

# A Sister To the Poor

Maria Clara do Menino Jesus  
Foundress of the Congregation of the  
Franciscan Hospitaler Sister of the Immaculate Conception

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## The Thread of a Skein

*Only for the religious vocation, how much do we not owe God!?* Says Sister Maria Clara in one of her letters, I think the most wonderful and demanding, given the scope of the subject. This phrase by itself, without the whole letter, gives us a glimpse of the reflection provoked by such wonder and demand. It also reveals the wonder of a soul of great understanding and remarkable spiritual sensitivity that sees in the smallest details, reason for praise and gratitude to God; so also her way of understanding the mystery of the person and the purpose of divine prerogatives. Therefore, for Blessed Maria Clara, everything and much that God gives us, undoubtedly ends up in the realization of our human vocation, called to welcome the highest gift of realizing ourselves as image and likeness of God.

**Only in the vocational horizon can we understand all that we owe God, however little it may be**

In this understanding, among all the gifts received, Mother Clara specifies the vocational dimension, as a thread in the skein, the end with which one begins to weave life with its divine attributes. Indeed, the illustration on religious vocation is only a motto for us to carefully appreciate, from among the divine gifts, the gift of gifts: our universal human vocation. Thus, we can say, without any objection: “only for the human vocation, how much do we not owe God!?” It is precisely to this observation that Blessed Maria Clara pulls us up, opening to us a fascinating challenge of corresponding to our sublime human vocation, unrenouncible gift and task, that encloses all the options of life to which one feels called to more fully find fulfillment as a person, image of God. On account of this, only in the vocational horizon can we understand all that we owe God, however small it may be. How inestimable is, indeed, our vocation, despite being limited! We are amazed and left with astonishment to consider, how much indeed, we owe God and subsequently, to live up to His dream over us only to the

price of fidelity to what constitutively we are! It is necessary to take this seriously, because the future of humanity depends on this.

**Moulded by the same divine hands, there is no vaccine that immunizes us from this blessing**

Hence, for Sr. Maria Clara, there is no other reason that should attract and ordain our action that this gratitude and love for God and only to God is due. In such a way this was the theological place of her unceasing meditation, the spindle on the loom of her life and mission bursts out from her delicate, just and grateful supplicating cry: *Oh let us love God and God alone!* This is in brief the great “hallel” and self-gift to the Lord, the touch stone of her undivided love for God, greatly loved and cared for, with deference and greatest amiability, in all deeds, with all affection, “her people”. Knowing to be pretentious in retributing to God all that we owe him, meanwhile, only for the vocation, Sr. Maria Clara used to place all her delight in the love of the One who loved her until it pained. Contrary to Mother Clara, perhaps we ponder little on our vocational identity. If this happens, easily we will invert the cultivation of the image of God by the cultivation of appearances and allow to escape from the end of the thread of the skein of our existence, in the entangled ideologies that falsify our original brand. Meanwhile, there is always the possibility of finding the end of the thread and weave our life of unity, truth, goodness and beauty with which God has marked us, if, like Mother Clara, we take seriously the greatness of our vocation. There is no vaccine that immunizes us from this nature and it is good: all have been moulded by the same divine hands and blessed with the same vocational blessing, capable of similarity in love of the Creator. No universal law should order our actions more than the truth that we are called to be by vocation!

Sr. Ndira da Cruz

## In God and with the needy

*These give thanks to God, for the intercession of Blessed Maria Clara*

**M. L. A. P. - Santo Tirso, Portugal (PT)** - Once again I had recourse to Blessed Mother Maria Clara in a very complicated situation of an urgent carcinoma that appeared in the bladder, for which I was operated. I used to have frequent check ups and everything used to go on well; until, one of the cystoscopies revealed reddish stains, with four very suspicious anomalous signs emerging. However, the doctor preferred to wait for some more time, since the size was still small, to do fresh tests. Taking into account the medical information, I gave myself heart and soul to the cross of Christ and to the intercession of Mother Clara of the Child Jesus. They were six months of permanent anxiety, but of great faith and prayer that ended up in great joy, as I received the new result of the cystoscopy. The doctor was surprised to see that everything was clean. There was no longer any stain or the four lumps that had erupted. I was also amazed and overflowing with joy and gratitude, for divine work! I cannot keep from thanking Jesus and all my friends, especially the Great Friend and loving Mother Maria Clara, who is always present!

