

## **Homily for the Memorial of Saint Clare of Assisi**

**Bishop John Barres**

**St. Agnes Cathedral**

**Wednesday, August 11, 2021**

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 vows of poverty, chastity and obedience have inspired people through every subsequent century to pray and live the Scriptures radically and courageously.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *The Word of the Lord* (2010), Pope Benedict XVI writes: “The interpretation of Sacred Scripture would remain incomplete were it not to include listening to *those who have truly lived the word of God: namely the saints*...The most profound interpretation of Scripture comes precisely from those who let themselves be shaped by the word of God through listening, reading, and assiduous meditation.” (48)

Pope Benedict specifically mentions St. Clare of Assisi as an example of a saint who let herself “be shaped by the word of God through listening, reading, and assiduous meditation.”

For instance, St. Clare of Assisi’s life, teaching and mission are profound interpretations of today’s readings from the Memorial of St. Clare.

The Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians emphasizes knowing Christ “and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death.”

The Gospel Acclamation is from the Beatitudes Matthew 5: “Blessed are poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!”

Chapter 19 of the Gospel of Matthew reads: “And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life.”

This is the Franciscan spirit, the spirit of St. Clare, the spirit of St. Francis – a spirit of total and radical dedication to Jesus Christ, the Gospel, and the mission of mercy

of the Church, a total conformity to Christ, a total embrace of the Cross and a total dedication to the Beatitudes and the Kingdom of God.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis has a great love for St. Clare and St. Francis.

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 teach us to see God in nature and in the natural law.

The Catholic spirit of integral ecology which they expressed in their day and which continues to inspire us in ours is grounded in their spirit of radical mysticism and mission.

We ask for their intercession today that our reverence for the Word of God and the Body and Blood of Christ may lead us to an even more refined respect for the sanctity of human life and God's beautiful presence in the splendors of creation.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us!

St. Joseph, in the Year of St. Joseph, pray for us!

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