

The Celebration of the
SANTA CLARA

Transitus

of our Holy Mother

St. Clare of Assisi

On the evening of the 10th of August



TRANSITUS OF SAINT CLARE OF ASSISI

At the central focus of the ceremony there should be placed

- seven candles (candelabra or votive candles), **lit**
- an icon or picture or statue of Saint Clare behind the candles
- a bowl of charcoal and a bit of incense next to the image
- the Paschal Candle, **unlit**
- a candle or taper for every participant, if feasible (to be passed out beforehand or at the time of use)

If there is a relic of St. Clare, it too can be placed near the image of the saint.

The ministers process in to the prayer space.

Opening Hymn (melody “*Jesu Dulcis Memoria*” or any LM):

Today we come to celebrate
the day on which our mother died,
the Lady Clare who gave her life
in witness to her Spouse the Christ.

The holy soul most worthy of
the laurelled crown of heav’n’s reward
had left this life of earthly strife
and joyfully went home to Christ.

Set free from hardships of the flesh,
she left her tent of misery,
and entered into heav’nly bliss
to share the nuptial feast with Christ.

Dressed in the robe of brilliant light,
bejeweled with gems of radiant hue,
the holy Clare was welcomed to
the kingdom of her Jesus Christ.¹

Leader: In the name...

ALL: Amen.

Leader: Happy, indeed, is the one permitted to share
in the sacred banquet so as to be joined
with all the feelings of her heart to him

**ALL whose beauty and all the blessed hosts of the heavens
unceasingly admire,**

¹ Text based on “The Life of St. Clare Virgin” by Thomas of Celano, #46b.

Leader: whose affection moves,
 whose contemplation invigorates,
 whose generosity fills,
**ALL: whose sweetness replenishes,
 whose remembrance pleasantly brings light,**
 Leader: whose fragrance will revive the dead,
 and whose glorious vision will bless
 all the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem,
**ALL: because the vision of him is the splendor
 of everlasting glory,
 the radiance of everlasting light,
 and a mirror without tarnish.²
 Amen.**

Leader: Let us pray:
 Loving God,
 on this day
 you granted the reward of blessed eternity
 to our holy mother, Saint Clare of Assisi.
 In your mercy
 grant that we, who celebrate with tender devotion
 the memory of her passing from earth to heaven,
 may also have the joy of sharing in her blessed reward.
 We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, for ever and ever.³
ALL: Amen.

Lector: A reading from the Song of Songs:
 My lover spoke and said to me,
 “Arise, my darling, my beautiful one,
 and come with me.
 See! The winter is past;
 the rains are over and gone.
 Flowers appear on the earth;
 the season of singing has come,
 the cooing of doves is heard in our land.
 The fig tree forms its early fruit;
 the blossoming vines spread their fragrance.
 Arise, come, my darling;
 my beautiful one, come with me.”⁴

² From the Fourth Letter of St. Clare, 9-14, the Joan Mueller translation (*hereafter JMt*).

³ Adapted from the Transitus prayer for St. Francis found in “Community Prayer Book” (1963) of Sacred Heart OFM Province, p. 149.

⁴ 2:10-13, NIV translation.

The Word of our God.
ALL: Thanks be to God.

For the following dialogue⁵ four “voices” are needed: Narrator (N), Clare (C), Male Voice (M), Female Voice (F)

N: Clare of Assisi was actually in sickness for twenty-eight years, from the age of thirty-two to sixty. From time to time her sisters at San Damiano were afraid of losing her, but each time she reassured them:

C: “My daughters, God does not wish that I die yet, but that I remain with you in this miserable body.”

N: Her mattress became her throne, from which she spoke, especially to the young, of resignation and penance.

Over the years San Damiano had become an irresistible magnet to many souls. A writer of the times had left on record:

M: “The young girls who run to Clare are more numerous than the bees that rest on flowers in the springtime.”

The first of the seven candles is extinguished, followed by a slight pause.

