



Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



A not so little surprise from two dear friends and generous benefactors. Glasses not included:)



Little Luisa

The spiritual life shouldn't be an obstacle course. Sure there will be highs and lows, consolations and desolations, dryness and sweetness, sufferings and delights, lights and darkness, but none of this should have any impact on our peace of soul if we truly live in holy abandonment. We complicate things with our worry, with our need to always know exactly what's going on, with our control. *"Lord, I surrender myself to You. Do with me whatever You desire...as long as You make Your plan clear to me every step of the way so I may promptly respond to Your grace and perfectly do everything I'm supposed to do. Oh, and please show me the fruits immediately so that I may know that You are pleased with me and that I'm on the right track."* How often do we think that way, whether consciously or subconsciously? Of course, that's not real surrender and this kind of mentality brings nothing but stress, anxiety, and frustration that we'll never measure up to God's impossible standards. We end up jumping through lots of hoops that the Lord never actually placed in front of us. Those standards, those pressures – if we look closely – haven't been placed on our shoulders by God or even others. For whatever reason, whether psychological or because of past experiences and wounds, we've taken them on all by ourselves.

When Jesus commands us in Matthew 5:48 to *"be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect,"* He wasn't referring to the exterior perfection that we often have in mind. In fact, His teachings preceding that famous quote focus on fraternal charity, generosity of spirit, loving forgiveness, and sincerity of character. Right after His call to perfection, Jesus warns against parading *"your uprightness in public to attract attention,"* (Mt 6:1) and then goes on to preach about almsgiving, prayer, and fasting in secret. The "Our Father" is also weaved into that same sermon after Our Lord exhorts His listeners not to *"babble as the gentiles do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard"* (Mt 6:7).

The perfection God seeks from us is from the heart, which is hidden and often seen only by Him. He's not condemning outward actions, but He doesn't want them to be our aim. When our motives are rooted in pride, whether to impress God, man, or ourselves, our works - no matter how good - can never really please Our Lord nor bear any fruit. On the other hand, if our aim is simply to love so that we *"may be children of [our] Father in heaven"* (Mt 5:45), good works, wisdom, and true humility will naturally flow from our pure intentions and from the One to whom we have given our heart. So no matter how things may seem or work out according to the world's (and our own) false idea of perfection, we can still always maintain our inner peace, resting safely in the arms of our Abba.

Though Jesus has taught us the easiest and most liberating road to perfection, it can be very difficult for our fallen human nature. We all must admit to having at least a little Pharisee in us. Maybe we struggle with spiritual pride,





jealousy, satisfaction in what we know or can do, wanting to always teach and never learn, attachments to our own opinions, secret judgements of others, the need to be recognized and esteemed, addiction to human respect, etc. Whatever our symptoms may be, they need to be rooted out if we really want the Will of God to reign in our souls.

That's why Our Lord tells the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta so often in the earlier volumes of her mystical diary NOT to self-reflect, NOT to investigate, and NOT to look at others. This is our greatest stumbling block and the step we often try to skip because, without realizing it, we sometimes try to live in the Divine Will with our human will...and, of course, that's impossible. God doesn't just want the motions, the formulas; He wants ALL of us, every particle of our body, heart, and soul completely abandoned in Him. He doesn't just want us to do

what He wants, but *because* He wants and *how* He wants – in other words, not with our own heroic and sometimes self-centered human efforts, but with the wisdom, power, and love of His Most Holy Will. As St. Paul perfectly put it:

“I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God...God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God...No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.”
(1 Cor 2:3-5, 10-13)



The name Paul actually means “the little one”. You have to be little for the Spirit to blow you wherever He wills. And as Jesus also explains to Luisa: *“While We – the Three Divine Persons – remain always united in working, if Creation is related to the Father, and Redemption to the Son, the ‘Fiat Voluntas Tua’ [Thy Will be done] is attributed to the Holy Spirit. And it is exactly in the ‘Fiat Voluntas Tua’ that the Divine Spirit will display His work...And in your childlike simplicity, say to Him: ‘Spirit Sanctifier, hurry, I implore You, I beg You, let everyone know Your Will, so that in knowing It, they may love It and welcome Your prime act of their complete sanctification – which is Your Holy Will!’”* (Book of Heaven, Vol. 17, 5/17/1925). But the Holy Spirit needs instruments for so great a mission, ones who never feel like they've got it all together or all figured out. He wants little ones who feel the constant need of His Will, administering every act, step, and even life itself to them. And much to the unassuming southern Italian girl's great confusion, Our Lord - after having gone around the earth over and over again, looking at all creatures one by one in order to find the littlest of all – chose Luisa Piccarreta to be the first, for He liked her littleness (Vol. 12, 3/23/1921).



