

## SERMONS ON ST CLARE

### SERMON 1

*O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory* [Wis 4:1 DRB]. In this text the first of the Poor Ladies, Clare, a most bright virgin, is commended with her children and companions for her spiritual beauty. This is no small commendation for, according to Augustine,<sup>1</sup> nothing pleases the Lord other than what is beautiful. Beauty is to be loved all the more, as Augustine says in *The City of God*, ch. 15.<sup>2</sup>

The beauty of Clare is praised from three points of view: firstly, for its singular excellence; secondly, for its actual existence; thirdly, for its being a clear model. That the spiritual beauty of Clare was singularly excellent is clear in the exclamation in the text: *O how beautiful is*. This exclamation is a sign of admiration. That Clare's beauty really and truly existed, not a false or hypocritical beauty, is indicated by the words: *chaste generation*. Real beauty dwells in chastity. That Clare's beauty shone forth and was bright in her is noted in the words: *with glory*. Some people are beautiful but their beauty is hidden while Clare's beauty shone forth in a singular way, it really and truly existed and shone forth clearly for the building up of the Church. Her light shone before people to be seen by them and that they might glorify the *Father in heaven* [Mt 5:16]. Gregory<sup>3</sup> says on the text of Luke 12:35: *Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit*: 'We hold lighted lamps in our hands when by our good works we show examples of light to our neighbours'. For this reason the beauty of Clare is put before us to be admired in its excellence, venerated because of its [real] or genuine existence, and imitated because it is a model.

The text says: *O how beautiful is the chaste generation*. One should reflect on how this beauty is got, preserved, lost, and recovered. But because this would be too long we can see of what it is made or put together. For bodily beauty, especially human, seven things come together to make it up or put it together and these are parallel to spiritual beauty. The seven things needed for bodily beauty are: complete perfection, height in stature, varied in contrasts,

a balance of proportions, a suitable build, a clear complexion, comeliness in build. In a similar way the following are needed for spiritual beauty: cleanness from any stain of sin, lofty desires, a variety of graces, sure judgment, a tranquillity of order, simplicity of intention, and an upright way of life.

I. The first thing needed for bodily beauty is complete perfection, something material and fundamental, so that nothing is lacking for the support and essential perfection of a body. If an eye, ear, nose or any other part of a human body is missing, the body is deformed. Freedom from any stain of sin gives this perfection in a spiritual sense. Every vice or sin forms a defect or deformity in a soul. Of this beauty we read: *You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you* [Song 4:7]. The eternal Bridegroom in the Song of love refers to a holy soul at one time as his bride, at another his friend: *friend*, from tender love, but *bride* from personal union. Therefore, he says to the friend: *you are altogether beautiful, my love: altogether*, in complete perfection so that *beauty* be understood of every part both of the affections and of the mind. Without flaw because of unstained purity, for in her was no vain boasting or lifting up of pride, no avaricious desire, no movement of concupiscence, no blindness of ignorance. She was completely beautiful and with without flaw according to a *Gloss*<sup>4</sup>: ‘without any criminal guilt’. For no man or woman has been so pure as to live without venial sin, according to the opinion of Augustine in many texts.<sup>5</sup> If all the holy people who have lived from the beginning of the world were asked whether they had lived without sin they would reply: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves* [I Jn 1:8]. This does not apply to the Saint of saints nor to the glorious Virgin. The Virgin is the only one ‘of whom when there is question of sin I want no mention to be made of her’, as Augustine says in *De natura et gratia*.<sup>6</sup> Clare was such a person whose brightness was not obscured by any darkness of sin.

II. The second factor in bodily beauty is height in stature. The Philosopher says in *IV Ethicorum*,<sup>7</sup> that ‘Beauty implies a good-

sized body, and little people may be neat and well-proportioned but cannot be beautiful'. So we are accustomed to say on seeing a great and tall person: there is a beautiful person. In a spiritual sense the height of desire makes for this height. The higher someone is, the higher their desire that reaches even to heaven while still standing on earth. It is wonderful that when a rational creature is of such height because of its dignity as an image of God, that it is in touch with the natural order and immerses itself in unchanging truth and goodness; in everything it can see somehow the first and eternal truth with certainty, and in every object it loves it loves in some way the first and greatest good. Other creatures have such withered, debased and lowly desires that they love only what is earthly and of the earth, like beasts whose bodies are bent and always close to the ground. But the bodily frame that is raised upwards urges us to aim for *what is above, not on things that are on the earth* [Col 3:2], as Augustine says in *The City of God*.<sup>8</sup>

