

EXPERIENCE THE SAINTS

ACTIVITIES FOR MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

SAINT CLARE

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THE STORY OF ST. CLARE

Instructions

Read through this background of St. Clare and share whatever details you would like with your child. Then work on one or both activities that follow.

Biography

Clare was born into a noble family near Assisi, Italy, in either 1193 or 1194. Her father, Favarone, was a count and her mother, Rotana, was a virtuous woman. Clare had two sisters named Agnes and Beatrice.

From her youth Clare was devout, living a life of prayer and service. She refused proposals for marriage, preferring to dedicate her life to spiritual pursuits. When she was eighteen, Saint Francis came to preach the Lenten sermons at a church in Assisi. Clare was inspired by Francis' words. Privately she sought him out, asking if she might live as he taught, following Christ completely. On Palm Sunday, 1212, Clare attended High Mass at the cathedral. Although she did not go to the altar as the other noblewomen did to receive the palms, the Bishop went to her and placed a palm in her hand. Later, many saw this as a sign of the church's blessing on what Clare was about to do.

In the middle of the night on Palm Sunday, Clare secretly left her parent's home and made her way to the Poor Friars at the small chapel of the Portiuncula. Francis and the brothers received her, and she put aside her wealthy clothing to put on the rough tunic

and thick veil that would henceforth be her covering. Francis placed Clare in the care of the Benedictines. Her family came to remove her by force, but withdrew because the Benedictine sanctuary prohibited violence. Later, also against the wishes of their family, Agnes joined her sister. Together they formed the Order of Poor Ladies, or Poor Clares, the Second Order of Saint Francis. Eventually her widowed mother and her second sister joined them as well.

In the eyes of God, Clare believed that all persons were equal. She saw herself as the servant of those who worked with her. In the monastery, Clare took on the most menial tasks. Together she and the other sisters worked with their hands and begged alms for their own support. Their lives were devoted to prayer, hard work, and good deeds. At age twenty-one, Clare agreed to accept the role of Abbess, but for nearly forty years, she never used the term. She lived among the sisters as one who served.

After a long illness, Clare died in 1253 and was buried in the San Giorgio church where Saint Francis had first been interred until his body was relocated to a new basilica. Two years later Clare was canonized as a saint and August 11 was designated as her feast day. Clare's remains were later moved to a crypt at Santa Chiara for display.

Feast Day

August 11

Mission

Clare's primary mission was to lead a life based on poverty and devoted to prayer and hard work. Twice her dedication seemed to provide special protection for the city that housed her monastery. First, she and the Poor Ladies prayed that the city would be spared from the ravage of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II; then Clare offered herself as a hostage if the army would leave. They departed without doing any harm. Another time when threatened with capture, Clare had all the sisters anoint themselves with ashes and report in the chapel to pray. The soldiers left the next morning.

Clare and the Poor Ladies embraced charity, humility, and poverty as companions for their spiritual journey. While the Gospels formed the central focus for their life, the example and inspiration of Francis provided a key influence on their work.

Legacy

Although she rarely left the monastery, living a disciplined life of prayer and service, Clare's ministry had a lasting impact. While her devotion and hard work made a difference in the time period in which she lived—for her kindness and good works were legendary—the results of Clare's efforts are most felt today through the Order she fought to establish and protect. After the death of Saint Francis in 1226, her religious rule was threatened; her privilege of poverty was to be removed. The Franciscan brothers were not to serve as preachers to the Poor Ladies any longer. Clare argued that if the brothers were not allowed to serve them spiritually, then they would also no longer accept the food the brothers provided for them physically. Clare's "hunger strike" brought the desired results; her Order was sanctioned, and her Form of Life accepted, finally, while she lay on her deathbed.

Today, the Order of the Poor Clares still exists. They continue to follow the teachings of Saint Francis, radiating the joy and peace that comes from living in Christian poverty like Jesus.

"PALM" PALM BRANCHES

Learn

By constructing palm branches, participants will re-tell the events of Clare's life that occurred on this Holy Day.

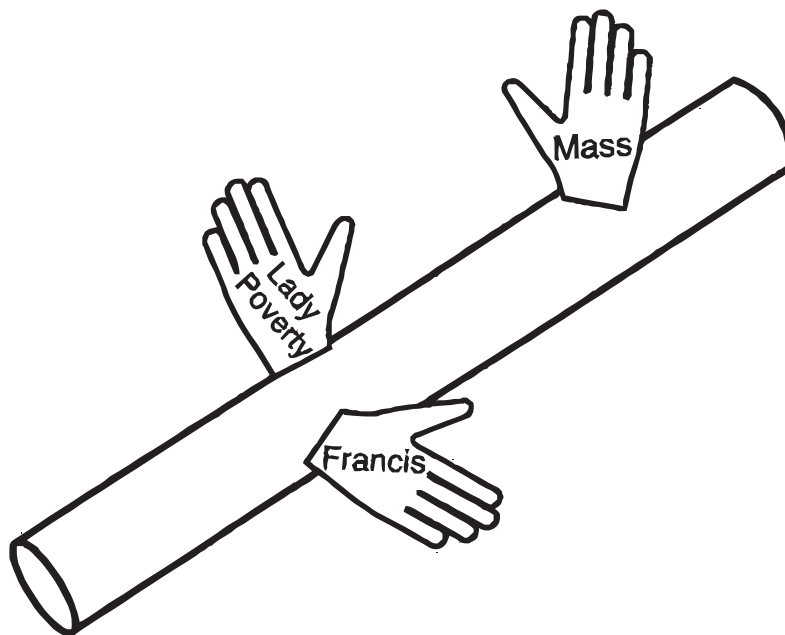
Locate

- ▶ Construction paper, green
- ▶ Glue
- ▶ Paint brushes
- ▶ Paint, green tempera
- ▶ Paper towel tubes or cardboard rolls from hangers
- ▶ Parent instruction sheet
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Tape

Lead

Since Palm Sunday—the beginning of Holy Week—was such a significant day in the life of Clare, make unique "palm" palms and use them to re-tell her story.

