

St. Clare of Assisi



1194-1253

Feast Day:
August 11

Clare was the oldest daughter of a wealthy Italian nobleman. When she was 18, she heard St. Francis of Assisi preach. She asked Francis to help her live according to the Gospel. A few weeks later on Palm Sunday, she left her home and met Francis at a chapel. Her hair was cut short and she put on a plain robe; she gave her possessions to the poor. She lived at a Benedictine convent until a home was built for her and her followers next to San Damiano church, near Assisi.

Clare and her followers called themselves the Order of Poor Ladies of San Damiano. They wore plain robes and no shoes. They lived primarily on alms which Francis' friars begged for, and they prayed, especially for Francis and his friars. Many women joined Clare. Francis directed the women for four years, and then Clare was elected abbess. She wrote a Rule of Life that the sisters be committed to joyous poverty.

So many women joined the order that they began communities throughout Italy. Clare also encouraged and advised Francis in his work of preaching the Gospel. When Francis grew very ill, Clare built a hut for him in an olive grove near his monastery, where he rested and prayed until he died.

On August 9th, 1253, Clare's rule was approved by Pope Innocent IV. Two days later, surrounded by many of her followers, Clare died after listening to one of Francis' friars read the Passion of Christ from the Gospel of St. John.

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