



Sacred Simplicity
Economics, Ecology, and the Clarean Way
By Sister Abigail Hester, OFC

Order of Franciscan Clareans

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Introduction: The Call to Sacred Simplicity

We live in a time of profound contradiction.

The world has never been more technologically advanced, and yet we stand on the precipice of ecological collapse. Billionaires soar to space while the poor can't afford to breathe clean air or drink safe water. We are surrounded by stuff—cheap, disposable, and mass-produced—yet spiritually, we are starving.

This is the fruit of a system rooted in exploitation: capitalism. It commodifies everything—land, labor, water, bodies, even love. It promises abundance but delivers anxiety, hoarding, and burnout. It teaches us to crave what can never satisfy. In this world, rest is laziness, simplicity is failure, and enough is never enough.

But what if we turned our attention elsewhere? What if we listened to the whisper of an ancient wisdom that speaks from the margins?

The Order of Franciscan Clareans stands as a small but radiant witness to another way—a way of sacred simplicity.

We follow in the dusty, joyful footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, who cast off the wealth and expectations of empire to embrace Lady Poverty and Sister Earth. They saw God in the wind and in the leper, in silence and song, in bread shared and injustice named. Their lives were not escapes from the world, but deep dives into its aching beauty and suffering.

They believed—and we believe—that simplicity is not about scarcity. It is about freedom. It is about reclaiming our souls from the clutches of capitalism. It is about choosing to live light so that others may simply live.

In this book, we offer a fierce critique of capitalism, consumerism, and climate injustice—but we also offer hope. We draw from liberation theology, queer theory, ecofeminism, Franciscan spirituality, and global movements for justice. We challenge you not just to think, but to act. Not just to resist, but to reimagine.

We write not as experts or saints, but as pilgrims. We are trans and disabled and working-class. We are neurodivergent and radical and queer. We are friars of the dirt and nuns of the street. We believe that theology must touch the earth and take sides with the poor.

This book is a companion on the journey. A lantern in the dark. A protest against despair.

Welcome to the way of sacred simplicity.

Let us walk it together.

Chapter 1: Capitalism and the Cross

How Profit Culture Crucifies the Poor

“You cannot serve God and Mammon.”

—Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 16:13)

The Gospel According to the Market

Capitalism is not neutral. It is not merely an economic system. It is a theology—a belief system with its own saints (the rich), its own sacraments (credit, ownership, branding), its own temples (shopping malls), and its own eschatology (endless growth). It preaches the gospel of scarcity: that there is not enough, that we must compete to survive, that success means stepping over others.

This gospel is fundamentally incompatible with the teachings of Jesus.

Where Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor,” capitalism says, “Blessed are the profitable.”

Where Jesus fed the multitudes, capitalism patents seeds.

Where Jesus flipped the tables in the temple, capitalism builds cathedrals of commerce.

The cross was not an accident. It was the price Rome made him pay for challenging the imperial status quo. In today’s world, empire lives on not just in governments, but in economic systems that sacrifice the many for the wealth of the few.

The Crucified Classes

To speak of the crucified today is to speak of those who are invisible and expendable to the system:

- The low-wage workers, essential but disposable
- The unhoused, criminalized for surviving
- The Indigenous water protectors resisting pipelines
- The global South communities bearing the brunt of climate chaos
- The disabled and neurodivergent who are deemed “unproductive”
- The trans women denied healthcare and safety

As liberation theologian Jon Sobrino wrote, “The crucified peoples of history are those who have been tortured and killed by unjust systems—and who remain so.”

To follow Christ is to stand at the foot of those modern crosses.

Prophets of Economic Resistance

Francis and Clare of Assisi are not mere medieval romantics. They were economic revolutionaries.

Francis tore his fine clothes in the public square and returned them to his merchant father. Clare fled a life of privilege to live communally with sisters in a small, poor house, refusing all dowries and church-endowed wealth. They were not running from the world—they were confronting the structures of power with holy foolishness.

Dorothy Day called capitalism a "filthy, rotten system." José Miranda argued that Marxism took the ethics of Jesus more seriously than many churches. James Cone warned that white capitalism enslaved Black bodies in both literal and economic chains.

We stand in their lineage, not to worship them, but to continue the struggle.

The Hidden Costs of Capital

The cost of capitalism is more than economic—it is ecological and spiritual.

Rivers are poisoned for profit. Forests are sacrificed for fast fashion. Animals are factory-farmed as if they do not feel. The Earth is treated as a dead thing rather than a sacred being.

And within our souls, capitalism breeds anxiety, shame, comparison, and isolation. It makes rest feel like failure. It teaches us that our worth is tied to our productivity, not our belovedness.

