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Her remembrance brings a gentle light

To the Poor Clare Sisters
on the occasion of the closure of the 750th Anniversary
of the death of Clare of Assisi

Dear Sisters,

the date that crowns the celebration of the 750th Anniversary of the death of our Mother and Sister, Clare of Assisi, is close. For that reason we greet all of you with the words of Francis: May the Lord give you peace!

On that day of the 11th August 1253, Clare breathed her last. The Sisters of San Damiano, after closing the eyes of their blessed Mother, felt the need to communicate the event to the Sisters “spread throughout the world” (*Not*). It was the first circular letter. It announced the passage to new life of the Poor Lady, the “Mother of the whole Order” (*Pro* 4, 18).

With their souls moved, their spirit enflamed and tears in their eyes those Sisters of the first hour sent out the news: “The mirror of the Morning Star, in whose radiance we admired the reflection of the true light” (*Not*) has gone to sleep in the Lord. It was the first moment, when the appropriate words that retain the essential traits of the person loved flow from the lips. They could not say anything more beautiful, profound or better on presenting the death of the *Christian Sister* in a Paschal key. Clare, the mirror of the radiance of the Risen One, of Him who said of Himself in a word of revelation: “I am the bright star of the morning” (*Ap* 22, 16b).

They who spoke in this way had seen Clare through sacramental eyes. They who wrote in this way had faith in the Resurrection. They sign their identity card, declare the most powerful and certain reason that they had to be her daughters and disciples: the truest vocational promotion: “I have seen the Lord and He has said these words to me” (cf. *Jn* 20, 18).

The Word of God convokes and illuminates the path. When the holy women sought the Crucified in the tomb, their spirits were disturbed. The voice of the Angel encouraged them: “He is not here, for He has risen, as He said He would” (*Mt*, 28, 6). “He is not here... Remember... And they remembered His words” (*Lk* 24, 6.8). When they opened their eyes they saw Jesus: “Go quickly and tell the disciples: I have risen from the dead... I have told you” (*Mt* 28, 7). All had been said. The women heard, remembered and announced.

Clare is the one who sought, who experienced perturbation in the midst of the emptiness that overshadows the world, who had rejoiced at recognising the traits of the Son of God in “the word and example” of the “true lover and imitator” (*TestCl* 2), Brother Francis. It is she who found the Lord of Life and the garden was filled with flowers and tasty fruits. *God gave me Sisters!*

Clare is the one who listens, remembers and announces the Word of the Risen One. She knows the voice of “the Truth” (*3LtCl* 23). She never removed her soul from the wound of the double edged sword. She gazed on it in her mind, served it with her words, obeyed it in her desires and mirrored it in her actions. “For the Lord Himself not only has set us as an example and mirror for others, but also for our Sisters whom the Lord has called to our way of life, so that they in turn will be a mirror and example for those living in the world” (*TestCl* 6).

The dynamic of the Sisterhood, moved by the obedient sharing of the Word of God, gives the fruit of holy unity, which is the bond of peace, the Christian and Clarean-Franciscan identity. The whole group was “united, heart and soul... everything they owned was held in common”, they came together for the breaking of bread and prayer and continued “to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power” (*Acts* 4, 32ff).

The Lord Jesus is present and active in the Church. Through the transforming power of the Resurrection, “the most beautiful among the sons of men” (*2LtCl* 20; *Ps* 44), all things are renewed unceasingly. Renew, Sisters, your Christian and Clarean-Franciscan identity in the form of Most High Poverty and Holy Unity.

The radiance of the Resurrection that transfigured Clare is the greatest recommendation for taking refuge in her teaching in order to love her and to allow the oil of mutual love that vivifies the Sisterhood flow. “Loving one another with the charity of Christ, let the love you have in your hearts be shown outwardly in your deeds so that, compelled by such an example, the Sisters may always grow in love of God in charity for one another” (*TestCl* 18).

It is the ecclesiology of communion that the Spirit again arouses as a sign in our days. This is the prophetic mission of witness that the present-day Church urges on the Poor Clares. Beyond all differences, daughters of such a great Mother, be those who wash your eyes in the blood of the Immaculate Lamb, in order to discover the divine image and likeness, and to love each person from the heart. And in this way, those that are dumb-

founded, fearful of not finding a trustworthy meaning to life, will rejoice and say: “The Lord has risen and has appeared in the Sisterhood”.