N: From her sickbed Clare radiated an influence of love that drew to her girls and ladies, not only from Assisi and its district but from the farthest countries. An historical writer of that period could say:

M: “There was hardly a kingdom in the world, or a baron’s estate, where there was not built a convent under the Rule and teaching of St. Clare.”

N: For the love of poverty the blond princess Agnes, daughter of the King of Bohemia, she who had been engaged to Frederick II, cut away her hair and girded herself with the Cord of St. Francis; Clare wrote to her:

C: “Spurning all these things [of earth] with your whole heart and mind, you have chosen instead holiest poverty and physical want, accepting a nobler Spouse, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will keep your virginity always immaculate and inviolate.”⁶

N: Agnes answered:

F: “Blessed are you, holy poverty, for you bring eternal riches to those who embrace you!”

⁵ The following dialogue is adapted from the text *The Little Flowers of St. Clare* by Piero Bargellini and translated by Edmund O’Gorman OFMConv, © 1972 by Messagero Editions, published in 1993 by Servant Publications, Ann Arbor, Michigan. The sections used are #23 “Infirmity and Suffering,” #24 “The Papal Bull,” and #25 “The Retinue of Virgins.”

⁶ First Letter of St. Clare, 6-7, JMt.

ALL PROCLAIM:⁷

Two options are provided. The first (A) is a hymn version, the second (B) a text version.

A. Hymn Version:

(Melody: "All Glory Laud and Honor")

O poverty most blessed,
 you give to those who love
 and seek to hold you tightly
 in intimate embrace
 the riches of the kingdom,
 the riches of true love,
 the riches of eternity,
 the riches of the Christ.

O poverty most holy,
 you give to those who have
 and lovingly desire you
 the promise of our God
 to own the heav'nly kingdom,
 to live eternal life,
 to fill with blissful glory,
 to make all joy abound.

O poverty most pious –
 which Jesus Christ embraced,
 the Lord who rules the heavens
 and reigns upon the earth,
 who spoke and all things happened,
 who came to show God's love –
 may we who now embrace you
 exchange our want for you.

B. Text Version:

O blessed poverty
 that provides eternal riches to those who
 love and embrace it!

O holy poverty,
 to those who possess and desire it, God
 promises the kingdom of heaven and, of
 course, gives eternal glory
 and a happy life!

⁷ Adapted (hymn) or quoted (text) from First Letter of Clare, 15-17, JMt

O pious poverty
 that the Lord Jesus Christ,
 who ruled and is
 ruling heaven and earth,
 and who spoke and
 all things were made,
 deigned to embrace
 before anything else!

The second of the seven candles is extinguished, followed by a short pause.

N: Poverty, however, would not have been much use on its own, if it were not supported in illness, and Clare gave them this example of patiently tolerating infirmity and tribulation. She prayed without ceasing and without stopping she worked, unless on those occasions when it happened that her soul was rapt in contemplation.

To one of her disciples who rendered filial assistance, she said:

C: “When you notice that I am not aware of things around me, you may come but do not call to me unless to you I seem to be in imminent danger of death.”

The third of the seven candles is extinguished, followed by a short pause.

N: Every time Clare met the Pope, she asked for two things: the forgiveness of her sins and the approbation of her vow of poverty.

The abbess of San Damiano particularly wanted a Papal Bull – one that would have to contain the approval of the Rule that she had followed at San Damiano under the guidance of St. Francis: the Rule which imposed a perfect and very strict poverty without any exception or mitigation.

Before she was called from this life, she wanted to have this Papal Bull to leave her sisters as a legacy, so that after her death no one might be tempted to assail the strong wall of poverty with weapons of human compassion.

Now that on her deathbed she felt the approach of Sister Death, now that she was about to relinquish the post of command and of battle, she wanted to leave her sisters another weapon which would be nothing less than a reflection of her own unbending will.

She wished that the Vicar of Christ would accept this will of hers. She requested from the Church an official documentation in which the Rule in all its integrity would be approved. Consequently, she waited for a papal Bull.

So, as she gazed lovingly at the hands of the cardinals and bishops who came to visit her, Clare would ask:

C: “Have you at hand anything new from sweet Jesus?”