Franciscan Clarean Insight:

In the OFC, we reject the lie that value is economic. Our worth is not earned—it is given by God. We refuse to be good consumers of a broken system. Instead, we choose to be faithful creators of another world.

The Gospel of Enough

What, then, is the good news?

That we do not have to live this way.

Jesus offers a radical alternative: the kingdom (kin-dom) of God—a society based not on extraction but on mutuality. The early church practiced an economy of shared goods (Acts 2:42–47). Jesus taught a daily bread ethic—not hoarding, but trust. He called his followers to store up treasures in heaven, not Wall Street.

Sacred simplicity is not poverty born of injustice. It is the deliberate refusal to participate in unjust wealth. It is choosing solidarity over status, community over competition, and joy over greed.

It is, as Francis and Clare taught us, a path of freedom.

Reflection Questions:

1. In what ways have you experienced the spiritual effects of capitalism?
 2. What does “enough” look like in your life?
 3. Who in your community is being crucified by the economy, and how can you stand with them?
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Chapter 2: The Lie of Consumer Salvation

How Capitalism Replaces God with Stuff

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?”

—Isaiah 55:2

The Cult of Consumption

Walk through any shopping center, scroll through social media, or watch a few minutes of television, and you will quickly encounter a message louder than any sermon: You are incomplete. You are lacking. But don’t worry—this product, this service, this upgrade will save you.

Capitalism has created a counterfeit salvation narrative.

Instead of confession, we are invited to confess our flaws to algorithms and influencers.

Instead of repentance, we’re sold a rebrand.

Instead of baptism, we are immersed in the waters of debt.

Instead of communion, we consume.

Consumer culture tells us that our deepest longing—belonging, identity, transcendence—can be fulfilled by what we buy. It replaces the sacred with the synthetic.

This is not just bad economics. It’s bad theology.

The Gospel of Scarcity

Consumer capitalism is built on a spiritual lie: scarcity. The idea that there isn’t enough love, enough beauty, enough security to go around. It fuels anxiety, comparison, and relentless striving.

In the logic of capitalism, you are never enough unless you are consuming. You are never safe unless you are hoarding. You are never seen unless you are selling yourself.

This theology is antithetical to the Gospel of Jesus, who declared that *the kingdom of God is already among us*. Who taught us to pray for *daily bread*, not designer brands. Who lifted up lilies and birds as reminders that we are already cared for.

As Virginia Ramey Mollenkott once put it, “The God I know doesn’t sell love in installments.”

The Religion of Image

In a consumer society, identity becomes branding. “You are what you buy.” Queer and trans people, in particular, are both targeted and erased by this system. We are exploited as markets, but our lives are often deemed “unprofitable” when we do not conform to cisheteronormative standards of beauty and success.

Consumer culture teaches trans girls to hate their faces and buy new ones. It tells disabled people to conceal their impairments and invest in appearing “normal.” It commodifies Black culture while denying Black lives.

In this false religion, to be valuable is to be visible—and visibility is for sale.

But Francis and Clare remind us: true worth is hidden with God.

Franciscan Clarean Insight:

Simplicity is not about shame or asceticism. It is about clarity. About seeing past the noise of marketing to the miracle of being. About reclaiming joy in what cannot be bought—friendship, ritual, breath, sunrise.

The Joy of Refusal

What does it mean to say no to the machine?

It means breaking the cycle of compulsive consumption. It means learning to delight in re-used, homemade, found, gifted. It means practicing *enoughness* as an act of sacred rebellion.

It may mean:

- Refusing fast fashion and choosing clothes with stories
- Learning to repair instead of replace
- Sharing tools, gardens, and meals with others
- Creating community economies not centered in money
- Making art that doesn’t sell, just heals

It is not about being perfect. It is about being free.

Clarean Refusal

St. Clare famously refused the Pope’s permission to own property “in community” because she believed it would make her sisters servants of mammon rather than God. She did not seek approval—she sought integrity.

Clare's way of poverty was not misery. It was a luminous joy that comes from depending on God and one another rather than on wealth. She once told a sister, "Be faithful, and God, who is faithful, will provide."

In our own time, sacred simplicity calls us not to escape the world, but to live in it differently.

Reflection Questions:

1. What product or image have you been told will "save" you?
 2. How do you resist the narrative that your worth is tied to your consumption?
 3. What is one area of your life where you could embrace sacred simplicity this week?
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Chapter 3: Climate Change as a Spiritual Crisis

Ecocide, Systemic Sin, and the Groaning of Creation

"For the creation waits with eager longing... groaning in labor pains until now."
—Romans 8:19, 22

The Earth Is Crying Out

The fires burn, the oceans rise, the storms intensify—and the Earth groans. The groaning is not passive. It is the pain of a violated body, a desecrated sanctuary. Climate change is not just a technical or political issue. It is a spiritual crisis, a moral emergency.

