

# The Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague

Translation by Frances Teresa Downing OSC

1. To the half of her soul and the special shrine of her heart's special love; to the illustrious Queen, the Bride of the Lamb of the eternal King; to the Lady Agnes, her dearest mother and the daughter who is special among all the others.  
2. Clare, the unworthy family servant of Christ and unprofitable handmaid (cf. Lc 17:10) of his handmaids who abide to the monastery of San Damiano of Assisi, 3. greetings; and with the rest of the most holy virgins, may she sing the new song (Rev 14:3) before the throne of God and of the Lamb, and may she follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes (Rev 14:4).

4. O mother and daughter (Mt 12:50), bride of the King of all the ages, although I have not written to you very often, in the measure that your soul and mine equally desire - and very much wish for, as well do not be surprised, S. nor believe that therefore the fire of love for you burns any the less sweetly in the bowels of your mother.

6. This is the hindrance, the lack of messengers and the evident dangers of the roads. 7. However, now that I am writing to your love, I rejoice and exult with you in the joy of the Spirit (1 Thess 1:6, O bride of Christ. 8. because you, like that other most holy virgin Saint Agnes, are wonderfully wedded to the spotless Lamb (1 Pt 1:19). who takes away the sins of the world (iii 1:29), having laid aside all the vanities of this world.

9. Certainly, she is happy,  
who has been given to drink deeply  
at this sacred banquet so that she might cleave  
with all her heart to him (cf. Lk 14: 15; Rev 19:9)

10. at whose beauty  
all the blessed hosts of heaven  
wonder unceasingly. (cf. 1 Pt 1:12)

9. It is he whose love stirs,  
whose contemplation remakes;  
whose kindness floods:

12. whose sweetness fills  
whose memory glows gently;

13. whose fragrance brings the dead to life again:  
the Jerusalem above most blessed. (cf. Rev 21:2.10; Gal 4:26:)

14. since she is the splendour of eternal glory,  
the brightness of everlasting light  
and an unspotted mirror. (cf. Hebr 1:3; Rev 21:11-23; Wis 7:26)

15. Gaze into this mirror daily, O Queen, Bride of Jesus Christ, and continually reflect your face in it, (cf. 2 Cor 11:2) 16. so that you may adorn your whole being, within and without, in robes set about with variety, (Ps 45:10) 17. adorned with virtues like flowers and with garments every bit as ornate as those of the daughter and dearly beloved Bride of the Most High King, for this is only fitting. (cf. Ps 45:11-12) 18. In that mirror, then, is reflected blessed poverty, holy humility, and love beyond words, as, by the grace of God, you can contemplate in the whole mirror.

19. Turn your mind, I say, to the border of this mirror, the poverty of him who was placed in a manger (Cf. Lk 2:12) and wrapped in tiny garments. 20. O wonderful Humility! O astounding poverty! 21. The King of Angels, the Lord of heaven and earth (cf. Mt 11:25), lay in a manger (Lk 2:7)! 22. Then, in the centre of the mirror, consider the humility, or at least the blessed poverty, the infinite and costly troubles which he took upon himself to redeem the human race. 23. At the edges of that same mirror, contemplate the love beyond words through which he chose to suffer on the Tree of the cross and, on that same Tree, to die the most disgraceful death of any.

24. Therefore, when it was placed on the wood of the cross, that same mirror taught the one who passed by to consider all this, saying:

25. 'All you who pass by the way, look and see if there is any suffering like my suffering!' (Lam 1:12). 26. [She says] let us respond to him with one voice, one spirit, crying out and grieving: "I hold this memory in my mind and my spirit faints within me!" (Lam 3:20).

27. So may you always more and more strongly catch fire from this burning love, O Queen of the heavenly King! 28. Over and above this, contemplating his inexpressible delights, enrichments and everlasting honours, 29. and sighing with the immense longing and love of your heart, may you cry out:

30. O heavenly Bridegroom, draw me after you,  
we are running in the fragrance of your perfumes! (Cant 1:3)

31. I shall run nor shall I give up,  
until you lead me into the wine-cellar, (cf. Cant 2:4)

32. until your left arm is under my head and your right will happily embrace me. then you will kiss me with the most happy kiss of Your mouth (cf Cant 1:1; 2:6; 8:3).

33. Placed in this contemplation, keep the memory your little, poor mother,  
34. knowing that I have inscribed the happy memory of you inseparably on the tables of my heart, holding you dearer than all others (ci. 2 Cor 3:3).

35. What else? Let the tongue of the flesh be silent in loving you, let that love be said and spoken by the tongue of the Spirit. 36. Love such as I have for you, can never be expressed in its fullness by the tongue of flesh, 37. I have written what it has said, which is half. I beg you, receive it generously and lovingly. Hear in it, at least, the motherly affection, the burning love which I feel for you and your daughters every day, and to which, over and over again, I

commend myself and my daughters in Christ. 38. In fact, these same daughters of mine, but especially the most prudent virgin Agnes, our sister, recommend themselves in the Lord to you and to your daughters as much as they can.

39. Be strong, dearest daughter, together with your daughters right up to the throne of the glory of the great God (Tit 2:13), and pray for us. 40. The bearers of this letter, our dearest brothers Amatus, beloved by God and men (Sir 45:1), and brother Bonaugura, by this letter, I recommend as much as I can to your love. Amen.