



# Boston Catholic Journal

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[www.boston-catholic-journal.com](http://www.boston-catholic-journal.com)  
[editor@boston-catholic-journal.com](mailto:editor@boston-catholic-journal.com)

## Saint Colette



### **The Testament of St. Colette**

#### **The Pure Vision into Sanctity**

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*"Jesus! Maria! Anna!"*

Glory, honour, awe and reverence to the three Divine Persons in one unity. Amen

... My dearly beloved sisters and daughters, in the charity of our merciful, sweet and loving Redeemer, Jesus, and of his loyal spouse, our mother Holy Church, with all humility of heart and devotion, I commend myself to you, in life and in death. I commend both my intentions and the burden which I have to carry before our Lord, that I may render a good account of it to him on the day of judgment.

.... My dearly beloved sisters, chosen out of the valley of the shadow of death by the uncreated wisdom of our sovereign Father, to enter into the gospel way of life of his dearly beloved Son Jesus. To be his spouses, true daughters of the sovereign King, temples of the blessed Holy Spirit, heiresses and queens of the most high realm of heaven; and for a little labour to obtain repose, honour, glory, and unending salvation without limit or measure.

... Therefore, my dearly beloved daughters, be aware of your call from God to holiness, your great dignity and high perfection. Ignorance of these things is damaging, consciousness of them will enable you to bear much fruit.

### **Living The Gospel**

... Know, then, that you have entered on the true way through the door of divine inspiration and God's loving call. For as our dear Saviour says, no one can come to me, unless my Father draw them by his inspiration.

.... This gateway into the rich field of the gospel way of life is total renunciation of the world, the flesh and one's own will. For thus says the blessed Son of the pure Virgin: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" by continually repenting of their sins and failings, so as to keep the grace God gives whole and alive and avoid future falls. This is shown in Saint John the Baptist, who was sanctified in his mother's womb. All his life long he carried the cross of continual penance, not because he had committed any actual offence but so as to persevere in grace and give good example. If this is what the just man does, what ought the sinner do? Whether here below or in the life to come, every sin will have its consequences.

.... The Lord says follow me. Follow' by final perseverance, keeping completely until death all that you have promised in accordance with the Holy Gospel, so as to be found in your last hour only desiring the fullness of my holy will; rooted in the perfect love of God.

### **Obedience**

... Note well then, my beloved daughters, that you have been called by grace to perfect obedience, so as to obey at all times and in all things, save in sin. Jesus Christ did this even unto death.

.... For it is not sufficient to obey when it suits you, or in certain limited things only. We should obey, even unto death, in everything not opposed to God, or contrary to your own souls, or to the Holy Rule. Following the example of our merciful Redeemer, who became obedient for our sakes even unto death, we in our turn ought to obey, for his sake, even unto death.

... Let us not to set our own judgments and feelings above those of our superiors, for the even the true Wisdom, Jesus Christ, was submissive to Joseph and obeyed his dear Virgin

Mother.

... The truly obedient person is concerned only with the work of true obedience, obeying purely for God sake and as with much reverence as if he had received his orders from the lips of Jesus. The more humble the command in human eyes, the more precious is devout obedience in the eyes of God. The truly obedient person fears more to be lacking in obedience than to run the risk of bodily death; after the example of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, of whom Saint Bernard wrote, saying: remember, that Jesus Christ much rather preferred to loose his life through his bitter Passion, than to fail in obedience to God his Father.

... All evil comes through disobedience. As another saint said: one prayer of a really obedient person is worth a hundred thousand of a disobedient one. If we are obedient to God, and to our Superiors for God's sake, God himself will obey us in granting all our good desires.

.... Rid yourselves then of all self-will for it is the one fuel for eternal destruction.

.... Above all the other virtues I recommend to you holy obedience, in which the excellence of charity is shown forth, when in all things we obey the creature for love of the Creator. In this virtue with Jesus on the cross, may we be able to die and obtain life everlasting! Amen!

## **Poverty**

... After the renunciation of ourselves through complete obedience, our Saviour wishes us to carry our cross daily - that is, our vow of holy poverty. Poverty is the heavy cross of not wishing for anything under heaven, except him who bore the cross on his shoulders, and deigned to die for our love on this cross: pierced with nails, crowned with thorns, spat upon and heaped with blows; his side pierced by a lance.

... O holy poverty! Finery of our redemption! Precious jewel and certain sign of salvation!

... It is to poverty that the King gives possession of the kingdom of heaven ,lastingly and without end. .... And you, daughters of Adam and Eve, O why do you not love this precious jewel, this noble pearl, whose worth and dignity is that of the kingdom of heaven, and so is far more precious than innumerable worlds?

... Alas, and more than a hundred thousand times, alas! You could possess poverty more easily and as an incomparably better bargain than this wretched world, which is full of wrong choices, traps and snares, lies and clinging mire; in the midst of which, you can, all too easily, lose the kingdom of heaven and saddle yourself with pain and eternal torments.

... O my most beloved sisters, love, love, love most perfectly this noble and precious and most excellent virtue, the poverty of the gospel; loved by God and hated by the world.