The Bridegroom admired this beauty in Clare, his bride: *How fair and pleasant you are, O loved one, delectable maiden! You are stately as a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters* [Song 7:6-7]. *Fair*, he says, *and pleasant*: fair within, pleasant outside; fair in her mind by chastity, pleasant in her flesh by bodily purity. *Delectable maiden*, from savouring eternal consolations and so she scorns all that is temporal and earthly. We say of a person who cannot eat coarse foods that he or she is too delicate. So the bride is a *delectable maiden*, busy with heavenly things, scorning what is earthly. The holy angels said: *Who is that coming up from the wilderness* [Song 8:5],<sup>9</sup> a delectable maiden? In appearance, because of the raising up and height of your mental desires by which you raised yourself to what is heavenly, you are compared to a *palm tree* because you triumphantly endured all torments. Because her heart clung to all that is heavenly and eternal, so she made little of all temporal torments. A palm tree represents victory,<sup>10</sup> a crown given at the end. The lower portion of a palm tree is prickly while above it is sweet and fruitful. So a holy soul while in the world puts up with difficult tasks but hopes to receive a reward in heaven; and just as a palm tree keeps its leaves, so in the dangers of this world a holy soul

remains faithful in confessing the truth. In Scripture, leaves represent words.<sup>11</sup> *Your breasts are like its clusters* by spreading helpful instructions. A soul completely filled with heavenly delights and raised up by supernatural desires can draw others upwards and instruct them on heavenly matters. The two breasts are the mind and the affections; the mind is filled with knowledge, the affections with love; and from this beauty it brings others to truth and fills them with love and so the soul is compared to the breasts from which flow *wine springing forth virgins* [Zech 9:17 DRB].

III. The third thing contributing to bodily beauty is a distinctive variety. Augustine says that something is more beautiful, the more varied it is.<sup>12</sup> And Richard, in *De Trinitate*,<sup>13</sup> says that beauty is found in an ordered variety. We see the truth of this in that a painting is more beautiful when it has many colours. A multiplicity of graces makes this variety in the spiritual order so that a soul is perfectly joined to eternal beauty which is a multiple equality [as Augustine says] in *On Music*.<sup>14</sup> In the eternal beauty there is variety with most perfect unity. *The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety* [Ps 44:10 DRB; 45:9 NRSV]. *The queen*, a holy soul, bride of the eternal king, joined to him in love, not serving in fear; *in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety*. There is a difference between golden and adorned with gold. What is golden is all gold; what is adorned with gold has some substratum that is adorned with gold.<sup>15</sup> The clothing is the collection of the various virtues. A holy soul should reflect on all the orders of saints in all their privileges of gifts and transform itself in so far as is possible; so that just as the Church is adorned with all the charisms of graces in all its members, so each person according to individual ability should strive to conform to the faith of the patriarchs, the constancy of the martyrs, the prudence of the confessors, the continence of the virgins and the abstinence of the anchorites. The soul is to be adorned with gold, that is, covered over with wisdom signified by gold. Of this beauty we read: *Thou shalt make also a veil of violet and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine twisted linen, wrought with embroidered work, and goodly variety* [Ex 26:31 DRB].<sup>16</sup> A *veil*, that is, the curtain

hanging before the Holy of Holies represents now a holy soul that is between the Church militant and triumphant; such a soul living here by faith by which *now we see in a mirror, dimly* [1 Cor 13:12], but there we will taste and experience those eternal consolations. This curtain was adorned with four precious colours, namely *twisted linen*; linen is cloth made from the cleanest flax, a material representing a double continence, namely, of the mind and body, for which reason it was twisted. By violet, a heavenly colour, we understand prudence; by scarlet twice dyed we understand immortal justice by which we are perfectly directed towards God and neighbour; hence scarlet twice dyed does not fade. By purple, a reddish and flame like colour, we understand patience. These four virtues are the art of living well, according to Augustine.<sup>17</sup> And this *with embroidered work, that is*, according to one interpretation covered as with feathers or plumes because of the bond by which virtues are connected one to another,<sup>18</sup> and group together like plumes from which comes a most beautiful variety. Clare was adorned and decorated with these virtues.

