

Studying the Life of Saint Clare of Assisi

A Beginner's Workbook

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Unless otherwise noted, citations from the writings of Francis and Clare of Assisi come from Armstrong, Regis J., ed. and trans. *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents (The Lady)*. Second Revised Edition. New York: New City Press, 2006. Armstrong, Regis J., J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, eds. *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*. Volume I: The Saint; Volume II: The Founder; Volume III: The Prophet; Index. New York: New City Press, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used with permission.

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Abbreviations and Editions

We use abbreviations as close as possible to those used in Regis Armstrong's *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (CA:ED). This helps the beginning student use the workbook and that collection of primary sources with ease. Occasionally, this leads us to use abbreviations that don't match our description of a work. For example, Cardinal Ugolino can also be identified as Cardinal Hugolino, Cardinal Ugo, or Cardinal Hugo. We use Cardinal Ugolino but accept the abbreviation used in CA:ED for his *Form of Life*: FLHug. Other examples will occur.

The Writings Of Clare Of Assisi

BICl	<i>The Blessing of Clare</i> (CA:ED 66-67)
FLCl	<i>The Form of Life of Clare of Assisi</i> a.k.a. <i>The Rule of Clare</i> (CA:ED 108-126)
1LAg	<i>The First Letter to Agnes of Prague</i> (CA:ED 43-46)
2LAg	<i>The Second Letter to Agnes of Prague</i> (CA:ED 47-49)
3LAg	<i>The Third Letter to Agnes of Prague</i> (CA:ED 50-53)
4LAg	<i>The Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague</i> (CA:ED 54-58)
TestCl	<i>The Testament of Clare</i> (CA:ED 60-65)

The Writings of Francis of Assisi

Adm	<i>The Admonitions</i> (FA:ED I 128-137)
BIL	<i>A Blessing for Brother Leo</i> (FA:ED I 112)
CtExh	<i>The Canticle of Exhortation to Saint Clare and Her Sisters</i> (FA:ED I 115; CA:ED 394)
CtC	<i>The Canticle of the Creatures</i> (FA:ED I 113-114; CA:ED 392)
ER	<i>The Earlier Rule</i> (FA:ED I 63-86)
FLFr	<i>The Form of Life</i> given to Clare of Assisi by Francis of Assisi (FLCl VI 3; CA:ED 118)
Last Will	<i>Last Will Written for the Poor Ladies</i> (FLCl VI: 7-9; CA:ED 118)
1LCus	<i>The First Letter to the Custodians</i> (FA:ED I 56-57)
1LF	<i>The Letter to the Faithful</i> (first version) (FA:ED I 41-44)
2LF	<i>The Letter to the Faithful</i> (second version) (FA:ED I 45-51)
LMin	<i>A Letter to a Minister</i> (FA:ED I 97-98)
LOrd	<i>A Letter to the Entire Order</i> (FA:ED I 116-121)

LR	<i>The Later Rule</i> (FA:ED I 99-106)
RH	<i>The Rule for Hermitages</i> (FA:ED I 61-62)
Test	<i>The Testament of Francis of Assisi</i> (FA:ED I 124-127)

