PART III

CLARE: HER WRITINGS IN TRANSLATION
CLARE’S FIRST LETTER TO AGNES

\[\text{1To the venerable and most holy virgin, the Lady Agnes, daughter of the most renowned and illustrious king of Bohemia, Clare, unworthy servant of Jesus Christ and useless handmaid of the enclosed ladies of the Monastery of San Damiano, her subject and handmaid in all circumstances, commends herself in every way and sends, with special respect, the prayer that Agnes attain the glory of everlasting happiness.}\]

\[\text{2Hearing the account, one that brings you the highest honor, of your holy conversion and manner of life, an account that has been reputedly disseminated not only to me but to nearly every region of the world, I rejoice and exalt exceedingly in the Lord. Concerning this news, I am not the only one able to rejoice, but also all those who serve and desire to serve Jesus Christ.}\]

\[\text{3I rejoice because you, more than others, could have enjoyed public ostentation, honors, and worldly status having had the opportunity to become, with eminent glory, legitimately married to the illustrious emperor, as would befit your and his pre-eminence. Spurning all these things with your whole heart and mind, you have chosen instead holiest poverty and physical want, accepting a nobler spouse, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will keep your virginity always immaculate and inviolate.}\]

\[\text{4Having loved him, you are chaste; having touched him, you will be made more pure; having received him, you are a virgin.}\]

\[\text{5His power is stronger, his nobility higher, his appearance lovelier, his love sweeter, and his every grace more elegant.}\]

\[\text{6You are now held fast in the embraces of the one who has adorned your breast with precious stones and has hung priceless pearls from your ears.}\]

\[\text{7He has completely surrounded you with glittering and sparkling gems, and has placed on your head a golden crown engraved with the seal of holiness.}\]