IV. The fourth factor in bodily beauty is an equality of proportion. Augustine<sup>19</sup> calls this an equality, namely, that all the limbs of a body are in proportion to one another. If one eye, or hand or shin-bone, were smaller than the other this would certainly make for a deformity; or if an arm was as large as a shin-bone and so on for the rest. Calmness or balance in judgment make for such proportion and equality, so that nothing superfluous, nothing lessened, nothing irregular remains in the kingdom of the soul. Of this beauty we read: *The Lord bless you, the beauty of justice, the holy mountain* [Jer 31:23 DRB]. It is said *of justice* because of equality, *the mountain* because of the dignity of life, but *holy* because of its stability.

Clare was beautiful in this way because in herself and her sisters she corrected anything untoward by a restraining censure, she curtailed what was superfluous by the filing tool of poverty and the abnegation of all temporal things. She filled up what had become lax

by the frequency and constancy of devoted prayer. This prayer makes up for our defects.

V. The fifth factor in bodily beauty is a harmony in the arrangement so that each limb and part be found in its proper place. It would be a great deformity to have a hand where the foot is and vice versa, or an ear where the eye is, or an eye where the nose is. Spiritually, it is a tranquillity of order that makes this necessary and fitting arrangement. Such a tranquillity of order is found in a perfect coordination of obeying, conforming and commanding, and in a consent or agreement between superiors and subjects as is clear in any university, college and especially in an army in which one presides over all and then there are centurions, captains of fifty, leaders of ten in an ordered arrangement among themselves. Likewise, a well ordered soul is subject to God as its superior, the lesser parts conform to the higher and the flesh is subject to reason while the will follows the judgment of reason. Human beings were made in this proper way and order but because of sin this chain was broken so that the lesser parts rebel against the higher and *what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit* [Gal 5:17]. So Augustine says in *The City of God*<sup>20</sup>:

The peace of the reasoning soul lies in the harmonious correspondence of conduct and conviction. The peace of a human being is ordered by the eternal law of obedience. Order is the equilibrium of all its parts.

Of this beauty we read: *You are beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army set in array* [Song 6:3 DRB]. He says, *beautiful, my love, sweet* from interior delight, *comely* from external actions; *like Jerusalem* from a cloistered contemplation. Jerusalem means a vision of peace.<sup>21</sup> A *terrible* opponent, *as an army set in array* from perfect harmony.<sup>22</sup> A well drilled army, compact and united within itself, is secure and inspires fear in an enemy, but when it is in disarray and divided it is easily overcome; this is true also of a soul. A well ordered soul united within and at peace, is secure because no opponent or enemy can conquer it;

furthermore such a soul is terrible to others. I think that the demons fear greatly to attack a well ordered soul, such as the soul of blessed Clare. Clare was so ordered within herself, so at peace and calm that she was completely unshaken.

VI. The sixth factor in bodily beauty is a brightness of complexion. Augustine says<sup>23</sup>: ‘A beautiful face, equally balanced, cheerful expression, splendid complexion’. Sometimes people who are otherwise deformed are judged to be beautiful simply because of their complexion. Simplicity of purpose provides this complexion because such a person in doing good does not seek any glory other than the glory of God whom alone the person wishes to please. Hence we read:

*The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!* [Mt 6:22-23].

This passage is to be understood as meaning that we know that all our works are pure and pleasing in the sight of God, if they are performed with a single heart; that is, if they are performed out of charity and with an intention that is fixed on heaven, because *love is the fulfilling of the law* [Rom 13:10]. Therefore, in this passage we ought to understand the eye as the intention with which we perform all our actions. If this intention is pure and upright and directing its gaze where it ought to be directed, then, unfailingly, all our works are good works, because they are performed in accordance with that intention. And by the expression, *whole body*, he designated all those works, for the Apostle also designates certain works as our members – works which he reproves and which he orders us to mortify. *Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, greed* [Col 3:5] and all other such things.