**E. G. P. S. - Algés, PT** - I fell and fractured my spine. I was taken to the Hospital. The doctors said that they could not operate on me due to the osteoporosis and rheumatoid arthritis. I was shifted to another Hospital, where they would prepare an iron vest to enable me to eat by my own hand and to do something. After four months of hospitalization, as I was leaving the Hospital I had a thrombosis. The moment I fell, the doctor who was there, at once helped me. My pressure was 24. Then I asked my daughter: "how am I going home? Who will take care of me?" She said: "Everything is taken care of with the ladies of the Day Care Centre." At that moment I prayed: "O Mother Clara, if I am going to your Centre, help me to be able to get well, to still do some good to other people!" What I know is that I owe to Mother Clara the recovery of my health. For me she is a saint of great value. She has not yet been canonized, but for me she is already a Saint.

**J. A. L. - Pico, Azores, PT** - I prayed to Blessed Maria Clara do Menino Jesus for my son to be able to get positive marks in the national exam of Portuguese and maths. Through this, I come to inform that this favour was granted. Thank you Blessed Maria Clara for this favour!

**C. T. - Belgium** - I received from the wonderful Mother Maria Clara this favour: for several years my savings were not sufficient; I had nightmares, fears, sleepless nights, accumulated tiredness; with two children, all alone, working hard, but I was not able to organize myself. Very difficult moments, thinking of giving up my own life! Then, my Mother, my only true friend who supported me and did not allow me to give up raising my children, dedicated herself to Mother Clara, imploring her intercession, to help me with

strength and courage. One Sunday evening, as I was lying on the sofa, I was invaded by interior peace and the vision of Mother Clara came to my mind, as she appears in her statue. This vision lasted the whole evening, until night fall, as if she were watching over me. From then, I found equilibrium, inner peace, to be patient with others, good nights' sleep and my work started becoming fruitful.

**G. R. S. - Oliveira do Douro, PT** - I prayed to Mother Clara asking for the favour of being able to conceive and it was granted me! Now we have one son by name of Francis in honour and homage to Blessed Maria Clara do Menino Jesus to whom we pray every day, asking for wellbeing and health of my children: Francis and Clara who was also born through the intercession of Mother Clara. Thank you very much Blessed Maria Clara do Menino Jesus!

**A. B. V. - Ribeirão Preto/SP, Brazil** - After 15 years of treatment for lupus nephritis, both my kidneys failed. For 2 years and 1 month, I underwent hemodialysis. However with venous access failure and progressive worsening of the renal condition, I underwent frequent surgeries that caused in me indisposition, anguish and a lot of suffering. Then, my aunt who admires Blessed Maria Clara for her life and virtue of charity, prayed unceasingly, asking that I recover my health and that never anyone should overtake me in the queue of renal transplant in an unjust manner and that it should take place at the right time. Thanks to Blessed Maria Clara, the surgery was done, when there was no other physical recourse for hemodialysis and it was successful, because the kidneys were in full and vertiginous functioning and in 10 days, I was discharged from the hospital. Besides this big favour, the holidays of my brother coincided with my hospitalization, which favoured me with his total dedication to my son, a minor, because at that time, my husband was working in the neighboring villages. My post-transplant was practically painless and I progressed successfully. Today, I no longer depend on the machine for my survival and I lead a normal life, only with the help of medication. I thank Blessed Maria Clara for this favour obtained!

**A. A. - Faial, Azores, PT** - I wish to inform that I received a favour from God, through Mother Clara. One arm of mine was not at all alright. I asked Mother Clara to intercede for me and I improved. May God be praised. I have received many favours, whenever I ask God for something through her, God always hears me. Thank you, Lord!

**M. J. - Lisbon, PT** - I prayed to Blessed Maria Clara do Menino Jesus and my grandson got high marks in his Masters in Engineering. It was a big favour!

**A. P. - Senhorim, PT** - I received the grace of being heard in the sale of a car. I want to thank Mother Clara very much!

**"How much has not been given to us!?"**

Blessed Maria Clara

## Missionary Dynamism

Mission exists, because there is vocation. There are youth who continue to respond to the inviting voice of God who calls to the mission of *Illuminating and Warming* the humanity, according to the dream of God, the Charism that comes to us from the origins: Hospitality! Consequently, we bring, in this number, vocational testimonies of some young girls in formation who aspire for the same ideal of life of Blessed Maria Clara and Fr. Raimundo dos Anjos Beirão, marked by the example of the Sisters who today make this ideal a reality.

