



Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



The Real Bethlehem

Have you put out your crèche yet? That’s usually a job reserved for Mother Gabrielle Marie at our convent. She’s got a real eye for the artistic and always gets our Nativity looking just perfect. The statuettes of Mary and Joseph peacefully gaze upon Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The wise men and shepherds are strategically spread out to avoid overcrowding. Even the ox, ass, and three little lambs seem to be smiling as they hover at a reasonable distance from their newborn Creator while matching angels are poised to sing glory to God. And when the adoration candles are all lit and the chapel lights are dimmed, the whole scene is simply breathtaking.



Now let’s rewind 2,019 years and peek into the real grotto of Bethlehem just before the Holy Family arrived. It was probably damp, drafty, and freezing cold. There must have been a pungent odor emanating from the cave’s four-legged tenants, most likely exacerbated by the little “treasures” they left hidden among the hay. Our animal figurines are mute, but the real chorus of moos, baas, and hee-haws would have undoubtedly driven most of us crazy after a long, tiring journey. Beautiful picture, huh? Well, to Jesus it was because that’s where He chose to be born. That should be very consoling to us, we who often feel like hot messes ourselves. In fact, we waste a great deal of time mulling over our weaknesses – worrying about them, feeling guilty over them, trying to fix or cover them up, justifying and rationalizing them, etc. etc. But does it ever really do any good? Ready for a different approach?

Drawing courage from that disheveled stable where the Eternal Father *preferred* to deliver His only Son to the earth, let’s lay it all out before the Lord. “Go into your inner room, shut the door, and pray to your Father in secret” (Mt 6:6), admitting to Him - and to yourself - all of your miseries...every last embarrassing thought, desire, and selfish ambition. Spill out all of your jealousy, pride, vanity, insecurity, arrogance, or whatever may be the root of your sinfulness, the cause of your escapes from the Divine Will. And then...let it all go. Deposit it into the tiny Babe’s Sacred Heart. Only when we accept ourselves for who we are, drop the pretenses, and empty our brains of all the self-absorbed clutter, only then do we make room for Jesus. And He will not only be born in the little, messy Bethlehem of our soul, but He’ll turn it into paradise... just like He did to the original, less-than-perfect grotto on that very first Christmas morning. That’s what we need to stay focused on - the very real presence of the Most Holy Trinity in our souls, in all of His beauty, goodness, and love.



It is the great secret...the secret to our peace and joy, to the healing of all of our wounds, to overcoming our miseries and weaknesses, to loving more, and to abandoning our will to God’s. Awareness of the Divine Indwelling is the most effective way of



disposing ourselves to *live in* the Divine Will with our whole heart, rather than letting Our Lord's teachings to Luisa Piccarreta remain stuck only in our heads. But it's certainly not easy. It takes practice, persistence in asking for the grace, and faith to believe that God truly does delight in dwelling in our poor souls. You're going to encounter distractions, desolations, dryness, and temptations to give up. But keep persevering. Nothing of value comes easy and the Lord wants to see if you're willing to work at your relationship with Him, more than anything else in this life. We've got a few suggestions that have been fruitful for us, along with a bit of expertise from Heaven. It's not an exact science, though, but rather a dynamic, ever-evolving relationship with our Creator and Father. So don't be timid if the Holy Spirit may be leading you to different methods. Be bold and simply follow.

*"I continued My stay in the grotto of Bethlehem with Jesus and dear Saint Joseph. How happy we were! **Through the presence of the Divine Infant and of the Divine Will operating in us, that little grotto had changed into paradise.** It is true that pains and tears were not lacking, but compared to the immense seas of joy, of happiness and of light which the Divine Fiat made arise in each one of our acts, they were just little drops plunged into these seas. And then, the sweet and loving presence of My dear Son was a happiness of the greatest kind."* (The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will, Luisa Piccarreta, Day 23)



Tip #1: Imitation of Mary

She pondered the mysteries of God in Her heart, proclaimed the greatness of the Lord, exulted in Her Savior, and nurtured Christ in Her most pure womb. Even after Our Blessed Mother brought Jesus forth into the world, She kept Her Immaculate Heart perfectly fused with His...allowing no time or distance to separate Them. Wherever Jesus went, Mary was there; and wherever Mary was, Her Son could be found there, too. As for us, this is something we could concretely practice while praying the Rosary. Try meditating on the mysteries inside of you, thinking of each moment in the life of Christ as actually happening in the depths of your soul. Imagine yourself inside of Jesus also, experiencing everything that He's experiencing, suffering together with Him, and consoling Him as Mary always did. Ask Our Lady for help, to lead you and guide you in Her very footsteps. There you can never go wrong.