“His remembrance brings a gentle light” (*4LtCl* 12), His remembrance, His presence in the soul and heart of the Sisterhood. You, Most Beloved Sister, who have seen the Immaculate Lamb, you, who have remained at the feet of the Christ of San Damiano as your Mother Clare did, reflect the glory of the Risen One. You who have space and time to pour out your soul in contemplation, have tasted the sweetness of His eyes and the kiss of peace that flows from His lips, you can understand, experience and announce to the world that every person is of value and worthy of being accepted, loved and respected for what he uniquely has: the divine image and likeness hewn into the deepest recesses of his being.

From you, dearest Sister, who breaths the spirit of the Poor Lady, we wish to receive always the witness to poverty and holy unity that give comfort. You announce Peace, so yearned after in our times. Peace, a gift that creates the presence of the Risen Lord: “peace be with you” (*Jn* 20,19.26; cf. 14,27), a gift the Church re-creates when it says to us: “Give each other a sign of peace”, a gift multiplied in the Franciscan greeting.

You, when you announce the radiance of “the Truth” in life, enlighten the learned, the evangelists, the masters, the simple, all who have eyes to see the glory of God.

The light of the Risen One transfigured the life of Sister Clare and, in that light, we are pleased to contemplate her death as we conclude these celebrations.

When St. Francis, his eyes sightless, reached the end of his earthly life, he sang to the Lord in His creatures. Sister Angeluccia said: “When the Most Holy Mother sent the serving Sisters outside the monastery, she exhorted them to praise God when they saw the beautiful blossomed and leafy trees; and likewise, they should always praise God for everything and in everything when they saw men and other creatures” (*Pro* 14,9).

Even more, Clare personalised the praise. How often she recognised the work of God in the Brothers and Sisters, whom she knew by name! Now, on reaching the end, she gave thanks for her own life: “Thank you Lord for having created me”. Thanks to the Creator! There is nothing to lament in the twelve five-year periods of her history, even the most bitter was lost like sand in the sea of sweetness.

Thanks also for the new paschal creation, “and after You created me, You gave me your Holy Spirit” (cf. *Pro* 3,20), life and death in a paschal key. Through the power of the same Spirit she could go up rejoicing to meet the Risen One, “who sits on a throne of stars” (*2LtCl* 5).

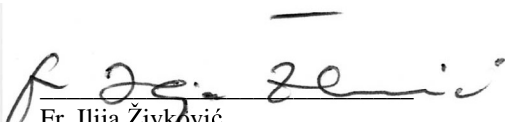
Death in the kiss of the Mother of the Lord. Death in a Marian key, like an assumption of the soul. And the Sisters wrote: “With great dances of rejoicing by the militia of the heavenly army Clare marched to the encounter of the blessed souls” (*Not*).

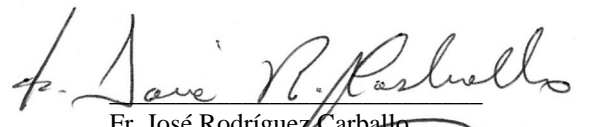
Rejoice Sister, sing intoxicated with jubilation on remembering that happy day on

which the Poor Lady passed from this world. In her are seen, as in a mirror, those brave, audacious and free women who joined in her paschal experience, in her there have been seen so many Sisters *Clare* down through the centuries. See yourself in her, my dearest Sister, in order to continue being the Mirror that we all wish to contemplate at this time, the mirror of the radiance of the Risen Christ and mirror of the most sweet Mother.

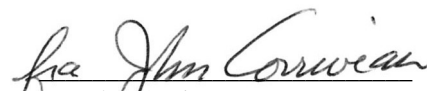
Truly it is just and necessary to give thanks to the Son of the Most High Father, because He has chosen, up to the present day, young women of every race, country and condition to perpetuate a venerable tradition and “to leave a noble example”: sanctity, sisterhood and through it the proclamation of her, who mirrors the glory of the Risen One.

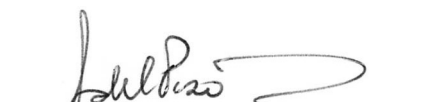
O Holy Mother and Sister Clare! Your life is truly a mirror of the Word believed in, meditated on, contemplated and loved in the faith of the Church. We call down your clarity on the whole Franciscan Family and in particular on the Sisters Clare of the whole world, whom we also cover with blessings. May they continue to be, for us, a mirror and announcement of the transfiguration which the presence of the Risen One works in the Church. Amen.



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NB. This letter was written for the Poor Clare Sisters, it is forwarded for the information of all the Friars and Sisters of the Franciscan Family.