What was it about Luisa that Jesus liked so much? What made her so little, so desirable as *“to be the object of singular predilection of Jesus, Divine Redeemer...the instrument of a mission so sublime that no other can be compared to it – that is, the triumph of the Divine Will upon the whole earth, in conformity with what is said in the ‘Our Father’”* (St. Annibale Maria di Francia, Preface to The Twenty-Four Hours of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ)? Let's take a look so that, like Luisa, we may also learn to be true little sons and daughters of God's Most Holy Will.

Luisa was real

For those of you who have read Luisa's writings, how many times has she made you laugh? How many times has she made you feel better about your shortcomings? That's because Luisa was totally real, never trying to appear holy or strong or wise. She struggled and never tried to hide it. She struggled with obedience, particularly in having to write and wait for the confessor to release her from her "usual state" of immobility or ecstasy. She struggled with Jesus' privations, often ending up in tears or saying a lot of "nonsense" (her words, not ours) in her fever of desire

(ie. *"Indeed it takes the patience of a saint to bear Him; and one would have to deal with Jesus to see how much patience it takes!"*). She struggled with doubt, often worrying about the state of her soul. In Volume 1, before having learned the value of the cross, we even read that Luisa struggled with suffering: (after 40 days of her bed-ridden state that would eventually last 64 years) *"My nature especially wanted to be freed of that being in bed continuously, because as beautiful as it was, it was always bed...having to be subjected to everyone, even in the most repugnant and necessary things of nature, and being forced to tell them to others, is a true sacrifice."* At other times she would describe how her nature trembled or did not want to consent to the sufferings Our Lord was asking.

Despite all of these struggles, Luisa always obeyed, always willingly submitted to God's Will. Completely abandoned in her Beloved's arms, she allowed Him to teach, transform, and do whatever He wanted with her nothingness. Though her sanctity is evident on each page of her writings, it is precisely Luisa's littleness and sincerity which give us the courage to believe that, yes, we too can learn to live in the Divine Will. Despite our own weaknesses and miseries, it is possible that we are also called to a mission so sublime. The littler we are, the more we peacefully accept that we are nothing and God is everything, the more God's power, love, and mercy will be able to operate in our souls...thereby giving courage to others. As one sister jokes: "There would be no greater miracle to draw souls to Christ than if they see that even I can become a saint."

"God chose those who by human standards are fools to shame the wise; He chose those who by human standards are weak to shame the strong, those who by human standards are common and contemptible – indeed those who count for nothing – to reduce to nothing all those that do count for something, so that no human being might feel boastful before God." (1Cor 1:27-29)



Intimacy with God

Two people who truly love each other hold nothing back. They feel they can be themselves with one another and say anything they want to each other. Such freedom and fearlessness in letting it all hang out is a mark of deep intimacy and mutual trust. That's exactly how Luisa behaved with Jesus. He was her loving Spouse, her tender Father, her whole life. She was totally herself with Him, without pretense, without formalities, without timidity. Luisa would pour herself out in both affection and sorrow. She would at times play with Jesus and at times get a little "huffy", as she described it. She would listen to Him, watch Him sleep, comfort Him, sing to Him, repair Him, suffer together with Him, search endlessly for Him, and at times, just remain silent in His presence. Ever the little newborn of the Divine Will, Luisa was never afraid to complain, ask questions, and even be a bit sassy at times. Not only did this not bother Our Lord, but He loved these little quirks, knowing they were signs of her affection and confidence. And when having to reproach or correct her, He used it as a means to teach both her and us valuable lessons. Lesson one: if you desire deep union with God and want Him to be able to use you...love Him with abandon and just be yourself.

