

A Sister to the Poor

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

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As bread to the mouth

Serious events tend to structure this century of globalization, with fame for digital progress and little benefit to humanization, creating growing instability, tiredness and anxiety, the repercussion of which are affecting the different dimension of our being, bringing about serious problems of human and social relationships. A good photographer would capture in the first place, two tendencies of these effects: the hypersensitivity and individualism, both unravelling the sparks of humanism that still remain in the world, in the families and in the communities. This reality reminds me, among other analogies, the old story of the “family of hedgehogs” that could not relate, on account of their thorns. Such was the hypersensitivity that they decided to isolate themselves from one

The gentle and the peaceful can regenerate the world...

another, ignoring the signs of the times: neither the autumn gale nor the snow, deterred them from their defensive strategies. It was only when the ice was formed that they were convinced of the imminent extinction due to the individualistic hypothermia. So, they decided to dethrone their self-sufficient and self-supportive measures, cultivated the gentleness of the doves and the meekness of the poppies, each one trying to chisel away the wildness of their own thorns, invest in proximity, respect the common house, with space and opportunity for all, in peaceful conviviality. Indeed, we conclude with *there is peace only where there is unity*, as Blessed Maria Clara used to say. Peace emerges from union, this grace, this gift and vital good, like bread for the mouth, in our houses, our communities, in our society, in our world. But the rhythm of life that we lead and the manner in which we relate to one another is weakening the family and community relationships, pillars of this indispensable good to the highest progress that humanity has not yet achieved: the universal fraternity. It is true that we

cannot either ignore or omit the limitations of the present time: however, despite the contrary waves that bring us suspense, impatience, stress and disagreements, these should make us feel the need of cultivating peace in us and around us, always having in mind this saying of Blessed Maria Clara: *It is true*

**...with meekness,
kindness and patience.**

peace of soul that gives us fortitude in the midst of the difficulties of life. Unfortunately, not only the concerns of life are obstacles to building fraternity. The behaviour of hedgehogs reveals other underlying causes, such as domination of others or over others and fear. We have already heard someone say to us: It must not be so among you (cf. Matt 20:26). As persons, our calling is to be each others viziers and not dominators. The union that generates peace is born from the recognition of interdependence and appreciation of the diverse gifts, in symphony of gratitude and gratuitousness to the admiration of the Creator in His creatures and from the natural impulse to leave the poverty of the “I” for the wealth of the “we”. This, indeed, makes us persons, images of the Creator, therefore, admirable and also admirers of this God who reveals himself to us in an eminent way in the human being. Why, then, finding ourselves strange, instead of penetrating, as Mother Clara used to do for all? The popular wisdom does not fail. “he who does not owe, does not fear.” The further one is from our identity, more susceptible we are to love the neighbour. To owe love is injustice, the first cause of disunity, because, precisely, to be a misfit to the law of love, God’s initials in the human creature. That is why Sr. Maria Clara had great appreciation for justice, that is, conformity with the law of God, and she put in it all her delight and did not get tired of exhorting: *if you make divine will reign over yours, He will fill you with his peace.* Sr. Ndira da Cruz

In God and with the needy

These give testimony of favours received from God, through the intercession of Blessed Maria Clara

M. R. F. - Lisbon, Portugal (PT) - On a very cold and rainy night, my husband who of late have had serious health problems, had a severe attack of cough accompanied by a sound that showed bad respiratory function. I called up 24 the health centre describing the condition and they sent the ambulance. As usual, I asked the help of Mother Clara that my husband may not be sent to the emergency of the Hospital, Meanwhile, I followed the instruction of the Health services 24 and made him sit in bed. When the Team arrived, they checked him and the breathing was stable. The Nurses calmed me and said that there was no need to take him to the Hospital, even so because the emergency services are complicated, full, and with the cold and all the delay in attending, he could have a relapse. The rest of the night was serene. Certainly I experienced the blessing of Mother Clara who always listens in our afflictions and watches over us, interceding to the All Powerful Father. And I thank for all the favours received.