The same systems that exploit workers and devalue trans lives are the ones that poison rivers, melt glaciers, and decimate rainforests. The oppression of people and the exploitation of the planet are two sides of the same demonic coin.

To pollute the Earth is to blaspheme the Creator.

To exploit the poor for profit is to crucify Christ again in their bodies.

To ignore this moment is to deny the Gospel.

Ecocide as Systemic Sin

Liberation theology teaches us to look not just at individual choices, but at systems of sin. Climate destruction is not just about littering or forgetting to recycle—it is about economies that extract, militaries that destroy, and empires that deny.

- The fossil fuel industry knowingly lied about climate science for decades.
- Western nations dump their waste and toxins on the Global South.

- Indigenous lands are stolen and destroyed in the name of “development.”
- Climate refugees are denied asylum while wealthy nations fortify their borders.

This is ecocide. This is empire. And it is a form of systemic sin.

From Gustavo Gutiérrez to Starhawk, prophets of liberation and ecology have called us to repent not only of what we’ve done, but of what we’ve allowed.

Queering the Climate Conversation

Climate justice is also queer justice.

Queer and trans communities are often on the frontlines of environmental collapse—living in flood-prone areas, facing housing insecurity, relying on medications vulnerable to supply chain disruptions. And yet, mainstream climate activism often centers white, cisgender, affluent narratives.

A Clarean ethic demands we queer the climate conversation:

- Centering Indigenous and Black ecological wisdom
- Uplifting disabled and neurodivergent adaptations to a changing world
- Valuing community care, mutual aid, and healing—not just policy

Climate collapse is a gendered and racialized reality. Our solutions must be too.

St. Francis, Patron of Ecology—and Holy Disrupter

It is tempting to reduce Francis to a sweet bird-loving saint. But Francis was radical. He kissed lepers, renounced his inheritance, and called all of creation “sibling.” He did not merely appreciate nature—he lived as kin with it.

He preached to birds not because they were cute, but because the Church was deaf.
He addressed the sun and moon as family—not metaphors, but realities.
He saw in Brother Fire and Sister Water not resources, but sacred persons.

Franciscan Clarean Insight:

Sacred simplicity means more than using bamboo toothbrushes. It means confronting the powers that destroy the Earth. It means standing with those who are being drowned, burned, and displaced. It means reweaving ourselves into the web of life.

The Eucharist of the Earth

What if we treated the Earth the way we treat the Eucharist?

What if forests were tabernacles, rivers chalices, mountains altars?

What if the smell of soil was incense, the wind a hymn, the bees a litany?

In the Franciscan Clarean tradition, we believe that God is not only above us—but among us, within us, beneath our feet. The Earth is not a backdrop. It is a living participant in salvation history.

To desecrate the Earth is to desecrate God.

To simplify our lives is to offer a eucharist of gratitude back to the world.

Reflection Questions:

1. Where have you witnessed or felt the groaning of creation?
 2. How do your daily choices participate in either healing or harming the Earth?
 3. What is one act of sacred resistance you can commit to for climate justice?
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Chapter 4: Lady Poverty and Sister Earth

Francis, Clare, and the Spirituality of Voluntary Simplicity

“If you have men who will exclude any of God’s creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men.”

—St. Francis of Assisi

Embracing the Sacred Feminine of Simplicity

Francis called her *Lady Poverty*. Clare walked beside *Sister Earth*. They did not speak of simplicity as a strategy, trend, or survival tactic—they loved her. They named her. They adorned her with reverence.

In a world that sees poverty as shameful and the Earth as a resource, Francis and Clare flipped the script. Voluntary poverty, for them, was not degradation—it was devotion. They chose to relinquish wealth not out of guilt, but for joy. They gave up possessions not to suffer, but to soar.

This was not asceticism for its own sake. It was a relational spirituality.

They saw poverty and the Earth not as problems to fix but as sacred beings to companion.

Franciscan Clarean Insight:

Lady Poverty and Sister Earth are not metaphors. They are teachers. Lovers. Companions. They reveal what is true: that freedom is found not in having more, but in needing less.

Voluntary Poverty vs. Involuntary Poverty

Let us be clear: the poverty of the poor is not holy.

When families go hungry, when trans youth sleep on the street, when elders die of heat without shelter—this is *not* the spirituality of Francis or Clare. It is the violence of capitalism.

But voluntary poverty—the chosen path of simplicity, detachment, and radical sharing—is a holy rebellion.

