

•+ Saint Clare •+

Clare was born in 1194, the daughter of a wealthy father and devout mother. Clare dedicated her life to prayer as a young girl and declared at age 15 that she would not marry, as her heart belonged to Jesus alone. As a young adult, she heard Francis of Assisi preach. Clare asked Francis to help her live a life according to the gospel. On Palm Sunday in the year 1212, she left her home to meet Francis at the chapel of Portiuncula.

There, she traded her clothes for a plain robe and Francis cut her hair. For Clare, this symbolized a new life of simplicity and devotion to God. Francis directed Clare to join a convent and live with a group of Benedictine sisters. Her father and uncles stormed the convent as they tried to force her to come home! Steadfast in her devotion, Clare ran to the chapel and clung to the altar, refusing to leave. After witnessing Clare's determination, her family allowed her to stay. Shortly after, Clare's sister, Agnes, joined her at the convent. Clare and Agnes stayed there until a building was built for them next to the church of San Damiano. There, they were followed by many other women who desired a life of poverty and devotion to Jesus. In 1215, Francis appointed Clare the women's superior (or abbess).



The women became known as "The Poor Clares." The sisters wore no shoes, slept on the ground, ate no meat, and lived in almost complete silence, except to sing God's praises. Their life of extreme poverty made others uncomfortable, and some tried to impose rules to alter their lifestyle. Clare refused. She lived her life as a mother to the women and would even sacrifice of herself for them, giving them her blanket during especially cold evenings and fasting when they were hungry. In the year 1244, Emperor Frederick II attacked Clare's convent walls. Clare held the Eucharist high and prayed. The soldiers miraculously fled!



Today, the Poor Clares still follow their founder's example of faith, simplicity and joy.

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Activities

Family Discussion: Clare's father disagreed with her decision to join a convent, but ultimately allowed her to stay when he saw how important it was to her. What is something that your family has disagreed on? How did you handle this disagreement? Sometimes we may get frustrated and argue with each other. (We are human, after all!) But it is important that we listen to our family and respect each other's feelings. It's also important that we use past mistakes to learn and grow! Next time you find yourself in a disagreement with someone you love, stop and think about what THEY are saying, more than you worry about what YOU are trying to say. Often, all it takes to come to an agreement is seeing the situation from another person's point of view!



Family Activity: Saint Clare dedicated herself to a life of silence. When you allow yourself to be silent, it is amazing how powerful God's voice can become! As a family, take time to sit in silence today. This can be for as little as a few minutes or as long as the whole day! While you are silent, focus on how you feel. Does the silence bring you peace, or does it make you feel uneasy and anxious? How does the silence affect your daily activities, like completing schoolwork and eating with your family? When you are finished with your time of silence, come together as a family and discuss what you felt and the thoughts you had. Imagine you were Clare, living your whole life this way! What a gift she was able to give to Jesus, to rid her ears of every voice but His!



Individual Activity: When Emperor Frederick II led an attack on Assisi, Clare must've been very scared. However, she did not show fear. Instead, she held the Eucharist and prayed. Life can be scary sometimes, but when we place our fears in the hands of God, his grace can fill our hearts! Use the attached page to represent God's hands. With it, you can literally hand your fears to Him. Write or draw pictures of something (or a few things) that scare you. How does it make you feel to know that God hears your prayers and answers them every day? Whether He answers you by easing your fears or by providing new struggles to learn from, He always knows what is best for us!