

## God's Mirror

Happy is the person  
Who clings with all their heart to our Lord  
And shares in God's sacred banquet.

God is the one whose beauty is praised by heaven's  
Indefatigable angels.  
God is the one whose kindness electrifies,  
Whose contemplation refreshes,  
Whose love satisfies,  
Whose joy replenishes,  
Whose celebration illuminates the world,  
Whose fragrance resurrects the dead,  
Whose splendid vision blesses,  
Whose eternal glory shines,  
Whose everlasting light burns brightest,  
Whose mirror reflects all things flawlessly.

Look in that Mirror each and every day.  
Study your face in it forever.  
Then you can put on the most beautiful clothes  
And wear them and every one of virtue's flowers  
Because happy poverty, holy humility, and indescribable kindness  
Are reflected in that Mirror  
As you contemplate them there.

**St Clare of Assisi**  
**trans. Carmen Acevedo Butcher**

When Bath Abbey commissioned this anthem to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their Abbey Girls Choir, they asked me to set a text by a woman. It was my wonderful nun friends at Stanbrook Abbey who found these words and their beautiful translation by Carmen Acevedo Butcher. They are taken from the fourth letter of St Clare of Assisi to her very dear friend St Agnes of Prague, written shortly before the former's death in 1253.

I asked the girls for some ideas of what they love to sing – the answers included: “happy, in 2 parts, big sings, high notes, upbeat, loud and interesting” and “no plainsong”! All these wishes have been granted, as the piece exhorts the pure joy and exhilaration of God being the source of so many positive moods and qualities.

Especially important is his ‘Mirror’ – having two recently teenage girls of my own, I'm only too painfully aware of how harshly this age group can judge their own reflections, comparing them to the significantly filtered and cosmetically enhanced celebrities who stare back them, via social media. St Clare sends such a potent message of looking at your own beautiful reflection (because, girls, you are *all* beautiful) and seeing the most important qualities every human being should have, most of all “indescribable kindness” not just to others, but to yourself.

This piece is dedicated to the Bath Abbey Girls Choir, on their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

I am hugely grateful to Steven & Maria Foster for thinking of me for this wonderful commission and sponsoring it. Also to Bath Abbey and their Director of Music Huw Williams and the girl choristers who helped inspire me through the work's creation. Thank you also Stanbrook Abbey, particularly D. Raphael and Sr. Phillipa, for finding these words and connecting me with translator Carmen Acevedo Butcher, who talked me through the thoughts between the lines.

**RP, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2022**