Other First Franciscan Century Sources

1C	<i>The Life of St. Francis</i> by Thomas of Celano (FA:ED I 180-308)
1.5C	<i>Life of Our Blessed Father Francis</i> . This work was recently discovered. The only English Translation is found in Jacques Dalarun's <i>The Rediscovered Life of St. Francis of Assisi: Thomas of Celano</i> . Trans. Timothy J. Johnson. St. Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2016. The text was written by Thomas of Celano between 1232-1239.
2C	<i>The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul</i> by Thomas of Celano (FA:ED II 239-393)
2MP	<i>The Mirror of Perfection</i> (Sabatier Edition) (FA:ED II 253-372)
AC	<i>The Assisi Compilation</i> (FA:ED II 118-230)
AP	<i>The Anonymous of Perugia</i> (FA:ED II 34-58)
BC	The Bull of Clare's Canonization entitled <i>Clara claris praeclara</i> (CA:ED 263-271)
FLHug	<i>The Form of Life</i> given by Cardinal Ugolino (CA:ED 75-85)
FLInn	<i>The Form of Life</i> given by Pope Innocent IV (CA:ED 89-105)
Jordan	<i>The Chronicle of Brother Jordan of Giano</i> (Chronicles 3-77, selections)
L3C	<i>The Legend of the Three Companions</i> (FA:ED II 66-110)
LCl	<i>The Prose Legend of Saint Clare</i> by Thomas of Celano (CA:ED 277-329)
LEr	Clare's doubtful <i>Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges</i> (CA:ED 420-421)
LJS	<i>The Life of Saint Francis</i> by Julian of Speyer (FA:ED I 368-420)
LMj	<i>The Major Legend of St. Francis</i> by Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (FA:ED II 525-649)
LRay	The Letter of Cardinal Rainaldo <i>Matribus sororibus</i> (CA:ED 133-134)
PC	<i>The Acts of the Process of Canonization</i> for Clare of Assisi (CA:ED 141-196)
PrPov	<i>The Privilege of Poverty</i> by Gregory IX (CA:ED 87-88)
VL	<i>The Versified Legend</i> (CA:ED 199-261)

English Editions of Franciscan Sources and Workbook

CA:ED Armstrong, Regis J., ed. and trans. *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents (The Lady)*. Second Revised Edition. New York: New City Press, 2006. Even though Downing provides a translation of all the writings of Clare based on the most recent critical editions, we regularly reference CA:ED in this workbook because it is a single volume that contains the majority of sources needed to do our worksheets.

Earlier editions include:

New York: Paulist, 1988. (First Edition)

Saint Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993. (Second Edition)

Chronicles Hermann, Placid, trans. and ed. *XIIIth Century Chronicles: Jordan of Giano, Thomas of Eccleston, Salimbene degli Adami*. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1961.

Downing Downing, Frances Teresa, ed., trans. and notes. *Saint Clare of Assisi: The Original Writings*. Vol. 1. Phoenix AZ: Tau Publishing, 2012. Includes the latest reliable Latin critical editions of all Clare's writings with an English translation. Readers may prefer to use Downing's version of Clare's writings because of this. Simply note that we provide page numbers for CA:ED because it contains a greater number of sources in a single volume, which may be a more economical purchase for beginning students.

FA:ED Armstrong, Regis J., J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, eds. *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*. Volume I: The Saint; Volume II: The Founder; Volume III: The Prophet; Index. New York: New City Press, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002. References in this workbook begin with "FA:ED" which is followed by a Roman numeral indicating the volume and then Arabic numbers indicating the pages.

Workbook I Hugo, William R. *Studying the Life of Saint Francis of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook*. Second edition. New York: New City Press, 2011.

Critical Editions

(A critical edition is the most authoritative version of a document in its original language. Critical editions are important because before the printing press (c. 1450 by Johannes Gutenberg) many errors and changes were introduced into texts by their copyists. While all translations vary in their value, it is always important that they be based on the best and likely the most recent critical edition.)

Becker, Marie-France, Jean-François Godet, and Thaddée Matura, eds. *Claire d'Assise, Écrits*. Paris: Les Editions du Cert, 1985. This collection of the writings of Clare of Assisi contains the best critical editions of her *Testament* and *Blessing*, and her doubtful *Letter to Ermentrude*. Frances Teresa Downing uses these three critical editions in her translation, *Saint Clare of Assisi: The Original Writings*, 2012. This French edition contains critical editions of other documents that have more recent editions elsewhere.

Boccali, Giovanni M., ed. *Legende minores latine sancte Clare virginis Assisiensis: testi latini con traduzione italiana a fronte*. Santa Maria degli Angeli (Perugia): Edizioni Porziuncola, 2008. A critical edition of the *Versified Legend of the Virgin Clare*.

