

FRANCISCAN LIVING

ST. CLARE: HER LIGHT AND HER WORDS

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Have you ever read what St. Clare actually wrote? If not, you will be in for a pleasant surprise! Although a lot has been written *about* St. Clare, reading what she actually said can be quite an eye opener! Her words are ripe with rare beauty, full of medieval sensuality reminiscent of the *Song of Songs* in the Hebrew bible. In her words, St. Clare reveals her relationship with the Lord and her Franciscan heart. She is a mystic in love with Love incarnate!

Please don't rush through these words of St. Clare. Read them slowly and let them seep into your heart and become your prayer. Savor them! They are Clare's gift to you!

In her letters to St. Agnes of Prague, St. Clare describes her relationship with her God and Spouse. She writes:

*"Draw me after you,
let us run in the fragrance of your perfumes,
O heavenly Spouse!
I will run and not tire,
until You bring me into the wine cellar,
until Your left hand is under my head
and Your right hand will embrace me happily,
You will kiss me with the happiest kiss of Your mouth."*¹

Clare did not easily arrive at this sacred place, however. She united herself with the Suffering Jesus, insisted on the love of poverty, and persevered in her vocation throughout her life.

*"If you suffer with Him, you will reign with Him;
dying on the cross of tribulation with Him,
you will possess heavenly mansions with Him among the
splendor of the saints
and in the Book of Life your name will be called glorious
among the peoples."*²

Clare embraced poverty, understanding that poverty's riches lie in dependence on God alone. In her words: *"For I firmly believe that you know the kingdom of heaven is promised and given by the Lord only to the poor because she who loves what is temporal loses the fruit of love."*³

Finally, St. Clare exhorts us:

*"What you hold, may you hold,
What you do, may you always do and not stop.
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,
believing nothing,
agreeing with nothing
that would dissuade you from this commitment."*⁴

As you can see, Clare was a strong lady. She fought for her "privilege of poverty," owning nothing, but relying only on what the good Lord would provide. She "agreed with nothing" that would dissuade her from this commitment to follow the poor Christ. She persevered despite many challenges.

We shall conclude with St. Clare's exhortation and blessing:

*"Always be lovers of your souls and
those of all your sisters [and brothers.]
And may you always be eager to observe
what you have promised the Lord.
May the Lord always be with you and
may you always be with Him. Amen."*⁵

All quotations from: Clare of Assisi: The Lady. New York, N.Y.: New City Press, 2006. Used with permission.

¹ 4LAg. 30-32.

² 2LAg 21-22.

³ 1LAg. 25.

⁴ 2LAg.11-14.

⁵ BICI. 14-16.