M. J. G. V. - Muntinlupa, Philippines - Due to a convulsion, it was seen that my brother's baby had microcypholis. The family unite in prayer, asking for the intercession of Mother Clara. The second Scan revealed a less serious situation, and the baby only had to take some medication upto two years of age. Praise to God and Mother Clara who watches over us.

M. F. A. - Porto, PT - I underwent two surgeries of the lungs, in an interval of three months between one and the other. There were malignant tumours diagnosed during regular check-up of an auto-immune disease. Though they were in the initial stage and I had no symptoms, it was necessary to act at the earliest. All the days preceding the surgeries, I and my husband sought the intercession of Blessed Maria Clara do Menino Jesus, that they may be successful and I would be totally healed. It so happened and there was no need of any other type of treatment, except respiratory physiotherapy. I am very grateful to God and to the Virgin Mary and Blessed Maria Clara, for the favours received.

L. - Mem Martins, PT - Since four years my son had been unemployed. I visited the tomb of Mother Clara and with great faith, I asked her to arrange for him a job. I also asked the Sisters to help me in this request. They immediately said that they would pray for him. After a short time, he got a job. He is very happy doing what he likes. Thanks to Mother Clara and to the Heavenly Father, because I was heard. My faith in Mother Clara is great, for, it is not the first time that she has heard me. May Mother Clara intercede for all of us. Thank you very much. I am very grateful. A thousand thanks to her!

M. J. C. G. - V. P. Ancora, PT - I come to inform of a big favour, which I attribute to Mother Clara, whom I thank for this "miracle". Due to the great devotion and great trust that I have in her, daily I entrust to her all the families, praying in a special way for mine, and for all the children in the world, praying especially that all may be protected and blessed. It happens that a daughter of

mine, accompanied by her husband and eight year old daughter, with another grandchild and other family members, went to a party of friends. When returning home, in France, more or less at 22 or 23 hours, the husband who had with him the house key, needed to stay on a little longer, while the group walked up to the bus. A little after, a man showed up with a sword and a pistol and said to them: "Are you alone... I am going to finish up with you". The little girl, in her innocence, said to him: "You are wicked...". "I am not". He said and added: "I am going to kill you and that is all". All of a sudden, the man became immovable. Just then my son-in-law came and saw him in the same position, without reaction or even a word. He asked him what he was doing there, but the stranger continued motionless for a few second. Then without a word or gesture, he turned round and disappeared. Meanwhile, the police came and looked for him, but no one found him. Upon receiving the news over the telephone, I immediately exclaimed: *It was Mother Cara!*. And my family believed. We are grateful to Sr. Maria Clara.

A. G. M - Coruche, PT - Through this means I come to inform you of another big favour received through the intercession of Blessed Maria Clara do Menino Jesus. My son, despite suffering from anxiety and depression has overcome everything and was able to complete his 12th year with good classification and has joined the University, for the course that he desired, despite his doubts and ours too.

M. J. - Vigo, Espanha (ES) - M. J. - Vigo, Spain (ES) - A lady, close family friend called me to tell that her husband had suffered a very serious heart attack and was hospitalized in a very critical state. I reassured her as best I could and I told her that her husband would get better because she was going to start praying to "her little saint" (Mother Clara) and she would intercede for her husband. So I did; I started with the Crown of Praises to God and spoke to Mother Clara as I would to my mother, asking to heal him. After a few days, his wife called me, to inform that he was worse and that his kidneys, liver and lungs had stopped functioning and his heart was getting weaker and weaker, could fail from one moment to the next. I told them to have faith, because Mother Clara was interceding for him. I continued to pray with more confidence the Crown of Praises and the novena, asking Mother Clara. Days later, his wife called me again, informing that his kidneys, heart and other organs had started functioning. The doctors were surprised and commented that it had been a miracle. They kept him under observation for about eight days to see the evolution and everything was fine. All happily, gave thanks to the Lord and to Mother Clara, for her intercession.

M. J. N. - Faial, PT - My son passed his driving license examination at the very first attempt, thanks to God, for having so insistently asked Sr. Maria Clara, who helped me so much.

