

## St Frances and St Clare of Assisi

Chiara di Navarone di Offreruccio, (1194-1253)

came from a landed aristocratic Assisi family. Christian name is spelt in a number of ways including Clare.



**Fresco - San Damiano Assisi,**  
[Wolfgang Sauber](#) - [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0](#)

In all probability, Clare would have heard of Francis and his conversion. There is an account that in her late teens she heard Francis preach at San Giorgio, Assisi. Francis impressed her. One of the brothers close to Francis, Rufino was cousin to Clare and he played a part in Clare and Francis meeting. This was 13<sup>th</sup> century Assisi, so such a meeting and subsequent meetings had to be arranged with care. Clare had a chaperone, and Francis had Brother Philip accompany him. We have no account of what took place at these clandestine meetings other than that Clare should endorse the life of penance.

We can date Clare making her commitment to Palm Sunday 1212, where she receives her Palm Cross from Bishop Guido, who knew Francis well. Thompson\* suggests that perhaps Bishop Guido was aware of what was going on and Clare receiving the cross personally from the bishop was a signal that he approved. That evening, Clare left her home with her sister Pacifica and went to Francis at **Santa Maria degli Angeli**, Porziuncola and made her vows, had her hair cut and was to wear a habit similar to the brothers. Francis used his contacts with the Benedictine nuns to find somewhere she could stay; within a few months she was to move into the church Francis had rebuilt San Damiano with her sister Agnes.

Their parents had unsuccessfully tried to persuade them to change their minds and the Order of Poor Ladies was formed. On Clare's death, it became the Order of St Clare, known today as the Poor Clares.

\* Augustine Thompson, O.P. Professor of History at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology Francos of Assisi – The Life, p 58-59

Clare was to give over 40 years of prayer and service to the women within the community at San Damiano. She followed a simple life of poverty and encouraged others to follow a similar life.

The Poor Clare's of Arundel on their web page described Clare's vision as something new:

'It was the idea of exchange. Everything she and her sisters made or grew they gave to others, and others in turn gave to the sisters. In this way they really shared the lives and poverty of those around them. This idea came to both Francis and Clare from the way that Jesus Christ shared our human life and lived in poverty too. They felt that the fewer things they had the more room they had for God in their hearts. She had many struggles with the Church about wanting to be totally poor and dependent on God. The Pope and bishops did not want her to be the original and determined figure that she was.'

Sr Clare was canonised in August 1255 by Pope Alexander IV

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The Anglicans also have a Franciscans Order for Women, the Sisters of the Community of St Francis (CSF), who make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, live together in community, pray together, and undertake active work of many kinds. There is also (Community of St Clare - OSC) who make similar vows but live a life in community of prayer and contemplation, and on work within the convent. Their convent in is Oxfordshire.

