



# Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



## ❧ The Person of Christ ❧

Catechism (or CCD) classes got to a late start here in Talamello due to the coronavirus, but the three sisters who are helping out this year were not at all disappointed with the delay. It gave them more time to gather resources, brainstorm new ideas, and prepare their curriculum. They stocked up on books, watched videos, and shared materials, all agreeing that there were so many beautiful things about the Catholic faith they wanted to impart to their students with not nearly enough time to cover everything. And they really didn't just want to "cover" everything as a history or mathematics professor might try to do, but rather set their young students on fire with love for God and His Church. How does one teach to both the head and the heart?



One sister really struggled in particular, unable to prioritize, organize, or even come up with a clear objective for the year. It was as if the Holy Spirit put a block over her mind, which was very frustrating for the former teacher and recovering perfectionist. However, in these moments when we're most tempted to fall into discouragement, the Lord uses the very darkness to reveal a light to us that we wouldn't have otherwise recognized. As with John the Baptist, the word of God often comes to us in the desert (Luke 3:2), and usually in the simplest of forms. For sister, the word was this: *Just get the kids to really know Me and I will take care of the rest.* And the message wasn't just for her class, but for her as well.

How well did she know Jesus? How well do any of us Christians really know Christ? Sure, we may know a lot *about* Him, but that's not exactly the same thing...otherwise we'd all be fit for canonization here on earth. The saints became saints because they truly knew their Heavenly Father through His Son in union with the Holy Spirit. And from that knowledge easily flowed love, the kind of love that filled them with joy and led them to make great sacrifices – in many cases, even to the point of giving up their lives – for their very real, very personal, and very close Beloved.

For those of us desiring to live in God's Most Holy and Divine Will, we're not called to less, but to far more. As Jesus indicates in the title He gave to Luisa's mystical writings<sup>1</sup>, we're being called back to the order, the place, and the purpose for which we were created by God – "the entry of God's creatures into the *perfect* unity of the Blessed Trinity" (CCC #260). The Church further goes on to explain that "even *now* we are called to be a dwelling for the Most Holy Trinity: *'If a man loves Me', says the Lord, 'he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our home with him'* (John 14:23)."

Do not let anyone fool you, this is not an easy task. For it's about no longer living life in the middle but responding one hundred percent to our baptismal vocation, dying completely in Christ so that we may rise with

<sup>1</sup> The 36-volume diary of the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta entitled *Book of Heaven: The Call of the Creature to the Order, the Place, and the Purpose for which He was Created by God*. If you'd like to start reading, drop us an email at [daughtersofdivinewill@gmail.com](mailto:daughtersofdivinewill@gmail.com) and we'll set you up with everything you need.





Him as a new creation, born from above, of the Spirit, in order to “enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:3-6). It requires us to follow in Our Lady’s footsteps, who took Her human will and “bound it to the foot of the Divine Throne, in continuous homage of love and sacrifice, promising never to use [Her] will, not even for one instant of [Her] life, but always that of God.”<sup>2</sup> And as Our Blessed Mother plainly makes clear: *“To sacrifice oneself for one day – now yes, now no – is easy; but to sacrifice oneself in each instant, in each act, in the very good that one wants to do, for one’s entire life, without ever giving life to one’s own will, is the sacrifice of sacrifices; it is the greatest attestation that can be offered, and the purest love, filtered through the Divine Will Itself, that can be offered to our Creator. This sacrifice is so great, that God cannot ask anything more of the creature, nor can she find how to sacrifice more for her Creator.”*

On second thought, this is not just difficult, but humanly impossible for our fallen nature, born with original sin and still very much feeling the effects of concupiscence. But St. Paul gives us hope, reminding us that whatever the weakness of our human nature cannot do, God *already* did, *“sending His own Son in the same human nature as any sinner to be a sacrifice for sin, and condemning sin in that human nature”* (Romans 8:3). If we live in

*Christ* and not dominated by our natural inclinations, Paul promises that our minds will rest on spiritual things, we’ll enjoy life and peace here on earth, and the Spirit of God will make Its home in us, helping us and making up for us in our weakness.