“Without union there is no Peace”

Blessed Maria Clara

Franciscan Hospitaller



Missionary Dynamism

Another 1st of December celebrating Blessed Maria Clara do Menino Jesus. There are always surprising events that give newness and grace to her feast day, where the Franciscan Hospitaller missionary dynamism is present. This time the news we bring, comes from Terceira island, one of the pearls of the Atlantic, where the *dies natalis* of Blessed Maria Clara had a particular brightness. Let us allow ourselves to be contaminated by the enthusiasm experienced right from the preparations to the realization, as will be described by Sr. Helena Maria de Meneses Godinho, responsible for the Confhic Delegation in the Azorean archipelago.

Sr. Helena, what special thing happened this year at the celebration of the Feast of Blessed Mother Clara, in the Terceira Island?

This year, for the first time the statue of Blessed Beata Maria Clara was enthroned in the parish Church of the Island, concretely speaking in S. Pedro, the Parish of Biscoitos, for public veneration of the faithful.

How did this idea come up? Was it at the request of the Parish Priest, of the faithful or the initiative of the Sisters?

The idea came from a five year old child, Pedro Diogo Luís, a student from our School of Santa Clara, who impelled us to celebrate Mother Clara, in his Parish in such a way that God would like to honour his Servant. One day accompanying his mother to the Church for the choir practice, not having seen among the Saints the statue of Mother Clara, who was very familiar to him, he asked his mother about her and she replied: you have to ask the Church Committee about it". Well, since one of the ladies in the choir belong to the Committee, Pedro promptly, asked her: "our Church does not have Mother Clara and my School has!" The question of Pedro, accepted with faith, motivated us to celebrate Mother Clara this year, in a special way in Terceira, on her Feast day!

- Sr. Helena, before we proceed, permit me to tell you how amazed I am to hear you! Just a five year old child



motivated the whole parish to celebrate Mother Clara in the manner that you relate to us! It is incredible, how the Word of God is fulfilled: "from the lips of children God does indeed raise Praise" (crf. Mt 21:16; Ps 8:2). It is also a case to say: no one stands between Mother Clara and her people. It is the simple, the little ones who give glory to God through Mother Clara and make her present in our life. We are attentive, Sr. Helena, listening to you with pleasure:



Having been requested to collaborate, we experienced deep satisfaction and imperative to make Mother Clara known. We therefore held two sessions of catechesis, one for children from the 1st to the 5th and the other for adolescents from the 6th to the 10th grades. Together with some parishioners and friends we prepared a vigil, in which the two facets of her hospitaller spirituality were highlighted: love of God and dedication to the brethren, through which she revealed to us the face of the God of the Beatitudes and of mercy that challenges our existence.

The high point was the solemn Eucharist on the day, a feast day throughout the parish of Biscoitos. The S. Pedro church was beautifully decorated; the parish choir helped us to open our hearts to praise and thanksgiving to God (Eucharist) presided by Fr. Dr. Helder Miranda, Rector of the Diocesan Seminary. The image, opening the procession, was placed in a prominent place, and, after the initial rite, it was blessed and incensed, followed by the ringing of bells, while the choir sang the Gloria, the assembly applauded and the children from the first to the fourth year of catechesis greeted Mother Clara, represented in the statue, with flower petals.

In the homily, the President stressed the courage of Mother Clara, in times of the pandemic of the Yellow Fever, just like the one we are experiencing with Covid-19, saying that he w impressed with this Woman who in such adverse times welcomed the appeals of God and of humanity.

At the end of the celebration, at the sound of the hymn of the beatification, the image was lifted on to the niche in

line with the main altar and a loud applause echoed in the temple, as manifestation of rejoicing of the faithful who with emotion were saying: “it will be an unforgettable day!” It was indeed a truly fraternal celebration. Nothing was lacking, including the Port of honour well replenished which concluded this very joyful day in unique fraternal proximity, uniting all in love and praise to God, in joy and trust in the intercession of Mother Clara, in mutual gratitude of the Parish Priest of S. Pedro, Rev. Fr. Luís Carlos Garcia de Castro, and the Franciscan Hospitaller Sisters, to all those who in this unique manner, in the Island of Terceira, Parish of Biscoitos, prompted the celebration of Blessed Maria Clara by a child.

