

# CLARE OF ASSISI AND MARY

## THE ADVENTURE OF FAITH - BEING ATTENTIVE



IMAGE : FROM THE GRAND HOURS OF ROHAN - BOOK OF HOURS - PARIS 1430-1435

### CLARE OF ASSISI : THE FOOTPRINT OF MARY

The suggestion that Clare modelled herself on the Virgin Mary is made by the author of The Legend of Saint Clare [written in 1255 two years after Clare's death]. He portrays Clare not only as a follower of Jesus or someone who is Christ-like, but also devoted to and a follower of Mary's humility, self-giving and poverty and as the bearer of Christ. Clare takes the Mother of God as her model and example. The un-named author of The Legend suggested that men should follow the new disciples of the Incarnate Word and women should imitate Clare, who is the footprint of Mary and the new leader of women.

Therefore,  
let the men follow the new male disciples  
of the Incarnate Word  
[and] the women imitate Clare  
the footprint of the Mother of God  
a new leader of women.

[CA:ED p279 The Legend of St Clare]

## THEME:

AS MARY'S WOMB WAS THE ENCLOSURE FOR JESUS, SO ARE WE THE DWELLING PLACE OF GOD.

The more we carry Christ, then the more we give birth to Christ as Mary did. The more Christ-like qualities 'reflect' from us, then the more we become like Him. Our life becomes less and less a mere imitation of Christ, and more and more Christ-like.

"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." Iliia Delio

It's important not to confuse imitation with mimicking Christ. Imitation means being transformed into the image of the Beloved. We become 'other Christs' while remaining completely ourselves.

## WHOM THE HEAVENS COULD NOT CONTAIN IS WITHIN

"May you cling to His most sweet mother who gave birth to a Son Whom the heavens could not contain, and yet she carried Him in the little cloister of her holy womb and held Him on her lap.... So you too by following in her footprints especially those of [holy] humility and [holy] poverty can without any doubt always carry Him spiritually..." (The Third Letter to Agnes of Prague)

"Indeed, it is now clear that the soul of a faithful person, the most worthy of all creatures because of the grace of God, is greater than heaven itself, since the heavens and the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator; only a faithful soul is His dwelling place and throne, and this only through the charity that the wicked lack. The Truth says: Whoever loves me will be loved by My Father, and I too shall love him, and We shall come to him and make Our dwelling place with him. As the glorious virgin of virgins carried [Him] materially, so you, too, by following in her footprints, especially [those] of humility and poverty, can, without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body." (The Third Letter to Agnes of Prague)

"So that, always submissive and subject at the feet of that same holy Church and steadfast in the Catholic faith, we may observe in perpetuity the poverty and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His most holy Mother and the Holy Gospel we have firmly promised. Amen. " (Clare's Rule of Life)

## INDWELLING: RECEIVE, RECEIVED, EMBRACED IN LOVE

Clare's spirituality is about Christ being within her, he is spiritually part of her very being, her soul. As Mary carried the Son of God during her pregnancy Clare understood that in a similar way Christ's dwelling place is within us. However Christ dwelling within us isn't only about something given but our willingness and ability to receive too. As Mary's Fiat, so must we be faithful, loving and freely give our own 'Yes' to God's Will. Indwelling is knowing that we are received into Christ's Crucified arms and into Our Father's Love. We are beloved.

"Through frequent talks she instilled in her sisters that their dwelling place would be acceptable to God only when it was rich in poverty and that it would continue to be secure only if it were always fortified by the strong watchtower of the most exalted poverty. [2 Cor 8:2]. She encouraged them in their little nest of poverty to be conformed to the poor Christ, Whom a poor Mother placed as an infant in a narrow crib" [Lk 2:7] . (Legend of St Clare CA:ED p294)

2 Cor 8:2 Even in the face of severe anguish and hard times, their elation and poverty have overflowed into a wealth of generosity.

Lk 2:7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

## REFECTION #1:

Clare understood that we are all temples of God, we are all dwelling places. Clare's Blessing reads "Always be lovers of your souls and those of all your sisters. 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."

Q1: How do I care for my soul?

Q2: How do I care for the souls of others?

## REFECTION #2:

Spiritual indwelling is felt through the presence of joy which no one can take away. For Clare her joy was deepened by holy poverty and holy humility. Clare possess Christ within her soul like treasure hidden in a field. She explains that sadness, pain and unhappy situations cannot rob us of this treasure within because Christ-like qualities reduces our tendencies of the type of unhealthy "pride that destroys human nature and the vanity that inflates human hearts".

Q3a: Do I sense God's indwelling within me?

Q3b: Where do I feel it?

Q3c: How does it feel emotionally, intellectually, physically and spiritually?

Q4: How would someone notice Christ-like qualities reflecting and shining from me to those I meet?

## REFECTION #3:

We are each a 'Temple of God' and have a responsibility to respect those physical vehicles of God's indwelling. We should celebrate the gift of our body and look after it. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." [1 Cor 6:19-20]

Q5: What habits do I have which honour the goodness of my body?

Q6: How is my body a good servant to other people?

Q7: What are my bad habits that misuse my body?

Ask your Heavenly Father for the graces you need to keep your body a fit temple. Celebrate you body by going for a walk, dancing, eating some fruit, giving someone a cuddle - whatever best fits your ability.

## REFECTION #4:

During this week when you enter a room think about the dwelling of God within you AND in the people you meet. As with Reflection #2, Question Q3c notice how you feel.



Ecce, Fiat, Magnificat  
are your words, O Mother.

Ecce, Fiat, Magnificat.

These precious words are no less powerful  
spoken today, O Mary, full of grace,  
than when they fell from your lips long ago.  
And God, as Artist, left his trace on your heart  
O Mother so gifted in beauty and grace.  
Both within and without you radiate God's image.  
Teach me to make a home for God in my heart  
Consecrate me through these sacred words:

Ecce Fiat Magnificat  
So be it. So be it. Amen!

## GOD'S WORD : 2 CORINTHIANS 4:5-7

For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

## A SALUTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

St Francis of Assisi

Hail, O Lady,  
Holy Queen,  
Mary, holy Mother of God,  
Who are the Virgin made Church  
chosen by the most Holy Father in heaven  
whom he consecrated with His most holy beloved Son  
and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete,  
in whom there was and is  
all fullness of grace and every good.

Hail His Palace!  
Hail His Tabernacle!  
Hail His Dwelling!  
Hail His Robe!  
Hail His Servant!  
Hail His Mother!

And hail all You holy virtues  
which are poured into the hearts of the faithful  
through the grace and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit,  
that from being unbelievers,  
You may make them faithful to God

## LOVE ENFOLDS - A POEM INSPIRED BY ST CLARE

Love enfolds  
It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me.  
I am secure in the Lord.  
I can look out, now, through the Lord's eyes.  
I can see the world as he created it, in his mercy,  
I can see my sisters and brothers with his love,  
and I can worship the Father through the eyes of the Son  
in the Love of the Holy Spirit.  
All: Let love enfold us, O Lord.

## ST BONAVENTURE - TO MARY

Have mercy on me, O Lady: for thou art called the Mother of Mercy. And according to thy mercy: cleanse me from all my iniquities. Pour forth thy grace upon me: and withdraw not from me thine accustomed clemency. For I will confess my sins to thee: and I will accuse myself of all my crimes before thee. Reconcile me to the Fruit of thy womb: and make peace for me with Him who has created me.