



Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



Who are you, St. Joseph?

For most of his priestly life, St. Maximilian Kolbe pondered the question: *Who are You, O Immaculate Conception?* And in 1941, only a few hours before the arrest that would eventually lead to his martyrdom of love under the Nazi regime, the great Marian saint penned his last reflections on the Mother to whom he had consecrated his entire *“life, death, and eternity.”* Now eighty years later, with Pope Francis proclaiming December 8, 2020 through December 8, 2021 as the Year of St. Joseph, that same Mother is now pointing to Her Most Chaste Spouse and asking the Church’s faithful to more deeply ponder another question: *Who are you, O Dear St. Joseph?*

This newsletter was initially meant to be a comprehensive ode to the first and greatest among all saints (after Our Blessed Mother, of course). We planned to share some of the so many beautiful things we’ve learned about St.

Joseph that have fostered our own personal devotion to him - insights flowing from Sacred Scripture, the Divine Will writings, books we’ve read and talks we’ve listened to. But after some prayer and reflection, we want to tell you a little story instead.



Don’t be afraid to take Joseph as your father



A few years ago, Fr. Elijah celebrated mass in our private chapel and gave a powerful homily on St. Joseph. However, it was a simple suggestion that struck the heart of

one sister the most and set her on an incredibly tender journey with the husband of Mary and father of Jesus. And that suggestion was this: *If you don’t have a devotion to St. Joseph yet, then you should pray for one.* Sister realized that she really didn’t have a devotion or any kind of relationship at all with him. It never crossed her mind to pray for the grace to love the hidden saint, but that day she did. And that prayer was answered.

Little by little, sincere affection did grow. Sister found herself conversing with St. Joseph with more familiarity and, together with the rest of the community, she faithfully completed the 33-day preparation for her very first consecration to him (according to Fr. Donald Calloway’s book, which we highly recommend). In the meantime, she had also been learning about the Chaste Heart of St. Joseph and felt strongly inspired to change the title of her religious name from *“of the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary”* to *“of the Three Hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.”* But for some reason, it took her months before asking permission from Mother Gabrielle Marie, who granted it immediately. Now all sister had to do was privately go before the Blessed Sacrament and renew her perpetual vows with her new title to make it official. Couldn’t get any simpler, right? Again, for some strange reason unknown to her at the time, she just never got around to actually doing it.

Another several months passed, during which Sister spent quite a bit of time in the United States helping to take care of her dying father. Exactly one month to the day after his passing, she was back in Italy, sitting before the tabernacle in our private chapel and waiting for the weekly Latin mass to begin. Her heart was in turmoil, still grieving her beloved dad, struggling with the guilt and regrets that often follow the death of a loved one, and trying to adjust again to the rhythm of community life. Sister felt tired and unable to pray when Mother quickly approached her

and whispered, “By the way, we all renewed our vows together when you were gone. You may want to renew yours at Holy Communion.” She secretly didn’t want to. Her mind was not in the right place and she felt totally empty and unprepared. But she obeyed, rushed to get her final vow formula, and spent most of the mass in the midst of an interior battle.

Finally at Communion time, when the priest approached and held Our Lord before her, Sister suddenly realized that this was it. She would not only be renewing her marriage commitment to Jesus, but she’d be doing so for the first time with St. Joseph’s Most Chaste Heart as part of her religious name and as part of her identity as a spouse of Christ. In that same instant, she also very powerfully felt the protective presence of St. Joseph standing right next to her as she knelt. He seemed to gently whisper to her heart, “*You know, I’m your father too.*” Immediately, the flood gates opened and tears of release flowed down her face – tears of peace and joy together with those of comfort in her sorrow. After barely making it through the profession, Sister’s vows were once again consummated as she received the Most Precious Body and Blood of her Jesus.

Sister not only received the grace of devotion to St. Joseph that she prayed for, but so much more. She now knew with certainty that she was his daughter and his paternity became so very real – his patience in waiting and

silence in listening, his tender compassion and strong protection. But most of all, she felt his faithful and sturdy love. So why are we telling you this story? Because, before anything else that you may learn or discover about dear St. Joseph, he wants you to know him – first and foremost – as *your* father, too. And all it takes is simply asking for the grace.



~ The Father’s Heart ~

Why do we need to have St. Joseph as a spiritual father? Pages could be filled with the answer to that question, but the short response is: *Because we don’t know what it means to live in the reciprocal love of the Most Holy Trinity.* While that’s the fulfillment of our baptismal vocation and really what it means to live in the Divine Will, who can fully wrap their mind around what that should look like while we’re still here on earth? Enter the Holy Family. St. Francis de Sales wrote, “*Mary, Joseph and the Child*

are a Trinity on earth that represents in some way the most Holy Trinity. Saint Joseph is the image of God the Father, the Child is evidently the Son and the Virgin takes the place of the Holy Spirit, of which She is the living temple.”

