



Queer Francis and Trans Clare
Theology at the Margins

by
Sister Abigail Hester, OFC

Order of Franciscan Clareans
<https://franciscanclareans.blogspot.com>

Copyright © 2025 by Sister Abigail Hester, OFC
All rights reserved.

Introduction: Theology in the Wound

The world is burning. The poor are crushed by systems too vast to name and too intimate to escape. Queer and transgender bodies, especially those of color, are legislated, pathologized, and erased. Creation groans under the weight of exploitation. In such a world, theology must not speak from marble halls or golden thrones. Theology must emerge from the margins—from the compost of suffering, joy, resistance, and resilience. It must come from the wound.

This book is written from that wound.

Queer Francis and Trans Clare is not a romantic or sanitized reading of Franciscan tradition. It is a passionate, irreverent, loving reclamation. It is a queer kiss to a dusty icon. It is a trans woman's prayer in the spirit of Clare's light. It is a theology that risks heresy in pursuit of liberation.

Saint Francis of Assisi—the rich boy turned radical, the fool turned prophet, the lover of lepers and troubadour of trees—was never safe. He scandalized his family, disturbed the church, and made himself small in a world obsessed with power. Saint Clare of Assisi defied gender roles, rejected marriage, founded a community of resistance, and redefined holiness through the body. Their legacy, if taken seriously, is dangerous. And deeply queer.

What happens when we read Francis and Clare through the eyes of drag queens, nonbinary mystics, disabled feminists, incarcerated prophets, and Indigenous grandmothers? What if their stories are not locked in the thirteenth century but bursting forth in today's housing justice movements, gender nonconforming liturgies, and queer street processions? What if the poor Christ they followed is trans? What if theology is not only about ideas, but about embodiment, desire, and liberation?

This book emerges from a life of prayer, study, and protest. It draws from queer theology, feminist theology, liberation theology, postcolonial theology, and Indigenous spiritualities. It leans on the wisdom of the Westar Institute, the defiance of bell hooks, the irreverence of Marcella Althaus-Reid, the clarity of James Cone, and the hope of Saint Francis and Saint Clare. It takes seriously the spiritual insights of those cast aside by church and empire alike.

Each chapter engages Franciscan texts—both primary sources and hagiographies—with a hermeneutic of suspicion and a heart full of love. It challenges purity culture, explores gender transgression in the lives of the saints, critiques capitalism in the Franciscan tradition, and reclaims community as sacrament. Along the way, we will wrestle with how Franciscan

spirituality can nourish today's resistance movements, from queer asylum seekers to climate activists to abolitionist organizers.

This is a book for theologians and nuns, drag artists and seminarians, street preachers and wounded wanderers. It is for those who believe that Christ still walks among us—in binders and glitter, in sackcloth and ashes, in defiant joy and collective grief. It is for those who long for a theology that dares to be beautiful and broken.

Come. Let us follow the queer Christ. Let us walk with Francis and Clare, not to escape the world, but to help remake it.

Chapter One: The Queer Conversion of Saint Francis

"And when he kissed the leper, what was bitter became sweet." — The Little Flowers of Saint Francis

"Coming out is a sacrament." — Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

The Conversion We Think We Know

Francis of Assisi is often portrayed as a kind of medieval Disney character: talking to birds, hugging wolves, frolicking in flower-filled meadows. But this sanitized version does violence to his radical memory. The real Francis was far more unsettling—a privileged young man who underwent a slow and agonizing transformation that began not with nature, but with repulsion.

His conversion did not start with a song—it started with a leper.

As the story goes, Francis was a wealthy young man with dreams of military glory. One day, while riding, he encountered a leper on the road. Leprosy was seen not only as contagious but as morally disgusting. Francis, like most people of his class and time, was repulsed. But in that moment—whether by divine voice or gut-level shame—he dismounted, kissed the leper, and gave him alms. Later, he would describe that encounter as the turning point of his life.

The bitter became sweet. The flesh he had been taught to despise became sacrament.

This is not just a moral tale. This is a queer story. This is a trans story. This is a story about *unlearning disgust*, about *touching what the world deems untouchable*, and about *meeting God in what we were taught to fear*.

Disgust, Desire, and the Queer Christ

In a society organized by purity codes—ancient or modern—the leper is more than a sick person. They are a theological problem. Like the queer child in a fundamentalist home, the

disabled woman denied the Eucharist, the Black trans youth misgendered in the ER—the leper is a body marked as “unclean,” “unworthy,” “untouchable.”

Francis’s kiss of the leper was not just compassion. It was a rejection of the religious and social order.

Queer and trans people know this terrain intimately. Many of us were taught to hate our own bodies, to see our desires as diseased, our gender as deception. We were the “lepers” of the church—not despite our holiness, but because of it. The kiss Francis offered was not a cure; it was solidarity. It was a moment of divine recognition. In kissing the leper, Francis was kissing Christ.

As Patrick Cheng writes, queer theology insists on locating God “in the places of shame, exclusion, and transgression.” The conversion of Francis is not a tidy moral lesson—it is an invitation to queer the holy, to reimagine the margins as sacred ground.

Transing Francis: The Body That Changed

We often ignore how bodily Francis’s conversion was. He gave away his clothes. He stripped naked before the bishop. He refused armor. He embraced sores. His body—once clothed in silk—became emaciated, bleeding, even feminized in the mystic tradition. The wounds of Christ (the stigmata) bled into his skin. He called his body *Brother Donkey*—a burden, a beast, a partner.

This bodily transformation resonates with trans experience. No, Francis was not a transgender person. But the transing of the self—the courageous journey of embracing a new body, shedding old identities, and publicly declaring a new name—echoes deeply in Francis’s story. He transitioned from status to solidarity, from soldier to servant, from dominance to vulnerability. He transgressed gender roles, abandoned family expectations, and followed a call that restructured his flesh.

Marcella Althaus-Reid, in *The Queer God*, reminds us that theology must stop protecting the norms of capitalism, patriarchy, and respectability. It must instead locate God in the disordered desires and disruptive bodies that threaten empire. Francis did exactly this—not in theory, but in sweat, sores, and tears.

Francis Against Empire

Francis’s conversion was not just personal—it was political. He renounced his inheritance. He publicly rejected his father’s wealth. He chose voluntary poverty in a time of rising capitalism. He formed a community based not on power but mutual care. He refused to become a priest and instead lived among the poor, preaching barefoot, begging, and singing. This was no apolitical retreat. It was a protest.

Francis's queerness is not about sexual identity; it is about his refusal to conform to the dominant scripts of his time. His life was a living sermon against empire, hierarchy, and patriarchy. He loved creation, yes—but he also dismantled systems. He saw the face of God not in the altar but in the alley.

In this way, Francis becomes a patron saint of queer revolutionaries, of radical nuns, of anarchist gardeners and drag evangelists.

