CLARE'S FOURTH LETTER TO AGNES

1To the other half of her soul and repository of the special love of her deepest heart, illustrious queen, spouse of the Lamb of the eternal King, the Lady Agnes, her own dearest mother and, among all the others, her special daughter, 2Clare, unworthy servant of Christ and useless handmaid of his handmaids who live in the Monastery of San Damiano in Assisi, 3sends greetings and her prayer that Agnes, together with the other most holy virgins, will sing a new song before the throne of God and of the Lamb, and will follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

4O mother and daughter, spouse of the King of all ages, even if I have not written to you as frequently as both your soul and mine would have desired and longed for, do not for a moment wonder or in any way believe that the fire of my love for you burns any less sweetly in the deepest heart of your mother. 5The truth is that a shortage of messengers and the obvious perils of travel have hindered me. 6But now, as I write to your love, I rejoice and exult for you in the joy of the Spirit, spouse of Christ, 8because like that other most holy virgin, Saint Agnes, you have been in an astonishing way espoused to the immaculate Lamb, who, having assumed responsibility for all the vanities of this world, takes away the sins of the world.

9Happy, indeed, is the one permitted to share in this sacred banquet so as to be joined with all the feelings of her heart to him.

10whose beauty all the blessed hosts of the heavens unceasingly admire,

11whose affection moves, whose contemplation invigorates, whose generosity fills,

12whose sweetness replenishes, whose remembrance pleasantly brings light,

13whose fragrance will revive the dead, and whose glorious vision will bless all the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem,

14because the vision of him is the splendor of everlasting glory, the radiance of everlasting light, and a mirror without tarnish.
15Look into this mirror every day, O queen, spouse of Jesus Christ, and continually examine your face in it, so that in this way you may adorn yourself completely, inwardly and outwardly, clothed and covered in multicolored apparel, adorned in the same manner with flowers and garments made of all the virtues as is proper, dearest daughter and spouse of the Most High King. Moreover, in this mirror shine blessed poverty, holy humility, and charity beyond words, as you will be able, with God’s grace, to contemplate throughout the entire mirror.

19Look closely, I say, to the beginning of the life of this admired one, indeed at the poverty of him who was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger.

20O marvelous humility!
O astonishing poverty!

21The King of the angels,
the Lord of heaven and earth,
is laid to rest in a manger!

22Consider also the midst of his life, his humility, or at least his blessed poverty, the countless hardships, and the punishments that he endured for the redemption of the human race. Ponder, moreover, the final days of this mirrored one, contemplate the ineffable love with which he was willing to suffer on the tree of the cross and to die there a kind of death that is more shameful than any other.

24That mirror suspended upon the wood of the cross from there kept urging those passing by of what must be considered, saying: O all you who pass by this way, look and see if there is any suffering like my suffering. In response, let us with one voice and in one spirit answer him who is crying out and lamenting: “I will remember this over and over and my soul will sink within me.” Therefore, seeing this, O queen of the heavenly King, you must burn ever more strongly with the fervor of charity!

28Furthermore, as you contemplate his indescribable delights, riches, and everlasting honors, and heaving a sigh because of your heart’s immeasurable desire and love you might exclaim:

30Draw me after you, heavenly Spouse, we shall run in the fragrance of your perfumes!

31I shall run and not grow weary until you bring me into the wine cellar,

32until your left hand is under my head and your right arm blissfully embraces me; and you kiss me with the most blissful kiss of your mouth.