

SAINT CLARE OF ASSISI PATRONESS OF MARINERS

Antonio Carossino related a tradition concerning the title of "Patroness of Mariners" being attributed to Saint Clare. The following is a summary of major points of the article that appeared in an Italian periodical.

During a local village contest the author heard Saint Clare referred to as Patroness of Mariners. He searched all the "Vita" of Saint Clare he could locate but could not find any reference to this title. There seemed to be no connection between Clare and the sea. Then he came upon a reproduction of an ancient life of Clare written by Giovanni Forti in 1705, entitled: *Vita di S. Chiara d'Assisi, Contessa di Sasso Rosso e Fundatrice delle Monache del suo Serafico Ordine*. In chapter XV, on the miracles following the death of Saint Clare, the following is reported:

Saint Bonaventure relates how a certain man called Bartholomew of Pisa, known for his goodness, and a famed theologian, had journeyed toward Sardinia with some merchants from Pisa. In the course of this most beautiful voyage they were assaulted by terrible happenings and frightening tempests which filled the air, making the night extremely dark. Those who were most frightened were the poor sailors, because the fury and strength of it forced an opening in the bottom of the ship. When the passengers saw it they were sure they were in proximate danger of drowning, and began with tears and vows to implore divine help, recommending their concern to the intercession of some of the Saints.

The destitute men found themselves at their end, and in their fear they were saddened and dejected. Seeing no end to the terrible tempest, they invoked the help of the glorious Mother Saint Clare, who, a short time before, had been canonized with solemn rites. Beset by imminent danger of death they had recourse to her, and promised her that if they were spared shipwreck they would go barefoot and with a cord around their necks to visit the Church newly erected in her honor in the city of Pisa, with everyone presenting a candle of white wax weighing a pound.

Having made their vow, immediately, to their amazement, they experienced the protection of Saint Clare, and witnessed three brilliant lights falling from the sky; one of which rested above the prow, the second above the stern, and the third descended into the hull of the ship and closed the hole there through which the ocean water was entering. In that very moment the waves became tranquil.

Therefore, with new courage, the sailors happily proceeded on their voyage with a smooth sea, sailing as far as Asescano (possibly off the shore of Sardinia, which

unfortunately I was not able to locate). They were accompanied throughout their remaining voyage by these heavenly lights which afterward disappeared as we will tell later.

Arriving at the Port the happy sailors disembarked, and scarcely on land or having removed their things from the ship, the three above mentioned lights suddenly disappeared, and the ship was seen by all the others to be submerged and crushed in the sea.

Because of this evident miracle the sailors began to give thanks for the efficacy of the Divine Goodness and the glorious Mother Saint Clare. Returning to their country they fulfilled their vow with great devotion, telling everyone of the miracle that had happened to them.

During the work of restoring the Cathedral of Albenga to its original structure, a painting was discovered with Saint Clare represented in the center and in another section an ocean scene with a ship in the midst of a tempestuous sea. The date inscribed is April 22, 1465. This painting beautifully presents the miracle reported by Giovanni Forti concerning a title for Saint Clare of Assisi that was little known previously.

Crossino, Antonio. "Santa Chiara d'Assisi patrona dei marinai." *Forma Sororum* XXXII, no. 4-5 (1995): 275-279.

"Saint Clare of Assisi Patroness of Mariners," in *Clareview*, Spring 1997: 1-2. By Antonio Crossino. Translated by Mary Francis Hone, O.S.C..