Kissing the Leper Today

What does it mean to kiss the leper today?

It means welcoming the trans woman banned from the church. It means housing the gay teen kicked out by their Christian parents. It means defending the disabled, the neurodivergent, the unhoused. It means dismounting from our positions of comfort and choosing solidarity.

It means becoming a new kind of body—a body that touches, weeps, rejoices, and heals.

Francis teaches us that conversion is not about belief but about transformation. And transformation always begins in the body.

Chapter Two: Clare's Radical Embodiment — Feminist Theology and the Reclaimed Body

“Place your mind before the mirror of eternity, place your soul in the brilliance of glory, and transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead.” — Saint Clare of Assisi

“The body is not an apology.” — Sonya Renee Taylor

The Woman Who Refused to Be Owned

Saint Clare of Assisi lived in a world where women were property—given in marriage to cement political alliances, hidden behind veils, and praised only for their obedience. Her family had arranged a wealthy marriage. Her destiny was mapped out in male handwriting.

And then she ran away.

At the age of eighteen, Clare fled her home in the night, guided by Francis and lit by candlelight. She cast off her jewelry, cut her hair, and claimed her body as her own. In the church of Our Lady of the Angels, she took sanctuary—not as a passive virgin but as a woman who dared to say no.

This was not just a religious act. It was an act of resistance. It was bodily rebellion. It was proto-feminist defiance.

Clare's story is often told as a sweet tale of pious devotion, but the reality is more scandalous. She left a world of patriarchal control and built a community of women outside the rules of marriage, church, and family. Her theology—crafted in letters and prayers—was one of radical self-possession, divine intimacy, and fierce solidarity.

Feminist Theologies and the Politics of the Body

Clare's refusal to marry, her insistence on poverty, and her foundation of a women's religious community were all acts of feminist theological embodiment. As feminist theologians such as Rosemary Radford Ruether and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza have argued, theology is not abstract—it is incarnational. It lives in the body. It speaks through blood, touch, hunger, ecstasy, and resistance.

Clare's body—marked by illness, devotion, and joy—was not a problem to be solved, but a site of divine encounter. She refused to conform to the expectations of the medieval Church, even defying the Pope to maintain her vow of absolute poverty. She would not let Rome define her holiness.

This insistence on bodily autonomy, on saying “my soul and my body are mine,” resonates with contemporary feminist and trans theologies. In a world where bodily autonomy is constantly denied—through anti-trans legislation, anti-abortion laws, medical neglect, and ecclesial control—Clare stands as a beacon of sacred resistance.

She did not ask permission. She embodied liberation.

Trans Clare: Beyond Binary Holiness

While Clare is not trans in the modern sense, trans and nonbinary people may see themselves in her story. She refused gender norms. She took up a life of radical community instead of domesticity. She made decisions about her body—how it would be clothed, what it would eat, how it would be seen.

This resonates deeply with trans embodiment.

As theologian Justin Tanis writes, trans bodies are holy not in spite of transition, but through it. Our scars, hormones, surgeries, pronouns, and clothes are not barriers to the sacred—they are icons of it. Clare's cut hair, simple dress, and emaciated frame were not signs of self-denial but self-claiming. She shaped her body as a witness.

Clare's language—especially in her letters to Agnes of Prague—is erotic, mystical, and bodily. She writes of gazing upon the crucified Christ, being pierced by love, and becoming the mirror

of God. These images break open the binary constraints of medieval piety and instead offer a vision of holiness rooted in the flesh.

As Marcella Althaus-Reid would say, this is “indecent theology”—holy, disruptive, embodied.

Community as Resistance

Clare’s monastery at San Damiano was not a convent—it was a counter-community. It was a holy refusal of empire. There, women lived without male control. They shared goods, prayed together, cared for the sick, and refused property ownership. This was not passive cloistering—it was active, political sanctuary.

This resonates with the feminist and queer vision of mutual aid, intentional community, and abolitionist dreaming. The Order of Franciscan Clareans is one such community in her lineage—a space where queer, trans, and disabled people find belonging in a world that tells us we do not belong.

Clare’s theology is not limited to liturgy—it is found in how she structured her community, in how she resisted papal compromise, in how she claimed her illness as part of her ministry.

She was not an icon of weakness—she was a general of grace.

Embodied Theology for the Margins

What Clare teaches us is that holiness is not about escaping the body. It’s about dwelling in it, transforming it, and honoring it.

In a world that seeks to control, discipline, and erase marginalized bodies, Clare invites us to listen to our hunger, to bless our desire, to love our flesh, and to build new communities where the poor and the exiled are family.

She invites us to place our souls in the brilliance of glory and become what we already are: radiant images of the Divine.

Chapter Three: Brother Sun, Sister Moon, and the More-Than-Human World — Ecotheology in a Time of Climate Crisis

“Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun...” — Francis of Assisi, *Canticle of the Creatures*

“The Earth is not a resource, she is a relative.” — Robin Wall Kimmerer

Singing with the World, Not About It

Long before the term *ecology* existed, Francis of Assisi lived it. He didn't view creation as a backdrop for human salvation or a fallen world to be subdued—he saw it as kin. When he called the sun his brother and the moon his sister, it wasn't poetic metaphor. It was spiritual truth.

Francis lived in relationship with the more-than-human world. He spoke with birds, wept for trees, and tamed a wolf not with violence but with trust. In his eyes, animals were not lesser beings, but fellow creatures praising God in their own tongues.

His *Canticle of the Creatures* is not a hymn to distant divinity but an embodied, ecological praise song. It places humans *within* creation, not *above* it. And it does so in a voice that is unapologetically intimate, kinship-based, and reverent.

For queer and trans people—so often cast out of “natural” orders and accused of violating “God’s design”—Francis’s radical inclusion of all beings offers an alternative theology: one of mutual belonging, of sacred wildness, and of deep interconnection.

Queer Ecology and the Undoing of Domination

Ecotheology is not just about caring for the planet—it's about dismantling the worldview that made ecological devastation possible: domination.

Queer ecology disrupts the binary thinking at the root of empire—human vs. nature, male vs. female, spirit vs. body, saved vs. damned. It challenges purity codes that separate the sacred from the messy, the clean from the wild, the “normal” from the deviant.

Francis and Clare lived this disruption. They embraced decay, poverty, illness, animals, and dirt. They did not cleanse the world—they *blessed* it. Their spirituality was not about escape but embrace.

As ecofeminist theologians like Vandana Shiva and Rosemary Radford Ruether insist, the oppression of women and the exploitation of the Earth are bound together. And as Robin Wall Kimmerer and Starhawk remind us, healing comes through relationship—not control.