—. *Santa Chiara di Assisi. I primi documenti ufficiali: Lettera di annunzio della sua morte, Processo e Bolla di canonizzazione*. Santa Maria degli Angeli (Perugia): Edizioni Porziuncola, 2002. Includes critical editions of the *Acts of the Process of Canonization*, the papal bull of Clare's canonization (*Clara claris praeclara*), and the notification of her death.

—. *Legenda latina Sanctae Clarae Virginis Assisiensis*. Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 2001. Considered the best critical edition of the *Prose Legend of St. Clare*. Contains an Italian translation by Marino Bigaroni.

Chiara de Assisi. *Lettere ad Agnese: La vision dello specchio*. Eds. Giovanni Pozzi and Beatrice Rima. Milan: Adelphi Edizioni, 1999. Considered the most recent critical edition of Clare's four known letters to Agnes of Prague. Frances Teresa Downing uses this critical edition of Clare's four letters to Agnes of Prague (c. 1211-1282) in her translation, *Saint Clare of Assisi: The Original Writings*, 2012.

Downing, Frances Teresa, ed., trans., and notes. *Saint Clare of Assisi: The Original Writings*. Vol. 1. Phoenix AZ: Tau Publishing, 2012. Includes the latest reliable Latin critical editions of Clare's writings with English translations.

Federazione S. Chiara di Assisi delle Clarisse di Umbria-Sardegna: Sinossi Cromatica. *Chiara de Assisi e le Sue Fonti Legislative*. Vol. 1. Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 2003. Frances Teresa Downing uses this critical edition of Clare's *Form of Life* (1252) in her translation, *Saint Clare of Assisi: The Original Writings*, 2012.

Chronology

- 1181 or 1182 Francis of Assisi (d. 1226) was born.
- 1193 or 1194 Clare of Assisi (d. 1253) was born.
- 1198 The emerging new classes including merchants revolted in Assisi and established a commune.
- 1199-1205 Possible years during which Clare and others of the Offreduccio family sought refuge in Perugia.
- 1202 The Battle of Collestrada between Assisi and Perugia. Francis was imprisoned by Perugia.
- 1206 After his trial before Bishop Guido I of Assisi (c. 1195-1212), Francis began his life of penance and separated from his blood family.
- 1209 Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) gave verbal approval to Francis's *Form of Life* that incrementally developed into his *Rule*.
- 1210-1211 Clare met with Francis to discuss her vocation.
- 1211 Clare left her family home on Palm Sunday to begin her religious life, spending time at San Paolo Monastery and then Sant'Angelo before settling at San Damiano Monastery.
- 1215 Lateran Council IV
- 1215 Clare accepted the title of "abbess" at Francis's insistence.
- 1219 Cardinal Ugolino (c. 1145 or before 1170 – 1241) completed his *Form of Life* that supplemented the *Rule of St. Benedict* for a new group of female monasteries in central and northern Italy called the "Order of the Poor Ladies of the Valley of Spoleto or of Tuscany." This was the first independent order of women in the Roman Church and the first women's order directly under the papacy rather than a bishop. It spread to other parts of Europe.