She stayed little

We'd never end if we mentioned all of Luisa's heroic virtues, but we're not here to talk about heroism anyway. Luisa wouldn't want it either. Always feeling herself so bad, so full of defects, she was confused and extremely humbled by the incredible things Our Lord would reveal about her and which she was compelled, under obedience, to write down (much to her "great repugnance"). Luisa knew, with a hundred percent certainty, that anything good in her was a gift of grace through the operation of the Most Holy Trinity in her soul. But that's what the Divine Will does...it *keeps* us little. Yes, the bar of sanctity has been raised to its highest level, but that shouldn't scare us or puff us up, for we're not expected to make the climb all by ourselves. Our Heavenly Father has not only equipped us for the journey, but Jesus carries us in His arms the whole way up, immersed in the immense love of the Holy Spirit. All we have to bring to the game is our Fiat...our yes, our affirmative and *active* response to all that God's Will disposes. It won't be easy, but it will be beautiful if we learn what Luisa did very early on, "*that true resignation can change the nature of things, turning bitter into sweet*" (Vol. 1). And the higher God leads us, the tighter we cling to Him, afraid of looking down at ourselves lest we fall. Our safety lies in keeping our eyes fixed on Him.

Yes,
that's a
"Fiat"
bib.



"I entrusted you to My Angels, so that they might keep you, not to make you grow, but to preserve your littleness. And now I want to begin the great work of the fulfillment of My Will; nor will you feel greater because of this; on the contrary, My Will will make you even smaller, and you will continue to be the little daughter of your Jesus – the Little Daughter of My Will." (Jesus to Luisa, Vol. 12, 3/23/1921)



Truth

One of the sisters suggested the theme of "truth" as a possible newsletter topic. Though it seemed like too big of a fish to fry at first, the Holy Spirit gently reminded us that if God is absolutely simple as well as absolute Veracity, than the truth must be simple, too.



With so much confusion and uncertainty all around, with so many videos and email forwards filling up our inboxes, we need to get back to the simple truth and learn how to discern it from falsehood. As Catholics, this shouldn't be as difficult as we make it out to be. Our Lord Jesus Christ - whom we have the opportunity to receive every day in the Eucharist - *is* the Way, the Truth, and the Life. His Body, the Church, has given us 2,000 years' worth of truths in the form of dogmas, doctrines, teachings, and traditions. At Confirmation, we've been sealed with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit - four of which being Wisdom, Knowledge, Council, and Understanding. Then there's Sacred Scripture, the history of our salvation, the love story between our Heavenly Father and His children fulfilled completely in Christ. And when finding ourselves in gray areas, we can have recourse to the great gift of prayer as well as the advice of prayerful, wise, and orthodox shepherds whom we trust.

So where do Luisa's Divine Will writings fit in? As the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains: "*Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance*" (CCC #66). In other words, the Will of God is nothing new. It's the engine that set Creation and Redemption into motion and keeps them in motion. It's the motor that sanctifies souls and will bring to fulfillment the prayer that, as St. Annibale di Francia emphasizes, has resounded from the lips of the children of the Holy Church, in the Royal Priesthood of the great Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, for twenty centuries: "*Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.*" It's the Eternal Fiat of God! However, the celestial truths given by Our Lord to Luisa Piccarreta through private revelation – already approved by Holy Mother Church – "*open new horizons, not yet contemplated until now, concerning the mysteries of the Divine Will, and about operating and living in It*" (St. Annibale Maria di Francia). Prayerful study of Catholic teachings and Sacred Scripture is, therefore, even more necessary for all those who want to LIVE IN the Divine Will, for those who want to worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:23). If we attempt

to grasp Luisa's writings with only a shallow understanding of the beautiful 2,000 year context that the Eternal Father has weaved for us, then we run the risk of two things: misinterpreting Jesus' teachings to the Servant of God and/or failing to appreciate the full and profound flavor they contain.

No matter what's going on in the world, this must always be our truth, *the* truth. It's our boat of refuge that will navigate us safely through every storm, with Our Lady – Star of the Sea – leading us always in the right direction. However, if we don't have the knowledge of how to sail the boat or even the sense to get in it, we're always going to be in danger of getting pulled away by the undertow. It's important to not just know what we believe, but why we believe – not in order to become scholars, but to fall more in love with our beautifully rich faith as well as with the Author of it all. And this doesn't have to be an overwhelming task, either. Let the Holy Spirit guide you. As a friend of ours so cleverly put it, take sips big enough to enjoy the taste but small enough so as not to choke.