N: Then at last came the pontifical document, only one day after it had been signed by the Pope. Clare kissed the seal on both sides and asked them to unroll the document and read it to her. She then closed her eyes, the better to follow the words. The papal bull read:

M: "You have humbly asked us to sanction with our apostolic authority the form of life which St. Francis gave you, and which you have embraced of your own free will, therefore obliging yourselves to a common life in spiritual unity with the vow of most high poverty. Wherefore attending to the desire of your piety, we very willingly fully ratify your Rule and strengthen it with our apostolic authority.

N: Clare reopened her eyes and tears of joy were on her face. She stretched out her hand and looked intently at the leaden seal having the impressions of St. Peter with his keys and St. Paul with his sword. From now on there existed a sure defense of the way of life at San Damiano and its privilege of holy poverty. Clare then read the date:

C: Given at Assisi, the ninth day of the month of August in the eleventh year of our pontificate.

The fourth of the seven candles is extinguished, followed by a short pause.

N: She drew the parchment to herself and closed her hands over it in the form of a cross. The hour of her death was very near.

ALL SING (RECITE) PSALM 119⁸ IN ANTIPHONAL STYE:

1. Happy are they whose way is blameless,
who walk according to your law.
Happy are those who observe your decrees,
who seek you with all their hearts. (1-2)
2. Blessed are you, Yahweh.
Teach me your statutes. (12)
I rejoice in the way of your decrees
with joy above all wealth. (14)
1. Your hands have made me and fashioned me.
Give me discernment that I may learn your commands. (73)
Let your compassion come to me that I may live,
for your law is my delight. (77)
2. Your word is a lamp for my steps,
a light to my path.
I resolve and have taken an oath
to follow your just decrees. (105-106)
1. Your decrees are always just.

⁸ Psalm is taken from *Psalms Anew: Inclusive Language* by Nancy Schreck OSF & Maureen Leach OSF © 1986 by St. Mary's Press, Winona, MN.

Give me discernment that I may live. (144)
 See how I love your law, O God;
 in your steadfast love give me life. (159)

2. My heart is set on keeping your statutes
 to the end. (112)
 Give me life according to your word;
 Accept the willing praise of my mouth, O God. (107b-108a)

**ALL: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
 As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.**

The fifth of the seven candles is extinguished, followed by a short pause.

N: With the papal bull about holy poverty clasped to her breast, Clare was now ready to die. On the bed where she had been lying through a very long illness, she murmured to her own soul which she felt about to leave the body, now a mere skeleton with fasting and suffering:

C: “Go forth joyfully in peace to Him who made you, sanctified you, who had always loved and watched over you; go forth to Him who has guided you.”

N: One of the Poor Ladies standing near hearing these words asked her apprehensively:

F: “What did you say, holy Mother? To whom were you speaking?”

N: Clare responded:

C: I was speaking to my own happy soul.”

N: A little time later she was again heard to say:

C: “Blessed are You, O my Lord, who has created me and with your Precious Blood has redeemed me to give me eternal life, which is, indeed, Yourself.”

N: Smiling she turned to the sister who was in attendance and asked:

C: “Do you see the King of Glory as I see Him?”

N: The Poor Ladies of San Damiano had by now all come together and were kneeling and weeping with sorrow round the bed of their Mother. They recalled the words of holy Clare:

ALL SING (melody of “O Salutaris”):

(Of course, other versions of this hymn may be used instead.)

Go forth in joy with peace to him
 who made you and who sanctifies
 who loves you and who cares for you;
 go forth to him who guides you still.

All praise be yours, O Lord my God,
 who made me from the dust of earth,
 who saved me with your Precious Blood
 and brought me to eternal life!

The sixth of the seven candles is extinguished, followed by a short pause.

N: A new day dawned, and every vestige of sorrow was cast aside. Through the large windows looking over the countryside, the morning light came in with more than usually brilliance, and Clare's eyes responded to its brightness. However, it was certainly not an ordinary, natural light that came in through the door. Clare turned herself in its direction, and all her sisters likewise turned, more enraptured than stupefied.

