

# Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare  
Saginaw, MI

## *The saints who shape our lives*

Our calendars are marked with days for remembering and celebrating. For example, we are reminded of national holidays and the beginning and end of seasons. In addition, we mark off birthdays and family events.

Along with all the usual events, Catholics also remember saints from our faith tradition. On Aug 11, we remember St. Clare. This year I spent time thinking about her influence on my life. I gained a new appreciation for the examples set by those who have gone before us.

One of the gifts of being born into a family is that we inherit relatives, people who have experienced life before us. From these people we inherit many shared values, and family stories that shape our lives.

From childhood on we meet aunts, uncles, and cousins. We hear stories about their lives, and together we create new stories. My grandpa has a limp because he hurt his ankle in the war. My Great grandma came from Ireland, so in our family St. Patrick's Day was almost as important as Christmas.

Birthdays, summer picnics, and Thanksgiving bring families together for shared celebrations and storytelling.

Just as we have a family heritage, we also have a faith heritage. As Catholics, we remember our saints as people who lived their lives in exceptional ways. Most often, their lives are presented in a similar pattern; they are often martyrs who endured harsh suffering. Sometime the pain of their lives doesn't inspire us to follow their examples.

However, digging deeper into saints' lives, we often find patterns that do inspire us. For example, St. Clare is someone I have come to cherish as a guide and mentor. She lived in the 12th century in Assisi, Italy. Her life story is often overshadowed by that of her dear friend St. Francis.

However, looking at her letters and the statements of her

sisters who lived with her, it is evident that she possessed a deep faith and conviction in her own beliefs.

St. Clare grew up in an educated family that had ample food, and nice clothes. As a young girl, St. Clare noticed that some in her town did not have enough food. She became known as one who brought food to the poor.

St. Francis had a religious experience while he was a prisoner of war. When he returned home, he decided not to work in his father's business. He gave away all he had and chose to live among the disadvantaged and work in the leper colony outside the city.



*St. Clare of Assisi is depicted in a stained glass window at the Poor Clares' Holy Sacrament Monastery in Canidé, Brazil.*

St. Clare often heard St. Francis preach in the streets of Assisi. She admired his nontraditional way of life. Besides, she did not see herself married and living the traditional life expected of her. Her heart was not interested in that future.

One night, she left the security of her family's home and joined the community of St. Francis.

I can understand St. Clare's desire to want something different for her life. During my first job as a laboratory technician in a hospital, I was restless. I remember looking out the window and

wondering what it was like in other parts of the country and the world.

I took a vacation and bought a ticket to Europe to see how other people lived. Later, my curiosity led me to join the Peace Corps. I was sent to Tunisia in North Africa.

Seeing the simplicity and often the poverty in which many other people lived, I knew that I could not look at my American culture the same way again. After returning to the United States, I saw things with different eyes. The usual markers of success and achievement didn't interest me.

I found myself remembering the early life experiences of my Irish Catholic family. I remembered the influence of the Franciscan sisters who taught us. Their dedication to our

education and their own simple life style inspired me. After various twists and turns, I joined the Poor Clare Monastery in Minneapolis.

There, I learned more about St. Clare's life. I was inspired by her determination to live her life in the way she believed was right for her.

She gathered together a community of women that included her own blood sister and her mother as well as other women from her town. She wanted to live by a rule or guidelines that she wrote for herself and her sisters.

However, the leaders of the church at that time wanted her to live under other established guidelines that were written for men's communities. But St. Clare had her own written Rule, a unique vision of living community life that was inspired by the vision of St. Francis and her own many years of experience. This passion to form a unique community of women had been the beacon of her life.

After many years of letters back and forth between Clare and church leaders, and when she was finally on her death bed, her Rule that she had written for living community life was brought to her with the seal of Pope Innocent IV - indicating that her Rule had been approved by church authorities. St. Clare was the first woman to write a rule for religious communities.

This Aug 11, I will remember Clare's story of determination and conviction. Her legacy inspires me to believe in myself and to hold fast to my beliefs. I find that stories like those of Clare and those from our families and our faith give us all courage to believe in ourselves, and the conviction to pursue our goals.

(We are interested in your thoughts. Let us know at: <http://srsclare.com/about-us/companions-in-prayer-newsletter>)

### *Sr. Laura and Sisters*

(Published (2018, Aug) at GLOBAL SISTERS REPORT:  
A project of National Catholic Reporter. Retrieved from  
<http://globalsistersreport.org/authors/laurahammel>

## Coming Soon Advent web calendar



In the midst of summer relaxation and heat, it may seem odd to be thinking about Advent and Christmas. However, because many people, both young and old, have told us that last year's Advent Calendar was a very special way for them to prepare for Christmas, we are presenting this year's holiday season calendar that will appear on our website on December 2. This year our special focus will be on the Prophets. Prophets teach us what to hope for. Advent is a

time of Hope. Today, we need hope more than ever as we face problems in a world often filled with struggles and violence. Coming in December at: <http://srsclare.com/advent>

## New Video



In this video Sister Laurene talks about her beliefs and life commitment in community. We make these videos in order to give you, our partners in prayer, and an

opportunity to know better who we are and what we believe. Sister Laurene is still very much a part of our community, although now she lives at the Community Village a nearby assisted living facility. The video can be seen at: <http://srsclare.com/practice-of-prayer/media>

## Centering Prayer Dates

We invite you to join us for two times of contemplative or quiet prayer at our house. One prayer time is on the second Sunday of every month from 1-3 pm; the other is on the fourth Monday of the month from 7-7:30 pm. Or join us in spirit by reading our Sunday Journal by Fr. Kelly on our website: <http://srsclare.com/practice-of-prayer/sunday-journal> and spend some time in quiet with the Sunday scriptures.

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