

The Second Letter to Agnes of Prague

Translation by Frances Teresa Downing OSC

1. To the daughter of the King of kings, the handmaid of the Lord of lords, (Rev 19:16; 1 Tim 6,15) to the Lady Agnes: most deservedly the Bride of Jesus Christ, and for that reason the most noble Queen; 2. from Clare, the unprofitable (Lk 17:10) and unworthy handmaid of the Poor Ladies: greetings and may you always live in the most high poverty.

3. I give thanks to the generous Giver of grace from whom we believe every good and perfect gift to come, (Jas 1:17) in that he has adorned you with the honour of such virtues and made you renowned with such insignia of perfection, 4. so that, by being made a loving imitator of the Father of perfections, (cf. Eph 5:1) you might merit to be made perfect, lest his eyes should see anything imperfect in you (cf. Mt 5:48; Ps 139: 16).

5. This is that perfection which the King himself will share with you in the heavenly bridal chamber, where he is gloriously seated on a throne of stars, 6. for you have scorned, as insufficient, the pinnacle of an earthly kingdom, the offer of marriage to the Emperor, 7. being made, in a spirit of great humility and most burning love, one who strives after the most holy poverty, cleaving to the footprints (1 Pt 2:21) of the one to whom you have merited to be united as in marriage.

8. Since I know that you are adorned with many virtues, however, I will spare you a lot of words, not wanting to burden you with superfluous ones, 9. even though I know that nothing seems superfluous to you if it can bring you some consolation. 10. Yet because one thing is necessary, (Lk 10:42) I bear witness to this one thing, and I admonish you, for love of him to whom you have offered yourself as a holy and acceptable sacrifice. (Rm 12:1) 11. Then, like another Rachel (cf. Go 29:16), remembering your purpose and always looking to the Beginning, hold what you now hold, do what you are now doing and do not cease. (Jo 8:25; Cant 3:4)

12. Instead, run even more swiftly, light-footed, without tripping, so that your stepping raises no dust.

13. With confident joy and speed, tread cautiously along the path of blessedness,

14. believing nothing, agreeing to nothing which would make you want to call back this purpose or which would place a stumbling-block on your way. In that case you would not be paying back your vows to the Most High (Rm 14:13; Ps 50:14) in that

perfection to which the Spirit of the Lord has called you.

15. In all this then, so that you may walk more surely along the way of the Lord's commands (Ps 118:32), follow the advice of our venerable father, our Brother Elias, the Minister General. 16. Prefer this advice to that of others and hold it dearer than any gift.

17. If anyone says something else to you, or suggests anything else to you which would hinder your perfection, or which seems contrary to the divine call, although you must respect him, do not follow his advice,

18. instead, O poor virgin, embrace the poor Christ.

19. See him, made contemptible for you, and follow him, being made contemptible for him in this world. 20. Your Bridegroom, more beautiful than the children of men (cf. Ps 44:3; Mt 27:26), was made the least of men for your salvation, despised, beaten and many times scourged over all his body, dying on the cross in the midst of anguish itself; O most noble Queen, gaze, consider, contemplate, longing to imitate.

21. If you suffer with him, you will reign with him, grieving with him, you will rejoice with him, dying with him on the cross of torments, you will possess heavenly mansions in the splendour of the saints, (cf. Rm 8:17; 2 Tm 2:11-13)

22. and your name will be noted in the Book of Life, glorious among those who are to come. (cf. Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5)

23. Therefore, in eternity and for ever and ever, you will share in the glory of the heavenly kingdom instead of an earthly and transient one, and you will live for ever and ever, in everlasting good instead of a good which is to perish.

24. Farewell, most beloved sister and Lady, on account of the Lord your Bridegroom. 25. And work hard at commending me, with my sisters, in your devout prayers to the Lord, that we may rejoice in the good things of the Lord which he is working in you through his grace. 26. Particularly, recommend us often to your sisters, as well.