



Congregation of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother
Third Order Regular of Saint Francis of Assisi

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St. Clare

Dear Sisters, Novices and Postulants,

The third reflection on the 140th Anniversary of the Foundation of the SSMs is being sent a few days early to mark the feast of St. Clare of Assisi. In fact, our Congregation celebrates the day dedicated to St. Clare as a feast of the community (Gen. Dir. #1.3).

Ven. Mother Frances Streitel's devotion to St. Clare is clearly visible in her letters and often with reference to poverty. St. Clare fought throughout her life to defend the right to own nothing, and this right, known as the privilege of poverty (*privilegium paupertatis*), was granted to the Poor Clares by Pope Gregory IX in 1228.

Poverty is the first beatitude of the Gospel and a privileged way to live the sequela Christi. Mother Frances speaks of *holy poverty* with very specific expressions, to mention just a few: *most precious ornament, well equipped fortress, mother of religious virtues, heaven's daughter* (Letters to Fr. Jordan #14 (23); #34 (25); #15 (6); #2 (2) and #15 (6), respectively).

Our Constitutions state: "we care for those in need, especially the poor, and in our own poverty seek the Lord above all" (#4). And again, in the chapter on consecrated poverty, we find the following words: "Fidelity to our Franciscan tradition and to the charism of the congregation requires that we live a simple unassuming way of life, hospitably welcoming all, especially the poor. In whatever we have or whatever we do, we are to manifest simplicity, generosity, moderation, and reverence for all creation" (#22).

Poverty touches all dimensions of our existence: the relationship we have with ourselves, with others, with God, with creation, with things, with time, with the social environment.

To bring fuller life to others

Um anderen die Fülle des Lebens zu bringen • Per portare vita piena agli altri • Levar vida plena aos outros



We can all recognize that today the standard of living of consecrated persons is higher than that of so many of our brothers and sisters.

It would be good to celebrate St. Clare today by challenging ourselves with some questions: What is the value of consecrated poverty for me? Does my/our daily lifestyle express the meaning of authentic evangelical poverty? In what concrete ways does the holy poverty sought, loved and lived by St. Clare and Mother Frances inspire our choices at the personal and community level, at the Delegation/Regional/Congregational level?

Best wishes to you all

Sr. Samuela Maria Rigon
General Superior