

PRAYER DISCUSSION
SERVICE TO OTHERS
CLARE AS HEALER



LEADER: CALL TO PRAYER: Let us take a moment to quiet ourselves, breathe deeply and relax in the loving embrace of our God. (pause). Who shall we bring into our circle of prayer this day?

(Allow time to share the names of individuals or groups of people especially where healing of body, mind or spirit is needed. This would be a good opportunity to raise up the names of the outreach Associates of your group and any of our Sisters in special need. Just the names. Later in this prayer during the INTERCESSIONS the particular intention can be expressed.)

ALL: OPENING PRAYER:

Holy One, we come together in your presence as Franciscans,
striving to walk in the footprints of Jesus.
Today we pray to be moved to prayer and action
by the example of Lady Clare
who with Francis
lived out the Word you sent us in Jesus.
Be with us through the fire of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

LEADER

Let us look now at some examples from Clare's life to learn more and be inspired by her service and care for others.

READER 1

Clare was known, even as a child, to be a servant of the poor in Assisi. She learned and practiced service to others from her mother, Ortulana. If you have ever been to Assisi you would know that San Damiano is set upon a hillside outside the gates of the city. In Clare's day it was just off a crossroads that led into the city. As Clare's reputation for healing grew, so did the streams of people coming to the door of her convent for counsel and healing. She would listen, counsel and make the sign of the cross over the person. Even though she herself was ill for most of her life, no one was turned away.

READER 2

Besides caring for those who came to the door, Clare managed to balance and respond to the needs of her sisters. From The Legend of Saint Clare we read:
"This venerable Abbess loved not only the souls of her sisters, she also took care of their bodies with wonderful zeal of charity. Frequently, in the cold of night, she covered them with her own hands while they were sleeping. She wished that those whom she perceived unable to observe the common rigor be content to govern themselves with gentleness. If a temptation disturbed someone, if sadness took hold of someone, as is natural, she called her in secret and consoled her with tears. Sometimes, she would place herself at the feet of the depressed sister so that she might relieve the force of her sadness with her motherly caresses."

READER 3

After Clare's death, during the canonization process which followed almost immediately, her Sisters testified that no task was too much for her. Besides personally nursing her Sisters tenderly, she also took her turn doing the most menial of household tasks, which were many in that house full of women with none of the modern conveniences we have today.

PAUSE FOR SOME MOMENTS OF REFLECTION ON THE READINGS. Consider the discussion questions below.

LEADER: PRAYERFUL SHARING AND DISCUSSION

Many of us are either receiving or giving care at this time in our lives. What aspects of Clare's gifts of healing or service resonate with you?

Please share an experience you've had of receiving some healing, compassion or tenderness from a friend or family member. What made it so effective and memorable for you?

Describe an opportunity you've had to be a comfort or help to someone who needed it. What was it like for you? For that person?

ALL: PRAYER

O God, you attend to us with great tenderness and persistence. May your faithfulness be reflected in us as we care for one another.

PAUSE FOR SEVERAL MINUTES OF SILENCE AND REFLECTION

LEADER

Let us look now at how Franciscans today propose to carry out living the Gospel as Clare and Francis did.

READER 4

From the Third Order Rule,²³:

Let us manifest our love in deeds.

(1John 3:17-18, " If someone who has the worldly means and sees a brother or sister in need, and refuses them compassion, how can the love of God remain in that one? Brothers and sisters, I say to you, let us love not in word or speech, but in deed and truth.")

With confidence let us make known our needs to one another so that each can find and offer the other that which is necessary. Blessed are those who love the others when they are sick and unable to serve, as much as when they are healthy and of service to them.

READER 5

And from the Constitutions of our Sisters:

We are sensitive to one another as we bear each other's burdens with compassion. (Article 10)

PAUSE FOR SOME MOMENTS OF REFLECTION ON THE READINGS. Consider the discussion questions below.

LEADER: PRAYERFUL SHARING AND DISCUSSION

What is it like for you to make your needs known to another? Why is this sometimes hard? What do you need to do or be before you can ask for help?

Sometimes we Associates feel that when we are unable to serve as we have been, that we should no longer continue as Associates. How can we overcome this temptation? How are we encouraging our "outreach" Associates that they are still active Associates?

What sometimes holds you back from responding to the needs of others? What gives you strength to respond effectively and appropriately?

Besides the immediate needs that challenge us daily, how can we "bear the burdens" of our brothers and sisters around the world today? Please share some global issues that connect you with those who are in need of healing service around the world. How do you respond?

LEADER: PRAYERS OF PETITION

Let us now raise up in prayer those we brought into our circle when we began. Please add your own needs for healing and peace and those of our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

After each intention we can respond,
LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER FOR HEALING AND COMPASSION.

Use this time also to communicate with each other about any contacts and/or updates that may have been made with the outreach Associates. Remind each other about upcoming Congregation events and discuss engaging in any ministry opportunities, local or Congregational, for some or most of your group. (Or you may be in the habit of doing this before the prayer service begins.)

FINAL PRAYER

Good and gracious God, we thank you for your presence with us in our prayer and discussion this day. As we experience your loving embrace, may we continue to reach out in service and love to all your people near and far. Inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, may we be able to follow in the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

SOURCES

Clare, Sister and Healer, a booklet, a Project of the Franciscan-Clarean Spirituality Commission in August, 2006, prepared by Sr. Margaret E. Guider with suggestions from Srs. Marianne Saig, Mary Lou Marchetti, Mary Ann Jerkofsky and Maria Aparacida Gomez.

MUSIC

Music is recommended especially for the face to face groups. For a Franciscan oriented prayer such as this one, the music of Cathy Tisel Nelson would be very appropriate. She has three albums which are available on Amazon. Her lyrics are based on the words and teachings of Francis and Clare. Unfortunately her music is not on YouTube.

SETTING THE ATMOSPHERE

Use whatever symbols of Clare you may have. Symbols of healing and care for each other might include a pyx for Communion, a glass of water, flowers, a phone, greeting cards, etc. Anything that might remind of how we care for each other and bring healing. You may want to end by giving each other peace in the form of signing each other with the Sign of the Cross on the forehead as Clare did when she was praying for healing.