In all our actions, therefore, it is the intention, and not the act, that ought to be considered, for the intention is indeed the light within us. Through this light it is made clear to us that, whenever we are doing anything, we are doing it for a good purpose, *for everything*

*that becomes visible is light* [Eph 5:13]. But there is uncertainty with regard to the result of even the deeds which we perform with the intention of benefiting others; on this account, the Lord calls these deeds darkness. For instance, when I am handing money to a needy beggar, I do not know what he will do with it or what evil he may suffer on account of it. And it is possible that he will do some evil with it or suffer some evil from it – an evil which, when giving him the money, I neither willed nor intended to happen. Now, if I performed that act with a good intention, that intention was known to me at the time; for this reason, it is called light. And my deed also is illumined, no matter what result it may bring; nevertheless, it is called darkness because its result is uncertain and unknown. On the other hand, if I performed that act with a bad intention, then – although even a bad intention is light – my intention is darkness as well. It is called light because a person knows with what intention an action is done, even when acting with a bad intention. However, that same light is darkness when the intention is not a single intention directed toward heavenly things, but is deflected toward the things beneath; it is as though it were causing an eclipse when the heart is divided. *If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!* This means that even if the intention of the heart, which is known to you, and through which you are performing your action – if this intention is sullied and darkened by a seeking after the temporal things of earth, how much more darksome is the deed itself of which the result is uncertain.<sup>24</sup>

We read of this beauty: *Ah, you are beautiful, my love; ah, you are beautiful. How beautiful you are. Your eyes are doves* [Song 1:15; 4:1]. The word beautiful is used twice: she is beautiful in the truth of her work and beautiful in her simplicity of heart. So he adds: *Your eyes are doves*. A dove free of poison, with a sigh for a song, represents the simplicity of intention in a soul that acts out of love for the heavenly home, for which the soul continuously longs.<sup>25</sup> We read of this beauty: *The eye admires the beauty of the whiteness thereof* [Sir 43:20 DRB]. Unfortunate hypocrites, you who destroy yourselves by the perversity of intention and by doing good for others give good things to the lost and corrupt. A text of Isaiah can be applied to them: *You who put darkness for light* [Isa 5:20]. – Not so was Clare who

was clear in her work, even clearer in her intention and from this had her name.<sup>26</sup>

VII. The seventh factor in bodily beauty is harmony in the whole person. Some, even though they are unbecoming and deformed in parts of the body, are in some way beautiful and pleasing from a harmony in the body. Others, however, even though they are beautiful and pleasing in the body's appearance, are so ungainly and inept that they seem to be quite deformed and displeasing. In a spiritual sense, this harmony comes from an upright way of life, for example in a person, particularly a cleric and a religious but even more in a religious woman who is modest in speech, mature in movement, chaste in looking, meek and peaceful in community. Ambrose<sup>27</sup> says of such:

Nothing piercing in the eyes, no impudent words, no shameful action, not a wild gesture, no feeble steps, no careless word, but rather she was dignified, mature and upright; the appearance of her body was an expression of the mind and a sign of probity.

And he gives a good example:

Through that entrance a good house is to be seen; and the first thing to notice in the entrance is that no darkness is hidden within because a light within lights up what is outside.

Such was the Virgin Clare of whom can be said: *She was exceeding fair, and her incredible beauty made her appear agreeable and amiable in the eyes of all* [Esth 2:15 DRB]. And also: *No other woman from one end of the earth to the other looks so beautiful or speaks so wisely* [Jdt 11:21]. Of her maturity can be said: *How graceful are your feet in sandals, O queenly maiden* [Song 7:1]. This text of Song 7:1 can be understood as follows<sup>28</sup>: *Queenly maiden*, daughter of God, or blessed Francis of whom she was a disciple and whom she imitated; *graceful are your feet*, that is, all your actions are in harmony; *in sandals*, that is, by the examples of the saints whose steps she followed. Let us ask God etc.

