

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON LIFE AS A CLARE

I first encountered the Poor Clares was when my mom and I visited my cousin at her convent in Northern Ireland. The Sisters were celebrating young women joining the community and receiving the white veil that marked this new beginning. The Sisters were so joyful and really loved just being with each other; the reception was absolutely *full* of laughter. There was a very tangible spirit in how the sisters lived their lives. After that; I *knew* that this was where I wanted to be – there was something special about these sisters inspired by Clare of Assisi.



Clare lived the ideals of a Gospel life. We have details of Clare's daily life in the documents supporting her Canonization. Sworn witnesses speak of her courage, compassion, and her interactions with the sisters. Care for the sick was big for her, even down to the messy parts of patient care. This sense of human dignity is still one of the values I appreciate as a Clare. She had the courage to dispatch an invading army but also the gentleness to wash her sister's feet! She argued with Popes but wept when St. Francis died...it was OK to be human.

Clare also left us her writings: She was the first woman to write a Rule, or 'Form of Life' for women. Clare wrote the Rule at the end of her life and incorporated not only her 50 years of her own lived experience, but also the input from her Sisters. In the Rule, Clare reminds us that our vocation is to live the Gospel. Clare speaks of the value of Silence... but also says the Sisters are free to speak whenever they feel necessary. The Sisters are to embrace 'Enclosure' (staying in the monastery) but were free to go out for a worthwhile cause. In her Rule, Clare ensured space for differences and discernment!

Clare's example is there and sometimes I can touch it. More often I fall short, but I've learned that it's OK to fall short, then begin again. My own aging has sapped energy but not dimmed ideals! As a Francis/Clarian I feel drawn to service with the sick, the poor, the needy and a care for the environment – and pray that others join us in these endeavors. However, from my first joyful introduction to the Poor Clares, it seemed to me that “being” was more important than “doing.” In my Poor Clare sisters, I have seen Clare's initiative, courage, compassion, honesty and integrity... all lived in a very human way. I also discovered the underpinning of that Francis/Clarian joy I witnessed at the first wonderful reception with my mom over sixty years ago: simplicity and humility.

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