- 1219-1220 Francis was in the Middle East.
- 1220 Cardinal Ugolino spent Holy Week at San Damiano Monastery in Assisi and wrote a very emotional letter to Clare describing the effect on him.
- 1221 Francis's *Earlier Rule*.
- 1223 The Franciscans' *Later Rule* was approved by Pope Honorius III (1216-1227).
- 1224 Clare experienced a deterioration of health.
- 1225 The Friars Minor arrived in Prague.
- 1226, Oct. 3 Francis of Assisi died.
- 1227, March 19 Cardinal Ugolino dei Conti di Segni was elected Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241).
- 1228, July 16 Gregory IX canonized Francis of Assisi.
- 1228 Gregory IX visited Clare at San Damiano and likely argued with her over the difficulties of sustaining a monastery practicing total and radical poverty.
- 1228, Aug. 18 Cardinal Rainaldo dei Conti di Segni (1199 or not before 1185 – 1261) issued *Matribus sororibus*, which announced that he had been appointed cardinal protector of 24 female monasteries in central and northern Italy. This was the first known time the order founded by Ugolino (now Pope Gregory IX) as the "Order of the Poor Ladies of the Valley of Spoleto or of Tuscany," was called the "Order of St. Damian." This is the first evidence that San Damiano Monastery in Assisi was considered part of this order. It is listed first among the other monasteries.
- 1228, Sept. 17 Gregory IX granted the *Privilege of Poverty* to San Damiano Monastery in Assisi in the papal bull *Sicut manifestum est*.
- 1230 Gregory IX issued *Quo elongati* in which he required Friars Minor to receive papal approval to enter the convents of nuns including those of the San Damiano observance. Perceiving this as a threat to her Franciscan

- identity, Clare initiated what amounted to a hunger strike. Gregory relented.
- 1234 Agnes of Prague established St. Francis Monastery in Prague.
- 1234 Clare's *First Letter to Agnes of Prague*
- 1235-1238 Clare's *Second Letter to Agnes of Prague*
- 1237, April 14 With *Omnipotens Deus*, Gregory IX separated St. Francis Hospice in Prague from the monastery of the same name. This allowed St. Francis Monastery to practice the same radical poverty as that of San Damiano in Assisi.
- 1238 Clare's *Third Letter to Agnes of Prague*
- 1238, April 15 Gregory IX extended the Privilege of Poverty to St. Francis Monastery in Prague with *Pia credulitate tenentes*.
- 1238, May 11 Gregory IX denied the request of Agnes of Prague for her own rule with *Angelis gaudium*.
- 1240 Mercenaries attacked San Damiano Monastery. Clare's prayers warded them off.
- 1241 Assisi was freed from the imperial forces.
- 1241, Aug. 22 Gregory IX died, followed by the 17-day reign of Celestine IV (1241).
- 1243, June 25 Innocent IV (1243-1254) was elected pope.
- 1247, Aug. 6 Innocent IV issued his own *Form of Life* for the Order of St. Damian with his papal bull *Cum omnis vera religio*.
- 1252, Sept. 16 Cardinal Rainaldo approved Clare's own *Form of Life* with his letter *Quia vos*.
- 1253 Clare's *Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague*
- 1253, Aug. 9 After visiting Clare, Innocent IV reaffirmed Rainaldo's *Quia vos* and gave Clare's own *Form of Life* papal approval with *Solet annuere*, not to be confused with the earlier papal bull of Honorius III with the same name that approved Francis's *Later Rule* in 1223.

- 1253, Aug. 11 Clare died.
- 1254, Dec. 12 Cardinal Rainaldo dei Conti di Segni was elected Pope Alexander IV (1254-1261).
- 1255 Alexander IV canonized Clare of Assisi at Anagni.
- 1260 The sisters at San Damiano Monastery moved to the new Proto-Monastery inside Assisi's walls.
- 1263 Pope Urban IV issued yet another *Form of Life* for the Order of St. Damian which he called for the first time the "Order of St. Clare."



Introductory Comments

In 1996, William Hugo published the first edition of *Studying the Life of Saint Francis of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook* (Franciscan Press). A revised edition that harmonized the workbook with the new *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (FA:ED) was published in 2011 (New City Press). The goal of the workbook was to help beginning students of Francis of Assisi accomplish a guided and informed study with the critical use of primary sources. The success of the workbook is visible in its use around the English-speaking world, especially in initial formation programs of the three Franciscan Orders.

Since the publication of the first workbook, both of us have spent considerable time studying the life and writings of Clare of Assisi. This forced us to also study the wider development of female religious life in 13th-century Europe. Our combined efforts are found in this second workbook.