Francis's refusal to own land, Clare's insistence on communal poverty, and their deep reverence for the Earth all subvert capitalist, colonial logic. Their vision is not medieval nostalgia—it is prophetic relevance.

The Earth as Sacrament

Francis saw the world not as neutral matter, but as alive with God. The sun, wind, fire, and water were not symbols—they were siblings. This is sacramental theology grounded in the dirt. The Earth was not something to be saved from, but a place where salvation unfolds.

Trans and queer people have often been alienated from their bodies, their land, and their place in the cosmos. But Franciscan ecotheology says: you belong here. Your body is good. The Earth delights in you.

This is why queer Franciscan theology must be ecological. Because our lives—like our ecosystems—are threatened by the same forces: white supremacy, extractive capitalism, transphobia, religious nationalism. These are not separate issues. They are *entangled roots of empire*.

When we plant gardens, we resist. When we build community gardens, ride bicycles, join water protectors, or honor Indigenous land sovereignty—we are doing theology.

Clare's Garden: Sanctuary and Soil

Clare's monastery at San Damiano had no grand cathedral. It was built among olive trees and sun-warmed stone. The sisters lived simply, ate from the land, and prayed with open windows.

This monastic ecology was not just asceticism—it was contemplative resistance. It modeled a way of life that did not consume but coexisted.

In *The Order of Franciscan Clareans*, we reclaim this legacy. We bless herbs, honor the seasons, pray with bees and soil, and listen to the more-than-human world as sacred teacher. Our theology is not just written in books—it is rooted in gardens, compost bins, and outdoor altars.

The Earth is not our possession. She is our elder.

Ecological Lament and Prophetic Hope

We live in a time of climate emergency. Species are vanishing, waters are rising, and forests are burning. To follow Francis and Clare today is to weep with the Earth. It is to hold funeral rites for extinct creatures, to grieve melting ice and poisoned air—and then to rise and act.

The *Canticle of the Creatures* includes praise for “Sister Death,” reminding us that even in the face of collapse, we are not abandoned. But that death is not a call to despair—it is a summons to courage.

Our task is to join the dance of resilience, to queer our relationship with the Earth, and to live lives of gentle ferocity.

This chapter is not an ending—it is an invitation. Plant something. Walk barefoot. Mourn the loss. Share the harvest. Speak up. Pray with the river. Resist the pipeline. Build a sanctuary garden in your body and your neighborhood.

The Earth is not a problem to be fixed. She is a beloved to be honored.

Chapter Four: Sacred Disobedience — Franciscan Resistance to Empire, Then and Now

“When the Emperor sins, the Church must resist.” — Peter Waldo, contemporary of Francis
“An unjust law is no law at all.” — Saint Augustine, quoted by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Not Your Obedient Saint

The sanitized version of Francis—the bird-whispering pacifist in a garden—is a distortion. Francis was not only a lover of peace; he was a dangerous threat to the status quo. He disobeyed his family, his bishop, his social class, and even the Pope. He walked away from empire not quietly, but publicly. And Clare did the same.

Their lives were acts of sacred disobedience.

Francis stripped naked before the bishop of Assisi and gave back his father’s money and name. Clare refused marriage, defied canon law, and founded a community of women without male control. Both of them rejected the religious-industrial complex that turned faith into power and piety into profit.

This is not quiet holiness. This is *holy resistance*.

What Is Sacred Disobedience?

Sacred disobedience is not rebellion for rebellion’s sake. It is the intentional, prayerful refusal to obey systems that contradict the heart of God. It is rooted in contemplative listening, prophetic courage, and a deep sense of moral clarity.

Francis refused to support the war economy. He wouldn’t carry a weapon or swear loyalty to a feudal lord. He kissed lepers and befriended Muslims during the Crusades. He begged instead of bought. He blessed instead of punished.

Clare refused to water down her rule to gain papal approval. She said no to compromise. She said no to comfort. She said yes to freedom.

This disobedience wasn’t reckless—it was rooted in spiritual discipline. Both saints listened deeply to God and acted with integrity, even when it cost them everything.

Today, this same spirit lives in water protectors blocking pipelines, trans clergy preaching without denominational approval, disabled activists occupying courthouses, undocumented organizers demanding sanctuary, and drag queens blessing communion.

Sacred disobedience is the heartbeat of queer Franciscan theology.

Empire, Then and Now

In the 13th century, empire looked like feudalism, papal armies, land ownership, and religious control. Today, empire wears different clothes: it looks like nationalism, racism, capitalism, patriarchy, and corporate Christianity.

But the logic is the same: power hoarded, bodies controlled, the poor discarded, and theology weaponized.

Francis and Clare saw it clearly. They refused to participate.

The Order of Franciscan Clareans follows in their footsteps. We reject the false peace of empire. We do not seek approval from religious institutions that silence queer voices, defend colonialism, or ban transgender people from ministry.

Instead, we proclaim: another world is possible—and it starts with disobedience.

Nonviolence as Active Resistance

Francis's embrace of nonviolence was not passivity—it was strategy. He refused to kill. He crossed enemy lines to speak with a Muslim sultan. He put his body between violence and the vulnerable. His poverty was not self-hatred—it was solidarity.

Nonviolence, in the Franciscan tradition, is not just about refusing weapons. It is about building communities where weapons are unthinkable. It is about disrupting systems without destroying people. It is about transforming rage into action and grief into love.

As Walter Wink describes in his writings on “Jesus and Nonviolence,” it is resistance that refuses to mirror the oppressor. It is power-from-below. It is a third way.

Francis and Clare embodied this. And queer and trans folks continue it today—in protest, in performance, in poetry, in prayer.

Holy Rulebreaking

To be queer is often to be criminalized simply for existing. Transness is legislated. Drag is banned. Gender-nonconforming youth are targeted. Loving our partners or changing our names becomes illegal.

And still—we rise.

Clare did not ask permission to found her community. Francis broke laws to serve lepers. Neither of them were “safe.” They were holy rulebreakers.

Theologian Emilie Townes speaks of “*troubling the waters*”—disturbing the calm surface to reveal the depth of injustice. Sacred disobedience troubles the waters. It refuses quiet complicity.

Queer Franciscanism is not about fitting in. It’s about showing up, speaking truth, and creating new structures.

Our Rule Is Love, Our Law Is Justice

In the Rule of the OFC, we do not ask for conformity. We ask for courage. We seek to build a world where no one is disposable, where theology is rooted in justice, and where obedience means listening to the Spirit—not the empire.

Sacred disobedience is how we live the gospel.

When the government outlaws trans healthcare, we will build clinics.

When the church bans queer clergy, we will ordain them anyway.

When the law says no, we say *love makes a way*.

This is the gospel of Francis and Clare—not an escape from the world, but a fierce, loving, embodied resistance to it.

