

Pilgrimage Reflection

Saint Clare: A Model of Devotion

While in Assisi, along with visiting all the sites that are important for understanding the life and legend of Saint Francis, pilgrims are also introduced to the profound holiness and courage of Saint Clare, a contemporary of Francis who was inspired by him to embrace the Gospel life. From the moment she secretly left her parents' home that is believed to have overlooked the Piazza of San Rufino—in front of the cathedral where both Francis and Clare were baptized—Clare's life was marked by humility and an unwavering fidelity to Christ. In the little church of San Damiano, which Francis gave to her and her followers, Clare devoted herself to serving the poor and to prayer, venerating the very cross that spoke to Francis at the start of his conversion and which now hangs in the Basilica of Saint Clare. And it is in this grand basilica, completed in 1260, just seven years after her death, that Clare's remains rest, serving as a reminder to all, not only on her feast day of August 11, but for all time, that Christ calls us to a life of poverty, service to others and prayerful devotion.



Scripture

Romans 8:16-17

The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Early Writings

From *The Second Letter of Saint Clare to Saint Agnes of Prague*

If anyone would tell you something else or suggest something which would hinder your perfection or seem contrary to your divine vocation, even though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel. But as a poor virgin, embrace the poor Christ. Look upon Him Who became contemptible for you, and follow Him, making yourself contemptible for Him in the world. Your Spouse, though more beautiful than the children of men, became, for your salvation, the lowest of men, despised, struck, scourged untold times throughout His whole body, and then died amid the sufferings of the Cross. O most noble Queen, gaze upon Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, as you desire to imitate Him.

Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady, trans., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1982), 197.



Prayer

Lord God, as we recall the life of Saint Clare, we ask you to inspire us with her courage to follow your will; to embrace poverty so that we may put others' needs before our own and to be prayerfully contemplative as we consider the transforming nature of our relationship with you. Bless us with the same love and devotion that Clare so faithfully demonstrated in her own life.



Photos, clockwise from left: Basilica of Saint Clare; San Damiano Cross; Piazza San Rufino; San Damiano; upper room in San Damiano where Clare and her sisters lived, where she died, and where pilgrims enjoy prayer and blessing services.