

LITURGY BYTES

St. Clare

St. Clare was born in Assisi on July 16, 1194. She was the oldest daughter of parents of nobility and wealth. As a young girl, she devoted herself to prayer. When she was 18 years old, she heard St. Francis of Assisi preach during a Lenten service. She approached him afterwards and asked him to help her live her life according to the Gospel.



In the year 1212, Clare left her parents' home and went to the chapel of the Porziuncula to meet with Francis. While she was there, her hair was cut off and she was given a plain robe and veil in exchange for her rich and beautiful gown. Under Francis' orders, Clare joined the convent of the Benedictine nuns of San Paulo. When her father found her and tried to force her to come home, she refused. In order to give her greater solitude, Francis sent Clare to another Benedictine monastery farther away from her family. To add to her father's distress, his other daughter, Catarina (Clare's sister), joined her. The two remained there until a separate dwelling was built for them next to the church of San Damiano. Over time other women joined them to be "brides of Christ" and live a simple, austere life in seclusion and poverty. San Damiano became the center of Clare's new order which became known as the Poor Clares. Clare was adamant that her order follow Francis because she was dedicated to him and his way of life. She became known as "another Francis" in some circles. She encouraged and aided the man she saw as a spiritual father figure and took care of him as he grew old. Following Francis' death, Clare continued to promote her order and protect her sisters through various attempted attacks on their convent. Even though her health declined, she never expressed that any pain troubled her. So great was her joy in serving the Lord that she once exclaimed, "They say that we are too poor, but can a heart which possesses the infinite God be truly called poor?"

She died at the age of 59 on August 11, 1253. The canonization process for Clare began immediately, and two years after her death she was declared a saint by Pope Alexander IV and became known as St. Clare of Assisi. St. Clare was designated as the patron saint of television in 1958 by Pope Pius XII, because when she was very ill and unable to attend Mass, she reportedly was able to see and hear it on the wall in her room.

What an amazing woman of the Church, guided by her soul mate and spiritual friend, St. Francis of Assisi, giving us examples of devoted friendship, sharing their love of Jesus, and giving up everything to truly live the Gospel. There have been many books written about both saints which might make for good summer reading!

Have a blessed, safe, and peaceful week! ~~*Michele Hahn*