*"Our Lady spoke to me about the Divine Indwelling. It was Her life and She lived it perfectly always conscious of His presence, never forgetting that **all Her greatness came from within, from Him who dwelt there**, working, loving, and doing good through Her...She seemed anxious to impress me with some idea of the greatness of this gift of God to us, namely, His Divine Presence within our souls through sanctifying grace."*

(Sister Mildred, the mystic to whom Our Lady of America appeared - August 5, 1957)

Tip #2: Simple, interior ejaculatory prayers

The key is to keep them short and to pray them from the heart. Mother Gabrielle Marie and a couple of sisters have received much grace imitating the early desert fathers, repeating "Jesus and Mary, I love You" throughout the day. Sometimes just the name of Jesus said with love and longing is enough. You can echo Our Lord's own words to His Father, "Not my will but Thy Will be done," over and over again. Though it may seem silly to some, this simple practice will lead our souls to contemplation without distracting us with too many words. It will help keep our minds and motives aimed in the right direction even when we're busy about many things.

"As He withdrew in my interior, I heard [Jesus] pray, saying: 'Ever Holy and indivisible Trinity, I adore You profoundly, I love You intensely, I thank You perpetually, for all and in the hearts of all.' And I went on in this way, hearing Him pray almost continuously inside of me, and I with Him." (Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta, Book of Heaven, Vol. 4, 1/14/1902)

Tip #3: Slow down

Even in the convent we sometimes struggle with our tight schedule and find ourselves rushing around, trying to get everything done so as to not sacrifice any prayer time. But as one sister put it, we've all got to learn to slow down, to stop and look at our hands and picture Jesus' hands working in them. We have to take a breath from time to time and, in anything that we may be doing, visualize Jesus physically doing that act in us. And what may seem like a waste of time to some workaholics will prove to be one of the most efficient ways of getting our "everything" done, all while still maintaining our peace of soul and union with God.

*"By practicing God's presence and continuously looking at Him, the soul familiarizes itself with Him to the extent that it passes almost its whole life in **continual acts of love, praise, confidence, thanksgiving, offering, and petition**. Sometimes all this may merge into one single act that does not end, because the soul is always in the ceaseless exercise of God's divine presence."* (Brother Lawrence, 1614-1691, from The Practice of the presence of God)

Tip #4: Cherish the Eucharist

Don't be eager to run out of the Church after mass, but spend some time thanking Our Lord for the incredible miracle of Holy Communion and meditating upon Jesus' Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity which you just had the privilege to receive. Find a little time during the week to place yourself before the Blessed Sacrament, whether exposed in the monstrance or hidden in the tabernacle. Put down the book, ignore all distractions and immerse yourself in the reciprocal love of the Most Holy Trinity. Allow God, who lives in you, to love, praise, and glorify God who dwells in the Most Blessed Sacrament. With your mind's eye, picture each one of your inhales and exhales participating in this divine exchange between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You cannot imagine the joy you would give to Our Lord, the good you would do for souls, and the fruit you would produce for your own.

*"I love to penetrate beyond the veil of the soul to this inner sanctuary where we live alone with God. He wants us entirely to Himself, and is making there within us a cherished solitude...**The whole Blessed Trinity dwells in us, the whole of that mystery which will be our vision in Heaven...**All day long let us surrender ourselves to Love, by doing the will of God, under his gaze, with Him, in Him, for Him alone...And then, when evening comes, after a dialogue of love that has never stopped in our hearts, let us go to sleep still in Love. And if we are aware of any faults, let us simply abandon them to Love, which is a consuming fire, and so do our purgatory in His love!"* (St. Elizabeth of the Trinity, 1880-1906)



Stocking Stuffers from the Saints

*"I always insist on one point – that is, sanctity does not consist of a formula. In order to form, with this new science, saints who may surpass those of the past, **the new saints must also have all of the virtues, and in a heroic degree, of the ancient saints** – the confessors, the penitents, the martyrs, the hermits, the virgins, etc., etc."* St. Annibale Maria DiFrancia wrote this in a 1924 letter to Luisa Piccarreta after he had already immersed himself in her writings and began the undertaking of their printing. He understood well what it means to truly live in the Divine Will, echoing the same sentiments that Luisa also frequently expressed to her spiritual children: *"To live in It is **not about changing actions, but only the will** – instead of making our will flow in all that we do, we let flow the Will of God."*

So let us look at our brothers and sisters, the saints. Our loving and very prudent Father planted tons of little seeds in their lives to prepare us for the great gift He was getting ready to return to the world - that His Will reign in us on earth at it does in Heaven. In order for this to happen, though, we need to ponder the

wisdom and follow the examples of those holy men and women who came before us...but with one really big advantage that we'll allow Luisa to finish explaining: "God's love, His goodness is so great that as we form our act and let His Will flow in it, the Divine Life forms in our act...Do you think it's trivial that, as long as I let His Will flow, He gives me the power to form as many Divine Lives for as many acts as I do? They might even be natural or tiny acts – as long as His Will is there, the great prodigy is performed."