Sr. Helena, one last question: what implication does the celebration of Mother Clara have for our life?

To celebrate Mother Clara is just to recall; it is allowing to be touched by the life and mission of someone who for certain criteria that guided her and the shades of her existence, that cannot be ignored, became a meaningful reference for us and the reason for acknowledgement and celebration for the legacy of her heart that unceasingly challenges us, because it is the bearer of meaning for our life, today. With this echo resounding in us, we thank Sr. Helena Maria de Meneses Godinho for the rich sharing that she brought to us, bearer of the meaning for our life, today. God bless you, Sr. Helena, the Sisters and collaborators, especially those of the Parish of S. Pedro dos Biscoitos, Terceira, Azores.

Towards Synod 2023

Journeying in **communion**, we are a *Church on the move*, praying, that in deversity of gifts and charisms, we may have only one heart and one soul, **participating** with responsibility and commitment in the synodal process, having the door wide open to the divine Ruah who wants us to be in **mission**, without walls, making present the proximity of the hospitaller God!

CANNOT FORGET THAT WHICH TOUCHES THE HEART

Great is the gratitude that we experience and owe to all our collaborators in divulgence and incrementation of the process of canonization of Blessed Maria Clara and generous donations to this cause, coming from various places, identified or non identified: Abrantes, A-dos-Cunhados, Afife, Amadora, Amarante, Amora, Barros da Paz, Caminha, Carnaxide, Cartaxo, Chaves, Codessais, Coimbra, Constantina-Ansião, Escapães-S.M.F., Fafe, Faial (Flamengos, Horta), Felgueiras, Ferreira do Alentejo, Formariz, Fronteira, Gandra-Paredes, Gualter-Braga, Guimarães, Leiria, Linda a Velha, Lindoso-P.B., Lisboa, Marvão-P. Régua, Matosinhos, Mem Martins, Messejana, Paço de Arcos, Paio Pires-Seixal, Penamacor, Pico-Madalena, Ponta Delgada, Ponte de Lima, Portimão, Porto, Póvoa de Varzim, Queijadas-Ponte de Lima, Queijas, S. João da Madeira, S. Martinho do Bispo-Coimbra, S. Miguel-Povoação, S. Paio de Merelim, S. Tirso, Silvares-Guimarães, Soutelo de Aguiar, Terceira (Angra, Lages, Praia da Vitória), Usseira, V. Castelo, V. N. Gaia, V. N. Paiva, V. N. S. Bento, V. P. Aguiar, V. P. Âncora, Vila Real, Vila Viçosa, V. Paraíso, Viseu.

Advice of Pope Francis to the Spouses

Dear husband and wives of the whole world

- «Your children, especially the younger ones, are looking for in you the strong witness of a strong and trustworthy love: relate with them, starting from an authority conquered day after day, of trust in you, in the beauty of your life, in the certainty of never being alone.
- Help them to discover God Father who loved them tenderly, right from the first moment, and every day leads them by the hand.
- Transform the society by your presence, initiatives, creativity and charisms, as an expression of ecclesial communion and interest in the common good.
- Build bridges between generations for the transmission of values that build humanity, values that constitute us as a people in our societies, and as People of God in the Church.
- Maintain your gaze fixed on Jesus present in your boat, thanks to the Sacrament of Matrimony. Only that way you will have peace, you will overcome conflicts, will solve the problems, seeing them in a different perspective.
- Pray insistently to the Holy Family that the power of love may make you capable of being concerned more with the other and may it inspire your decisions and actions (cf. 1 Cor 13:1-13; Rom 8:15; Gal 4: 6).
- Remember these three words: “excuse me, thank you, I am sorry”; kneel, together, before the Eucharistic Jesus, that you may find moments of peace, look with tenderness, kindness and smile.
- Live your vocation intensely; support the families and young couples with your experience; do not set aside the grandparents, living memory of humanity.
- And, please, do not forget to pray for me; as I do for you every day ». [Cf. *Letter to spouses, 26.12.2021*]

Imagens pp. 2 e 4, ESPIGA Pinto

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!

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