And now, with Luisa Piccarreta’s diary and all of the divine treasures it contains, we can come to understand the deeper meaning of *“it is no long I who live, but Christ who lives in me”* (Gal 2:20). God loves us so much that He doesn’t just want to dwell but *reign* in us, in the very home He plans to establish – His Kingdom. Though the lessons Our Lord gave to Luisa teach us a great deal about how to dispose ourselves to receive and nourish this gift - the Sanctity of Living in the Divine Will - we can also learn very much through the intimacies that passed between Jesus and Luisa...ones we are sometimes tempted to skip over. But to Luisa’s great embarrassment, Jesus wanted every word written to convince us just how much He longs to give us this gift, how many graces He’s prepared to pour into souls who want it, and just how intimately He desires to relate to all of His children.

So during this Advent and Christmas season, let us set our minds and hearts on this middle coming of Our Lord. As St. Bernard described it, “In His first coming our Lord came in our flesh and in our weakness...in the final coming He will be seen in glory and majesty.” But the intermediate coming, he explains, will be a hidden one, when “only the elect see the Lord within themselves” in order to “fulfill what is written: *‘As we have born the likeness of the earthly man, we shall also bear the likeness of the heavenly man.’*” Getting back to our original question, how well do we know this

Heavenly Man? For the greater the heights we desire to reach, the more we must know Christ and love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And the more we love Him, the more we will trust Him, letting His love dissolve our will into His... *“just as snow dissolves at the rays of a burning sun.”*<sup>3</sup>



*“My daughter, man was created to be inseparable from God; and if He is not known and loved, it is precisely because they think that God is the Being far away from man...while Our Divinity is not far away, but close – even more, inside of man, and in all his acts We are actors and spectators...To think of Us as far away is*

<sup>2</sup> *The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will*, Day 5 Meditation, Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta

<sup>3</sup> *Book of Heaven*, Vol. 13, 12/3/1921, Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta





*the deadly iron that kills the love of the creature toward the Creator; distance breaks any friendship. Who can ever think of loving, of knowing and of hoping from a faraway Being? No one...Now, My daughter, do you want to know who makes God be felt alive in the heart of the creature? My Will reigning in her. In fact, not giving life to the human will, My Fiat makes her feel, vividly, Its Love, Its Power, Its Goodness and Sanctity that run in all the acts of the creature. For her there isn't the faraway God, but the God who is close and primary Life of her life and of all her acts. Therefore, the living in my Divine Will maintains the vigor of all the goods that We gave to man in creating him, and makes of him the throne of God and His glory, where He dominates and reigns."*

(Jesus to Luisa Piccarreta, Book of Heaven, Vol. 28, 11/30/1930)

Here's a little food for meditation in order to know, love, and grow closer to the Person of Christ – the reason for the season and for all of our hope and joy!



## The Heart of Christ

Reading and meditating on Sacred Scripture every day is one of the five most important practices that Our Lady of Medugorje repeatedly asks of Her children. And at the very heart of the Bible – the Gospel – is also where we'll find the Heart of Her Son. *"Go out to the whole world and proclaim the gospel to all creation,"* were Jesus' parting words in Mark 16:15 and the *good news of the Kingdom of God* (Lk 4:43) is what won the Apostles a multitude of new converts to the early Church. But somehow over the years, many Catholics have lost an appreciation for hearing the story of their salvation and, consequently, they remain with only a superficial knowledge of the Man-God who obtained it. What a tremendous loss, for on each page we have the opportunity to enter into the Humanity of Our Lord, getting to know Him on a more intimate level and being transformed by His Holy Spirit.



In the Gospel we find an obedient Son who left His throne in Heaven to take on our weak and suffering human nature as a defenseless baby. We see the Creator of the earth and skies choosing to be born hidden in a stable, living His life in poverty, and working for most of it as simple carpenter to support Himself and His family. We encounter a brother who understands temptation and desolation firsthand. We meet a Man who is moved to compassion at the sight of the poor and hungry, the weak and sick, the lonely and depressed. We witness Him weep over the death of His friend and at the suffering of his mourning sisters. The Gospel reveals to us a King who seeks to forgive rather than punish, give rather than levy, heal rather than cast away, and establish a kingdom full of children living in freedom rather than slaves in bondage. We discover a Master who washes the feet of His disciples, a Father who gives us His very self as food, and a Savior who suffers and dies meekly on the cross. And most importantly, we're able to understand more the Heart of our Heavenly Father, who Jesus perfectly images.

Our words don't transmit grace, but those of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John do...for they are the living and inspired Word of God. Jesus wants us to enter into them and find whatever we need – His merciful gaze, His penetrating truth, His witness of divine love, or perhaps an extra dose of strength, wisdom, and comfort in moments of trial. Especially in these dark times of spiritual warfare, let us never forget Our Lord's powerful promise in the Gospel of His beloved Apostle: *"I am the light of the world; anyone who follows Me will not be walking in the dark, but will have the light of life...If you make My Word your home, you will indeed be My disciples; you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free"* (John 8:12,31-32).