## NOTES

- 1 *Confessions*, book 4, ch. 13, n. 20: ‘Do we love anything but the beautiful?’, FOTC, vol. 21, 90; *De vera religione*, c. 32, n. 59 (PL 34, 148).
- 2 Book 15, ch. 22, FOTC, vol. 14, 469.
- 3 *In Evangelia*, l. 1, Homilia 13, n. 1 (PL 76, 1124 ), on Lk 12:35.
- 4 *Glossa interlinearis*, on Song 4:7 in Lyranus (III, 361r).
- 5 See next note.
- 6 C. 36, n. 42 (PL 44, 267); see also *De oerfectione iustitiae hominis*, c. 21, n. 44 (PL 44, 316).
- 7 *Ethica nicomachea*, book 4, ch. 3, WAE, vol. 9, 1915, 1123<sup>a</sup>.
- 8 Book 22, ch. 4, FOTC, vol. 24, 486; see also Matthew himself, *Sermons on the Blessed Virgin Mary*, transl. C. Murray, 108.
- 9 See Matthew, *Sermons on the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Transl. C. Murray, 77 and 136ff.
- 10 See Isidore, *Libri etymologiarum*, l. 17, c. 7, n. 1 (PL 82, 609 A); this passage for the most part is taken from Bede, *In Cantica Canticatorum*, l. 6 (PL 91, 1197).
- 11 *Glossa interlinearis*, on Mk 11:13, in Lyranus (V, 110v).
- 12 Book 6, ch. 13, n. 38, FOTC, vol. 4, 363.
- 13 L. 5, c. 2 (PL 196, 950).
- 14 *On Music*, book 6, ch. 13, n. 38, FOTC, vol. 4, 363.
- 15 See P. Lombard, *Glossa* on Ps 44:10 (PL 191, 443).
- 16 A commentary on this text is found in *Glossa ordinaria* on Ex 26-27, in Lyranus (I, 180vb-187r).
- 17 *The City of God*, book 4, ch. 21, FOTC, vol. 8, 218; book 19, ch. 3, FOTC, vol. 24, 192. *Enarratio in Ps 83*, n. 11 (PL 37, 1065); *The Trinity*, book 14, ch. 9, FOTC, vol. 45, 429.
- 18 See *Glossa ordinaria* on Ex 27:16 in Lyranus (I, 187r); Augustine, *Letter 167*, c. 4, FOTC, vol. 30, 36.
- 19 *The City of God*, book 11, ch. 22, FOTC, vol. 14, 220.
- 20 Book 19, ch. 12, FOTC, vol. 24, 217.
- 21 According to Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis*, de Isaia (PL 23 829).
- 22 See *Glossa interlinearis*, on this text, in Lyranus (III, 364r).
- 23 Source not known.
- 24 Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount*, book 2, ch. 13, n. 445-46, FOTC, vol. 11, 153-155.
- 25 From *Glossa ordinaria* on Song 1:14, in Lyranus (III, 357r).
- 26 Antiphon for Magnificat, First Vespers, Office of St Clare, in *Breviarium Romano-Seraphicum*, Pars aestivalis, Roma: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1938, 888.

<sup>27</sup> *De virginibus*, l. 2, c. 2, n. 7 (PL 16, 220).

<sup>28</sup> See *Glossa interlinearis*, on this text, in Lyranus (III, 365r).

## SERMON 2

*As the noon light is clear* [Isa 18:4 DRB].<sup>1</sup> The perfection of the blessed virgin Clare shone in these latter times and God who glorified her in heaven made her shine forth on earth.<sup>2</sup> After her death God made her shine forth in miracles and in the deeds and example of her life.<sup>3</sup> As we now celebrate the solemn feast of blessed Clare and wish to extol the brightness of this saint who shone forth in fact and in name,<sup>4</sup> we take the word of Isaiah who in the Spirit foresaw her perfection and extolled, that is, described and commended her. Isaiah extolled her in three ways.

Firstly, he compares the reality of her perfection to light, saying: *As the noon light*. Among the bodily substances light is the most perfect and so the Lord wanting to comment most highly on the perfection of the apostles, says: *You are the light of the world* [Mt 5:14].

Secondly, he compares the excellence of her perfection not only to light but to the light of midday. Noon light is more excellent, more perfect in its position, splendour and heat as experience teaches us. And so he says not only *as light* but *as the noon light*. When the Lord wanted to extol the noon light he said: *Your light shall rise in the darkness* [Isa 58:10]; and: *And brightness like that of the noon-day, shall arise for you at evening* [Job 11:17 DRB].

Thirdly, he declares the evidence of this perfection by saying: *is clear*. The midday light is clear and evident, like the perfection of the virgin Clare whose perfection was as clear as the light of midday.