... After the example of Jesus Christ, who had nowhere here below to lay his head, and the example of our glorious father, Saint Francis, and our mother, Lady Saint Clare, be utterly content with the form of your poor habit allowed by your Rule, and hold everything else as suspect, such as books, chaplets, thread, needles, pins and whatever trivia; kerchiefs, veils and other things which may be for your own use and on which you may set your affection.

.... Have only those things which are truly necessary, and possess all things in common.

.... In this present life, be content with what is necessary, so as to attain more easily to the true goods of the celestial kingdom, to which you already have a claim by reason of that holy poverty which you have willingly promised and vowed for the love of God.

... The kingdom of God will be ours without fail if we keep faith with Lady Holy Poverty.

... By this cross of holy poverty I mean: to live a life of continual abstinence, not eating meat, fasting daily, going barefoot and enduring the cold, sleeping on hard beds, wearing poor clothing, being content with scanty and coarse food, and bearing the burden of labour, both manual and spiritual.

.... Whoever at the hour of death is found possessing anything, in fact, or in deliberate desire, will be dispossessed of the kingdom of heaven.

... Live and die truly poor, my dearly beloved daughters, just as our sweet Saviour died on the cross for us; for if it seems that few love him in this way, it is all the more reason that we should so love him.

... After Lady Holy Obedience in the order, I recommend to you above all else, Poverty, which is the straight ladder by means of which, without anxious wobbling, one mounts easily to that self-same kingdom, thanks to the complete renunciation of all passing goods for the love of God, who is so good, and who promises us his kingdom and does not lie.

### **Chastity**

... Since our Lord has said follow me, I understand that we really are to follow Jesus Christ - the spotless lamb, the virginal Son of a virgin Mother - through true purity of heart and body until death. Through this true vow of angelical chastity, one becomes a loyal bride of Jesus Christ, in virtue of that faithfulness promised and given at the time

when we made our vows in the hands of superiors, who represented God on earth; a pledge made in the presence of witnesses:- the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Francis, Saint Clare, and all the saints, and before those other witnesses who were present when we made our vows at our holy profession; a profession through which we obtained the remission of all our sins and the full assurance of eternal life.

... O noble and most precious virtue of chastity! Loved by God as his loyal bride, honoured by the angels as spouse of their Lord and King, most highly praised by the saints, and so splendidly proclaimed in sacred scripture!

... It is the noble crown you will wear in the kingdom of heaven at the true wedding feast of your true spouse, Jesus.

... O most excellent garden! Full of all the plants that are truly good! You never let thorns, nettles, or poisonous weeds grow in you; you do not allow any profane thing to enter. O how good is your strong surrounding wall!

... How loyal is the one who keeps faithful watch at your gates and allows none but the true messengers of your true spouse and king to enter!

... Naturally you will find your place in the imagery of Sacred Scripture as the finest flowering trees bearing this noble fruit, which is served to the King of true love in his kingdom!

... O worthy and excellent virtue! Your dignity, your meaning and your worth, and the excellence of your victory - it is impossible to understand them properly and to express them! God alone is your reward, whom you will see in bliss divine! This virtue, coming next in order and merit in the sight of God, who loves holy chastity, I commend to you, so that through her you will have honour and merit on the great day of judgment. But those who are false to the vows that they have promised before God, and who have not made fitting reparation, will suffer the consequences!

.... Our merciful Redeemer, through his highest obedience, poverty and chastity is the sole source of the virtues for us. Through him let us live in blessed penance, for it can win for us full reconciliation with our beloved Father.

### **Enclosure**

... The Lord willingly allowed himself to be shut away in a sepulchre of stone.

... As it pleased him to be enclosed for forty hours, my dear Sisters, you, too, must follow

him; for after obedience, poverty and pure chastity, you have your holy enclosure to support you. In it you may well live forty years, more or less; and in which you will die. You are therefore already in your sepulchre of stone; that is to say, the enclosure which you have vowed.

... O how precious is the sepulchre of Jesus; that tomb visited by so many out of devotion!

... O how precious is that sepulchre - your enclosure - into which devout souls enter to obtain their salvation. From the depths of that tomb, these souls take flight, with the help of the three vows already mentioned, soaring to the great celestial palace without difficulty, or hardly any, and without danger, having carried out all the works required in accordance with the call they have received from God, How much comfort, delight and aid, should these fellow captives feel when a new bride enters into the noble realm of the Bridegroom she has loved and desired.

... Such is the abundance and superabundance at the table of this blissful marriage feast, that when a tiny part of the great and immeasurable joy and bounty of the noble King and Spouse falls from it, it cannot but delight the poor captives, whom sin still keeps from entering into this noble wedding feast.

... O happy enclosure, which can remove you from many vices and occasions of evil and keeps you secluded securely and worthily in the midst of noble virtues.

... O noble castle, powerful and strong, of the King of heaven! It fears not the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil.

... O impregnable tower, you enclose within yourself all truth's provisions against the assault of the devil.