## The Divinity of Christ

There's a pretty Italian Christmas song that goes like this: *"Dio si è fatto come noi, per farci come Lui."* It's translated as *"God made Himself like us in order to make us like Him"* - like God! Gosh, do we really



appreciate what the Incarnation means?! Christmas is not just about celebrating the birthday of cute little baby Jesus every year on December 25<sup>th</sup>. Knowing that we could never reach the Celestial Fatherland on our own, God has crept down to earth in littleness in order to scoop us up into the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. It's about the Eternal Son emptying Himself of the joys and beatitudes of Heaven, taking on the all of the miseries of our humanity (except sin), in order to make it possible for us to receive everything His Father has been giving Him from all eternity – Divine Life itself. And in a perfect cycle of divine, familial love - through Jesus, with Jesus, and in Jesus, in the unity of the Holy Spirit - we can also return the fullness of that gift back to its very source, singing “all honor and glory is Yours, Almighty Father, for forever and ever!”



Of course, we never fully appreciate what we don't understand. But with the *Book of Heaven*, we've been given a magnifying glass to more easily ponder all that Christ's Divinity accomplished in His Humanity. And the deeper we enter into Jesus' interior, the more layers of love we uncover. There we find His relationship with the Father as well as the perfect model of the communion we were always meant to have with Him from the dawn of creation. We learn the *how* of living the Gospel from the very heart of our own interiors. But in order to find and learn and appreciate, you must prayerfully read Our Lord's own words spoken to us through Luisa. Then every day will feel like Christmas and you will find yourself with the shepherds, “*glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as they had been told*” (Luke 2:20).

*“My daughter, the act of My birth was the most solemn act of the whole Creation. Heaven and earth felt plunged into the most profound adoration at the sight of My little Humanity, which kept My Divinity as though enclosed within walls. So, in the act of My birth, there was an act of silence and of profound adoration and prayer: My Mama prayed, and remained enraptured by the power of the prodigy which was coming out of Her; Saint Joseph prayed; the Angels prayed; and all Creation felt the strength of the love of My creative power being renewed upon them... Only men, ungrateful, even though all felt something unusual within themselves - a joy, a powerful strength – were reluctant...And even though I called them with tears, with moans and sobs, they did not move, except for some few shepherds. Yet, it was for man that I was coming upon earth! I was coming to give Myself to him, to save him, and to bring him back to My Celestial Fatherland. Therefore, I was all eyes to see whether he would come before Me in order to receive the great gift of My Divine and Human Life.”*

(Jesus to Luisa, *Book of Heaven*, Vol. 17, 12/24/1924)



## The Suffering Christ

Luisa was always faithful to the Christmas Novena\*, devoutly meditating on the nine excesses of Jesus' love in the Blessed Mother's womb every year in preparation for the feast of Holy Christmas. And what do we find in those nine mediations? Suffering. From the moment of His conception, Our Lord proves just how much He loves us through just how much He suffered. For as Dr. Scott Hahn often explains in his talks, “*suffering without love is unbearable, but love without suffering doesn't exist.*” One cannot be separated from the other. The beginning of St. John's Passion narrative also comes to mind: “*Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end*” (John 13:1). Oh and how He loved us in the beginning and middle, too. The entire life of Christ was one continuous act of agape love, pure self-gift, consumed in pains in