It is providential that early attempts to complete a workbook on Clare of Assisi failed because there has been an explosion of learning about Clare, the various female religious movements that surrounded her, other women equally inspired by Francis, and those who were not particularly attached to Francis. Some of this work began in preparation for the 800th anniversary of the birth of Clare (1993-94). In addition, many lay and secular authors rose to prominence in the study of Clare and the movements around her. Freer from typical biases associated with members of the Franciscan community, these researchers imagined new interpretations of the primary sources available to us.

These authors are responsible for a new awareness that Clare did not found what would be called the Order of St. Clare for the first time by Pope Urban IV (1263). They identified the crucial role of Cardinal Ugolino, later Pope Gregory IX, in founding a new order that he tied to San Damiano Monastery in Assisi for branding and public relations purposes. In light of their research, many old assumptions are called into question and new narratives are required.

The new state of scholarship presents new challenges for a beginners' workbook on Clare's life and writings. It's a complicated study that involves more than the expected primary sources. Thus, this workbook offers much more additional commentary than the workbook on Francis of Assisi did.

With all of this in mind, we explain a number of technical points that affect this workbook.

Many different names are used to describe the followers of Clare of Assisi or those assumed to be her followers: Sisters Minor, Poor Sisters, Poor Ladies, Minoresses, Damianites, Order of St. Damian, Clarisses, Order of St. Clare, Cloistered Women, Poor Women, Poor Enclosed Ladies, Ugolini-an Sisters, Enclosed Poor of San Damiano and others. Some of these terms are more descriptions than titles. Despite the great variation of names, we are able to count Clare referring to herself and her followers as “Poor Sisters” more than sixty times in her writings (see FLC I 1 for the official designation by Clare). In this workbook, we favor use of this name as well.

The names of men who eventually became popes can also be confusing. Cardinal Ugolino became Pope Gregory IX. Cardinal Rainaldo became Pope Alexander IV. We generally use the name of a person that was current at the moment we are describing. So, when he was the legate of Pope Honorius III we refer to Ugolino dei Conti di Segni, not Gregory IX. Referring to his *Form of Life* can be more challenging. Because it was written when he was a cardinal, we typically refer to it as Ugolino’s *Form of Life*, unless the context is best served by referring to Pope Gregory IX.

We acknowledge that there is a lot of repetition in this workbook. That is because it is a workbook. Our experience teaches us that students using the workbook seldom read it from start to finish. Instead, they utilize parts of the workbook that help them complete assignments, answer questions or investigate interests. Thus, we repeat information so that individual sections or chapters can stand alone. For beginning students who do read the workbook from start to finish, we believe the repetition helps them master complex names, dates and events. It takes time to digest this enormous material.

Our intended audience is beginners who want to study the life and writings of Clare of Assisi with primary sources in a critical way. While our goal is to bring the best scholarship to the benefit of the beginner, we have striven to shape our workbook in a way that will most benefit English-speaking readers. Thus, we typically focus on English language bibliography and only mention other language sources when they represent something of great importance, e.g., a critical edition or a work containing seminal ideas. We recognize the enormous role of *Greyfriars Review*, which for twenty years provided translations of important works that otherwise would be inaccessible to English-speakers. Its translations fill our bibliographies.

The scholarly world has its own set of standards for scholarly publication. These include ample footnotes of various types. Because we aim our workbook at the beginner, we do not include footnotes. If a point is valua-

ble to our reader, we include that information in the text itself. If reference to a source is valuable, we note it in a parenthetical note that refers to the cited or suggested reading list at the end of the chapter. Commonly accepted statements among scholars are not documented. However, we typically make parenthetical references when divergent opinions exist on a given point.