... You have within yourself universal obedience, the daughter of Holy Humility, which condemns all self-will, the cause and root of all evil; you are fully supplied with Lady Holy Poverty, which has no care about worldly things and who makes it her entire aim and desire to tend entirely towards his glorious kingdom, without anxiety about the untrustworthy things of this passing world. Against the strong and harmful assaults of the flesh, our particular enemy here below, we have its adversary Holy Chastity, continual prayer, fasting cold and bare feet, close guard of the senses, holy silence, chapter, correction, meditation, tears, sighs, regular discipline, the Divine Office, sacred Scripture, holy Mass, the sweet partaking of the precious Body of Jesus Christ, purity of heart, right instruction, the remembrance of death, the cross, the passion, the sight of the cemetery, the faithful guardianship of your good angel, the fidelity loyally promised to your dear Spouse, the hope of eternal reward - and the thought of the terrible punishment of those who will have merited otherwise.

... Be gone then, away with you, foolish and rebellious flesh, full of distracting promptings and evil inclinations; you who seek to lure us from the way of perfection, bringing shameful death and perdition.

... Be led by Lady Holy Grace as her servant, and by wise reason, for your profit and, ultimately, your glory.

... Sin passes away swiftly and its punishment is unending; penitence is short, but its ending will be your eternal glory.

... O happy enclosure! O soul completely enclosed, according to the will of its superior, which nothing causes to go straying abroad here and there, but which rests at all times completely submissive to the will of its superiors. There is its only rest!

.... O precious and sure enclosure! To be enclosed by continual remembrance in the precious wounds of Jesus Christ!

... O happy captives, soaring above the heavens to hear with the ears of the spirit the nine choirs of angels, whose sweet praise and chanting magnifies the Holy and Blessed Trinity, one God in three persons.

### **Praise and Glory**

... With all the angels praise God, glorify him - in him and through him, and through all his creatures in heaven and on earth: exalt him above all for his inestimable favour in creating the human person in the image of the Creator, and for the sovereign gift of the sacred Incarnation of our God, who is so good that, after having created all things for our sake, he himself became truly man and our loving Brother, so as to restore all things by his glorious death and his passion.

... O infinite good!

... O bounty without measure!

... O ingratitude which forgets so great a gift!

... Praise him! Exalt him with all your voice for the great gift received in Holy Baptism, that of knowing complete innocence and becoming temples of the blessed Holy Spirit.

... Give thanks worthily to the Lord for having borne, so generously, with your sins and failings. His pity has recalled us to himself through contrition, confession, atonement and the resolution to lead a good life. He has drawn us through our call to the religious life, to

enter into the state of perfection found in the Form of Life, with a good company which will not desert us, so as to glorify him at all times for the holy promise of eternal life, the promise he has already made to us.

.... Praise him, love him, serve him worthily so you can be sure of everlasting life - as sure as those who are already in full possession of it and who see God in the clear vision of his sweetness and infinite goodness, in the highest bliss and perfect surety of their eternal inheritance.

... In order to be able to attain to this by his grace and his aid, we must loyally keep the vows that which we have promised him, and if we commit some fault through human frailty, we must make haste every time pick ourselves up, to make ourselves clean and to make up our losses through holy penance. And our dear Father, during this life receives us without delay into his mercy and his sweet reconciliation, considering that first, holy and good intention, which he gave us in our holy vocation and in his loving binding of us to himself, and for the sake of all his innumerable favours, graces present and to come.

... Praise, praise always, praise everlastingly, and love the Father, the Son and the blessed Holy Spirit; the most humble Virgin who bore Jesus Christ, the holy and sacred soul of our Redeemer, and his precious body which hung upon the cross for us all; love the saints, men and women, and all the angels, and all the good and just people who serve God day and night.

... Set your minds on living well and dying holily. The end is approaching; the world not improving: malice increases; goodness, loyalty and truth decrease; iniquity abounds, charity grows cold again; devotion and religion are found in very few hearts. Many are called, but few are chosen.

... Alas ! The pity of it all ! For God, according to his holy will, wants to save all humankind without exception! Yet so few of them let themselves be chosen ! All are called, but few consent to come; and if there are those who start out and go on for some time, nevertheless there are very few who persevere to the end in keeping the law of God.

... There are many who make solemn vows in religion but alas, and more than a hundred thousand times alas, there are all too few today who acquit themselves of them loyally in the sight of God who misses nothing. In order to be saved people are obliged to keep in completely, justly and loyally, all that they have promised and vowed; the punishment for dishonesty is eternal! Surely it would be better not to promise anything and so fail in nothing, than to promise much and then fall abysmally short.

... The greater the promise, the greater the injury, and the more awful the fate of the transgressor. But for the good, the greater the promise, the greater is the merit and the greater the salvation, which will be given us as a pure gift by the Father of all mercy, the

Son by his holy Passion, and by the blessed Holy Spirit, the fountain of peace, of  
sweetness, of love and of all consolation.

**... Amen, amen, without recall."**

*Courtesy of the Ty Mam Duw Poor Clare Colettine Community in Hawarden, Wales, GB.*

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