Chapter Five: The Wound and the Wonder — Francis, Disability, and the Theology of the Scar

“Let your wounds become windows.” — Howard Thurman

“He bore the wounds of Christ in his flesh, not as a metaphor, but as a manifestation.” —
Fioretti di San Francesco (The Little Flowers of Saint Francis)

The Body as Testimony

In the final years of his life, Francis of Assisi was nearly blind, physically broken, wracked with illness, and scarred with the stigmata—those strange wounds said to mirror Christ’s crucifixion. His body, once strong and noble, had become a vessel of pain. But Francis did not hide it.

He preached from it.

This is not the triumph of suffering for its own sake. This is the radical theological claim that *God meets us in the scarred places*. In a world obsessed with health, perfection, and productivity, Francis offers a counter-gospel: holiness is found not in the absence of wounds, but in the sacredness of survival.

Francis's disabled body became a site of revelation. The stigmata weren't decorations. They were disruptions—reminders that the way of Christ leads through brokenness, and that pain, when held with love, becomes power.

Disability Theology and the Broken Christ

Disability theologians like Nancy Eiesland, Sharon Betcher, and Thomas Reynolds argue that traditional Christianity often treats disability as something to be fixed, pitied, or spiritualized away. But disability theology reclaims the disabled body as *holy in itself*. Jesus was resurrected with scars. The risen Christ did not erase his wounds—he showed them.

Francis, as a mystic, lived into this reality. He allowed his illness, his scars, his weakness, and his blindness to become spiritual gifts. He didn't overcome his body—he *became more human through it*.

For disabled, neurodivergent, chronically ill, and mad folks, this is good news. You do not need to be “healed” to be holy. Your pain is not a punishment. Your difference is not a sin. You are not a problem to be solved—you are a sermon to be heard.

Queer and trans bodies often carry their own scars—from surgery, from rejection, from trauma, from surviving in a world that treats us as disposable. Like Francis, we are invited to *preach from the wound*.

The Stigmatized Saint: Pain, Power, and Prophecy

The stigmata—the wounds of Christ received by Francis—are not about self-harm. They are about *identification*. They are a mystical union with the suffering Christ. They are an embodiment of solidarity. And they are deeply queer.

To carry the wounds of another in your flesh is to challenge the false binary between self and other. It is to say, “Your suffering is not separate from mine.” In a queer theological key, the stigmata are a nonbinary reality—Francis becomes a living threshold between heaven and Earth, suffering and joy, life and death.

The world stigmatizes certain bodies: Black bodies, fat bodies, trans bodies, disabled bodies, aging bodies. The stigmata reveal that stigma is not a curse to hide, but a site where Christ dwells.

As Delores Williams taught us, *survival* is itself a form of salvation. Francis survived through the love of his brothers, the song of creation, and the presence of God in his broken flesh. And so do we.

Brother Donkey: The Theology of the Body

Francis affectionately called his body “Brother Donkey”—stubborn, slow, worn-out, yet faithful. He did not idealize it, but he did not hate it either. He carried it like a friend on the long road of love.

This is a far cry from purity culture, body-shaming theology, or capitalist fitness idols. This is *compassionate embodiment*. This is living with limitations in a way that honors rather than resents.

Our Franciscan Clarean spirituality embraces *embodied theology*. We anoint our wounds. We name our disabilities. We bring our wheelchairs, our service animals, our medication, our neurodivergence, our fatigue, our PTSD, our trauma memories—to the altar. And we call them sacred.

Francis teaches us: the scar is not the end of the story—it is the holy beginning.

Scars as Communion

In his final days, Francis asked to be laid naked on the earth, unshrouded, unhidden, vulnerable. He died not in a palace but on the ground, among friends and birds and sky. His scars remained. His blindness remained. And in those final breaths, he gave us his clearest sermon:

You are not your usefulness. You are not your productivity. You are beloved, even when broken.

This is the gospel of the wounded Christ, the gospel of the stigmatized poor man of Assisi. This is the gospel for all of us with scars.

Come, show your wounds. They are the site of God’s glory.

Chapter Six: Queer Kinship and Chosen Family in the Franciscan Tradition

“Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” — Jesus (Matthew 12:48)

“The family you choose can be more sacred than the one assigned to you.” — Sister Abigail Hester, OFC

Blood Doesn’t Always Bless

When Clare ran from her family, she wasn’t just rejecting marriage—she was refusing the assumption that biology determines belonging. Francis, too, severed ties with his birth family, famously stripping naked before the bishop and saying, “From now on I will say, ‘Our Father

who art in heaven,’ not ‘my father Pietro.’” These were not small gestures. They were radical acts of disinheritance and spiritual reparenting.

The early Franciscan and Poor Clare movements were not extensions of the biological family; they were holy experiments in *chosen family*. Ragged brothers who begged on the streets. Women who took vows of poverty rather than marriage. Laypeople who gathered around them for prayer and support. This was not about bloodlines. It was about *belonging*.

In a world where many queer and trans people are disowned, excluded, or erased by their families of origin, the Franciscan tradition offers a profound and prophetic gift: **the family of love is more sacred than the family of law.**

Queer Theology of Kinship

Queer theology insists that relationship—not reproduction—is the foundation of holiness. Jesus redefined kinship around *solidarity, intimacy, and choice*. When he said, “Whoever does the will of my Father is my sibling,” he wasn’t dismissing family—he was reimagining it.

Queer and trans people have long formed “houses,” “pods,” “collectives,” and “found families” to survive in a hostile world. These are not second-best options—they are incarnations of divine love. The ballroom houses of queer culture, the chosen families of trans communities, and the kin networks of Black and Indigenous resistance are all sacred sites of God’s presence.

Francis and Clare modeled this. Their communities were built not by blood, but by *covenant*. They were formed through shared vows, daily care, mutual aid, and radical vulnerability. They lived as siblings in the Spirit, not prisoners of patriarchy.

As feminist theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz writes, “Lo cotidiano”—the daily, ordinary acts of mutual care—are where God dwells. The friars who bandaged Francis’s wounds. The sisters who carried Clare’s frail body to the altar. The laughter, the meals, the songs—they were theology in motion.

Naming, Gender, and the Creation of the Self

Francis and Clare both underwent ritual renaming. Clare, originally Chiara Offreduccio, became “Clare of Assisi.” Francis, once Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone, took the name “Franciscus”—the Frenchman, the outsider. Naming oneself anew is a queer act. It is a declaration that you are not who they said you had to be.

Trans people know this intimately. We choose names that align with our souls. We undergo ceremonies—sometimes formal, sometimes whispered—to claim the truth of who we are.

In the Franciscan tradition, names are not inherited—they are received, discovered, and spoken into being in community. Our kinship is not limited to who we were born as, but expanded through who we become together.

