

Homily for Feast of St. Clare of Assisi

19th Thursday of Year II

August 11, 2016

LCWR Assembly, Atlanta, GA

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Sisters and brothers, you may recall the moment you determined that you would give up mother and father, sisters and brothers, friends, families, acquaintances and other dreams to freely follow Jesus and enter religious life. I presume that you experienced no coercion or violence, but you desired to join something that enticed you.

If you keep vigil for such phenomena, then each year on August 11 a flash startles us so electrically brilliant that our eyes, even in dimness, retain a shadowy but sure image of what we glimpsed so momentarily but instinctively knew to be pure feminine greatness. Clare from Umbria visits us again. Claro, clearly, she swiftly pushes away the shadows, like a person opening the shuttered window to the morning sun or to Mystery risen anew. Before us and around us, she shares what she purchased at an outrageous price without an iota of regret, naming privilege what we have mistakenly termed disfavor.

Few genuine persons live freely and happily as Clare did as exiles (as the Ezekiel cycle of the Old Testament reveals to us in today's reading) who dug through walls that held them from greatness. This fitting but obscure metaphor adheres to Clare's breaking open the door of death in the family home in Assisi in order to escape to the bliss of the gospel-centered life. Because Clare escaped, she reigned free and confident that God in Christ Jesus enticed her and loved her without measure. Add her name to your list of heroines and heroes: a prophetess in exile; a leader with clear mindedness; a lover strong and wise; a minister of forgiveness and mercy; a companion coach to her sisters.

Even in her day, peers and powerful persons hailed Clare as "a new leader among women." You, sisters, are, like it or not, leaders in the Church and in American society. You have become prophetesses in our time of exile; strong and wise lovers of humanity; ministers of forgiveness and mercy for many; and a companion coach to other women and sisters. Can you find a better coach for our ponderings of Divine Mystery this day? Clare's era hardly ambled along in peaceful co-existence or in absence of violence; even the Church rocked and rolled precipitously threatening to sink into an abyss of disunity robbed of its treasure. Yet Clare shown brightly like one guiding light in storms.

Sisters, without full awareness you have captured or been captured by the same mysterious unity in God in Christ Jesus. With your full intention, Clare's brilliance will shine anew like electrum to others sure only of darkness alone. For she is, as both poor and wealthy attest, with God, in God's fullness, and drawing us along to the eternal unity we have sought from our youngest days and our sister and brothers still seek now.