

# *Blessing of Clare House Oratory and Building*

*Sunday, October 9, 2011 - 10:00 a.m.*

**Is. 25:6-10**

**Phil. 4:12-14; 19-20**

**Mt. 22: 1-10**



## *Homily by Archbishop Jerome Hanus, O.S.B.*

It is a joy to be here and a historic moment for this community. Clare house reflects your desire to care for and provide well for your members, as their strength and health declines.

Clare house has been a challenge for you as a community. You had your doubts and hesitations, some caused by external events and some caused by internal feelings. Still-you went ahead. But in doing so, you did not forget the poor. Hand in hand with this project, you pursued the project in Gracias, building the Bethany Home (Casa Betania) for the sisters and those whom they serve.

Clare house is a place that recognizes the importance of old age, diminishing health, or illness-both chronic and acute. It is a place where many if not most of you will spend the last months, weeks or days of your earthly life. It is very appropriate that a chapel be at the center of this new facility.

The chapel is the place where members of the community celebrate the earthly liturgy. Here the gospel is heard-something essential to Franciscan spirituality. Here the needs of the poor are brought, the concerns of peace and justice; the injustices in society are brought in prayer before the community and before God. Here local communion as church is achieved. But the earthly liturgy is not complete and closed into itself. The first reading of today's liturgy reminded us of the emphatic images that the prophet Isaiah used to celebrate heavenly liturgy. Rich wines and good choice of food-yes, we have those here on earth and you are renowned for your excellent culinary skills. But in the eucharist we also have the "pledge of future glory." As the community and individual members hare in the communion of the earthly liturgy, there is also the anticipation and longing for the future. "I shall live in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life" (as we sang in the responsorial psalm.)

It is appropriate that you have decided to name this new facility the "Clare House." St. Clare has always been a favorite, almost on a par with Francis the Poverello. When I think of her as the patron of this facility, I call attention to the fact that if she were living in 2011 here in Dubuque, she would have spent many years of her life at Clare house. Authors explain that the last 23 years of her life, she suffered from very poor health. Many times during this span, members of her community thought she was dying, so they had many memories of her "last moments." There is one of these moments in particular that I think is poignant and appropriate to recall on this occasion. The day before she died, as she was surrounded by her caring Sisters, they heard her speak these words:

**"Go forth in peace. For you shall have good company on your journey.  
Go forth, for the One who created you, has sanctified you, and protected you always,  
that One has loved you with a tender love, even as a mother does her child."**

One of the sisters asked her, "To whom are you speaking?" She responded, "I am speaking to my own happy soul." Isn't that the ultimate goal we hope will be realized by every sister who is cared for in Clare house? Speaking to one's own soul on such intimate and spiritual terms! We are called and challenged to be friends to ourselves, calling our inmost reality by familiar names-my sister soul. Surely Clare captured the sentiment which inspired Francis' Canticle to the Creatures, sometimes called the Canticle of the Sun.

Remember the last part, which Francis composed shortly before his death...

**Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Death,  
from whom no one living can escape.  
Blessed are they whom she finds doing Your Will.  
No second death can do them harm.  
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks,  
and serve Him with great humility.**