It says:

- I will not play by the empire's rules.
- I will not equate worth with wealth.
- I will not hoard while others hunger.

It is a prophetic refusal to worship Mammon.

Sacred Interdependence

The spirituality of Francis and Clare is not about rugged self-reliance. It is about sacred interdependence. When Francis walked barefoot through the woods, he was not *alone*—he was among kin. When Clare begged for her sisters, she was not *ashamed*—she was trusting the Spirit.

Simplicity, in the Clarean Way, is not withdrawal—it is radical engagement. It leads us closer to people, not farther. It collapses hierarchies and invites communion. It breaks down the walls between “mine” and “yours,” between “human” and “non-human.”

It teaches us to live not as masters, but as members of a sacred community.

Clare's Defiant Simplicity

While Francis is often celebrated for his poverty, Clare's story is even more subversive. She defied her family's wealth, shaved her head, and escaped into the night. She refused papal permission to own property even when offered a safe compromise.

She would not be bought. She would not be handled.

She built a house where poverty was embraced with joy, where sisters lived in silence and solidarity, where God was found not in gold, but in the gaze of the other.

In her final words, she exclaimed, “Go forth in peace, for you have followed the good road.”

Let us follow it too.

Our Earth, Our Sister

When we speak of Sister Earth, we are not being poetic. We are being truthful.

She feeds us, bathes us, shelters us. She births us and receives our bodies at death. To live simply is to live as a grateful sibling—not a conqueror.

In this age of climate collapse, simplicity is survival. But more than that, it is reverence.

It is saying:

- I will eat with awareness.
 - I will consume with restraint.
 - I will love the soil as I love myself.
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Reflection Questions:

1. What does “Lady Poverty” mean to you today?
 2. In what ways have you experienced the Earth as your sister?
 3. Where might voluntary simplicity invite you to deeper freedom?
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Chapter 5: Economics of Kinship

Mutual Aid, Jubilee, and the Sacred Economy of Enough

“There was not a needy person among them.”
—Acts 4:34

Breaking the Illusion of Individualism

Capitalism thrives on isolation. It teaches us that we are self-contained units, competitors in a zero-sum game. It turns neighbors into rivals, communities into marketplaces, and bodies into brands.

But this is a lie. We were never meant to go it alone.

The Franciscan Clarean Way reveals that we are not isolated selves, but interdependent souls. We belong to each other. We need each other. And the economy of God is not built on profit—but kinship.

Kinship is not charity. Kinship is not pity. Kinship is mutuality—the holy recognition that your liberation is bound up with mine.

Mutual Aid as Sacred Practice

In times of crisis—hurricanes, pandemics, wars—it is not corporations that save us. It is mutual aid. It is neighbors cooking for neighbors, strangers raising bail, trans collectives delivering hormones, undocumented people feeding each other when the state refuses.

Mutual aid is not new. It is ancient. It is the way of the early church. It is how Indigenous and Black communities have survived for generations under empire.

In the Clarean Way, mutual aid is theology. It is our sacrament of daily bread. It is how we practice sacred simplicity—not as rugged individualism, but as collective flourishing.

Franciscan Clarean Insight:

Living simply doesn't mean living alone. It means choosing a shared life. It means living light so we can carry one another. It means building communities where everyone has what they need, and no one is disposable.

Jubilee Economics: God's Blueprint for Justice

The Bible contains one of the most radical economic visions ever imagined: Jubilee.

Every 7 years, debts were to be forgiven. Every 50 years, land returned to its original stewards. Slaves freed. Rest granted. Systems reset.

This was not utopia—it was God's justice made real in land, labor, and law.

Jubilee teaches us:

- Wealth accumulation is not sacred
- Land ownership is temporary
- No one should be stuck in poverty forever

Jesus proclaimed his mission in Jubilee language: "to release the captives... to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18–19).

The early church practiced this ethic. Acts 2 and 4 describe a community where "no one claimed private ownership," and "everything they owned was held in common." This wasn't socialism for show—it was survival and solidarity.

Queering the Economy

Queer communities have always queered the economy.

When the mainstream economy denied us jobs, housing, and health care—we created our own networks. Chosen families, queer co-ops, underground pharmacies, rent-sharing, crowd-funding transition surgeries. These are not just acts of survival. They are acts of holy resistance.

Trans economics is not trickle-down. It is ripple-out. It is survival through sharing.

As Marcella Althaus-Reid taught us, theology must be indecent enough to meet people in their realities—including sex workers, squatters, migrants, and gender-nonconforming folk.

Economics of kinship centers those whom capitalism rejects.

The Table of Enough

Imagine a table. Not a boardroom. Not a checkout counter. A shared table where bread is broken, laughter is common, and everyone has a seat.

