**Growing the Pie Week 6**

**Vision Belongs to the Future**

**Message Notes**

### We seek to help build the Kingdom of God on earth.

* Kingdom-building always begins and ends with a big vision that, hopefully, makes a big impact.
* We’re seeking a future where everyone in our little corner of the world, the most unchurched area of the country will, one day, call Jesus Christ “Lord” and “King of the Universe.”

### To realize that vision and build the Kingdom, we must have:

* Servant leaders;
* Strong faith to guide us;
* Passion and drive for the Kingdom of God;
* Wisdom to read the signs of the times and respond accordingly; and
* People who are active, engaged, and involved.

### Jesus’ Kingdom is different from all other kingdoms in three ways:

* It is not of this world, but comes from above because God is above;
* It is based on the objective Truth of God; and
* It is governed by a Shepherd-King, Jesus Christ, who gathers his followers into a single, unified flock.

### Everyone who belongs to this Kingdom, therefore:

* Belongs to God;
* Belongs to the Truth; and
* Belongs to Each Other

### Our vision is to create a church experience so irresistible that everyone will want to belong to this flock. To do that, we need your commitment of faith.

### Money is a spiritual issue and how we spend our money greatly affects our relationship with God.

### The greatest investment you can make with your money is in your local church, because we stand for an eternal kingdom where everyone belongs to God, everyone belongs to the Truth, and everyone belongs to each other.

**Christ The King**

***“The most noble and royal of grooms.”***

*By Lisa Rosenlund*

Primarily due to the romanticization of the relationship between Saint Clare and Saint Francis in the 1972 film, *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, and others like it, Saint Clare’s independent contribution to the Franciscan tradition is often overlooked.

Clare of Assisi was the first woman to join Francis’ community. Unlike Francis, whose family (though wealthy) were common, Clare came from a family of nobility and high social standing. At seventeen, she heard Francis preach and was captivated by his message. Against the wishes of her family, she asked to be admitted to his newly-formed group of followers.

Clare viewed Francis (twelve years older) as her spiritual father and was fond of describing herself as his *plantacula* (“little plant”). However, she was more than a disciple. Modern scholars view her as a “true cofounder and long-influential shaper of the [Franciscan] tradition.”

After Saint Francis’ death, Clare carried the torch and, according to Franciscan scholar, William Short, was “at the core of the tradition as it [was] being handed over to the next generation.” She was at the center of the early companions of Saint Francis. Three of the first followers were at her bedside when she died almost thirty years after Francis, the only time the three were in the same place at the same time after Francis’ death. Clare lived for forty years with her sisters at the church of San Damiano, then the site of a leper colony, which contained the crucifix that instructed Saint Francis to “rebuild the church.”

United as they were in their shared Franciscan values of love for Jesus and the Gospel life, the two saints differed not only in age, gender, and social status, but also in the manner in which they expressed their beliefs. Both embraced poverty, however, rather than traveling from place to place,

Clare chose a cloistered, contemplative life.

Clare’s style of prayer reflected her noble birth and used visualization and relational imagery. She often used royal images such as “precious stones, priceless pearls, sparkling gems, and a golden crown of holiness.” Saint Clare viewed herself and her sisters as having been joined in marriage to Jesus Christ. She refers to him as “the most royal and noble of grooms, a spouse whose beauty far surpasses all others.”

In contrast to Saint Francis, Clare followed a specific pattern of contemplation: *gaze, consider, contemplate and desire to* *imitate*. She used more intimate visual language such as gazing in a mirror, as opposed to aural language like “hearing God’s call.” Indeed, notes Franciscan theologian, Timothy Johnson: “[Clare’s] preference for visual language underlines her conviction that Christ will be continually and intimately present . . . if she envisions him daily as spouse and mirror.”

But Christ is not only a bridegroom for nuns like Clare; he is the highest love of every human soul. To welcome Christ as the king of your heart, follow Saint Clare’s simple four-step guide to prayer.