She also had a strong love for the Eucharist. On one occasion, she placed the Blessed Sacrament on the walls of the convent during an attack on the town by the invading Saracens. Clare told her sisters, to "Trust in Jesus." That night the invading army fled. On another occasion, bedridden with illness and less than eight months from her death, and on Christmas Eve 1252, Clare was very disappointed that she could not experience the Franciscans' singing at Mass in the new St. Francis basilica. Through a miraculous vision she was blessed with an audiovisual experience of the Mass from several miles away. In 1958, Pope Pius XII latched on to the uniqueness of this miracle and granted Clare the rather distinguished honor of the patron saint of television!

Clare remained St. Francis's very faithful friend and confidant over her 41 years as a nun. She died on August 11th, 1253 after many years of infirmity through which she remained brave and cheerful and was canonized only two years later. Her tomb was found in 1850 and her perfect skeleton now lies in the crypt and shrine at Santa Chiara, Italy.

"Amen, Amen I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life."

John 6:47-48

From today's Gospel reading, and likely one of St. Clare's favorite Scripture passages.

*This is one of a series of articles on
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