Monastic Life as Queer Communal Resistance

The early Franciscan and Clarean communities were *non-nuclear*, *gender-nonconforming*, and *economically interdependent*. They rejected private property, biological determinism, and social hierarchy. In today's terms, they were *queer co-ops for sacred mutual aid*.

The friars called each other “brother” even when unrelated. The sisters of San Damiano called each other “sister” even when the world called them outcasts. They did not ask permission to become family—they simply *did it*.

Queer kinship today takes many forms:

- Two trans elders raising a nonbinary teen.
- A drag house supporting its members through homelessness.
- A disability justice collective pooling resources and care.
- A queer Franciscan order of misfits and mystics choosing simplicity, solidarity, and shared meals.

These are not deviations—they are revelations.

Clarean Maternal Mysticism

Clare's writings are filled with maternal imagery, not because she bore biological children, but because she *birthed love into the world*. She speaks of becoming the mirror of Christ, of nourishing the divine presence within. Her spiritual motherhood was expansive, inclusive, and non-biological.

This resonates with queer understandings of parenting, caregiving, and leadership. You don't need a uterus or a last name to be a mother. You need tenderness, courage, and the willingness to nurture liberation.

In our Franciscan Clarean communities, we honor *queer parenthood* in all its forms: trans dads, lesbian moms, fairy godmothers, spiritual aunties, sibling mentors. We make family out of what the world calls scraps.

Because that's what Francis did.

The Gospel of Chosen Family

The gospel of Francis and Clare is not about retreating into solitary holiness. It is about building beloved communities that defy the logic of blood and empire. It is about choosing each other over and over again.

In a world that discards the vulnerable, we gather the exiles. In a society that enforces norms, we celebrate multiplicity. In a church that excludes, we build our own altar—one where everyone has a seat, a name, and a story that matters.

You are not alone. You are not beyond family. You are beloved. Welcome home.

Chapter Seven: Decolonizing Francis — Rethinking Mission, Encounter, and Empire

“Preach the gospel always. If necessary, use words.” — Attributed to Francis of Assisi

“Decolonization is not a metaphor.” — Eve Tuck & K. Wayne Yang

“I tremble for my church when I remember that God is just.” — Adapted from Thomas Jefferson

The Missionary Myth

Francis of Assisi is often claimed as the gentle missionary who sought peace with the Muslim world. The image of Francis crossing battle lines during the Crusades to meet Sultan Malik al-Kamil has been romanticized as an early model of interfaith dialogue. But we must ask: whose story is being told, and for what purpose?

Francis’s visit to Egypt happened in the context of *the Crusades*—a genocidal campaign drenched in blood and baptized in theology. While Francis may have gone peacefully, he did so within the violent structures of Western Christendom’s imperial project.

This chapter is not about canceling Francis. It’s about **decolonizing** him—reclaiming the parts of his story that resist empire, and naming the parts that have been co-opted into imperial theology.

Because love demands truth.

Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor

As Indigenous scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang insist, decolonization is not simply about inclusion or representation—it is about *the repatriation of land, the dismantling of empire, and the honoring of Indigenous sovereignty*. Anything less is tokenism.

When we apply this lens to Franciscan theology, we must reckon with the ways the order—though born in poverty and resistance—became entwined with colonial missions. Franciscan friars accompanied conquistadors, baptized Indigenous people without consent, and participated in the violent suppression of native religions across the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

This is part of the story. And if we are to be faithful to the queer, marginalized Jesus that Francis followed, we must grieve it, confess it, and actively resist it.

The Seeds of Resistance in Francis

To be fair: the *real* Francis had no interest in conquest. His Rule forbade friars from carrying weapons, acquiring land, or dominating others. When he met the Sultan, he did not try to convert him by force, but through presence. He left disappointed—because he realized the church was not ready for peace.

Francis's instinct was not colonization, but connection. He saw the poor, the leper, and the outsider as bearers of Christ's image. He wept at the destruction caused by war and wealth. These instincts—if followed—could have inspired a radically non-imperial Christianity.

But they weren't followed.

The Church institutionalized Francis. His barefoot rebellion was domesticated. His radical poverty was turned into aestheticism. His peace-making was weaponized into missionary expansion. And so, to honor Francis today, we must *refuse to let empire have the final word*.

Queering the Mission

Queer theology resists conquest. It is grounded not in evangelism but in *encounter*. Not in "saving souls," but in *seeing God in the other*. The idea that we must go into the world to "convert" people is a colonial theology that treats difference as danger.

Francis's true gift to us is not his missionary impulse, but his *unarmed vulnerability*. He met the Sultan with nothing but his robe. He knelt, not to conquer, but to witness.

We must queer the idea of mission—from domination to dialogue, from conversion to communion, from supremacy to solidarity.

Clare, too, was no missionary. She never left her monastery. But through her letters to Agnes of Prague, she built spiritual kinship across continents and cultures. Her theology was rooted in *deep listening*, not proclamation. In *mirror-gazing*, not conquering.

A Decolonial Franciscan Clarean Practice

What does decolonizing Franciscan theology look like today?

- **Land Acknowledgment:** Not just as a ritual, but as an ongoing commitment to Indigenous justice and land return.
- **Refusing Empire's Gospel:** We do not believe in a Jesus who conquers. We believe in a Christ who suffers, resists, and liberates.
- **Spiritual Solidarity, Not Conversion:** We walk alongside, not ahead. We see the sacred in all traditions, and we learn from those once called "pagan."
- **Economic Justice:** We resist the theft of land, labor, and lives by capitalism, and instead commit to mutual aid, reparations, and redistribution.
- **Centering the Margins:** We listen to Black, Indigenous, trans, disabled, and poor voices—not as charity, but as church.

Francis didn't own land. Clare didn't seek titles. Their lives were protest liturgies against empire. We reclaim them not to spread Western Christianity, but to birth a decolonial, queer, and justice-rooted spirituality for our time.

Let Us Meet Again, Barefoot

If Francis were to meet the Sultan today, it would not be in armor, nor under the flag of a nation. It would be barefoot, queer, and full of longing.

Let us walk that path—decolonized and beloved.

Chapter Eight: Holy Hunger — Food, Fasting, and Feasting in a Queer Franciscan Key

"We are all beggars at the table of grace." — Francis of Assisi

"To taste fully is to live deeply." — bell hooks

"The Eucharist is not just a symbol. It is a revolution of the table." — Sister Abigail Hester, OFC

The Theology of the Table

Francis and Clare knew hunger—literal, spiritual, and political. They fasted often, not to perform piety, but to stand in solidarity with the poor. They ate with others, not above them. They broke bread in community, blessing every crumb as grace.

The Franciscan table was never about control. It was about communion. A loaf of bread was not just sustenance—it was a sermon. Food was not earned; it was *received*. And in that receiving, Franciscan theology found its heart: *dependence, mutuality, gratitude*.