Terminology can be confusing on several fronts in this study. The first involves the use of the terms *form of life* and *rule*. Authors and readers are accustomed to using the term *rule* to describe the fundamental code governing a religious way of life. Clare typically talked about her fundamental code as her *form of life*. In an attempt to be sensitive to her own terminology, scholars have increasingly used *form of life* to describe every governing code for San Damiano Monastery beginning with the short and simple code given by Francis of Assisi. A few scholars continue to call these codes *rules*. We will use *form of life* to describe all these codes through Clare's own *Form of Life*.

However, scholars do not typically use *form of life* for a fundamental code after Clare's. Thus, we will use the term *rule* to describe the document given by Pope Urban IV (1263) and the two versions of a fundamental code written by Isabelle of France (1259 and 1263). There is nothing magical about these choices. They are simply choices.

There also can be great confusion around terms involving *San Damiano*. Let us explain.

It is historically clear that Cardinal Ugolino formed the first religious order specifically for women after he was appointed papal legate in central and northern Italy. On August 18, 1228, Cardinal Rainaldo dei Conti di Segni issued the letter *Matribus sororibus* to twenty-four female monasteries announcing that he had been appointed Ugolino's successor legate after Ugolino had been elected Pope Gregory IX. For the first time, we see in this letter the new order of Ugolino called the "Order of St. Damian" instead of the "Order of the Poor Ladies of the Valley of Spoleto or of Tuscany." The letter places San Damiano Monastery in Assisi at the top of the list of member monasteries.

This can be quite confusing because Clare and her Sisters at San Damiano Monastery were often doing things differently than the other monasteries in the Order of St. Damian. So, we have chosen to include "monastery" and the Italian version of "St. Damian" in the title of that specific foundation in Assisi led by Clare, i.e., San Damiano Monastery. When we are talking about the wider order founded by Cardinal Ugolino, we will use the saint's name in English and preface it with "Order," i.e., "Order of St. Damian."

Another decision involves how to refer to St. Francis Hospice in Prague. *Hospice*, *hospital*, *hotel*, and *hospitality* all have the same Latin root. Perhaps the English word *hospitality* best approaches that root. Thus, in its broadest meaning, a medieval hospice could provide hospitality to pilgrims and travelers (our idea of a hostel). In other uses, it meant a place caring for the dying or lepers (our idea of hospice care), or providing medical treatment to the sick (our idea of a hospital). We use *hospice* throughout this workbook to refer to St. Francis Hospice in Prague, but realize different designations are also appropriate.

There are many papal bulls that affected the Franciscan movement during the time of Clare. Various cardinals likewise issued letters of importance. While they affect many areas of study in this workbook, their greatest impact is visible in the letters of Clare to Agnes of Prague. To avoid repetition, we have created a list of such documents in chronological order with a short description in the chapter “Clare’s Letters to Agnes of Prague.”

The first time we mention a name of particular interest, we parenthetically indicate the time in which she or he lived. When appropriate, popes and civil rulers are marked by the span of their years in office. If a precise date is uncertain, we use the abbreviation “c.” for *circa* meaning *about*. For example, “(d. c. 1270)” would mean the person died *about* 1270 and no further precision is possible.

Many users of Workbook I tell us that chapters in the preliminary section of that workbook were important in establishing helpful attitudes toward studying medieval texts. This caused us to pause when considering what to include in the preliminary section of this workbook. In the end, we chose to duplicate some of the material from Workbook I because we cannot presume that users of this workbook also have Workbook I in hand. Those who already have used Workbook I might consider skipping these chapters, though a review seldom hurts anyone.

Every enormous enterprise has many collaborators. In a special way, Capuchin novices at San Lorenzo Novitiate in Santa Ynez, California, helped by using early drafts of this workbook in their own study of Clare. Their many comments had a huge impact on the final text, and they were the guinea pigs who demonstrated that the method of this workbook could work.