I. Therefore, Isaiah says: *As the noon light is clear*. The most holy virgin Clare shone and still shines with a sevenfold brightness. Firstly, she shone with a clearness of clear and serene knowledge. She knew God from the knowledge of faith or from faith illumined by the light of faith. As Augustine says<sup>5</sup> it is not incorrect to say we believe through faith since undoubtedly it is faith that assents to the truth. Without faith going ahead what is divine cannot be understood according to one version<sup>6</sup> of the text: *Unless you believe, you will not understand* [Isa 7:9]. So for Clare faith opened the way to

understanding and she knew God in contemplation, contemplating God in all creatures, in herself as in a mirror; finally carried and raised to the eternal light itself she saw the Godhead itself in the eternal light as far as is possible in this life. She was so illumined by the light of truth that she could foretell future events and the secrets of her companions lay open to her. Of such clear knowledge we read: *Wisdom is radiant* [clara] *and unfading* [Wis 6:13]. Only truth is incorruptible, only truth is bright. Therefore, because wisdom is knowledge of truth, it makes a soul bright and incorrupt, holding a soul immovably fixed to truth.

II. Secondly, the virgin Clare shone with a brightness of purified love. Affection or love is spoilt and defiled in two ways, namely, by a desire for carnal delights called lust or gluttony; and by a desire for temporal riches called avarice. Augustine<sup>7</sup> says that a thing becomes defiled if it is mixed with a baser substance. A soul made in the image of God and born to know and love God is spoilt, stained and defiled when it joins itself in love to things inferior and baser, even though these are good in themselves and in their proper place. And so by contempt for carnal delights and temporal riches, that is, by chastity and poverty, she removes herself from these and separates herself from them, lifting her desire and affection to what is eternal, she is purified and made bright as long as she remains single minded. Augustine<sup>8</sup> says that this is the perfection of love: The poison of love is greed; an increase in love diminishes greed; in perfect love there is no greed. Wisdom, in admiration of the brightness and purity or beauty of the virgin Clare, so cleansed and purified, says: *O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory* [Wis 4:1 DRB]. Wisdom calls people living chastely a generation for they are something beautiful and outstanding.

III. Thirdly, the virgin Clare shone forth with the brightness of a disciplined way of life. There was no darkness or obscurity, nothing piercing in her eyes, her words, her actions, nor in her gestures.<sup>9</sup> In brief, there was nothing in her way of life except what pointed to and tasted of wisdom. Her whole way of life was a pattern and mirror of

discipline. This is reflected in the text: *She was honoured throughout the whole country* [Jdt 16:21]. This is the Judith of whom it was said: *No other woman from one end of the earth to the other looks so beautiful or speaks so wisely* [Jdt 11:21]. By reason of her purity she cut off the head of Holofernes [Jdt 13:8]. This is blessed Clare, completely chaste and disciplined, modest and upright who in her life overcame the devil.

IV. Fourthly, the virgin Clare shone forth with the brightness of virtuous deeds. Afterwards *she put out her hand to strong things* [Prov 1:19 DRB], was never idle but always busy and active in virtuous actions. Who can explain the rigour of strictness in her great affection of piety and compassion, her prompt obedience, her zeal in humble service, while eating but little, dressed in rough clothes, using a hard bed, with regular vigils, fervour of devotion, faithfulness in prayer, abundance of tears, a praiseworthy memory of divine gifts. There are witnesses who saw all this.<sup>10</sup> Sure experience teaches in how many ways she shone forth and still shines in her life, her death and after death by the wonders of miracles so that it can be said of her: *When we hear we will admire her wonderful works* [Sir 43:26-27 DRB]. Indeed those who hear should admire the wonderful works of the virgin Clare, all of which became wonders; but once seen they are admired all the more. Would that those who admire would imitate her!

V. Fifthly, the virgin Clare shone forth with the brightness of a much talked of fame.<sup>11</sup> The fame of her holiness spread throughout the whole world and bathed the whole Church. How many, indeed how many women run in the *odour of your ointments* [Song 1:3]. Many come to her door, follow her footsteps, and like her despising the world, they disdain and in fact avoid carnal marriage by dedicating themselves by a vow of chastity to *Christ, the one husband* of souls [2 Cor 11:2]. They place themselves in enclosures of cloisters and abhor greatly not only the company of men but even to see and speak with them. So the following text can be applied to Clare: *For her sake I shall have glory among the multitude, and*

*honour with the ancients* [Wis 8:10 DRB]. *For her sake*, that is, through her perfect life by which she is made splendid and is rightly honoured by all. Or *for her sake*, that is, by the wisdom of which Wisdom spoke and loved only her beauty, she who put aside and despised all carnal beauty for love of Wisdom. She shone with splendour because wisdom, *the brightness of eternal light* [Wis 7:26 DRB], makes bright a soul into which it is poured making it honourable and outstanding.