Though most of us have already consecrated ourselves to Jesus through Mary and have an intimate relationship with both, as St. Francis points out, the Trinity’s earthly family also has a father.

Since the Fall of Adam and Eve in the garden, the Eternal Father has been so incredibly misunderstood. The fact that we live in a broken world and have all been emotionally wounded ourselves further skews our image of His Paternity, even if only subconsciously. So what did our loving Father do? He sent us St. Joseph, who – in the words of Our Lady - would serve as “*the cooperator - the guardian – who was to take care of that bit of the human that We needed; as well as the shadow of the Celestial Paternity in which our little Celestial Family on earth was to be formed.*”¹ The fatherhood of St. Joseph reveals the Heart of the Eternal Father to us in a way that we can understand. If you’re a bit thrown off by such a strong statement, just take a look at Scripture.

Wasn’t King David referred to as a man after God’s own heart...twice? “*I have found David son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do My entire will*” (Acts 13:22). Or in 1 Samuel 13:14 we find: “*The Lord has sought out a man after His own heart; and the Lord has appointed him to be prince over His people.*” David obviously prefigures Jesus who, as St. Paul tells us, is the perfect fulfillment of that promise. However, we cannot exclude His foster-father, whom the angel addresses in a dream as “*Joseph, son of David*” (Mt 1:20). And what verse and response do we recite at the end of every Litany of St. Joseph?: *He has made him lord of His household, and prince over all His possessions.* So if David was given such a lofty title, can you imagine how God must regard the *Noble Offspring of David* – Joseph most just, chaste and prudent; Joseph most courageous, obedient and faithful; the

¹ *The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will, Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta, Day 17*

mirror of patience and lover of poverty; the spouse of the Mother of God and zealous defender of Christ? How much more must he reflect God's fatherly love?

Entirely one with the Father, Jesus is the perfect *"image of the invisible God"* (Col 1:15). And as He tells Philip in John 14:9, *"Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father."* However, being born in time as a child, Jesus' humanity also needed a human example – a masculine one - of what His Father's Divine Paternity should look like in the flesh. St. Luke affirms this in his gospel account when he writes that Jesus *"increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and men"* living under the authority of *both* Mary and Joseph (2:51-52). God *willed* for His only begotten Son to grow under the model and protection of an earthly father-figure - Good St. Joseph. And He wants the same for us, too.

In Joseph we find a father who keeps vigil at his Son's side, both adoring and guarding Him. In the midst of hardship and poverty, we find a faithful and tireless provider. When danger approached, St. Joseph was willing to make any sacrifice in order to save his Wife and Child - even to the point of dwelling in a foreign and pagan land. Though proving himself trustworthy in the big things needed to provide for and protect his family, in St. Joseph we also find a dad who loved in the little things as well - such as making sure that Jesus always had *"the light of a little lantern at night."*² His sensitive heart cried at the painful cut of Jesus' circumcision, consoling both Mother and Baby by sharing in their suffering. He also delighted in just being with "his boy" in the day to day routine of life, teaching Him the carpentry trade and watching His progress (or maybe even some mistakes) with paternal affection. And, oh, how Jesus must have tangibly felt the tenderness of His Eternal Father through the loving embrace of His foster-father Joseph: *"I shared Him with dear Saint Joseph, placing Jesus in his arms, and – oh! how he rejoiced. Saint Joseph pressed Him to his heart, and the sweet little Baby poured torrents of grace into his soul."*³

How many more glories of St. Joseph do we not know about? How many more tears, caresses, acts of affection and sacrifice remain hidden in those hidden years? If we could witness them all, each moment would give us yet another glimpse into how our Heavenly Father loves us. We would find His Divine Heart veiled within the Most Chaste Heart of Joseph of Nazareth. So don't be afraid to take Joseph as your father. If we stay close to the shadow, we're sure to remain under the tender gaze of the One who has cast it.



Look to Joseph

"My daughter, your life must be in our midst in the house of Nazareth. If you work, if you pray, if you take food, if you walk, you must give one hand to Me, the other to our Mama, and your gaze to Saint Joseph, to see whether your acts correspond to ours, so as to be able to say: 'First I make my model based on what Jesus, the Celestial Mama and Saint Joseph do, and then I follow it.' ...I want to find in you the works of My Mama, those of My dear Saint Joseph, and My own works." (Jesus to the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta, *Notebook of Childhood Memories*)

Coming from a book of memories from Luisa Piccarreta's childhood, this is one of the earliest teachings that Our Lord gave to her. It has always intrigued us because, in a way, these first lessons laid the foundation for Luisa to receive the gift of living in the Divine Will. We've also pondered what it means to keep our gaze on St. Joseph.