From Angola, the first country of our mission beyond Portugal (1883), let us listen to our Aspirants, young girls who are in their first stage of formation and discernment of their vocation, **and** through these lines we leave, the echo of how they recognized the call of God, the reasons for their option for the Franciscan Hospitaller Religious Vocation and the path to be followed, to respond to what God dreamt for them.

Managing her company of beauty and aesthetics, **Esperança Manuel** tells us how the plan of God awakened in her life, which made her change her business at the age of 24, *enchanted by the beauty of living in fraternity, since the age of 14, I began to question myself about the meaning of my life and to take an interest in the Religious Life. Later, through the Confhic site, I identified myself with the Charism of the Congregation, through their way of living hospitality, serving the more needy, according to the spirit of the Beatitudes, and I opted to follow Jesus in this religious family.*

It is impressive, how, as it always happens that way, when our dream intersects with that of God who shaped us from the mother's womb and nurtured a specific mission for each of us, in this land where Jesus walked the same path, to fulfil the dream of the Father to humanity. Yes, God never calls us for ourselves; it is always to send us forth, with a mission in favour of others. This was the case with **Ana Maria** and **Luzia Pedro**, both of the same Parish, who felt God's call through the life and mission of the Franciscan Hospitaller Sisters: the former *fascinated by the Franciscan Hospitaller Charism among others that she knew and the latter by the life and witness of the Sisters of Mother Maria Clara. The total surrender of the Sisters to others, the way they welcome, look after and form, attracted them to want to follow in the same footsteps.*

There is always an end by which God holds us and seduces us to His love and, from this part, begins to weave the History of the Covenant with us. It is what happened with **Julia Libra**: *it was not easy to let go ... and leave ... But for God everything is possible! And I always have the trust that everything, everything that God*

## Missionary Dynamism

*wants, happens.*

**Imaculada da Conceição** had an identical experience: *It was a struggle to overcome the impediment of my mother. But the grace of God did not fail me and I was able to count with the support of persons whom the Lord placed on my path.*

Despite all this enchantment, it was not lightly and easily that these took the decision of breaking away from the world, leaving the family, the friends, many things that they liked and wanted to do, to launch into this adventure, certain that in this decision is the dream of the good God to whom nothing is impossible! Indeed, when "God wants, man dreams and the work is created" (Fernando Pessoa). These young girls overcame, first themselves; then the others and the world.



*Like the disciples, they too left everything, went and followed Jesus, because they found greater joy, the best place: to be by the side of Jesus! Luzia observed. And they thus joined, in a formative process, inherent to the mission, with various stages, which will last the whole life, the purpose of which is the configuration with Christ, assimilating his way of living, thinking and acting.*

The configuration with Christ is the vocation of each human person dreamt by God-Father to be the image of His Beloved Son Jesus. It is the path to be tread by the whole humanity, specially the christians and the religious men and women, with more demand. This is testified by our Sr. Ana de Souza Freitas since she joined this adventure and is today elderly and tells us about the secret of her happiness.: *union with the Lord, the desire to do good and the willingness to correspond with fidelity to the Lord, is the secret that made of my life a celebration, in the following of Jesus! And from her experience she leaves this message to the young ones: love and allow yourselves to be loved by the Lord! Be not afraid if He calls you! Respond to his call! It is worth belonging to the Lord, it is worth serving his Church, is worth serving the poor! I wish you blessings of the Lord and may He accompany you with His grace!*

## We don't learn!

Exclaimed Pope Francis, last April 3, on his return from Malta, in a conversation with the journalist, during the flight: *We do not learn!*

«I saw the reality of the migrants in Malta. One of the problems is migration. The problem of the migrants is serious. I saw the reality. **Greece, Cypress, Malta, Italy, Spain**, are countries closest to **Africa and Middle East** and the migrants arrive there. They must always be welcomed! The problem is that each government has to say how many it can receive. For this, you need an agreement with the countries of Europe and not all are ready to receive the migrants. We forget that **Europe was made by the migrants**. Right?