In a world obsessed with ownership, the friars begged. In a culture that prized feasts for the rich, Clare and her sisters ate simply. This was not self-denial—it was a holy refusal of excess.

This chapter explores how hunger, food, and the body intersect with queer, trans, feminist, and Franciscan spirituality.

Fasting and the Politics of Control

Throughout Christian history, fasting has often been weaponized. Especially for women, queer people, and the poor, it has reinforced control over the body: thinness as holiness, hunger as virtue, denial as identity.

But Francis and Clare did not fast to disappear. They fasted to *belong*—to the poor, to creation, to each other. Fasting was not about purity. It was about presence.

Today, queer and trans people live with many forms of hunger.

- Hunger for safety.
- Hunger for recognition.
- Hunger for gender-affirming care.
- Hunger for sacred touch.
- Hunger for inclusion at the table.

When the church denies us bread and body, we must name the fast for what it is: *a wound inflicted by religion*, not a spiritual gift.

To reclaim fasting, we must decolonize and degender it. Fasting can be an act of protest—against overconsumption, against climate destruction, against unjust food systems. It can be a contemplative practice—not to erase the self, but to listen more deeply.

Fasting, when freely chosen, becomes not erasure but *embodiment*.

Feasting: Pleasure as Resistance

If Francis's spirituality honored fasting, it also celebrated feasting. He sang to the sun. He blessed every herb. He danced with joy. He saw God in wine and bread, laughter and flowers. Clare, even in illness, delighted in the Eucharist—seeing in it not only sacrifice, but *satisfaction*.

In a queer theological key, feasting is *resistance*. To eat with delight is to say, "I am worthy of nourishment." To celebrate food is to reject theologies of shame. Pleasure—especially bodily pleasure—is holy.

Queer joy at the table is revolutionary.

A trans woman savoring a meal after years of dysphoria is sacred.

A drag banquet where communion is passed in glitter and grace is sacred.

A mutual aid potluck in a homeless encampment is sacred.

A disabled person being fed with tenderness is sacred.

These are not deviations from holiness. They *are* holiness.

Eucharist: The Queer Table of God

The Eucharist is the center of Franciscan spirituality. But we must ask: *Whose bodies are allowed at this table?* And who has been cast out?

When the church denies communion to queer people, divorced people, unbaptized people, or anyone deemed “unclean,” it betrays the table of Jesus—a table of scandalous welcome.

In queer Franciscan theology, the Eucharist is not a reward. It is a right rooted in belovedness. It is a meal for the broken, the bleeding, the hungry, the heretics, the hopeful. It is the meal Jesus shared with tax collectors and sex workers, the meal Clare received in mystical vision, the meal the friars begged for in alleys and fields.

The Eucharist is the trans body made visible. The nonbinary Christ made flesh. The communion of saints, drag queens, disabled elders, and neurodivergent prophets.

It is not a metaphor. It is a revolution.

Queer Franciscan Food Justice

Food is political. The poor go hungry while billionaires waste. Communities of color face food deserts. Trans people are turned away from shelters and soup kitchens. Indigenous lands are poisoned for profit.

To follow Francis and Clare today is to engage in food justice: – Grow gardens on church lawns.

- Turn monasteries into food pantries.
- Fast in protest of unjust policy.
- Feast in celebration of queer life.
- Share meals without judgment, price, or ID.

Let our kitchens be sanctuaries. Let our tables be altars. Let our meals preach liberation.

Come, All Who Hunger

You are welcome at this table. Not despite your hunger, but *because of it*. You are not too much or not enough. You do not need to earn your place.

Come hungry. Come joyful. Come weary. Come trans. Come queer. Come nonbinary. Come beloved.

There is bread enough. There is body enough. There is blessing enough.

This is the table of Francis and Clare.

This is the table of Christ.

This is your table too.

Chapter Nine: The Franciscan Option — Queer Monasticism in a Burning World

“We are pilgrims and strangers in this world, not owners or overlords.” — Francis of Assisi

“The monastic option is not retreat, but resistance.” — Ched Myers

“To be queer and Franciscan is to choose holy simplicity in a world that consumes us.”
— Sister Abigail Hester, OFC

What Is the Franciscan Option?

Much has been written in recent years about the so-called “Benedict Option”—a call for conservative Christians to retreat into enclaves of traditional values. But we need a different kind of option. We need a *Franciscan Option*: one that doesn’t escape the world, but enters it with love, poverty, joy, and holy protest.

The Franciscan Option is not about isolation. It’s about integration—living fully in the ruins of empire while building communities of resistance, contemplation, and care. It’s about embodying an alternative economy, a different kind of belonging, and a prophetic witness that doesn’t wait for institutional permission.

It is queer. It is poor. It is relational. It is political.
And it’s exactly what the world needs now.

New Monasticism for the Margins

New monastic movements—especially among queer Christians, disabled believers, anarchist spiritual collectives, and contemplative activists—have already been living the Franciscan Option. The Order of Franciscan Clareans is part of this living stream. We do not seek to recreate the 13th century. We seek to queer the monastery for the 21st.

This new monasticism is:

- **Non-hierarchical:** We reject clericalism, patriarchy, and rigid obedience.
- **Radically inclusive:** All genders, bodies, and backgrounds are welcome.
- **Grounded in justice:** We live simply, act boldly, and organize fiercely.
- **Rooted in daily rhythms:** Prayer, mutual aid, rest, and study shape our days.

You don’t need a stone cloister to be a Franciscan Clarean. Your kitchen table is an altar. Your prayer walk is a pilgrimage. Your community garden is a monastery.

To be queer and Franciscan is to live liturgy in drag, to make Eucharist in alleyways, to do theology in protest chants, to find divinity in trauma-informed therapy and collective healing.

This is not nostalgia. It's revolution.

Holy Poverty in a Time of Extraction

Francis's vow of poverty wasn't about personal purity—it was a *political stance*. He refused to participate in an economy built on exploitation. He gave away everything not to suffer, but to join the suffering. Clare, too, insisted her sisters live without private property—not to be ascetics, but to be free.

In a capitalist world that commodifies everything—gender, time, attention, bodies—the Franciscan Option says: enough.

We choose: – Shared housing over accumulation

- Community gardens over fast food
- Sabbath over grind culture
- Giving away over hoarding
- Mutual aid over charity
- Simplicity over spectacle

Poverty is not about lack. It is about interdependence.

As Ilia Delio writes, “The Franciscan heart lives with an open hand.” That's what we need now—not just as individuals, but as a global church reimagined by the queer poor.

Chastity and Queer Embodiment

Franciscan chastity has often been misunderstood. It's not sexual repression—it's liberation from domination. In queer monastic life, chastity can mean many things: sacred singleness, polyamorous honesty, nonsexual intimacy, body-affirming celibacy, erotic devotion.