To be sure, we're supposed to watch and learn from him, as with Jesus and Our Blessed Mother. If we spend some time praying and meditating on the life of this mysterious saint, the Holy Spirit will enlighten us as to the qualities and virtues we need to highlight on our own spiritual journeys. Perhaps we need to imitate his silence, learning how to listen more attentively to the voice of God. Do we accept all circumstances as part of God's divine plan and willingly obey as Joseph always did? Though it would have cost him dearly, St. Joseph was ready to separate himself from Mary so as not to interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit. We suspect that rather than doubting her purity, he sensed God was accomplishing something great in his beloved Spouse. Do we love with that kind of

² *Book of Heaven*, Luisa Piccarreta, Vol. 12, 12/25/1920

³ *The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will*, Luisa Piccarreta, Day 22

detachment, ready to give up even the holiest affections for the Divine Will? Maybe we have the bad habit of acting impulsively and without prudent discernment. St. Joseph shows us how to wait on the Lord's Word *and then* jump into immediate action. Or perhaps we procrastinate doing what we know God wants, quick to give up in the face of adversity and unwilling to suffer or make sacrifices. Have we found the right balance between hard work and also making time to spend with Jesus? Do we know how to work with Him and for Him and His Mother? We probably all could use a lot of help in the humility and patience department as well. Wherever we need improvement, Jesus tells us to model ourselves on *all three* members of the Holy Family.

But there seems to be more than just this surface understanding of the above passage. If one hand is grabbing onto Jesus and the other to Mary, that places St. Joseph right in the middle. We must look at him because he was the first to be consecrated to Jesus through Mary. He was the first to place his heart between the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts, defending and protecting Them as well as abandoning himself totally to Them. He made of himself a total gift of self, offering – as Kolbe's consecration formula puts it – all of his powers of soul and body, all that he was and had, without reserve, into Our Lord and Our Lady's hands for Their good pleasure. In a way, St. Joseph was a type of first fruits of the Two Hearts, a birth from the Divine Will that reigned in Jesus by nature and Mary by grace. Look at how Luisa describes it: *"Certainly my beloved Jesus had the Kingdom of His Will during His hidden life. The Sovereign Lady possessed His Fiat, He was the Divine Will Itself, and Saint Joseph, in the middle of these seas of endless light - how could he not let himself be dominated by this Most Holy Will?"* (Vol. 24, 7/7/1928). Three years later in volume 29 (5/31/1931), she states even more confidently, *"My poor mind stopped in the little house of Nazareth, where the Queen of Heaven, the celestial King Jesus and Saint Joseph were in possession of and lived in the Kingdom of Divine Will. So this Kingdom is not estranged to the earth – the house of Nazareth, the family that lived in it belonged to this Kingdom and they held It in full vigor."*



Our Lord and Our Lady never corrected such bold statements, but rather affirmed them. Jesus tells Luisa in the same volume 24 excerpt that *"indeed My Divine Will reigned in this house of Nazareth on earth as It does in Heaven. My Celestial Mama and I knew no other will, and Saint Joseph lived in the reflections of Our Will."* And on Day 25 of Our Blessed Mother's teachings to Luisa for the month of May, she explains that *"the light, the love and everything that a Divine Will can possess, which came out of Us, were so great that Saint Joseph remain eclipsed, inundated, and lived of our reflections."* No wonder Luisa was supposed to keep her gaze on St. Joseph...which means we must, too. Like Joseph, none of us can boast of being divine nor immaculately conceived. And like Joseph, we cannot live in the Divine Will on our own. Everything begins by allowing our human will to be sweetly eclipsed by God's, grounding our very existence in Jesus and Mary. And who could show Luisa how to do that better than the heroic example of Good St. Joseph?

"Saint Joseph, my dear most perfect example of the highest sanctity, you be my singular protector and my model in the interior life of holy sorrow and of holy love. In the midst of your three Hearts, O Jesus, O Mary, O Joseph, I remain secure and will fear no more on my journey." (Luisa Piccarreta, "Yearnings for Sanctity")



His mission continues

"My daughter, it is certain that the Kingdom of My Divine Will has existed upon the earth and therefore there is the sure hope that It will return again to Its full vigor. Our house of Nazareth was Its true kingdom, however we were without people. Now you should know that every creature is a kingdom, hence one who lets My Will reign in her can be called a little kingdom of the Supreme Fiat. So, she is a tiny little house of Nazareth that we hold upon the earth...Now in order to form the great Kingdom of our Will upon the earth, we will first make the so many little tiny houses of Nazareth - that is, the souls who will want to know It in order to let It reign in them. I and the Sovereign Queen will be at the head of these little tiny houses, because we having been the first ones that possessed this kingdom on earth. It is Our right, that we won't surrender to anyone to be the managers of them."