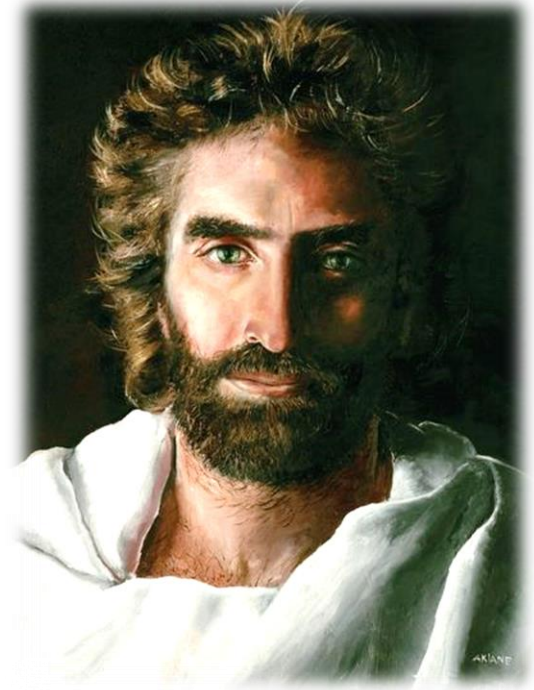


order to undo the effects of the Fall of Adam and Eve. He healed all the wounds caused by our sins, repaired for all acts of our self-will, did what we should've done, redid what we messed up as well as purified, sanctified, and divinized what was already pleasing to Him. Though we still have to justly suffer, our sweet Lord uses it for a much greater good – to teach us how to love as He loves. He laid every last sorrow of ours on His shoulders first, making sure we would have His very life at our disposal as comfort and strength. Finally, on Good Friday (as Dr. Brant Pitre so beautifully described it), Christ accomplished on the cross in history what the Eternal Son does always in eternity – the total, complete offering of Himself to the Father. And just think that, when we unite our own crosses to the sufferings of our dear Savior, we can actually participate in this great mystery of love, too!

\* To download a copy of *The Nine Excesses of Love in the Incarnation of the Word*, visit the “Family Tree” page of our website and scroll down to the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta.

## The Face of Christ

St. Thérèse of Lisieux is most famous for her devotion to the Child Jesus, but many often forget that the second half of her title in the religious life was *of the Holy Face*. “*Your sweet face for me is Heaven on earth*,” she sang...and she was right. That’s another one of those little secrets for enjoying a foretaste of the Eternal Beatitude here in the valley of tears – keeping our mind’s eye always on the tender face of Christ. There we find the Heart of God on display, the window to Jesus’ soul. He came down from Heaven to be seen, to be gazed upon, to be fallen in love with. So when before the Blessed Sacrament, close your eyes and contemplate the face of the One who has loved you from all eternity. When alone at home in prayer, look deeply within yourself at the countenance of He who delights just being in your presence. In every moment, go and seek the gaze of your Father, Brother, Savior, Beloved, and Friend. We are flesh and blood, heart and soul, and we need a tangible face to contemplate *and* reflect. And if faithful to this simple, yet powerful, practice you will find virtue easier, your spirit lighter, and your own face radiating the love of Christ to others.



## The Patience of Christ

“*He went down with them then and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His Mother stored up all these things in Her Heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and with people*” (Luke 2:51-52). Does that passage ever just blow your mind? Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, grew in wisdom and stature and favor! His Divinity kept pace with the temporal limitations of His Humanity. And yet we, full of sinfulness and flaws, want to arrive at the finish line overnight. We get discouraged at every small setback and are ready to give up. Take some time to meditate on our God, so patient and so humble. Though always perfect, Jesus chose to increase slowly, at our human pace, and in the hiddenness of the house of Nazareth. Once we understand this gentle, little way the Lord operates, we’ll learn to be humbler and more patient with ourselves. And then, ironically, that’s when we’ll actually begin to move forward.

*“I was thinking about how blessed Jesus would make the Kingdom of His Will come: how could the creature embrace, all together, so many knowledges about It and, almost all at once, goods so great, divine manners, beauty and sanctity which contain the reflections of the likeness of her Creator? But while I was thinking of this, My beloved Jesus moved in my interior and told me: ‘My daughter, by her nature the creature cannot receive a great good, a light which has no boundaries, all together, but she must take it sip by sip, waiting to swallow the first sip to then have another one. And if she wanted to take everything together – poor one, she would be drowned... Has this not been the order I have had with you, manifesting to you that which regarded My Eternal Fiat little by little, starting from the first lessons, then the second, the third, and so on? And when you were chewing the first and you swallowed it and it flowed like blood in your soul, I prepared for you the second lesson, and My Will formed the first acts of life in you. And I celebrated Its glory and fulfilled the purpose of Creation,*

*anxiously waiting to be able to give you more sublime lessons... So I will do to form the Kingdom of My Divine Will...this is why I want that they begin to be known, that they may make their way, preparing and disposing souls, so that, little by little, they may yearn to listen to more lessons.”*  
 (Book of Heaven, Vol. 24, 4/6/1928, Luisa Piccarreta)