VI. Sixthly, the virgin Clare shone with a brightness of sincere and ordered intention by which she took pains to please only her eternal Bridegroom. She needed no praise, no human or earthly applause, but referred all to the praise and glory of the Creator to whom she humbly submitted, holding back absolutely nothing for herself. She was not one of the foolish virgins [Mt 25:1-8] who met the Lord with empty lamps, with no joy in their consciences because they depended for all their joy on the praise of others for which reason they were rightly excluded from the kingdom. She was one of the prudent virgins who went to meet the Bridegroom with full lamps, not looking to others for joy but having it in their consciences and so they entered the wedding feast together with the Bridegroom.

It is this intention that either darkens a deviant action or illumines and brightens it when it is correct. The Saviour said: *If your eye, that is, your intention, is healthy, pure and correct, your whole body, all your actions will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, that is, deviant and distorted, your whole body, that is, all your actions will of necessity be dark.*<sup>12</sup> Paul who did not set out to please people says: *If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ* [Gal 1:10]. He says also: *They glorified God because of me* [Gal 1:24]. He does not say *me* but *because of me* they glorified God for according to the Gospel teaching: *Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory not to you but to your Father in heaven* [Mt 5:16].

VII. Seventhly, the virgin Clare shone with the brightness of final glorification. Devoid of any darkness or obscurity of sin or

punishment, she shone forth, immersed completely in an abyss of brightness and illumined by the brightness of the eternal Light. Now, at least in the adornment of her soul she is in open contemplation, in quiet enjoyment and eternal possession of the brightest truth God gave her *everlasting honour* [Wis 10:14], *And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another* [2 Cor 3:18].<sup>13</sup> The word face refers to the mind or reason, by which revealed through faith we see *the glory of the Lord* while for the Jews *a veil still lies over their minds* [2 Cor 3:15]. Through a mirror, that is, through an image impressed on our mind as on a mirror, as the same Apostle says: *Now we see in a mirror* [1 Cor 13:12]. *We are being transformed into the same image*: an uncreated image because we are being transformed into God or a created image that the Apostle refers to as glory. This is the glory of men and women whose minds are created in the image of God in so far as they are able to know and love God.<sup>14</sup> The Apostle says *we are being transformed* from one state into another because we are changed and we cross over from a condition of darkness to a condition of brightness. When we are converted to God, the image deformed by sin is remade. When we are justified we are being changed from being deformed into being beautiful; so he adds: *from one degree of glory to another*. One way of explaining this is to say from a glory of creation to a glory of justification, from a glory of nature to a glory of grace. Or another way is to say from a glory of faith to a glory of vision, from a glory by which we are children of God, to a glory in which we will be like God because *we will see him as he is* [1 Jn 3:2], from a glory of grace to the glory of glory itself. Finally, we will be glorified perfectly in the condition of the body when we are clothed in immortality, quickness, subtlety and glory as the Apostle says: *We are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory* [Phil 3:20-21]. The Son of God leads us to this glorious brightness to whom with the eternal Father and Holy Spirit be glory and honour for ever and ever. Amen.

## NOTES

- 1 The word for clear is clara.
- 2 Clare was declared a saint by Alexander IV on 15 August 1255.
- 3 *The Legend of Saint Clare*, n. 62, in *Clare of Assisi. Early Documents*, St Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993, 307.
- 4 See Antiphon for Magnificat, First Vespers, Office of St Clare, in *Breviarium Romano-Seraphicum*, Pars aestiva, Roma: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1938, 888.
- 5 See *The Trinity*, book 15, ch. 2, n. 2, FOTC, vol. 45, 452.
- 6 According to the Septuagint.
- 7 *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, book 2, ch. 13, n. 44, FOTC, vol. 11, 152. See above page 18.
- 8 *Eighty-three Different Questions*, Question 36, n. 1, FOTC, vol. 70, 57. See above page 80.
- 9 *De virginibus*, l. 2, c. 2, n. 7 (PL 16, 220).
- 10 *The Acts of the Process of Canonization*, in *Clare of Assisi. Early Documents*, St Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993, 133-165.
- 11 *The Legend of Saint Clare*, n. 10, in *Clare of Assisi. Early Documents*, St Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993, 261.
- 12 See above page 90.
- 13 What follows in the text above has been taken by Matthew from a *Glossa* of P. Lombard on this text (PL 192, 28s.); Lombard was copying from Augustine, *The Trinity*, book 15, ch. 8, n. 14, FOTC, vol. 45, 469-470.
- 14 As Augustine says, *The Trinity*, book 14, ch. 8, n. 11, and ch. 12, n. 15, FOTC, vol. 45, 426 and 432.

### ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
BFS	Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica Medii Aevi
CtC	<i>The Canticle of the Creatures.</i>
DRB	<i>The Holy Bible</i> , New York: T. Murphy Co., 1899. This translation is commonly referred to as the Douay Rheims Bible.
FA:ED	Francis of Assisi: Early Documents.
FOTC	The Fathers of the Church. Washington: Catholic University of America Press.
LMj	<i>The Major Legend.</i>
LR	<i>The Later Rule.</i>
Test	<i>The Testament.</i>
NRSV	<i>The Holy Bible</i> . New Revised Standard Version, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. The abbreviations for the names of the books of the Bible are the abbreviations listed in the NRSV.
PG	J.P. Migne, ed., <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , 1857-1866.
PL	J.P. Migne, ed., <i>Patrologia Latina</i> , 1841-1855.
WAE	The Works of Aristotle.
2C	<i>The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul.</i>

### Works quoted in the sermons

....	<i>Glossa ordinaria</i>
Ambrose	<i>De virginibus</i> <i>Hexaëmeron</i>
Aristotle	<i>De animalibus historiae</i> <i>Ethica Nichomachea</i>
Augustine	<i>Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount</i> <i>Confessions</i> <i>De natura boni</i> <i>De vera religione</i> <i>Eighty-Three Different Questions</i> <i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i> <i>Epistolae</i> <i>On Music</i> <i>Sermo 103</i> <i>The Advantage of Believing</i> <i>The City of God</i> <i>The Free Choice of the Will</i> <i>The Good of Marriage</i> <i>The Literal Meaning of Genesis</i> <i>The Trinity</i> <i>Tractates on the Gospel of John</i> <i>De consideratione</i>
Bernard	

Bonaventure	<i>De gradibus humilitatis</i> <i>In Cantica Canticorum</i> <i>Sermo III: De S. Francisco</i> <i>The Major Legend</i> <i>The Triple Way</i>
Chrysologus	<i>Sermo 129</i>
Dionysius	<i>De coelesti hierarchia</i> <i>De divinis nominibus</i>
Fulgentius	<i>De fide ad Petrum</i>
Francis	<i>The Cantic of the Creatures</i> <i>The Later Rule</i> <i>The Testament</i>
Gilbertus Abbas	<i>In Cantica</i>
Gregory	<i>In Evangelia Homiliae</i> <i>In septem psalmos poenitentiales</i> <i>Liber dialogorum</i> <i>Libri Moraliu</i> <i>Pastoral Rule</i>
Horace	<i>Epistle 2</i>
Hugo de S. Victore	<i>De arrha animae</i> <i>Expositio in Hierarchiam coelestem S. Dionysii</i>
Innocent III	<i>De sacro altaris mysterio</i>
Isidore	<i>Libri etymologiarum</i> <i>Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum</i>
Jerome	<i>De nominibus hebraicis</i> <i>Epistola 54</i>
John Damascene	<i>De fide orthodoxa</i>
Julian of Speyer	<i>Officium S. Francisci</i>
Lombard, P.	<i>Glossae</i> <i>Libri Sententiarum</i>
Matthew of Aquasparta	<i>Quaestiones disputatae</i> <i>Sermons on the Blessed Virgin Mary</i>
Pseudo-Augustine	<i>sermo 289</i>
Pseudo-Bernard	<i>De modo bene vivendi</i>
Sulpicius Severus	<i>Life of St Martin</i>
Tullius Cicero	<i>De inventione</i>

## INDEX

Translator's Preface		iii
Introduction		iv
Sermons on Blessed Francis:	Sermon 1	1
	Sermon 2	13
	Sermon 3	27
Transfer of Saint Francis:	Sermon 1	42

	Sermon 2	52
	Sermon 3	62
	Sermon 4	65
Sermon on Saint Anthony		75
Sermons on Saint Clare:	Sermon 1	84
	Sermon 2	95