How does one do this exactly? Desire it, invite the Most Holy Trinity into everything you do, and then be ready to correspond to grace – to the life of God who's going to take over. Rather than going crazy with a do-it-yourself method of growing in virtue (which rarely works), you'll find that Jesus will be steadily planting His divine virtues in your heart and exercising them Himself in the weak little vessel that you are. But it does help to know what He's doing, which is why the Lord filled His Church with the examples of so many different saints before unleashing the Sanctity of sanctities upon the world. So here are a few stocking stuffers from our family in Heaven to help us along our journey in the Divine Will. And since God is a multitasker, anything His Will does in us embraces all generations. That means at every single moment we have the opportunity to love and glorify Him on behalf of every soul past, present, and future...including the saints! Not a bad exchange of gifts from our end either.

"As our beloved Jesus lives in your hearts, so too, He will live in your conduct and He will be revealed by your eyes, mouth, hands, yes even the hair on your head." (St. Francis de Sales)

On Adversities and Mortifications

"Such mortifications as come to us from the hand of God, or from men by His permission, are always more precious than those which are the offspring of our own will; for it is a general rule that wherever there is less of our own choice, God is better pleased and we ourselves derive greater profit." ~ *St. Francis de Sales*

"To attain union with God, adversities are indispensable; because by them God aims at destroying all of our corrupt propensities within and without. Hence all injuries, contempts, infirmities, abandonment of relatives and friends, confusions, temptations, and other mortifications, all are in the highest degree necessary for us...and we shall never arrive at divine union until adversities, instead of seeming bitter to us, become all sweet for God's sake." ~*St. Catherine of Genoa*

On Suffering

"[St. Teresa of Avila] appeared after her death to a soul and revealed to her that she enjoyed an immense reward in Heaven, not so much for her good works, as for the sufferings which she cheerfully bore in this life for the love of God; and that if she could possibly entertain a wish to return upon earth, the only reason would be in order that she might suffer more for God." (from The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ, St. Alphonsus Liguori)



"When I am suffering greatly, instead of becoming discouraged, I react with a smile. In the beginning I didn't succeed very well, but now I am happy to have acquired this habit."

~*St. Thérèse of Lisieux*

On True Humility

"To be exasperated at ourselves after a fault is not humility, but a subtle pride, as if we were anything else than the weak and miserable things that we are...It is a fault worse than the one committed and will be the occasion of many other faults...Whenever, therefore, we fall into any fault, we should turn to God with humility and confidence, craving His forgiveness." ~*St. Alphonsus Liguori*

“Practicing humility really consists not only in thinking and in saying that you are full of imperfections, but in being glad that others also think that you are imperfect, and even say so!” ~*St. Thérèse of Lisieux*

On Meekness

“If I must err, let it be on the side of mercy and charity, of meekness and compassion... Hatred must be overcome by love, and persecution by meekness; thus the saints acted, and so they placated the affections of their most exasperated enemies. ‘There is nothing,’ says St. Francis de Sales, ‘that gives so much edification to our neighbor as meekness of behavior.’ The saint, therefore, was generally seen smiling, and with a countenance beaming with charity, which gave a tone to all his words and actions.” ~*St. Alphonsus Liguori*



On Hiddenness

“Above all, let us be little, so little that everyone may trample us underfoot, without our even having the appearance of feeling it and suffering from it... What a blessing to be so well hidden that no one thinks about you, to be totally unknown even to those who live with you! The grain of sand does not desire to be humbled; this is still too glorious, since one would be obliged to be occupied with it. It desires only one thing, to be forgotten, counted for nothing. But it desires to be seen by Jesus!” ~*St. Thérèse of Lisieux*