## The Sacred Mysteries of Christ

We’ve been practicing a lot of Christmas music lately. The words are just so beautiful and the melodies so familiar and sweet, that they almost transport your heart and soul up to Heaven. As we were singing the second verse of *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, one of the sisters got goosebumps and thought, “*This is how we should feel after every Holy Communion.*” We should be like the Magi who remained in profound ecstasy as they beheld the Divinity of Christ shining forth from His Humanity. Holy Simeon trembled in reverent fear just holding the Divine Child in His arms, while we’re able to receive the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus into our very bodies – a foretaste of not just Heaven, but of the glorious resurrection of our own flesh. If we truly understood the incredible mysteries at work in the Eucharist, the excesses of God’s love hidden in every host, we wouldn’t just tremble but die of pure joy. But Our Lord, in His goodness, allows us to continue to live, wanting to complete the consummation of Bridegroom and bride while we’re still on earth. Jesus longs to *remain* one with us, not just for fifteen minutes or so after having received His Sacramental Presence, but perpetually. What intimacy Jesus desires to have with us and promises we can obtain! ...as long as we give Him our perpetual fiat (our yes to His Will) in return. So let us approach our next Holy Communion with an interior that reflects the greatness of the God whom we are receiving - with renewed love, childlike wonder, and in His Most Holy and Divine Will.



*“My daughter, come into My arms, and deep into My Heart. I have covered Myself with the Eucharistic veils so as not to strike fear. I have descended into the deepest abyss of humiliations in this Sacrament in order to raise the creature up to Me, identifying her with Me, so much as to form one single thing with Me. And by letting My Sacramental Blood flow inside her veins, I constitute Myself life of her heartbeat, of her thought, and of her whole being. My Love devoured Me and wanted to devour the creature in My flames, to make her be reborn as another Me. This is why I wanted to hide Myself under these Eucharistic veils and, so hidden, enter into her to form this transformation of the creature into Myself. But in order for this transformation to take place, the dispositions were needed on the part of creatures; and My Love giving in to excess, as it instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist, it also issued from within My Divinity more graces, gifts, favors and light for the good of man, to render him worthy to receive Me... [and] in order to give him the true fruit of my Sacramental Life.”* (Vol. 15, 3/27/1923)



*“I am the ever virgin Mary, Mother of the true God through whom all things live...There is nothing to frighten and distress you. Do not let your heart be troubled, and let nothing upset you. Is it not I, your Mother, who is here? Are you not under My protection?”*

## The Mother of Christ

Never to stop turning to Mary! She’ll lead you straight to Christ.

*“There is no grace that descends upon earth, there is no sanctity that is formed, there is no sinner that is converted, there is no love that departs from Our throne, which is not deposited in Her Heart of Mother first...in such a way that the creature who receives it feels the Divine Paternity and the Maternity of her Celestial Mother. We can do it without Her, but We don’t want to...Our love, Our infinite wisdom, Our very Fiat impose themselves on Us and don’t let Us do anything that would not descend through Her.”* (Jesus speaks to Luisa about His Mother, Vol. 34, 12/8/1935)





## A Witness to Merciful Love:

*Sister Maureen Christine O'Connor, BDV*

(January 6, 1943 – November 6, 2020)

During one of his early visits to our convent, our bishop told us that the consecrated life is a proof of God's existence for those looking in from the outside. How could so many men and women possibly find the strength to give up everything – readily renouncing marriage and children, family and friends, careers, property, homeland, and even their own will – for a fairytale God, for someone who doesn't even exist? When our dear Sister Maureen Christine passed away this past November 6<sup>th</sup> after having served Our Lord and the Blessed Mother for almost fifty years as a victim soul, we began to reflect along the same lines.

Sister Maureen's title in the religious life was *of the Divine Mercy*. That truly was her secret for not just enduring, but embracing, so many extraordinary sufferings with peace, love, and

even joy. Sister's unfailing trust in Jesus' love and mercy rendered what would be humanly impossible for most people, possible for her. As a little daughter of the Divine Will, she also believed that she wasn't just suffering *for* God, but *with* Him. Christ was *in* her as she lay in bed and she was *in* Him on the Cross, allowing Sister Maureen to become a living tabernacle for the Sacred Heart of Jesus - from which Blood and water gushed forth as a fount of mercy for us all. Though the extraordinary supernatural graces at work in her soul remained hidden from others (and herself), her sweet countenance and gentle manner did not. And again, for those peeking in from the outside, Sister Maureen was undeniable proof that God not only exists, but that He is all Merciful Love.