The point is not control. The point is consent, truth, and freedom from commodification.

We reclaim chastity as: – An honoring of all bodies, not just the “pure”

- A rejection of patriarchal ownership of women
- A resistance to the pornification of love
- A celebration of erotic diversity
- A centering of *relational holiness* over sexual normativity

Francis kissed lepers. Clare caressed the Eucharist. Our sexuality, too, can be holy touch—not because of what it denies, but because of how it connects.

Obedience Reimagined

In the Franciscan Option, obedience is not blind submission. It's deep listening—to God, to the Earth, to the cries of the oppressed, to your own body.

We are not obedient to empire. We are obedient to love.

We listen: – To the trans child cast out of church

- To the elder who survived conversion therapy
- To the refugee longing for sanctuary
- To the Black queer disabled prophet in our midst
- To the groaning of the Earth beneath oil rigs and bulldozers

That's our rule. That's our obedience.

You Can Live This Way

You don't need to take final vows to be a Franciscan Clarean. You can live the Franciscan Option now: – Light a candle and bless your body every morning.

- Join or start a queer prayer group.
- Grow a tomato plant on your windowsill.
- Refuse to buy into fashion that exploits.
- Write love letters to yourself.
- Feed your neighbor.
- Speak up at city hall.
- Bless your scars.
- Dance with joy.

You are already enough. You are already holy.

This queer monastic path is *not about perfection*. It's about belonging, boldness, and belovedness.

Chapter Ten: Daring to Bless — Queer Sacraments and the Revolution of Grace

"If God can use water and bread, surely She can use glitter and gender too." — Sister Abigail Hester, OFC

"The sacrament is not in the object, but in the love." — Marcus Borg

"Blessed are the freaks and the flamboyant, for theirs is the kingdom of God." — A queer beatitude

Who Gets to Bless?

Who gets to anoint? Who gets to preside? Who gets to say, "This is holy"?

In traditional ecclesial systems, sacraments are often locked behind ordination, hierarchy, cisnormativity, and patriarchy. Only certain bodies are deemed worthy to touch the sacred. Only certain voices are allowed to speak divine words. Only certain gender expressions are allowed to bless.

But queer Franciscan theology asks: *What if the real scandal of the gospel is that everyone is a priest?*

Francis was never ordained. Clare led a religious movement without hierarchical power. They blessed bread, bodies, and the broken—not because they had permission, but because they had love.

To follow their path today is to reclaim the sacramental not as institutional monopoly, but as divine revolution.

Queering the Sacraments

The sacraments—baptism, Eucharist, confession, anointing, vows—have long been treated as tidy rituals. But they were never meant to be gatekept. They were meant to be *encounters* with the holy in the flesh-and-blood world.

A queer sacramental theology dares to say:

- Baptism happens in a river, at a Pride parade, in a tearful gender reveal ritual for the self.
- Eucharist is found at the drag brunch where the broken body of the queer Christ is shared in pancakes and prosecco.
- Confession is two trans friends weeping together in the safety of chosen family.
- Ordination is a nonbinary street preacher handing out communion in front of a state capitol.
- Marriage is the covenant made between lovers who are banned by the state but beloved by the Spirit.

Queer sacraments are not simulations. They are *incarnations*. They proclaim that grace is not bound by canon law—it bursts through every border.

Anointing the Wounded

Francis bore wounds. Clare lived in pain. Their bodies were not pristine—they were pierced and weary. And they did not hide them.

In queer and trans communities, we carry scars—physical, emotional, spiritual. Many of us were told we could not be healed, or that we needed to be “fixed” to be holy.

But we dare to bless the wound.

The Franciscan Option includes *anointing ceremonies for trans surgery, blessings for name changes, rituals for coming out, candles lit for hormone therapy, confessions screamed out at protests, and holy oils for the disabled and the brokenhearted.*

We say: your wound is not your shame. It is your altar.

Bless it.

Decentering the Clergy

In the Franciscan Clarean Way, *every person is a living sacrament.* You don't need a stole. You need sincerity. You need presence. You need love.

Queer theology insists that we all have access to the sacred. That's what makes it so dangerous to systems of control.

When a disabled lesbian priest offers communion in a wheelchair—she is breaking systems.

When a Black trans man baptizes his child in a community kiddie pool—he is tearing the veil.

When a neurodivergent queer person blesses their friend's hormones with lavender oil and psalms—this is not extra-liturgical. It is *extraordinary grace.*

We must not ask permission to bless. We must *dare* to bless.

Sacramental Justice

The sacraments are not just private rituals. They are public acts of theology. When we bless, we declare: – God is here.

- This body is holy.
- This bread is enough.
- This love is valid.
- This grief is sacred.
- This transition is divine.
- This queer joy is a miracle.

Sacraments in the Franciscan Clarean tradition are not escape routes. They are *revolutionary practices of incarnation.*

They are how we survive.

They are how we celebrate.

They are how we build a world in which *everyone belongs at the table.*

A Litany of Queer Blessing

Let us close this chapter with a Franciscan Clarean litany:

- Blessed are the genderqueer, for they reflect the mystery of God.
- Blessed are the polyamorous, for they teach us that love cannot be limited.
- Blessed are the disabled, for their bodies are the body of Christ.
- Blessed are the drag queens, for they know how to celebrate resurrection.
- Blessed are the asexual, for they show us the beauty of stillness.
- Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom we're trying to build.
- Blessed are the wild, the weird, the wounded, the wonderers.
- Blessed are you, right now, just as you are.

You do not need a collar to bless.

You do not need approval to preside.

You are already a sacrament.

Chapter Eleven: Fire in the Bones — Prophetic Imagination and the Queer Franciscan Future

"There is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones." — Jeremiah 20:9

"We must dare to imagine the world we want, not just survive the one we're given." —

Audre Lorde

"Francis dreamed of peace. Clare dreamed of freedom. Let us dream beyond even them." — Sister Abigail Hester, OFC

Prophets, Not Preservationists

Francis and Clare were not spiritual curators—they were *prophets*. They didn't exist to preserve the status quo of church or state. They existed to *disrupt* it. To reorder the world through love, simplicity, and justice. To imagine—boldly—a future no one else could yet see.

Prophetic imagination is not about predicting the future. It is about refusing to accept the present as permanent.

In every generation, the Spirit raises up those with fire in their bones—people who carry dreams too dangerous to institutionalize. This chapter is a call to *be those people*.

Queer Futures Are Franciscan Futures

We who are queer and trans, disabled and neurodivergent, poor and exiled—we already live in prophetic tension. Our very existence defies the binary, the budget, the ballot box, and the theological norm. We do not fit. And that is our gift.

The Franciscan future is not a return to the past. It is a bold, unapologetic queering of tradition, a liberation of love from the vaults of Vatican control, a rewilding of Christianity itself.

