Clare of Assisi

Patron of Television

Born: 1194

Died: 1253

Feast Day:

11 August

DERRY DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE

Clare of Assisi was born in Assisi, as Chiara Offreduccio, the beautiful eldest daughter of Favorino Sciffi, Count of Sasso-Rosso and his wife Ortolana. Tradition says her father was a wealthy representative of an ancient Roman family. Her mother was very devout. Clare was taught to read and write as well as spin yarn and needlework. She had little interest in her luxurious surroundings (she lived in a palace), and influenced by her mother's religious devotion, Clare dedicated her life to God at an early age. She also showed early on that her calling would involve helping the poor, as she set aside food from her family table to give to the needy on the streets.

When Clare was 18, Francis of Assisi came to preach in the church of San Giorgio at Assisi. Inspired by his words, Clare asked Francis to help her in dedicating her life to God, and he vowed to do so. The following year (1211), Clare's parents chose a wealthy young man for Clare to marry, but she pointedly refused, fleeing soon after for the Porziuncola Chapel, where Francis received her.

Clare joined the convent of the Benedictine nuns of San Paulo, near Bastia, under Francis' orders. When her father found her and attempted to force her back into his home, she refused and professed that she would have no other husband than Jesus Christ. In order to give her the greater solitude she desired, Francis sent Clare to Sant' Angelo in Panzo, another Benedictine nuns' monastery. She took vows dedicating her life to God, and that moment, occurring on March 20, 1212, marked the beginning of the Second Order of Saint Francis.

Clare's sister Catarina, who took the name Agnes, joined her in community. Soon separate dwelling was built for them next to the church of San Damiano. It wasn't long before other women joined them, and San Damiano's residents, known for their ascetic lifestyle, became known as the "Poor Ladies." (Known as the Order of San Damiano, 10 years after Clare's death the order would be renamed the Order of Saint Clare.)

The group became known for their austere and devout lifestyle and for the power of their prayer, which is credited with saving Assisi from invaders twice.

After Francis's death, Clare's Franciscan theology of joyous poverty in imitation of Christ is evident in the rule she wrote for her community and in her four letters to Agnes of Prague.

Their Rule was (like the Franciscan rule) both a challenge to established structures and a risk to those who followed it, and successive Popes tried to modify it. Clare continued to promote the growth of her order, writing letters to abbesses in other parts of Europe and thwarting every attempt by each successive pope to impose a rule on her order which weakened the radical commitment to corporate poverty she had originally embraced.

Clare was canonised two years after her death by Pope Alexander IV, and her feast day was immediately inserted in the General Roman Calendar for celebration of the memorial of Saint Clare to be celebrated on 11 August, the day of her death.

Pope Pius XII designated Clare as the patron saint of television in 1958 on the basis that when she was too ill to attend Mass, she had reportedly been able to see and hear it on the wall of her room.

She is also patron of eye disease, goldsmiths, laundry, good weather, needle workers; Santa Clara, California; Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico; Obando, Bulacan, Philippines