Afterwards into the little room floated a procession of white-clad virgins, each wearing a golden crown. In their midst came the Virgin of Virgins, more glorious and lovely than all the others. The Queen of Virgins came forward ahead of the rest and went towards Clare's bed. She stooped over the dying nun and sweetly embraced her. And while she held Clare in the loving embrace, the Virgin Queen of Heaven motioned to the others to bring forth the tunic of pure gold set with precious stones, and in this the Blessed Virgin enveloped Clare's soul.

Accompanying this retinue of Virgins, the happy and glorious soul of Clare went off to paradise and everlasting joy.

The Paschal Candle is lit from the remaining candle.

The seventh and last of the seven candles is extinguished, followed by an extended pause.

Incense is placed in the bowl on top of the charcoal.

ALL STAND AND SING:

While the hymn is sung, the light is passed from the Paschal Candle to all of the participants.

(Melody: Beethoven's "Song of Joy")

Clare shines brightly in the heavens,
 brilliant by her shining deeds,
 brilliant in her lasting glory,
 brilliant through her miracles.
 Clare's vowed life, so strict and lofty,
 spread a glowing ray on earth;
 all her virtues dawn upon us,
 showing us eternal light.

Clare, endowed with priceless treasures
 through the poverty she chose,
 now enjoys the love and honor
 of the people moved by her.

Clare, resplendent in her striving,
 Clare, now full of light divine,
 Clare, revealed to Christian people
 by her thoughts and words and deeds.

Clare, who gives us light in living,
 Clare a mirror to this world,
 Clare, as bright as sun and lightning,
 now is radiant after death.
 Clare, the light, reveals the Godhead;
 Clare enlightens all the Church.
 Clare illumines how we journey
 on the homeward path to God.⁹

INTERCESSIONS (FROM THE LETTERS OF SAINT CLARE):

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Giver of grace from Whom, we believe, *every good and perfect gift* proceeds, because he has adorned us with splendors of virtue and signed us with such marks of perfection that, since we have become such diligent imitators of the *Father of all perfection*, His eyes do not see any imperfection in us¹⁰:

L: May we cling with all our heart to Christ;

ALL: may his love inflame our love, his graciousness be our joy, his gentleness fill us to overflowing, and the remembrance of him bring us a gentle light.¹¹

L: May we be strengthened in Christ's holy service and progress from good to better, from virtue to virtue,

ALL: so that He Whom we serve with the total desire of our soul may bestow on us the reward for which we long.¹²

L: May we always remember our resolution and be conscious of how we began;

ALL: what we hold, may we always hold; what we do, may we always do and never abandon.¹³

L: If we suffer with Christ, we *shall reign with Him*; if we weep with Him, we shall rejoice with Him; if we die with Him on the cross of tribulation, we shall possess heavenly mansions *in the splendor of the saints* and, *in the Book of Life*, our name shall be called glorious among all;¹⁴

⁹ Lyrics based on the beginning of "The Bull of Canonization" (1255) of Pope Alexander IV, 2-4.

¹⁰ 2L, 3-4.

¹¹ 4L, 10-12.

¹² 1L, 31-32.

¹³ 2L, 11.

¹⁴ 2L, 21.

ALL: so let us gaze upon Christ, consider Him, contemplate Him, as we desire to imitate Him.¹⁵

L: Let us love Him totally Who gave Himself totally for our love¹⁶ and transform our whole being *into the image* of the Godhead Itself

ALL: so that we too may feel what His friends feel as they taste *the hidden sweetness* which God Himself has reserved from the beginning for those who love Him.¹⁷

L: When we have loved Christ, we shall be chaste; when we have touched Him, we shall become pure; when we have accepted Him, we shall be a virgin¹⁸;

ALL: let us be strengthened in the holy service which we have undertaken out of an ardent desire for the Poor Crucified.¹⁹

L: May we go forward securely, joyfully, and swiftly, on the path of prudent happiness, believing nothing, agreeing with nothing which would dissuade us from this resolution and which *would place a stumbling block for us on the way*;

