

Reflection Wednesday Week 19 St Clare 2021

Saint Clare (1193/4 - 1253) was born in Assisi and was greatly influenced by Saint Francis. Leaving home at 18, under Francis's guidance, she founded a community that grew to become the Poor Clares (she was later joined by her sister and her widowed mother). In its radical attachment to poverty the Rule was very severe. In 1215 Clare obtained from the Pope the privilege of owning nothing, so that the nuns of the order were to be sustained by alms and nothing else. Such a rule (like the Franciscan rule) challenged the established structures and was a risk to those who followed it. Successive Popes tried to modify it. In 1247 Pope Innocent IV promulgated a new Rule that allowed the ownership of communal property: Clare rewrote it. A later attempt at mitigation in 1263 partly succeeded after Clare's death: some communities followed the old, strict rule and some followed the new. Clare was a noted contemplative and a caring mother to her nuns. She died in Assisi in 1253.

The words of the psalmist (Ps 15(16)) summarise Clare's life, *"Lord, you will show me the path of life, the fullness of joy in your presence, at your right-hand happiness for ever."* St Clare did not give her life to Jesus for the reward but out of love; a love that consumed her life so much that everything else had little importance except her sisters. Let us reflect on her wisdom:

- *We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become. If we love things, we become a thing. If we love nothing, we become nothing. Imitation is not a literal mimicking of Christ, rather it means becoming the image of the beloved, an image disclosed through transformation. This means we are to become vessels of God's compassionate love for others.*
- *Go forth in peace, for you have followed the good road. Go forth without fear, for he who created you has made you holy, has always protected you, and loves you as a mother. Blessed be you, my God, for having created me.*
- *Loving one another with the charity of Christ, let the love you have in your hearts be shown outwardly in your deeds so that compelled by such an example, the sisters may also grow in the love of God and charity for one another.*