August 11: St Clare of Assisi

**THE HUMILITY OF ST CLARE**

St Clare was well known for her humility that was often compared with her poverty.

  In those days before cell phones, email or Zoom, St Clare and St Agnes of Prague communicated via handwritten letters personally carried back and forth between Bohemia and Assisi by Franciscan friars as they made their dangerous travels on foot across Europe.

Regretfully, we do not have any of Agnes’s letters to Clare, but we do know that Agnes wrote to Clare for instructions on how to establish her monastery.

In her letters responding to Agnes, Clare reveals what is essential to the Franciscan life, how to become a person of prayer and of joy, and the spiritual benefits of living a simple, humble, and poor lifestyle.

In Clare’s Second Letter, she wrote, “You will be able to observe blessed poverty, holy humility and love beyond the power of words to describe.”

Clare wrote in her Third Letter, “You make up wonderfully what is lacking both in me and the other Sisters in following the footprints of the poor and humble Jesus Christ.” “Therefore, as the glorious Virgin of virgins carried Christ materially in her body, you, too, by following in His footprints , especially those of poverty and humility, can, without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body.”

Especially in her Fourth Letter, Clare wrote, “Indeed, blessed poverty, holy humility, and ineffable charity are reflected in that mirror, as, with the grace of God, you can contemplate them throughout the entire mirror. Look at the parameters of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. O marvellous humility, O astonishing poverty! The King of the angels, the Lord of heaven and earth, is laid in a manger! Then, at the surface of the mirror, dwell on the holy humility, the blessed poverty, the untold labours, and burdens which He endured for the redemption of all mankind.”

In the Acts of the Process of Canonization of St Clare, the nuns who were called as witnesses gave down-to-earth examples of St Clare’s humility.

When Clare commanded her sisters to do something, she did so “with great fear and humility and more often than not she wished to do what she had commanded the others.”

Clare “was humble, kind, and loving to her sisters, and had compassion for the sick. While she was healthy, she served them and washed their feet and gave them water with her own hands. Sometimes she washed the mattresses of the sick.”

Clare “had marvellous humility and looked down upon herself so much that those tasks, which she knew were more degrading, she herself performed.”

Clare “used to hand water to the sisters and, at night, covered them from the cold.” Her humility “was so great that she consistently looked down upon herself and abased herself before the other sisters, making herself less than the other person by serving them, giving them water by hand, washing the mattresses of the sick sisters with her own hand, and even washing the feet of the serving sisters.”

One time, while she was washing the feet of one of the serving sisters of the monastery, she turned to kiss her feet. That sister clumsily withdrew her foot and thus, while pulling it away, she hit Clare in the mouth with her foot. Nevertheless, because of her humility, Clare did not desist, but kissed the sole of the foot of the servant.”

“She even cleaned the toilets of the sick sisters with her own hands.”

With one of the Intercessions in the Office of St Clare, we pray, “You gave St Clare as our mother our model, -- grant that we may serve you in poverty and humility.”