

## The Blessing of St Clare

The Church celebrates the Feast of St Clare of Assisi next week on 11 August. Clare was born in Assisi into the wealthy and influential Offreduccio family, later renouncing her fortune for a life of simplicity and spiritual purity as a follower of St Francis. St Clare was the founder of the Poor Clares, the second order of the Franciscans.

We remember St Clare especially for her courage and determination to challenge the conventions of her day in responding to those made poor and vulnerable. As Miller and Peterson (1994) note:

*Clare attended to, honoured, and acted upon her inner experience. She refused to be defined by culture or the Church in traditional roles for women. She held fast to her inner truth despite constant misunderstandings and setbacks. Clare believed in what she did ... she was the first woman to incorporate her experience, and that of her sisters, into the formulation of a rule. Clare of Assisi persisted so that her spiritual descendants could live as she had lived, in the spirit of the Gospels (Praying with Clare of Assisi. 1994. 14).*

Despite her cloistered life of radical poverty, St Clare has much to offer our world, so different from hers, yet still in desperate need of the quiet contemplation and ethic of other-centredness central to life within the Poor Ladies of San Damiano (as the Sisters were known).

*Clare's one desire was for God; her one concern was for God. And God remains the modern need, the One Who alone suffices, as Clare so well knew... Clare wanted God alone; therefore she embraced the universe... From Clare we can learn to pray. Prayer is the opening of one's own being to God; but it is God who does the greatest work – even all! Our part, though important, is relatively very small. To open one's soul to God, to watch and listen for His word, is to be as wakeful to the needs of the hour as Clare was, and yet unperturbed as she. (Lothar Hardick OFM)*

St Clare challenges us to focus on Jesus as a anchor for life in our fast-paced and I-centric world. As Sr Marie Beha describes:

*By looking at the Crucified Jesus, as Clare did, our love will go deeper and come closer to the*

*compassion of Jesus who gave for all. We will be better able to avoid our culture's over emphasis on feel-good faith and immediate gratification. At the same time we will be strengthened to find hidden meaning in the seemingly senseless suffering that invade all our lives. We will also be less tempted to discouragement just because the Christ on the cross is also the Christ of Glory (The Cord 50.4. 2000. 173).*

St Clare's life reinforces the link between prayer and everyday life. Although St Clare rarely left the monastery, her prayers saved the people of Assisi on a number of occasions, people brought the sick and dying to her cloister for blessing and her letters remain sources of inspiration and insight to millions over the centuries. Sr Marie Beha suggests, Clare teaches us that our prayers inform and sustain "grace in our lives".

As we celebrate her feast day may we too attend prayerfully to the needs of our communities and our world and may her blessing strengthen all of us on the journey.

*May God bless you.  
May God look upon you  
with mercy and give you peace.*  
(Blessings of St Clare. Mary Connor ofc).



Reflection: How is St Clare of Assisi a source of inspiration for your life and your ministry?

*We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.*