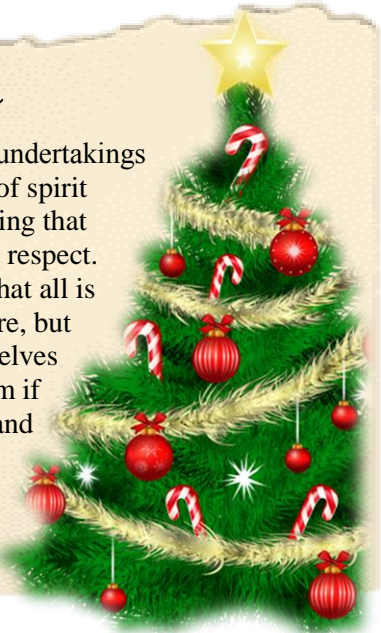
On Prayer

“We should not go to prayer in order to taste the sweetness of divine love. Whoever prays from such a motive will waste his time, or at least derive little advantage from it. A person should begin to pray solely to please God, that is, solely to learn what the Will of God is in his regard, and to beg of Him the help to put it into practice... Prayer unattended with sensible consolations confers greater fruits on the soul. But pitiable is the poor soul that leaves off prayer because she finds no relish in it.” ~*St. Alphonsus Liguori*



On Purity of Intention

“Those who have nothing else in view in their undertakings than the Divine Will, enjoy that holy liberty of spirit which belongs to the children of God; and this enables them to embrace everything that pleases Jesus Christ, however revolting it may be to their own self-love or human respect. The love of Jesus Christ establishes His lovers in a state of total indifference, so that all is the same to them, be it sweet or bitter. They desire nothing for their own pleasure, but all for the pleasure of God. With the same feelings of peace, they address themselves to small and great works, to the pleasant and the unpleasant: it is enough for them if they please God... This is what is meant by loving Jesus Christ with a pure love; and in this we ought to exercise ourselves, battling against the craving of our self-love, which would urge us to seek important and honorable functions, and such as suit our inclinations.” ~*St. Alphonsus Liguori*





Everything in the right order

“First I had to form the saints, who were to resemble Me and copy My Humanity in a more perfect way, as much as is possible for them; and this I have already done. Now My goodness wants to go beyond and wants to give in to greater excesses of love. Therefore I want them to enter into My Humanity and copy what the soul of My Humanity did in the Divine Will... **If man did not first know the way, the**

door, the rooms of My Humanity, how could he enter inside of Me and copy what I did? Now the time has come for the creature to enter into this plane... What is the wonder if I have called you as the first one?... To no other soul, though dear to Me, have I manifested the way to live in My Will, the effects of It, and the wonders and goods which the creature operating in the Supreme Volition receives... Therefore, be attentive.”

(Jesus to Luisa Piccarreta, Book of Heaven, Vol. 14, 10/6/1922)

Oh, what the saints wouldn't have sacrificed in order to receive the knowledges of living in the Divine Will that we have so readily available in Luisa's writings. They would have immediately sold everything for this pearl of great price that God, in His wisdom and mercy, has chosen to reveal in our times. They would have marveled at our lack of holy ambition in learning about this Sanctity of sanctities, the highest and deepest union a soul could have with her Creator while still on this earth. So get back to reading, praying, and surrendering to these divine teachings if you've grown lax. Or if you're new to all this but feel a strong tug at your heart, contact us and we'll get you started with everything you'll need. There are no quick fixes or Divine Will cliff notes. If you want to live in It, you've got to read and continually reread all of what our Lord dictated directly to Luisa from her diaries themselves.



Tithings for Christmas...and a happy New Year



For those of you who haven't heard yet, we're getting ready to expand. We'll be opening up a second convent in a new country next spring. You can read about all the details in our September newsletter on our website. Though we're all excited about this next phase of our young community, the change will also bring added expenses. Would you prayerfully consider helping the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will with your financial support as we prepare to promote Eucharistic Adoration and spread the Divine Will beyond our little town of Talamello? If you feel called to make a donation this Christmas season or on a monthly basis throughout the following year, visit the "Donations" page of our website: www.benedictinesofdivinewill.org

Or simply send a check or money order to the address of our non-profit organization below:

(All donations are tax-deductible)

**Benedictine Daughters
of Divine Will
P.O. Box 1002
Hanceville, AL 35077**

So many of you have been so good to us in 2019! In thanksgiving for your generosity, whether financially, spiritually, or by the giving of your time, Holy Mass will be celebrated for all of our benefactors and friends this Christmas Season. You'll also be receiving all of our prayers offered up for each of your personal needs and intentions throughout the entire Octave.



*We love you all!
Merry Christmas and a
Blessed New Year!!!*