Once the branches are completed, allow time to re-tell the story of the events of Saint Clare's life that occurred on this Holy Day.



"PALM" PALM BRANCHES

Construct palm branches and re-tell the events of Clare's life that occurred on this Holy Day.

- ① **Explain to the children** these points:
 - Palm Sunday in the year 1212 was an important day in the life of Clare of Assisi. In the morning she attended High Mass at the cathedral, but when the others went to the altar rail to receive a palm, she remained in her place in the pew.
 - Nevertheless, the bishop went to her and placed a branch in her hands. Recollecting on this act later, many witnesses came to see it as the bishop's approval of Clare's plan to follow God's leading in her life.
 - That same night, Clare secretly left her family home-accompanied by her Aunt Bianca and another companion. Saint Francis and his followers met the women at the small chapel of the Portiuncula. Then Francis helped Clare exchange her fine clothing and her wealthy lifestyle for a rough robe and a future with "Lady Poverty."
 - Francis and the brothers accompanied Clare to the Monastery of San Paolo in Bastia where she found sanctuary with the Benedictines. Although Clare's Uncle Monaldo came with force to reclaim her, he withdrew because the sacred property was reserved as a sanctuary from violence. Later Clare moved to Sant Angelo in Panzo where she was joined by her younger sister Agnes. After the little church of San Damiano was repaired, they lived there.
- ② **Cut hand shapes** from green paper (or use white paper and color/paint them green) for the leaves and attach them to paper towel tubes or paper rolls from hangers for the stem. Paint the tube or paper roll green. Set it aside to dry. Trace and cut several hand shapes from green construction paper for each palm branch.
- ③ **Write words** that explain various parts of Clare's story on each shape. Be sure to include Clare, Francis, Palm Sunday, and 1212. Glue or tape the palms along the stem or paper roll.

"WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS" CUBE

Learn

By using the hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" and participating in a cross-cube activity, students will reflect on the importance of the cross in Clare's life and their own.

Locate

- ▶ Construction paper
- ▶ Copier
- ▶ Equipment to play music
- ▶ Markers
- ▶ Music for "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"
- ▶ Paper
- ▶ Parent instruction sheet
- ▶ Pencils
- ▶ Resource sheet: Cross Cube Pattern
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Tape

Advance Preparation

Enlarge the cube pattern to the desired size and duplicate copies for the participants to share.

Lead

Although the famous hymn writer, Isaac Watts (1674-1748) lived nearly five hundred years after Clare of Assisi (1194-1253), the words of his familiar hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" could have been the saint's personal statement of faith.

One of the ways to contemplate on the meaning of the cross is through music. Find the music online (such as this recording: <https://youtu.be/Tkx8WAycYAc>) and play it, or review the lyrics on the next page.

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" reminds us that when we look at the cross we see it as Christ's gift of love to us. Isaac Watts tells us that such an amazing gift requires us to give something back in response: our souls, our lives, our all.

Follow the instructions to create folded paper cross-cubes and using them to share the story of the hymn, Clare's story, and the personal stories of the participants.

"WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS" CUBE

Use the hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" and participate in a cross-cube activity to reflect on the importance of the cross in Clare's life and your own.

- 1 Explain to the children** these points:

 - Although Isaac Watts (1674-1748) lived nearly five hundred years after Clare of Assisi (1194-1253), the words of his hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" could have been the saint's personal statement of faith:

<i>When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Christ of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.</i>	<i>Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, demands by soul, my life, my all.</i>
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 - Isaac Watts grew up in England in a very religious family. He was very smart and by the time he was five he learned to understand Latin, by age nine he knew Greek, at eleven he added French, and at thirteen he knew Hebrew—all in addition to English. Isaac began to write hymn texts as a young man, and during his lifetime he composed about 750 of them. His most famous is the Christmas carol "Joy to the World."
 - The cross was the central symbol of Clare's faith. When Clare prayed for those who were ill, Clare made the sign of the cross and murmured words for their recovery. To others, she spoke of the Cross as a mirror in which we must gaze to see ourselves reflected in Christ.
 - "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" reminds us that when we look at the cross we see it as Christ's gift of love to us. Isaac Watts tells us that such an amazing gift requires us to give something back in response: our souls, our lives, our all.
- 2 Since the Cross was such an important symbol** in Clare's life, create a folded paper cross-cube and use it to share the story of the hymn, Clare's story, and your personal stories.
- 3 Trace the cross pattern** onto construction paper and cut out the shape. Print "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" in the top square of one side of the shape and the words Who, What, When, Where, and Why in the remaining five squares. Discuss answers to each of the five "W" questions regarding the history of the song, then record them on the squares.
- 4 Print "Saint Clare of Assisi"** and the five "W" questions on the reverse side of the cross. Discuss answers to the questions from Clare's life and write them down. Fold each section toward the center to form a cube and provide tape to secure the flap.
- 5 Draw another cross-cube** and complete the "W" answers from your personal experience. Remember Clare's advice to see our lives reflected in the cross of Christ. Think about how Christ's cross affects who we are, what we do, when we live, where we go, why we make choices, and how we share our faith. Remember the gift of love represented by the cross.

CROSS CUBE PATTERN

