

Homily for the Memorial of Saint Clare of Assisi

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St. Agnes Cathedral

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Our first reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel has compelling imagery about how the Word of God is meant to be received, internalized, expressed and lived.

The Lord God has this exchange with the prophet Ezekiel: “Son of man, eat what is before you; eat this scroll, then go, speak to the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth and he gave me the scroll to eat. Son of man, he then said to me, feed your belly and fill your stomach with this scroll I am giving you. I ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. He said: Son of man, go now to the house of Israel, and speak my words to them.”

There are a number of applications of this compelling Old Testament passage.

First, believe in the inspired Word of God. Believe that the Holy Spirit nourishes our souls every time we pick up, read and pray the Word of God.

Realize that there will not always be emotional fireworks every time we confront a text of the Old Testament and New Testament. Break through biblical boredom, lukewarmness and indifference.

Realize that the text always, always nourishes us, strengthens us and expands our souls and our Catholic witness in the world. Stay at it. Don't let up.

Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that the true realists walking on earth are the people who believe, pray and live the Sacred Scriptures. Biblical reality opens the door to the full supernatural landscape of reality.

Second, read, meditate, pray, contemplate and live the inspired Word of God. The Word of God is honey for the soul. St. Jerome resonates with the experience of the prophet Ezekiel when he writes: “The flesh of the Lord is true food and his blood true drink; this is the true good that is reserved for us in this present life, to nourish ourselves with his flesh and drink his blood, not only in the Eucharist but also in reading Sacred Scripture. Indeed, true food and true drink is the word of God which we derive from the Scriptures.” (*Verbum Domini* 54)

Third, like the prophet Ezekiel, allow the Word of God to be honey for your mouth. Like St. Jerome, eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ. Eat and drink the inspired Word of God.

Third, as we celebrate the Memorial of St. Clare of Assisi and the influence of the Franciscan charism on the mission of the Church, we ask the intercession of this feminine contemplative and corporal works of mercy genius whose radical living of the Gospel and the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience have inspired people through every subsequent century to pray and live the Scriptures radically and courageously.

In his 2015 Encyclical on integral Catholic ecology *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis writes: “The poverty and austerity of St. Francis (and St. Clare) were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled. What is more, Saint Francis (and St. Clare), faithful to Scripture, invite us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness.” (11-12)

St. Clare of Assisi and St. Francis of Assisi were able to live the Scriptures so radically precisely because they ate and drank the inspired Word of God, they ate and drank the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The Catholic spirit of integral ecology which they expressed in their day and which inspired us in ours is grounded in their love for Word and Sacrament.

We ask for their intercession today that we may respect the sanctity of human life and God’s beautiful presence in the splendors of creation.

St. Clare of Assisi and St. Francis of Assisi, pray for us!