This is the Eucharistic economy. This is the vision of Francis and Clare.
Not opulence. Not austerity. Just... enough.

Enough food.
Enough shelter.
Enough dignity.

In the OFC, we are learning (imperfectly) how to live from that table. Through shared resources, shared decision-making, and shared burdens, we glimpse what another world might look like.

And we refuse to give up that vision.

Reflection Questions:

1. Where have you experienced mutual aid or shared economics in your life?
 2. What would Jubilee look like in your community today?
 3. How can you participate in an economy of kinship this week?
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Chapter 6: Franciscan Feminism and Queer Simplicity

Bodies That Refuse to Be Bought

"We must dare to be nothing. But let this nothingness be a flame."
—Dorothy Soelle

Simplicity as a Feminist and Queer Rebellion

Simplicity isn't just about having less—it's about **dismantling systems** that measure our worth by what we produce, how we look, or whom we love.

Capitalism teaches that beauty is currency, that care is unpaid, and that "success" is a patriarchal fantasy of domination. For women, especially trans women and disabled women, for queer people, for all who are marginalized, simplicity becomes an act of liberation.

To simplify, for us, is not about minimalism as marketed by wealthy white influencers. It is about **refusing to perform worthiness** for a system that never valued us in the first place.

Franciscan Clarean Insight:

Simplicity is not about making ourselves smaller—it is about reclaiming space in ways that empire cannot monetize or control.

Clare as a Feminist Icon of Refusal

Clare of Assisi smashed the expectations placed on her as a wealthy woman. She refused marriage, refused inheritance, refused property. And yet, her refusal wasn't quiet submission—it was fierce and unrelenting.

She wrote her own Rule—the first woman ever to do so in the Church—and refused papal pressure to conform. She lived in solidarity with other women, chose sisterhood over status, and defied gender roles while deepening her mystical connection to Christ.

Clare's simplicity was not about self-denial—it was about **self-possession** in the Spirit.

She chose to belong not to a man or a market, but to a community of love, resistance, and mutual care.

Queer Simplicity: Living Outside the Norm

Queer lives are already acts of economic and social nonconformity. To transition, to refuse compulsory heterosexuality, to embody gender variance—these are costly, risky, and radical in a system designed for cishet profit and control.

Queer simplicity is not a monastic vow—it's survival.

It looks like:

- Sharing hormone kits in mutual aid networks
- Refusing corporate Pride and building queer co-ops
- Healing in the safety of chosen family
- Wearing what feels holy rather than what is "professional"

It is radical precisely because it chooses life outside the empire's gaze.

Marcella Althaus-Reid called this *indecent theology*—a theology that shows up in bodies, in resistance, in sweat and glitter and prayer.

Queer simplicity says: I do not need to be legible to capitalism to be beloved by God.

Crip Simplicity and Sacred Slowness

In a culture that idolizes speed, productivity, and utility, disabled bodies are often seen as a burden.

But Crip Theory teaches us that disabled people are not broken—they are teachers of a different rhythm. A rhythm of slowness, rest, interdependence, and holy inefficiency.

Disability justice is simplicity in action:

- Knowing limits and embracing them
- Centering care, access, and connection over efficiency
- Rejecting ableist capitalism and its gospel of hustle

To be disabled and faithful is to proclaim: **We are already enough.**
We are already holy.

As disability theologian Nancy Eiesland said, we follow a **disabled God**—wounded, scarred, and risen.

Reclaiming Our Bodies as Sacred

Capitalism wants to make our bodies into products.
Patriarchy wants to make our bodies into property.
White supremacy wants to control, erase, or exploit our bodies.

But Franciscan feminism and queer theology remind us:
Our bodies are **altars**, not assets.
They are **temples**, not transactions.
They are **sacraments**, not shame.

To live simply is to live **embodied**, not consumed.

It is to dance in the ruins of empire with joy.
It is to eat what nourishes, love who loves you back, and pray in the language of your bones.

Reflection Questions:

1. In what ways have you been taught to commodify or control your body?
2. What does feminist or queer simplicity look like in your life today?
3. How can you practice body-honoring simplicity that resists empire?

Chapter 7: Toward a Post-Capitalist Gospel

Reimagining Salvation in a Burning World

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”
—Arundhati Roy

The End of the World as We Know It

Capitalism is not just in crisis—it is the crisis.
It has brought us to the brink:

- Economies built on extraction and exploitation
- Climate spiraling toward catastrophe
- Billionaires hoarding wealth while the hungry beg for crumbs
- Politicians baptizing injustice in the name of “freedom” and “growth”

And still, in many pulpits, we are told to pray harder, tithe more, obey quietly, and wait for heaven.