Community Updates



San Marino: We recently spoke to our bishop, Msgr. Andrea Turazzi, and he told us that work on our future convent has resumed. Almost everything came to a standstill for over two months in both Italy and San Marino during the COVID-19 quarantine measures, but little by little, both countries are trying to return to normalcy (along with the rest of the world). The Curia

hopes to finish renovations on the apartment sometime this summer, and then we'll be able to make our own monastic touches. We'll continue to keep you posted and, as always, we count on your prayers.

New Life: With strict travel restrictions throughout Italy for most of March, April, and May, our newest postulant from Sardinia – Daniela Spanu – had to postpone her entrance date. But as many of you can probably testify with your own experiences, the Lord knows what He's doing and allowed us all to be where we needed to be during these unusual times... whether for our own good or for the good of others. After finally entering the community with great joy on June 3rd, Daniela recounted that although she was disappointed with the delay at first, she resigned herself peacefully to God's Will and soon recognized His providential hand throughout everything. Quite a few of our aspirants have had to put their vocational visits on hold as well, but all still seem determined to persevere in their discernment. Trials and difficulties are good signs when we sincerely seek the Divine Will, for they masterfully test our resolve, enable us to grow and mature in faith, and prepare our souls for what lies ahead. Though we're not always meant to understand Heaven's mysterious ways of operating, we must always trust that Our Lord and Our Lady are at work. And so, whenever and however God so determines, we look forward to the continual growth of the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will.



Sister Maureen: Please pray for our dear Sister Maureen Christine of the Divine Mercy as she approaches the end of her pilgrimage here on earth. At the Lord's request, for over forty years Sister Maureen has willingly suffered as a victim soul for the Church and the world. Since 2011, she's been specifically offering up her sufferings both for and as a member of the Benedictines of Divine Will. Though called to live out her special vocation in hiddenness, away from community life and confined to a bed at her home in New York, Sister Maureen is an incredibly active member of our religious family. Only in Heaven will we be able to fully grasp all of the graces she has earned for each sister, monk and oblate with her peaceful – and even joyful – acceptance of every pain "Our dear Lord", as she affectionately refers to Jesus, disposes.



Sister Benedicta, who has been in Queens the past few months taking care of Sister Maureen, told us that it has been an amazing experience witnessing her suffer, “hard but amazing seeing God work.” Her closest friends have confirmed the same, explaining that you cannot watch Sister Maureen without being moved, without being drawn to God. And in these past weeks of particular agony, she’s been described as absolutely radiant. Sister Maureen has sustained us all through the total gift of her life. Let us now join together in sustaining her with our prayers and sacrifices as sweet death draws near...sweet because *“if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, provided that we share His sufferings, so as to share His glory”* (Rom 8:17).

“Oh, power of the victim souls! That which is not given to us Angels to do, they can do with their sufferings. Oh, if men knew the good that comes from them – because they are there for the public and individual good – they would do nothing but implore God to multiply these souls upon earth.” (An Angel to Luisa, Vol. 3, 5/17/1900)

Don't forget to Smile



Have you been shopping more online lately? Just a reminder that with every purchase you make from Amazon, you can help support the sisters. By going to **smile.amazon.com**, signing into your account, and choosing the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will as your preferred charity, 0.5% of every dollar you spend will be sent directly to our community. Doesn't seem like much, but every little bit adds up. Over the past few years, we've earned almost \$1,200 in donations thanks to the purchases made from customers who have chosen to “smile” at us...that is, always beginning their shopping experience from **smile.amazon.com**. We very much appreciate your continued support and don't forget...the prices of the items you buy won't change because the donations are on Amazon!

Summer Support

If you feel called to help support the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will this summer or on a regular basis, visit the “Donations” page of our website to make a one-time donation by credit/debit card or to sign up for automatic monthly contributions:

www.benedictinesofdivinewill.org

You can also simply send a check or money order to the address of our U.S. non-profit organization below:

(All donations are tax-deductible)

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We know times are tough, which makes us even more grateful for the generosity of our benefactors. Thank you for all that you do to help provide for our corporeal needs, enabling us to dedicate our lives to the Eucharist Heart of Jesus and the Kingdom of His Divine Will.