ALL: so that we may offer *our vows to the Most high* in the pursuit of that perfection to which the Spirit of the Lord has called us.²⁰

L: May we carry out steadfastly the work we have begun and fulfill the ministry we have undertaken in true humility and holy poverty²¹;

ALL: so that we may be considered *a co-worker of God Himself* and a supporter of the weak members of His ineffable Body.²²

L: Let us commend our brothers and sisters to the Lord, for we rejoice in the good things of the Lord that He works in them through His grace;²³

ALL: so that we may make up what is lacking in them in following the footprints of the poor and humble Jesus Christ²⁴ and that by their help we may merit the mercy of Jesus Christ and together with them may merit to enjoy the everlasting vision.²⁵

ALL CHANT THE "OUR FATHER"

¹⁵ 2L, 20.

¹⁶ 3L, 15.

¹⁷ 3L, 13-14.

¹⁸ 1L, 8.

¹⁹ 1L, 13.

²⁰ 2L, 13-14.

²¹ 5L, 14.

²² 3L, 8.

²³ 2L, 25.

²⁴ 3L, 4.

²⁵ 1L, 34.

Leader: Let us pray:
 Blessed are you,
 Lord God of light.
 You are the Light of the world.
 Whoever follows you will never walk in darkness,
 but will have the light of life.²⁶
 In you is life,
 and in that life is the light of all.²⁷
 With you is the fountain of life,
 and in your light we see light.²⁸
 We praise and thank you
 for the brilliant life and shining example
 of our holy mother, Clare of Assisi.
 As we recall her passing
 from earthly life to heavenly glory,
 teach us to live in this world
 as children of light²⁹
 with gentleness, simplicity, and love
 so that our light may shine before all
 in order that others may see Goodness in our acts
 and give praise to our heavenly Father³⁰
 with whom you live and reign
 together with the Holy Spirit, one God,
 for ever and ever.

ALL: Amen.

Leader: Let's bow our heads and receive God's blessing
 from holy mother Clare. **(Pause)**

The relic of St. Clare may be held during the blessing and may be used to bless those participating.

ALL: Amen!
 Leader: What you hold, may you always hold;
 What you do, may you always do, and never abandon.³¹
 May you always be lovers of your souls
 and those of your sisters and brothers;

²⁶ See Jn 8:12.

²⁷ See Jn 1:4.

²⁸ Ps 36:9.

²⁹ Eph 4:8.

³⁰ See Mt 5:16.

³¹ Second Letter of Clare, 11.

may you always be eager to observe
 what you have promised to the Lord;
 May the Lord always be with you
 and may you always be with the Lord.³²

ALL: Amen!

Leader: Through the supporting merits
 of the holy and glorious virgin Mary, his Mother,
 and of our most blessed father Francis and all the saints,
 may the Lord himself, who has given [us] a good beginning,
 give [us] also the increase and the final perseverance.³³

ALL: Amen!

Leader: Go in peace with the light of Christ.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

Candles (tapers) are extinguished and taken home as a remembrance.

The relic of St. Clare may be venerated during the closing hymn.

Any appropriate hymn may be used in conclusion. One suggestion is given here:

(Melody: "The Church's One Foundation")

**Look down upon us kindly,
 Assisi's holy Clare,
 the light of gospel living,
 a brightness we all share.
 The fire of loving Jesus
 burned deep within your heart;
 you left your family's treasures
 and set yourself apart.**

**You journeyed down the valley
 to join the brothers' way;
 you traveled up the mountain
 to find a place to pray.
 The chapel of St. Damian
 became your loving home
 where with your sister pilgrims
 you gazed on God alone.**

**You healed the sick with blessings,
 you wrote a rule of life,
 your mirrored gospel living,
 you fought off earthly strife.
 You showed the way to Jesus**

³² Blessing of Clare, 14-16.

³³ Testament of Clare, 77-78.

through pray'r and poverty;
in union with your sisters
you loved God faithfully.

Your faithfulness we honor,
your life we imitate,
your legacy we cherish;
to you we dedicate
our work of prayer and service,
as Christ would have us do,
to wash the feet of others
and make the world anew.

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