Many scholars and professionals provided incalculable help in a variety of ways. They include Jean-François Godet-Calogeras of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University; Michael Blastic, formerly of the Franciscan Institute and currently on the Franciscan novitiate staff at Old Mission Santa Barbara, California; Catherine M. Mooney of Boston

College; Frances Teresa Downing from the Poor Clare Monastery in St. Leonards on Sea, England; and Gary Brandl of New City Press. Baudry Metangmo provided translation assistance. Helmut Rakowski helped to locate German language sources.

Joanne Schatzlein and William Hugo

What Do I Need Besides This Workbook?

This is a workbook. Its purpose is to teach students to study the life and writings of Clare of Assisi with primary sources, i.e., those that come from the time and place of Clare and those around her. That implies that a student using this workbook will also need other books or sources. However, there is no definitive list of other sources that you will need. Few beginning students will have them all. So, the next question becomes, “what are the most important sources to have at hand?” We list them in order of importance, noting how important each source is. The full citations of many sources are found in the “Abbreviations and Editions” chapter of this workbook.

- *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (CA:ED) has gone through three editions. It was a labor of love for Regis Armstrong, its translator and editor. The third edition is the most available today. It’s also the most valuable because it reflects the ongoing research of the day. However, even the third edition is a bit outdated. It was published in 2006 when so much groundbreaking research was reaching the printing press. Despite that, it is the single most important book for students to have along with this workbook. While some of the history surrounding Clare has been revised, the texts in translation are what students need close by. It is true that new critical editions of some sources are available. However, the translations in CA:ED will serve the beginning student just fine. No other single volume will contain as many sources for the study of Clare.
- *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (FA:ED) comes in three volumes plus an independent volume of indices. It is the next important source to have, especially volume one which contains the writings of Francis of Assisi. The writings of Francis and some of the hagiography about him have important relationships with the writings and life of Clare of Assisi. This is the second most important source to have at your side. While a study of Clare is possible without this collection, such a study would be quite limited.
- William’s original workbook, *Studying the Life of St. Francis of Assisi: A Beginner’s Workbook* (Workbook I), is referenced frequently in this workbook on Clare. However, having it is less important than the previous two sources.
- Frances Teresa Downing’s *Saint Clare of Assisi: The Original Writings* (Downing) is the only English translation based on the best and

most recent critical editions of the various writings. Her translations are elegant and nuanced. Her notes, introductions and commentaries expand our understanding of the translations. If you can have this volume close at hand, you are working with the best translations of Clare's writings. However, it is a collection of only the writings of Clare. None of the hagiography or other important documents cited in our workbook are found within it. Thus, it's not the most complete collection of sources for our students. This is why we still recommend CA:ED for the student who can afford only so many books. By the way, Downing's other three volumes in the same series are quite valuable. We will suggest them in various worksheets.

- Many of our chapters contain a section entitled, "*Cited sources and suggested reading.*" These documents are too numerous to expect a beginner to have. Their primary value is to the person who has a particular interest in the topic of one of the worksheets. Most good university or college libraries will have many of them. Others are still in print or available through used bookstores.

Know *Your* Biases; Know *Our* Biases

A hallmark of our approach to studying Clare of Assisi is to gather as much objective data about her as possible. We wish to know the historical Clare as well as we can. All other images of her (theological, spiritual, symbolic) should be based on good history.

Despite this goal, we are powerfully aware of how biased all of us are. *Bias* carries many connotations that we wish to clarify. Certainly, the word can imply a negative prejudice that might even lead to sin. Racial bias can be the unjust basis for racial discrimination. Sexism, ageism, and racism are all evils grounded upon biases.

People are also biased in favor of certain things. When watching an NFL football game that doesn't involve our favorite teams, we usually root for the underdog. That reflects a bias.

Our lives are full of biases, most of which we are unaware. They are frequently subconscious and usually unreflected upon. We don't have the mental or emotional energy to deal with all our biases. Yet at certain times it becomes critical to reflect upon them.