But what if salvation isn’t about escaping the world?
What if salvation is about **remaking** it?

In the Clarean Way, salvation is not a ticket to the afterlife.
It is the **liberation of all life**, here and now.

The False Gospel of Empire

Empire tells us salvation is individual—your soul, your success, your eternity.
It tells us God rewards obedience, wealth, and national pride.
It preaches prosperity for the few and austerity for the rest.

This is not the Gospel.
This is **Mammon dressed up in robes**.

Jesus didn’t die so we could protect tax breaks for the rich.
Jesus wasn’t crucified to uphold free-market theology.
Jesus didn’t rise so the church could become a corporation.

Franciscan Clarean Insight:

We must decolonize our faith. Strip away the gold leaf of empire. Return to the raw, rebellious Jesus—who flipped tables, fed the poor, healed outsiders, and called the rich to repentance.

A Gospel of Kinship and Repair

A post-capitalist Gospel is not about returning to scarcity. It is about **reclaiming abundance**—an abundance of joy, community, connection, and enough-for-all.

It looks like:

- **Decolonized land and Indigenous sovereignty**

- **Climate reparations and debt cancellation**
- **Healthcare and housing as sacred rights**
- **Prisons emptied and mutual aid networks flourishing**
- **Churches becoming sanctuaries for the unhoused, the undocumented, the queer**

This Gospel demands that we reimagine the meaning of wealth—not as accumulation, but as **shared well-being**.

Not gold but grace.

Not growth but goodness.

Process Theology and the God Who Suffers With Us

Process theology gives us a vision of God not as a distant monarch but as a **loving presence who co-suffers, co-creates, and invites** us into liberation.

God is not in control of everything. God is in **solidarity** with everything.

God does not coerce; God **persuades** through love, through justice, through our own rising.

In a burning world, process theology offers hope—not in magic solutions, but in the divine **invitation to act**, to resist, to repair.

God is with the climate striker.

God is with the migrant child.

God is with the trans woman on the street.

God is within us, urging us toward life.

The New Heaven and New Earth Begin Now

The Book of Revelation ends not with escape, but with a vision:

A **new heaven and a new earth**

A city with no temple because **God is everywhere**

A tree of life whose leaves heal the nations

No more tears, no more hunger, no more empire

This isn't science fiction. This is Scripture.

And it begins in us.

To follow the Clarean Way is to plant seeds of that new world.

To live simply so others may simply live.

To renounce empire not out of fear, but out of **fierce love**.

Reflection Questions:

1. What parts of the current system do you feel called to renounce?

2. What does a post-capitalist Gospel look like in your faith practice?
 3. How can you embody a theology of kinship and repair this week?
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Chapter 8: The Order of Franciscan Clareans as Sacred Resistance

Building a Way of Life in the Ruins of Empire

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”
—Romans 12:2

A New Monasticism for a New World

The Order of Franciscan Clareans (OFC) was born in the cracks of a crumbling empire—not in marble cathedrals, but in virtual chapels, queer kitchens, compost piles, and borrowed bedrooms. We are friars of the margins and nuns of necessity, rooted in the spirit of Francis and Clare—but reborn for this moment.

We are a resistance—not a retreat. A sanctuary—not an escape.
We are not here to fix capitalism.
We are here to **outlive it**.

Franciscan Clarean Insight:

Our sacred resistance is not abstract—it is rhythmic, embodied, and daily. It is compost and community, prayer and protest, herbal salves and housing solidarity. Simplicity, for us, is not a vibe. It is a **vow**.

Rhythms of Economic Dissent

In a world that demands constant consumption, one of the most radical things we can do is **slow down and share**.

Some OFC practices of sacred simplicity:

- **Shared housing and cooperative living**
- **Sabbath rest and tech detoxes**
- **Cooking with food that honors land and labor**
- **Rejecting fast fashion and choosing thrift, swap, or handmade**
- **Paying mutual aid forward with time, skills, and solidarity**
- **Resisting wage slavery through radical budgeting and side-hustle ethics**
- **Tithing not to institutions, but to people in crisis**

These are not rules—they are rhythms. They are the scaffolding of a life not owned by capitalism, but woven into community.

Vows as Prophetic Witness

The OFC reimagines religious vows—not as restrictions, but as holy resistance.

- **Poverty becomes Sacred Simplicity**
— Not having nothing, but owning nothing that owns us.
- **Chastity becomes Embodied Integrity**
— Honoring our sexual and relational lives as sacred and honest.
- **Obedience becomes Mutual Accountability**
— Listening not to hierarchy, but to Spirit, community, and conscience.

