

## The Fourth Letter of St. Clare to St. Agnes of Prague

To her who is the half of her soul and the special shrine of her heart's deepest love, to the illustrious Queen and Bride of the Lamb, the eternal King: to the Lady Agnes, her most dear mother, and, of all the others, her favorite daughter: Clare, an unworthy servant of Christ and a useless handmaid (Lk 17:10) of His handmaids in the monastery of San Damiano of Assisi: health and a prayer that she may sing a new song with the other most holy virgins before the throne of God and of the Lamb and follow the Lamb wherever He may go (Rev 14:3-4).

O mother and daughter, spouse of the King of all ages, if I have not written to you as often as your soul and mine as well desire and long for, do not wonder or think that the fire of love for you glows less sweetly in the heart of your mother. No, this is the difficulty: the lack of messengers and the obvious dangers of the roads. Now, however, as I write to your love, I rejoice and exult with you in the joy of the Spirit (1 Thes 1:6), O bride of Christ, because, since you have totally abandoned the vanities of this world, like another most holy virgin, Saint Agnes, you have been marvelously espoused to the spotless Lamb who takes away the sins of the world (1 Pt 1:19; Jn 1:29).

Happy, indeed, is she  
to whom it is given to share this sacred banquet,  
to cling with all her heart to Him  
whose beauty all the heavenly hosts admire unceasingly,  
whose love inflames our love,  
whose contemplation is our refreshment,  
whose graciousness is our joy,  
whose gentleness fills us to overflowing,  
whose remembrance brings a gentle light,  
whose fragrance will revive the dead,  
whose glorious vision will be the happiness  
of all the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem;

Inasmuch as this vision is the splendor of eternal glory (Heb 1:3), the brilliance of eternal light and the mirror without blemish (Wis 7:26), look

upon that mirror each day, O queen and spouse of Jesus Christ, and continually study your face within it, so that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes and cover yourself with the flowers and garments of all the virtues, as becomes the daughter and most chaste bride of the Most High King. Indeed, blessed poverty, holy humility, and ineffable charity are reflected in that mirror, as, with the grace of God, you can contemplate them throughout the entire mirror.

Look at the parameters of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. O marvelous humility, O astonishing poverty! The King of the angels, the Lord of heaven and earth, is laid in a manger! Then, at the surface of the mirror, dwell on the holy humility, the blessed poverty, the untold labors and burdens which He endured for the redemption of all mankind. Then, in the depths of this same mirror, contemplate the ineffable charity which led Him to suffer on the wood of the cross and die thereon the most shameful kind of death. Therefore, that Mirror, suspended on the wood of the cross, urged those who passed by to consider it, saying: "All you who pass by the way, look and see if there is any suffering like My suffering!" (Lam 1:2). Let us answer Him with one voice and spirit, as He said: Remembering this over and over leaves my soul downcast within me (Lam 3:20)! From this moment, then, O queen of our heavenly King, let yourself be inflamed more strongly with the fervour of charity!

As you contemplate further His ineffable delights, eternal riches and honors, and sigh for them in the great desire and love of your heart, may you cry out:

Draw me after You!  
We will run in the fragrance of Your perfumes,  
O heavenly Spouse!  
I will run and not tire,  
until You bring me into the wine-cellar,  
until Your left hand is under my head  
and Your right hand will embrace me happily  
and You will kiss me with the happiest kiss of Your mouth.

In this contemplation, may you remember your poor little mother, knowing that I have inscribed the happy memory of you indelibly on the tablets of my heart, holding you dearer than all the others.

What more can I say? Let the tongue of the flesh be silent when I seek to express my love for you; and let the tongue of the Spirit speak, because the love that I have for you, O blessed daughter, can never be fully expressed by the tongue of the flesh, and even what I have written is an inadequate expression.

I beg you to receive my words with kindness and devotion, seeing in them at least the motherly affection which in the fire of charity I feel daily toward you and your daughters, to whom I warmly commend myself and my daughters in Christ. On my part, these very daughters of mine, especially the most prudent virgin Agnes, our sister, recommend themselves in the Lord to you and your daughters.

Farewell, my dearest daughter, to you and your daughters until we meet at the throne of the glory of the great God (Tit 2:13), and desire this for us. Inasmuch as I can, I recommend to your charity the bearers of this letter, our dearly beloved Brother Amatus, beloved of God and men (Sir 45:1), and Brother Bonagura. Amen.