I was at the migrant reception and the things that I heard are terrible: the suffering of these people to get here...! And then, the *lagers* on the Lybian coast, when they are sent back...!? That sounds criminal, doesn't it? I think it is a problem that touches everyone's heart. Just as Europe is making space so generously for the Ukrainians who come from the Mediterranean. This is a point that touches me a lot. I listened to the testimonies, sufferings, like those of a person who had to pay four times to reach here! I ask you to think about this!

War is always a cruelty, an inhuman thing, that goes against the human spirit; I do not say christian, I say human. There is no just war. All war always arises from an injustice. For example, investing to buy weapons, saying that "we need them to defend ourselves", It is injustice. This is the pattern of war.

When the II World War ended, everyone breathed the "war never again" and peace. A wave of work for peace

also began with the goodwill of not giving weapons, the atomic weapons at that moment, for peace, after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There was great goodwill. There were many hopes in the work of the United Nations at that time. Seventy years later, we have forgotten all about it! This is how the plan of war imposes itself, because there is a plan of war and there is no plan of peace.

There were great personalities whom I mention at the end of the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, who bet on the peace project. But we, as humanity, have been stubborn, the Bible shows it since the beginning; we are passionate about wars, by the spirit of Cain, the spirit of killing instead of the spirit of peace!

I tell you something personal about when I was in Redipuglia in 2014 and I saw the names of the young people (dead in wars): I cried. I really cried bitterly. Two years later, [the same happened when] I went to celebrate in Anzio, on All Souls Day and saw the names of young people killed there. All young and there too I cried. Really, we need to cry, because there is political problem. The youth do not matter! This makes me think. I am saddened! We do not learn! *May the Lord have pity on us, on all of us. All of us are to be blamed!*»

Pope Francis, 03.04.2022

## From EASTER to SYNOD 2023

Taking our identity seriously, we journey the synodal path, spreading in the world the spirit of *communion, participation and mission*, the marks of our vocation. To have in mind the image of God in us is sufficient to change and make possible among us the Easter of Jesus. Happy Easter, blossomed with goodness, truth and concord!

### Prayer to ask for favours and for the Canonization of Blessed Maria Clara

**Most Holy Trinity, most High, omnipotent and good Lord! You who made your holiness to shine in the simple and humble life of Blessed Maria Clara do Menino Jesus, by calling her to be an apostle of your tenderness and mercy, grant us the grace of her canonization. May the brightness of your light shine upon us, so that, by living in the spirit of the beatitudes, we may practice the Works of Mercy, in fidelity to the holy Gospel.**

**Through the intercession of Blessed Maria Clara do Menino Jesus, hear our prayers and grant us the grace that we confidently ask you (mention your petition). To You all honour and all glory, forever and ever. Amen! Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be... Blessed Maria Clara, pray for us!**

(With ecclesiastical approval) **Communicate favours received to:**

The Provincial Secretariat of Mother Clara  
Clara Sadan Provincialate  
Carmelaram P.O  
Bengaluru 560 035

The Provincial Secretariat of Mother Clara  
Provincial House  
Mary Hill, 2nd and 3rd Floor  
- 60, Mount Mary Road  
Bandra West - Mumbai 400 050

## YOUR GENEROSITY REMAINS

*It is necessary to be generous with God who is so generous towards us*, said Mother Clara! She lived that way, generously sharing with the poor, lending to God, according to the proverb. And God continues to be generous towards her, through the friends, collaborators and devotees to whom we find no word to express so much gratitude, for divulging, collaborating in the Cause of her Canonization and the donations coming from: Alferrarede, Almagreira (PBL), Angústias-Faial (Az), Barros da Paz (PBL), California, Caminha, Carnaxide, Cartaxo, Casal de Revelhos, Chaves, Ermesinde, Escapães (SMF), Fafe, Guimarães, Formariz, India, Lajes-Terceira (Az), Lamas de Olo (VR), Linda a Pastora, Linda a Velha, Odivelas, Oeiras, Pico (Az), Philippines, Ponte de Lima, Porto Salvo, Porto, Póvoa de Lanhoso, Povoação-S. Miguel (Az), Queijas, S. João do Monte-Senhorim, Saint Martin de Crau, Santa Catarina da Serra, Seixal, Senhorim, Serzedelo (PVL), Soutelo de Aguiar, Tabuadelo-Guimarães, Toronto, Usseira, Valbom-Gondomar, Vila Maior, Vila Nova de Gaia, Vila Real.