These vows are *public theology*. They are our billboard to empire:

We do not consent to your violence.

We are building something different.

Queer, Crip, Trans, and Poor by Design

The OFC is made up of those who have been left behind or cast aside by capitalism's false gospel. We are not a charity for the marginalized—we are the marginalized creating church on our terms.

We are:

- **Transgender nuns in recovery**
- **Disabled prophets with mobility aids and sacred rage**
- **Neurodivergent mystics in thrifted robes**
- **Queer herbalists who anoint with chamomile and clove**

We are not waiting for permission to be holy.

We claim our holiness as we are.

Sacred simplicity, for us, is **refusal and re-creation**.

We refuse disposable culture.

We re-create communities where everyone matters.

We Make Our Lives a Sermon

OFC doesn't just talk about justice—we live it in our bodies, budgets, and backyards.

- We choose joy over jadedness.
- We bless menstrual cycles and compost piles.
- We host healing circles and political education nights.
- We turn gardens into grocers and porches into pulpits.

Every act of simplicity is a sacrament.
Every act of sharing is a sermon.
Every time we say “no” to empire, we say “yes” to God.

Reflection Questions:

1. Which rhythms of resistance speak to you most from the OFC way of life?
 2. What vow or intention might you take to embrace sacred simplicity?
 3. How can your daily choices become acts of prophetic witness?
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Chapter 9: A Manifesto of Sacred Simplicity

Living Light, Loving Bold, Belonging Deep

“Live simply so that others may simply live.”

—Elizabeth Ann Seton (quoted and lived by Dorothy Day)

We Begin Again at the Table

Not with noise. Not with conquest.
But with bread, wine, breath, and belonging.

The world is aching under the weight of too much:
Too much extraction.
Too much noise.
Too much fear.
Too much stuff.

We say: enough.

Enough despair. Enough greed. Enough false gospels of profit.

We are writing a new creed—scratched into the margins of empire, planted in rooftop gardens, whispered in trans lifelines, shared in mutual aid drop-offs and eco-funerals and Friday night soup pots.

This is the **Manifesto of Sacred Simplicity**.

We Believe...

- That the Earth is not property—it is **our sister**.

- That people are not profit—they are **our kin**.
 - That bodies are not burdens—they are **temples**.
 - That God is not in the palace of the wealthy but in the breath of the poor.
 - That enough is **abundance**, and joy is **justice**.
-

We Confess...

- That we have been seduced by stuff.
 - That we have measured success by speed, size, and status.
 - That we have feared simplicity because it is vulnerable and raw.
 - That we have denied our interdependence and forgotten our place in the family of creation.
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We Commit...

- To live light in a world that consumes.
 - To value rest over rush, repair over replacement, people over productivity.
 - To build communities where everyone has what they need.
 - To practice **voluntary poverty**, **eco-justice**, and **mutual aid** as spiritual disciplines.
 - To refuse the lie that we must buy our worth.
 - To worship not in cathedrals of capital, but in gardens, kitchens, and circles of care.
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We Resist...

- Empire economics that extract and exploit.
 - Climate injustice that sacrifices the Global South and Indigenous lands.
 - Patriarchal systems that erase care work and commodify the body.
 - Queerphobia, transphobia, ableism, racism, and all violence woven into capitalism's web.
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We Dream...

- Of communities where everyone eats.
- Of land returned, debt forgiven, prisons emptied.
- Of forests regrown, waters healed, and economies centered in **kinship**.

We dream not of utopia, but of **faithful resistance**—clumsy, communal, creative, and real.

A Clarean Call

Francis heard the Spirit say, “Rebuild my church.”
Clare built it with silence, fire, and fierce love.

Now, in our time, we hear the call again:
Live light. Love bold. Belong deep.

The path of sacred simplicity is not easy. But it is **possible**.
And the world is waiting.

Reflection Questions:

1. Which statements from this manifesto speak most powerfully to your soul?
2. How can you begin living this manifesto in your own life, one choice at a time?
3. What part of your community could be transformed by a collective embrace of sacred simplicity?

Closing Chapter: Living Light in a World That Consumes

The Journey Ahead

“Walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone.”
—George Fox, Quaker mystic

We have come to the end of this book, but not the end of the path.

Sacred simplicity is not a lifestyle trend. It is a form of resistance. It is a declaration of joy in a culture of despair, enoughness in a world of greed, and presence in a system that demands performance.

The Franciscan Clarean Way is not about heroic individualism or performative minimalism. It is about being honest: the world is burning, the poor are crucified, and the Earth is groaning. And yet, we can choose to live differently. We can choose to live **light**—not to escape the weight of the world, but to make room for each other to breathe, to bloom, to belong.

