

St Clare of Assisi – Feast Day 11 August



St Clare of Assisi was the eldest daughter of the Count of Sasso-Rosso and his wife Ortolana, a wealthy family from Assisi. Whilst pregnant with St Clare, Ortolana heard a voice whilst praying, that foretold the greatness of the child who was about to be born. Her mother educated her spiritually, teaching her to love God, be charitable towards the poor and venerate purity, as well as showing her many other Christian virtues.

At 18-years-old, St Clare heard St. Francis of Assisi preach during a Lenten service in the church of San Giorgio and asked him to help her live according to the Gospel. On Palm Sunday in 1212, Clare secretly left her home and went to the chapel of the Porziuncula to meet with Francis. She cut off her long blonde hair, was given a plain robe and veil in exchange for her rich gown.

St Clare's family were very disappointed with her choice and tried to force her home, she refused. When her sister, Catarina, who took the name Agnes, joined the vocation. Her family tried to stop her also and even beat her. Other women joined St Clare and Agnes and they became known as the "Poor Ladies of San Damiano". The order took a vow of extreme poverty. They wore no shoes, ate no meat and kept silent most of the time. St Clare punished her body with mortifications and penance and was known to have worn a hair shirt made of pig skin, for 29 years!

In 1224, an army of rough soldiers from Frederick II came to attack Assisi. Although very sick, Clare went out to meet them with the Blessed Sacrament on her hands. She placed it on a wall where the enemies could see it, fell to her knees and begged God to save the Sisters. "O Lord, protect these Sisters whom I cannot protect now," A voice seemed to answer: "I will keep them always in My care." In that moment, a sudden fright struck the attackers and they fled as fast as they could without harming anyone in Assisi.

St Clare was ill and suffered great pains for many years but expressed that no pain could trouble her. On August 11, 1253 St Clare died. She was 59-years-old. Two years later, Pope Alexander IV canonised Clare as Saint Clare of Assisi.