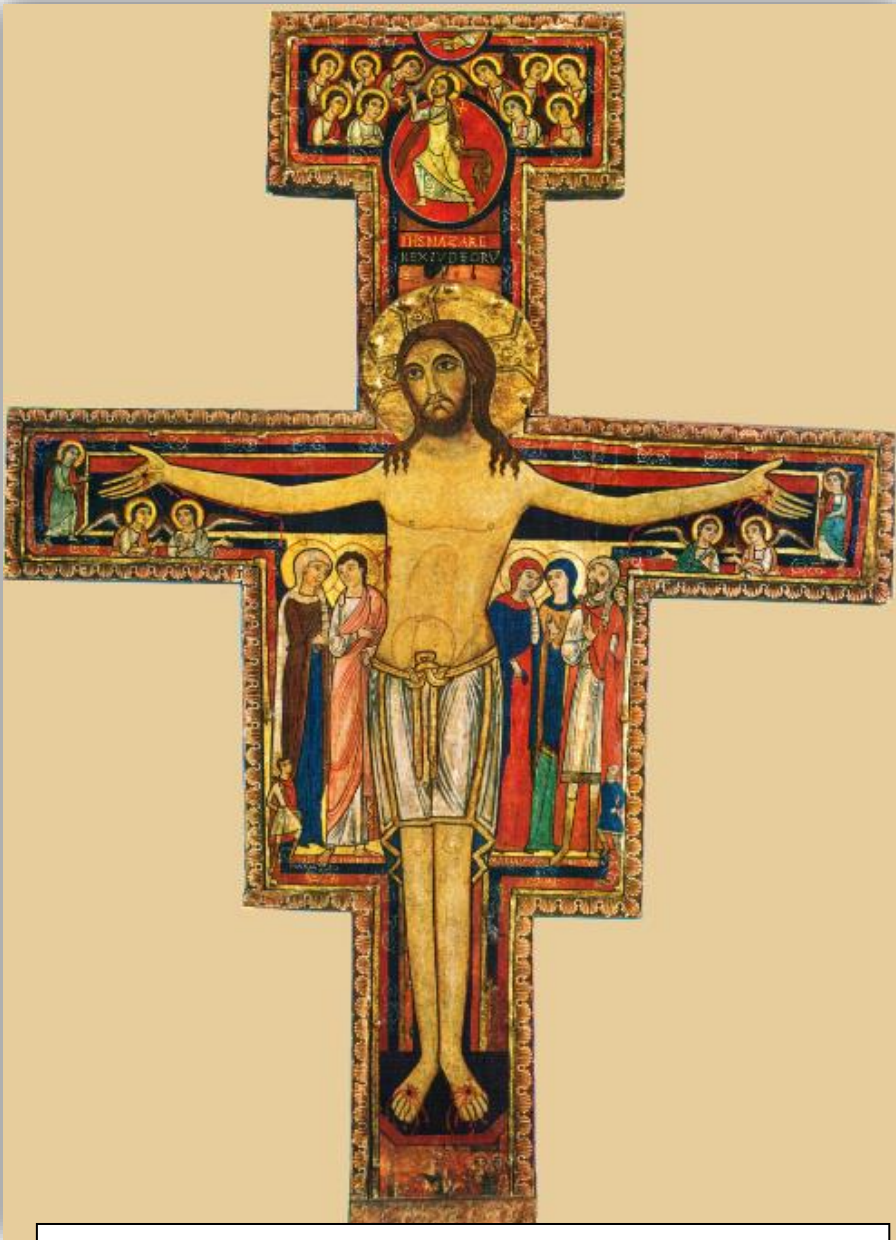
When I was a Team Vicar in north Staffordshire, there was a small Community of St Francis within walking distance of the vicarage. They undertook work in the community and were a prayerful presence and a resource for the church. They had created the simplest of hermitages out of a small brick-built building at the bottom of the garden. It was a retreat, a refuge for a few hours or longer, it was uncluttered and a space to gather your thoughts, to pray and to listen.



St Clare with lantern and the Basilica di Santa Chiara in Assisi Italy.

[Chris Light](#)

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The Cross of San Damiano played a significant part in Francis' spiritual development.

not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.' (Matt.6:7)

### **Our opening prayer**

Most High, glorious God,  
enlighten the darkness of my heart  
and give me true faith,  
certain hope, and perfect charity,  
sense and knowledge,  
Lord, that I may carry out  
Your holy and true command.

Amen

(The Anglican Society of St Francis)

### **A Channel of Peace**

**Find your favourite space for this time of prayerful reflection**

**light a candle and look upon the San Damiano cross.**

**Slow down, breathe calmly, be comfortable and relax.**

**Set aside 10 minutes or more**

**Sense the presence of God in this stillness.**

**Prayer does not always require words**

**Recall Jesus' words about using many words.**

'And when you pray, do





We listen to a trailer to the Album Trailer Light of the World by the Poor Clares of Arundel

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/zs5rGW-RE38?si=itdOoMaQEUpHXzpZ>




## **A reading from Luke**

Mary and Martha Worship and Serve

Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me."

And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (10:38-42 New King James Version)

I invite you to spend time thinking of the women to influenced our lives for the good.

-  Are there some who walked with us on our faith journey?
-  Are there some who have been busy working, always on the go?
-  Are there some who were a quiet presence, unassuming and showed love?

Now in the silence of your hearts give thanks to God for them, for their life and witness.

Let us pray in confidence using the words of Saviour gave us:

This prayer formed the basis of daily prayer for the early brothers, who could not read or write. They would say the 'Paternoster', the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;  
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil. Amen

We listen to: The Poor Clares of Arundel singing All Who Labour

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/tv3l96wwb9E?si=fZ6JWhxWxlQ97XTb&t=3>

## **The closing words attributed to St Francis**

O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

## **Fr Derek Akker**

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(Derek is a retired Anglican Parish Priest and a member of the congregations of All Saints & St James. Prior to his ordination he was accredited as a Methodist Preacher in 1968 and served within the Methodist Church until returning to the Anglican Church in the mid 1980's)

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While I seek to use only reliable sources when using websites, I cannot guarantee that the content on these websites is or will remain accurate or appropriate.

**Image** - San Damiano cross - Unknown author - Public domain