You don’t need to sell everything and become a monk. You don’t need to have it all figured out. You just need to begin. To let one moment of enoughness open a door. To follow that thread.

Every small act—cooking from scratch, canceling a subscription, planting a garden, joining a rent strike, lighting a candle instead of doomscrolling—can become a **sacrament**. Every yes to simplicity is a no to empire.

The world needs your witness. Not your perfection.

Let your compost bin be your protest sign.

Let your borrowed coat be your sermon.

Let your open table be your Eucharist.

We are not alone. Across the globe, people are waking up. Listening. Praying. Refusing. Creating.

The new world is not a fantasy. It is already being born—in you, in us, in sacred simplicity.

Let's walk this way together.

Appendices

Appendix A: The Clarean Rule of Simplicity

A living vow for individuals and communities walking the path of Sacred Simplicity.

1. We vow to live with less, so that others may live with enough.

We will resist waste and overconsumption, practicing contentment, reuse, and conscious stewardship.

2. We vow to honor the Earth as our sibling, not our servant.

We will seek relationship with the natural world, reduce our ecological footprint, and support regenerative practices.

3. We vow to center people over profit.

We will prioritize mutual aid, just labor, and economic systems rooted in equity and dignity for all.

4. We vow to practice sacred time.

We will reject busyness as a badge of worth, embracing rest, sabbath, and sustainable rhythms of work and renewal.

5. We vow to resist empire in all its forms.

We will stand with the marginalized, divest from violence, and reject systems that commodify the human spirit.

6. We vow to create communities of care.

We will share resources, hold one another accountable, and seek reconciliation and collective well-being.

7. We vow to live prophetically.

We will speak truth to power, embody joy in resistance, and live as if another world is not only possible—but already blooming.

Appendix B: Daily Practices for Sacred Simplicity

These are *gentle invitations*, not rules. Let them shape your days like prayer beads worn into the soul.

- 🌞 **Morning:** Greet the Earth with gratitude. Step outside barefoot if possible. Say aloud: *“I am not alone. I belong.”*
- 🍲 **Meal Prep:** Cook with what you have. Bless the hands who grew, harvested, and prepared it. Eat without a screen.
- ♻️ **Consumption Check:** Before any purchase, ask: *“Do I need this? Who made it? What impact does it have?”*
- 💰 **Economics of Love:** Set aside part of your income—no matter how small—for mutual aid, reparations, or a local need.
- 🌱 **Sabbath Simplicity:** One day each week, do less. Turn off the noise. Tend a plant. Nap. Create. Be.
- 💬 **Community Circles:** Form a “simplicity pod” or justice circle to share resources, emotional support, and action plans.
- 🕯️ **Nightly Prayer:** Light a candle. Breathe deeply. Reflect: *Where did I live simply today? Where can I try again tomorrow?*

Appendix C: Further Reading & Study

A curated list drawn from your full resource library.

📖 Theology, Justice, and Simplicity

- *The Irresistible Revolution* – Shane Claiborne
- *The Economy of Grace* – Kathryn Tanner
- *God’s Mission and Postcolonial Resistance* – Ched Myers
- *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* – Matthew Fox
- *The Gospel in Solentiname* – Ernesto Cardenal
- *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* – Ronald J. Sider
- *Indecent Theology* – Marcella Althaus-Reid

- *Earth-Honoring Faith* – Larry Rasmussen
- *Braiding Sweetgrass* – Robin Wall Kimmerer

Ecology and Sacred Living

- *Active Hope* – Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone
- *The Dream of the Earth* – Thomas Berry
- *Water, Wind, Earth, and Fire* – Christine Valters Paintner
- *The Earth is the Lord's* – Ellen Davis
- *St. Francis of Assisi: A New Biography* – Augustine Thompson, OP

Queer and Feminist Witness

- *Radical Love* – Patrick Cheng
- *Black and Woman* – Dr. Monica A. Coleman
- *Sister Outsider* – Audre Lorde
- *Queer Virtue* – Rev. Elizabeth Edman
- *The Disabled God* – Nancy Eiesland
- *Emergent Strategy* – adrienne maree brown

About the Author

Sister Abigail Hester, OFC is a transgender Christian nun, activist, writer, and founder of the Order of Franciscan Clareans—a prophetic, justice-rooted expression of new monasticism. Drawing from queer theology, liberation theology, feminist theory, and Franciscan spirituality, Sister Abigail writes and teaches at the intersections of faith, simplicity, ecology, and justice.

Her work amplifies the sacred voices of the poor, the disabled, the trans, and the Earth itself. You can read more of her writing and explore resources from the Order of Franciscan Clareans at:

 FranciscanClareans.blogspot.com