We are not trying to save the church. We are trying to *resurrect the gospel*.

What does that future look like?

- Gender-neutral liturgies in public parks.
- Mutual aid monasteries on reclaimed land.
- Disabled queer saints canonized by the people, not by Rome.
- Communal vows that center ecology, decolonization, and joy.
- Eucharist made from local harvest, shared at protest barricades.
- Networks of queer spiritual resistance that span borders and denominations.

We are already building it.

Holy Rage and Radical Joy

The prophet Jeremiah said the word of God was like fire in his bones—so hot he couldn't hold it in. That's what this calling feels like. *It burns*. It grieves. It disrupts. But it also *sings*. It dances.

Queer prophetic imagination is not just rage—it is *radical joy*.

Francis stripped naked before the bishop *laughing*. Clare wrote poetry *in ecstasy*. We, too, proclaim the future not just in fury but in *fabulousness*. In drag. In dance. In daring to delight.

Our queer Franciscan future must be joyful or it will not be just.

As adrienne maree brown teaches, "*What we practice at the small scale sets the pattern for the whole system.*" If we want a church without shame, we must begin by blessing ourselves. If we want a world without prisons, we must build relationships that repair harm. If we want a theology that frees us, we must speak it—even trembling.

The Order of Franciscan Clareans and the Road Ahead

The OFC is not the end of the story. It is a *seed*. A beginning. A wild idea with roots in Assisi and branches reaching into every corner of queer survival and sacred resistance.

Our work is to:

- Build queer, trans, and feminist spiritual community
- Write theology that speaks to now
- Grow food, share wealth, protect one another

- Bless without apology
- Organize without hierarchy
- Love without shame
- Pray without fear
- Dream without permission

We are not waiting to be included. We are including *ourselves*.
We are not reforming systems. We are *resurrecting imagination*.

And we are doing it together.

Francis and Clare Are Not Finished

Their bones may rest in Assisi, but their spirits are dancing in our drag sanctuaries, our protest chants, our transition ceremonies, our trauma healing circles, our garden monasteries, our whispered prayers in gender-neutral bathrooms and crowded emergency rooms.

The queer Franciscan future is already here—whenever we love boldly, live simply, and belong deeply.

The fire is in our bones. Let it burn.

Chapter Twelve: Benediction for the Margins — Living the Queer Franciscan Way

“May the Lord bless you and keep you, may He show His face to you and have mercy on you.” — The Blessing of Saint Francis

“I will not be silent, I will not be ashamed, I will not be erased.” — Trans Blessing Prayer

“Holiness is not found in leaving the world behind, but in touching it more tenderly.” — Sister Abigail Hester, OFC

You Are Already on the Path

You don’t need to wear a habit. You don’t need to take final vows. You don’t need to be celibate, scholarly, or sinless.

If you are loving in the face of hate, if you are living in truth despite fear, if you are holding the hands of the hurting, planting seeds of justice, blessing your queerness, breaking bread with the broken—you are already walking the queer Franciscan path.

This is not a destination. It is a way of being.

**It is a song you sing with your body.
It is a wound you touch with reverence.
It is a prayer whispered through protest.
It is a sacrament made from crumbs and kisses.**

You are already enough. You are already sacred.

Living the Rule in Everyday Flesh

The Franciscan Clarean Rule of Life is not just a document. It's a rhythm, a relationship, a radical "yes" to love in a world of "no." It calls us to:

- **Live simply in a time of consumption**
- **Love boldly in a time of repression**
- **Belong deeply in a time of exile**
- **Bless freely in a time of control**
- **Resist nonviolently in a time of empire**
- **Weep honestly in a time of denial**
- **Laugh joyfully in a time of despair**

To live this Rule is to risk looking foolish. So did Francis. So did Clare. So did Christ.

Let the neighbors gossip. Let the bishops fume. Let the empire tremble.

We choose the margins because that's where Christ is born—again and again—in queer wombs, in Black trans dreams, in disabled cradles, in the back alley Eucharist and the communal table.

A Blessing for You, Beloved Reader

Let me send you forth now with this Franciscan Clarean benediction:

▽ May your body be blessed—every scar, every stretch mark, every soft place you've learned to love.

▽ May your name be blessed—especially the one you chose for yourself, the one whispered in prayer and shouted in joy.

▽ May your hunger be holy—whether for justice, for intimacy, or for warm bread shared in community.

▽ May your gender be an icon of divine creativity.

▽ May your queerness be your anointing oil, not your thorn.

▽ May your grief be companioned, not dismissed.

▽ May your joy be defiant and loud and contagious.

▽ May your dreams of a different church be the seeds of a new world.

▽ And may the spirit of Francis and Clare—those holy troublemakers of tenderness—walk with you, barefoot and free, singing under your breath, dancing through your doubts, and showing you again and again...

You are not alone.

You are not a mistake.

You are part of the revolution.

And you are deeply, wildly, eternally loved.

Final Words: This Is Not the End

This book is only a doorway. The queer Franciscan path continues—through your breath, your hands, your altar, your people.

We bless you as you live this truth:

God is not found in control but in communion.

Not in purity but in presence.

Not in shame but in shining.

Not in the center of empire but at the edge—

where the queer saints gather,

where the trans angels sing,

where Francis and Clare dance,

and where you, beloved, belong.

Go now.

Preach with your life.

Bless without fear.

Queer the church.

Transfigure the world.



Amen.

About the Author

Sister Abigail Hester, OFC is a queer transgender Christian nun, preacher, and the founding servant of the Order of Franciscan Clareans (OFC)—a radical new monastic

community committed to simplicity, justice, inclusion, and love. Drawing inspiration from Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi, Sister Abigail weaves together queer theology, liberation theology, feminist spirituality, and Franciscan mysticism into a powerful witness at the margins.

A lifelong student of both scripture and social movements, Sister Abigail blends scholarly depth with prophetic fire, crafting works that are both pastoral and provocative, grounded and revolutionary. Her books, sermons, and devotionals speak especially to queer and trans Christians seeking belonging, but her gospel is for everyone: love is wider than the church has allowed, and holiness lives in our bodies, our wounds, and our joy.

Through the OFC, Sister Abigail works to create spaces of radical belonging, sacred resistance, and spiritual healing for all people, especially those the institutional church has silenced or exiled. Whether blessing hormone therapy, leading herbal healing workshops, writing inclusive commentaries on Scripture, or organizing mutual aid, she believes that theology must be lived—boldly, simply, and in community.

She lives, prays, writes, and organizes from her heart—one grounded in the wounds of Christ, the laughter of the saints, and the stubborn hope of the queer poor.

You can follow Sister Abigail's ongoing ministry and find more of her work at:

 franciscanclareans.blogspot.com