Though most of us are not called to the unique vocation of victim soul, St. Thérèse teaches us that we can all become victims of merciful love regardless of how weak or lacking in virtue we may feel. Take courage in a letter the apostle of the *Little Way* wrote to her sister who had the same doubts as probably all of us do:

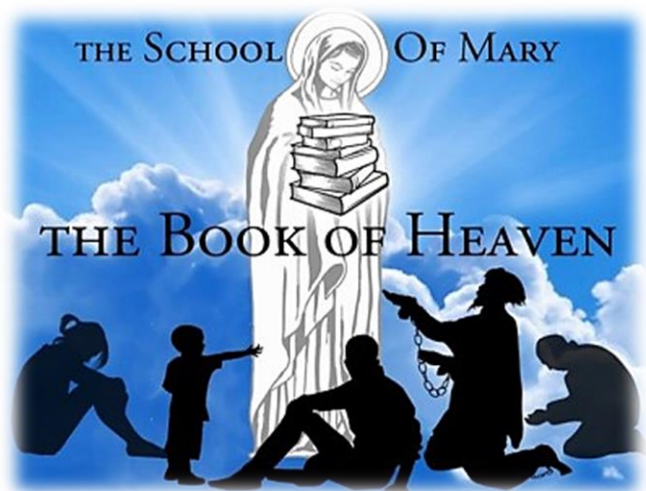
*"Oh, dear Sister, I beg you, understand your little girl, understand that to love Jesus, to be His **victim of love**, the weaker one is, without desires or virtues, the more suited one is for the workings of this consuming and transforming Love...But we must consent to remain always poor and without strength, and this is the difficulty...Ah! Let us remain **very far** from all that sparkles, let us love our littleness, let us love to feel nothing, then we shall be poor in spirit, and Jesus will come to look for us and He will transform us in flames of love. Oh! How I would like to be able to make you understand what I feel!...It is **confidence and nothing but confidence that must lead us to Love.**"* (taken from Day 14 of 33 Days to Merciful Love: A Do-It-Yourself Retreat in Preparation for Consecration to Divine Mercy by Fr. Michael E. Gaitley, MIC)

If you haven't made the Consecration to Merciful Love yet, we highly recommend it. Trusting in God's Divine Mercy with total abandonment is a prerequisite for living in the Divine Will, because only the little ones can enter the Kingdom and the quickest path to get there is confidence.

## The School of Mary



Are you interested in Divine Will cenacles with a simple and practical approach to the teachings Our Lord gave to the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta? Or perhaps you're looking for a down-to-earth way of introducing the Gift of Living in the Divine Will to someone you know. Come join us, then, at **The School of Mary!** Two



Sundays a month we're on *Mary's Hill Live Contemplative Divine Will Cenacle*\*, reading and reflecting on Luisa's writings with the online cenacle's founder and host, Peter DePalma. You can also tune into Peter's new live show on Radio Maria - *The Book of Heaven: A Kindergarten of the Divine Will* – where we've been invited to speak as guests every Thursday at 11:00am (ET): [radiomaria.us](http://radiomaria.us). All the recordings of past episodes can be found at [radiomaria.us/divinewill](http://radiomaria.us/divinewill) along with other Divine Will programming that you may like to check out. We can't promise you eloquence, expertise, or deep theological discourses. However, you can count on a relaxed format with sincere, off-the-cuff, straight from the heart reflections based on our personal experiences of striving to live in God's Most Holy Will. There will most likely be some mistakes, but definitely a bit of humor as well.

\* To receive Divine Will updates as well as event and programming notifications from Mary's Hill, drop them an email at [maryshill@queenofthedivinewill.org](mailto:maryshill@queenofthedivinewill.org) and place yourself on their contact list. You can also access the archives of all past cenacles on their website: [www.queenofthedivinewill.org](http://www.queenofthedivinewill.org).



## Christmas Alms



If you feel called to financially support the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will this Christmas season or throughout the following year, visit our website to make a one-time donation by credit/debit card or to sign up for automatic monthly contributions...

**[www.benedictinesofdivinewill.org/donations](http://www.benedictinesofdivinewill.org/donations)**

Or simply send a check or money order to the address of our non-profit organization on the right: *(All donations are tax-deductible)*

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



Thank you so much for your prayers, generosity, and friendship in 2020. It sure was a challenging year for everyone, so your goodness to our community even in these hard times touched us all the more. In thanksgiving to all of our family members, friends, and benefactors, Holy Mass will be offered in our little chapel this Christmas Season for all of your needs and intentions.



*Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!*