Biases shape perspective. Perspective helps us to recognize some realities and ignore others. Getting in touch with your biases gets you in touch with your partiality, preferences and prejudices. You become aware of your attitudes about how you think life is and, just as importantly, how you think life *should* be. What you think makes the world "go round" is partly the result of your biases. Is it love, money, power, or some other force in life?

People of faith, theologians, popes, atheists and historians are all people with biases. They and we are no different from the rest of our race. We draw out this point because many people hold the bias that some people *are not biased*. This is a difficult bias to dispel, especially if the bias involves religious belief. For example, some people believe popes are not biased because they are inspired by God's spirit. However, popes are people; they are biased. Some think saints could do no wrong. Otherwise they wouldn't be saints. Since bias is too often construed as a weakness or imperfection, they often consider saints to have been unbiased. However, saints were people; they were biased. Others view scholars as people devoted to objective truth. Since bias is not objective, scholars, at least good scholars, cannot be biased. However, scholars are people; they are biased. Teresa of Calcutta, Pope Francis, the Dalai Lama, and Aristotle all are or were biased. They are or were human beings.

That is important for our study of Clare of Assisi; she too was biased. In fact, her bias should be an object of our study of Clare.

More importantly, you are biased, and so are we. If we are to benefit from this study of Clare's life, it is critical that we are aware of our own and each other's biases. Teachers should reveal their important biases to their students. This is only fair. It's a little like truth in lending. People should know up front what they are getting into, whether the commodity is financial or intellectual. The real importance of this practice is that it leaves the students *free*. They should be free to decide for themselves, to evaluate the soundness of arguments, and to know how their teachers' biases might shape their approach to the information they share.

When teachers share their biases, students are forced to examine their own. Which biases are the important ones to reveal? The answer is different for each of us. Different biases influence each person's ideas and approaches more than others. The biases that critically shape your thinking are the important ones to become aware of, understand, examine, and reveal. It's a process that never ends.

Frankly, it's a process that excites us. This self-discovery is as important as the information we learn through study. In the end, it will help us learn about Clare of Assisi as much as reading medieval stories.

Our Lens: History

As long as we are talking about biases, we need to reveal one more. We prefer to study Clare of Assisi from a historical perspective.

Scholars study Clare using the lenses of a variety of disciplines. Church people tend to use the disciplines of theology, philosophy, spirituality, and history to study Clare. Others have studied her through art history. A surprising number of secular scholars study Clare's writings and hagiography as pieces of literature.

For our purposes, we take an unequivocally historical approach in this workbook. We have several reasons for this choice.

Our first reason lies in the nature of hagiography, which we will discuss in a few chapters. Hagiography is writing that has a heavy emphasis on *interpreting* the saints. As we will see, this image or interpretation of the saint is more important than the facts about the saint.

There is nothing wrong with simply studying these interpretations if one is willing to accept medieval interpretations as adequate for today. We don't, so, we strive to uncover as much historically reliable information about Clare as we can. Once we have done that, we need to interpret Clare again, hopefully in meaningful terms for us living 800 years after her birth.

Medieval hagiography mythologized Clare. (We use *mythologize* in a positive way.) Some describe the process of stripping away that mythology as *demythologizing*. If we want to continue with the pattern, the final step might be called *remythologizing*. All this myth-talk highlights an important factor: the myth or interpretation of Clare is just as important as the history of Clare.

We seldom know historical figures as they really were (historically). We more commonly know them through images, a few characteristics, or a solitary action for which they are famous. Actually, the same is true about modern people we know only through the media. Consider how the "handlers" of a presidential candidate work to shape our image of the candidate. Their job is to create a favorable myth or interpretation of their candidate to win votes. The truth is not as important as what people believe is true. Of course, there are limits to the handlers' abilities. Sometimes a candidate's record is so obvious that the desired image will not stick. Handlers also work to create negative images of their opponents, often with tremendous success. The frequent result is competing images in conflict. Nonetheless, the truth is that we come to know these people through their images.