

The Second Letter of St. Clare to St. Agnes of Prague

To the daughter of the King of kings, the servant of the Lord of lords (Rev 19:16), the most worthy Spouse of Jesus Christ, and, therefore, the most noble Queen, Lady Agnes: Clare, the useless and unworthy servant (Lk 17:10) of the Poor Ladies: greetings and a wish for your perseverance in the life of the highest poverty.

I give thanks to the Giver of Grace, from whom we believe, every good and perfect gift proceeds (James 1:17), because He has adorned you with such splendors of virtue and signed you with such marks of perfection, that, since you have become such a diligent imitator of the Father of all perfection (Mt 5:48), His eyes do not see any imperfection in you.

This is the perfection which will prompt the King himself to take you to Himself in the heavenly bridal chamber where He is seated in glory on a starry throne because you have despised the splendors of an earthly kingdom and considered of little value the offers of an imperial marriage. Instead, as someone zealous for the holiest poverty, in the spirit of great humility and the most ardent charity, you have held fast to the footprints (1 Pt 2:21) of Him to whom you have merited to be joined as a Spouse.

But since I know that you are adorned with many virtues, I will spare my words and not weary you with needless speech, even though nothing seems superfluous to you if you can draw from it some consolation. Because one thing alone is necessary (Lk 10:42), I bear witness to that one thing and encourage you, for love of him to whom you have offered yourself as a holy and pleasing sacrifice, (Rm 12:1), that, like another Rachel (Gen 29:16), you always remember your resolution and be conscious of how you began.

What you hold, may you always hold.

What you do, may you always do and never abandon.

But with swift pace, light step,
and unswerving feet,

so that even your steps stir up no dust,
go forward securely, joyfully and swiftly,
on the path of prudent happiness,

believing nothing,
agreeing with nothing
which would dissuade you from this resolution
or which would place a stumbling block for you on the way,
so that you may offer your vows to the Most High
in the pursuit of that perfection
to which the Spirit of the Lord has called you.

In all of this, follow the example of our venerable Father, our Brother Elias, the Minister General, so that you may walk more securely in the way of the commands of the Lord (Ps 118:32). Prize it beyond the advice of others and cherish it as dearer to you than any gift. 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 in the world for him. Your Spouse, though more beautiful than the children of men (Ps 44:3), 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.

If you suffer with Him, you shall reign with Him,
if you weep with Him, you shall rejoice with Him;
if you die with Him on the cross of tribulation,
you shall possess heavenly mansions in the splendor of the saints
and, in the Book of Life, your name shall be called glorious among humankind.

Because of this you shall share always and forever the glory of the kingdom of heaven in place of earthly and passing things, and everlasting treasures instead of those that perish, and you shall live forever.

Farewell, most dear Sister, yes, and Lady, because of the Lord, your Spouse. Commend me and my sisters to the Lord in your fervent prayers, for we rejoice in the good things of the Lord that He works in you through His grace.

Commend us truly to your sisters as well.