

Interview / **Sister K. Gardner**

“Sister Clare teaches us that happiness is found only in God”

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Ten years have passed since Sister Clare Crockett (14 November 1982 – 16 April 2016) ended her earthly life in Playa Prieta, Ecuador, following the earthquake that devastated the South American country, claiming 663 lives and leaving over six thousand injured.

Ten years in which the life of the young woman from Northern Ireland – who joined the Servants of the Focolare of the Mother at the age of 18 and a half after giving up a career as a presenter and actress – has inspired so many people around the world and given hope. A hope that is closely linked to what Sister Clare experienced after her conversion, which began on Good Friday in 2000.

Following the opening of her cause for beatification in January 2025, Sister Clare holds the title of Servant of God: the next step, if the heroicity of her virtues are recognised, will be her proclamation as Venerable. But how is her cause progressing, and what is her legacy for the Church and the world today? The *Daily Compass* asked Sister Kristen Gardner, Sister Clare's fellow sister and postulator of her cause.

Ten years ago Sister Clare died. Her death, at the age of 33, may seem to the world like a 'senseless' tragedy, but what does it tell us from the perspective of faith?

At the moment of Sr. Clare's death, on April 16, 2016, it truly seemed that she was in the plenitude of life and that she still had so much to offer and do in the world. I remember that when I received the news of Sr. Clare's death, I asked God the question "why" – as so many people do when they lose a person they love. I immediately understood that I shouldn't have asked, and that I should have just trusted Him. He always does everything for the good of the ones He loves, that is to say, us. Something that can seem an apparent tragedy, can really be a source of grace and we will only be able to see it on the last day, in the final judgment and when we get to Heaven. But the amazing thing is that in very little time God has deigned to show us the answer to this question "why". Sr. Clare is doing much more good now, and on many more levels, than she could when alive. We can only give thanks to God for permitting us to see these fruits and to understand a little of His unfathomable plans for us.

What is the current status of Sister Clare's cause for beatification with regard to the assessment of her heroic virtues?

The cause of beatification of Sr. Clare Crockett was opened on January 12 of last year in the Diocese of Alcala de Henares (Spain). Since then, the tribune designated by the local diocesan Bishop has been receiving the witnesses, that is, the people who personally knew Sr. Clare in life and who have many memories of her, who live in Spain. The next step is for this tribune to travel to Ireland, the USA and Ecuador – the other three countries where Sr. Clare lived – to continue taking testimonies there. Once all the witnesses have been received, the cause will be closed on a diocesan level and all the documentation will be sent to Rome.

Are you receiving reports of graces linked to Sister Clare's intercession? And if so, what sort?

Yes, we receive many emails and phone calls. The great majority are spiritual favours. Upon watching a video of Sr. Clare or reading her book, people are moved to conversion. Some times it is from a life of total non-practice of the faith. Other times it is from a mediocre life in the faith to a fervent life. But many people write to share their story and give thanks. Many mothers and grandmothers write because they pray to Sr. Clare to intercede to help their children or grandchildren return to the faith, and they write to thank us and Sr. Clare for her help. There are many other types of favours, that seem less important, but for which people are very thankful: from help to getting a job, to getting a good result on an exam.

And yes there are also physical favours, which are still in the process of being studied in order to determine if they can be declared miracles. Recently a mother wrote to thank us because her two-year old daughter had a rectal prolapse and it has totally disappeared, without medical intervention. Another woman wrote two months ago to thank us because the metastasis in her lungs has disappeared. In October a young man was clinically dead for forty-five minutes, friends of the family prayed to Sr. Clare, and he woke up.

These are the most recent three favours of this type. But as I say, they need to be studied, as it is not easy to prove that these occurrences are scientifically impossible to explain on a human level. In any case, these people have definitely received a sign of God's love through Sr. Clare.

Before her conversion, Sister Clare had led a rather dissolute life, typical of many young people today, involving sexual promiscuity, alcohol and even drug use. In her photos as a nun, the joy radiating from her face is striking: how can such joy be explained?

Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. When you live in faith, hope, and charity, God gives you a joy that surpasses our expectations. And I think that joy was a gift that God gave Sr. Clare in a special way. It stood out. She discovered that happiness couldn't be found in fame, pleasure, or wealth: only in God. And this discovery changed her totally and made her find the true treasure.

The Church is home to many figures of holiness, each with their own unique qualities. In your view, what were Sister Clare's unique qualities, and what is the main message her life leaves as a legacy?

I think Sr. Clare's main message is double: only God can give us the happiness that our hearts desire. And that we have to love God with our entire heart, not just with part of it. As Jesus said, we can't serve two masters. If we serve Him, we have to serve Him with our whole self, and keep nothing back. We are made for great things. We can't wallow in the mud like pigs (and the mud is a life of sin – Sr. Clare was always very clear about this). We are made to fly like eagles: *Ad maiora natus sum*.