(Jesus to Luisa, Vol. 29, 5/31/1931)

Where does this leave St. Joseph? Well, in the same place he occupied in the Holy Family at Nazareth two thousand years ago. He's the defender and protector of the work Jesus and Mary are doing in our souls. He's Their cooperater, facilitator, and our own personal guardian. Jesus referred to St. Joseph as the Prime Minister of His Kingdom and Bl. Bartolo Longo called him the Vicar of the Holy Spirit. We see this clearly in the Church, as well. Pope Francis declared the Year of St. Joseph to commemorate the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being named the Patron of the Universal Church – God's Kingdom here on earth. And where does the word patron come from? The Latin word *pater*, meaning *father*. He continues to father the mystical Body of Christ and protect Mary, Mother of the Church. As members of the one Body, that places all of us under St. Joseph's cloak, too!



A couple of years ago, we began making our monthly retreat on every first Wednesday of the month to honor the Most Chaste Heart of St. Joseph in a special way. In a generation that has not only forgotten the virtue of chastity but works hard to destroy it, what better time is there than now to entrust ourselves, our families, the Church and the world to *Joseph Most Chaste* and His Most Pure Heart?:

*“I desire souls to come to my Heart, that they may learn true union with the Divine Will...I am the protector of the Church and the home, as I was the protector of Christ and His Mother while I lived upon earth. **Jesus and Mary desire that my Pure Heart, so long hidden and unknown, be now honored in a special way. Let my children honor my Most Pure Heart in a special manner on the First Wednesday of the month by reciting the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary in memory of my life with Jesus and Mary and the love I bore Them, the sorrow I suffered with Them. Let them receive Holy Communion in union with the love with which I received the Savior for the first time and each time I held Him in my arms. Those who honor me in this way will be consoled by my presence at their death, and I myself will lead them safely into the presence of Jesus and Mary.**”*

(St. Joseph to Sister Mary Ephrem on March 30th, 1958, visionary to whom Our Lady of America began appearing in 1956. Her spiritual director, Archbishop Paul F. Leibold, granted his Imprimatur to all the messages.)

Consecration to the Most Chaste Heart of St. Joseph

(Feast Day: the First Wednesday after the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus)

Most Chaste Heart of Saint Joseph, protect and defend my family against every evil and danger. Most Chaste Heart of Saint Joseph, pour on all humanity the graces and virtues of your Most Chaste Heart. Saint Joseph, I truly entrust myself to you. I consecrate to you my soul and my body, my heart and my whole life. Saint Joseph, defend the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. With the graces of your Most Chaste Heart, destroy the plans of satan, bless the entire Holy Church, the Pope, Bishops and Priests of the whole world. We surrender ourselves to you with love and trust, now and forever. Amen!



Celebrating 10 Years

We've hit a big landmark – 10 years as a religious community! April 12th, the day in 2011 when His Excellency, Msgr. Luigi Negri declared the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will a Public Association of the Faithful in the Diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro, fell on the Monday after the Feast of Divine Mercy this year. God was so good as to let us celebrate with our baptismal innocence back. We also celebrated with our freedom, after a month-long quarantine and a mild case of Covid that made its rounds in the community. We're so grateful for the prayers, generosity, health tips, and concern that so many of you showered us with during that time. Our pastor, Fr. Sante, is also doing very well. He truly received a miracle and is now at home with his family, continuing to recover and regaining his strength. Though he admits that those months of suffering were very difficult, Fr. Sante also confided in us how much he learned and how much grace he received from having carried the cross together with Christ.

Our tenth year also promises to bless us with new vocations and a second foundation. One aspirant has already moved in, taking her discernment to the next level. Another is planning to make her vocation visit in August while a third hopes to get here before Christmas. We've also been in regular communication with three more young women studying at college, and they are seriously considering spending next year's summer break in discernment with

us here in Italy. Please keep them all in your prayers! Many of you have been asking about San Marino, as well. It's been a bit of a slow journey due to Covid, but the wheels are still turning. Our bishop, Msgr. Andrea Turazzi, officially gave us the key, and we're now in the process of gathering the paperwork needed to reside in the independent republic. When God wills, the three sisters chosen will be heading over there. We'll keep you posted along the way.

This year we're also excited to be celebrating the Year of St. Joseph, the 40th anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions at Medugorje, and sixty years since She appeared at Garabandal. Who knows what lies ahead for our community, for the Church, or for the world? As the Lord said at the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 6:34), *"Tomorrow will take care of itself."*

And though each day sure does have enough trouble of its own, in the Divine Will each moment also has a new grace of its own to be thankful for. Praise be Jesus Christ now and forever!



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Thank you for your goodness to us! Be assured that you remain always in our daily prayers.



Supporting the Sisters



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

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