



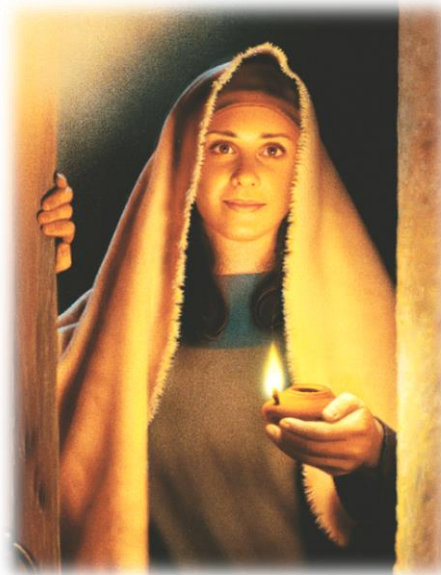
Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



🎵 Seek ye first the Kingdom of God

One day when young Dominic Savio was playing soccer with a few of the other boys from the Oratory, St. John Bosco came along and asked him: *“What would you do if the world was going to end at this very moment?”* The future saint replied with candor, *“I’d continue to play, because I know that what I’m doing is God’s Will.”* Are we always that ready? Do we have that kind of security?

We have to address the elephant in the room: all of the rumors, prophecies, and conspiracy theories floating around cyberspace about what’s coming. There may be some truth in what we’ve been hearing or maybe not. But does it really matter? Should that give us reason to worry or lose our peace? Our Lord does allow certain circumstances to light a fire under us, to wake us up out of our complacency so that we’re not caught off guard. This is His mercy working through His justice. In fact, we’re living in such times now. However, if we were prepared in all seasons and watches of the night as Jesus exhorts us in the Gospel, nothing that may or may not happen in the world – or in our own personal lives - should be cause for fear or panic.



So let’s use these strange times we’re living in to become more like the wise virgins, making sure our souls always have enough spiritual fuel to stay lit and avoiding the risky need to scramble at the last minute. We can also make St. Dominic Savio our model who, like the conscientious steward, was always at peace knowing that he kept his “house” in order and would be found ready at any given moment doing exactly what his Master wanted him to do. And finally, let’s consider Our Lord’s own words calling us to childlike trust in Him alone:



“Can any of you, however much you worry, add a single cubit to your lifespan?...Consider the lilies, how they grow - not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of them. Now if that is how God clothes a flower which grows wild today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how much more will He look after you, who have so little faith! Do not set your hearts on things to eat and things to drink; nor must you worry...Your Father well knows you need them. No, set your hearts on His kingdom, and these other things will be given to you as well. There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:25-32)

Many of you may be thinking, *“I’m not so much worried about me, but about my family, friends, etc.”* Like they teach us on planes, in case of an emergency, securely fasten your own oxygen mask before attempting to help anyone else. So we have to make sure our own spiritual lives consistently rest on a strong foundation, first. And then, in doing so, we’ll actually be helping all others in the process.



FOUNDATION STONES



Rooting out sin

The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes two great teachings from the early Church Fathers as part of its explanation of the Lord’s Prayer. St. Cyril of Jerusalem writes, *“Only a pure soul can boldly say: ‘Thy*



kingdom come.’ **One who...has purified himself in action, thought, and word will say to God: ‘Thy kingdom come!’**” (CCC #2819). A few paragraphs later in #2825, St. John Chrysostom goes on to say: *“Consider how [Jesus Christ] teaches us to be humble, by making us see that our virtue does not depend on our work alone but on grace from on high. He commands each of the faithful who prays to do so universally, for the whole world. For He did not say ‘Thy will be done in me or in us,’ but ‘on earth,’ the whole earth, so that error may be banished from it, truth take root in it, all vice be destroyed on it, virtue flourish on it, and earth no longer differ from Heaven.”*

If we really and truly want the Kingdom of God and His Most Holy Will to reign both in our own souls and throughout the whole world, **sin has to be rooted out of our lives first** – for we each hold integral places in the Body of Christ and therefore affect all the rest of its members. The Catechism further explains that this very desire is not only possible, but has been the mission of the Church since the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles: *“Since Pentecost, the coming of the Reign is the work of the Spirit of the Lord who completes His work on earth and brings us the fullness of grace...The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The end-time in which we live is the age of the outpouring of the Spirit”* (CCC #2818-19). In other words, we have no excuse.

We’re living in the era of Sanctification with access to an overabundance of the Holy Spirit. And He’s ready, willing and able to guide us up that seemingly insurmountable peak as long as we contribute our correspondence to grace - those faithful, concrete efforts which serve as pledge of our sincere commitment to race towards the finish line. Develop the habit of examining your conscience each evening and make manageable, yet firm, resolutions for the following day. Be honest with yourself and ask the Lord for His light, especially with regards to the habitual sins that have made themselves at home in your life. Get to Confession often. This sacrament of healing not only offers us Christ’s forgiveness, but His grace to overcome our wounds and conquer sin as well. Be like that one leper who came back to thank Jesus, rejoicing and praising God for His goodness and mercy. Moderate acts of mortification will have a two-fold benefit: atoning for sin and training your body (and stubborn will) to learn the word “no”. *The Hours of the Passion*, written by the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta, is filled with prayers of reparation and ways to console the Heart of Jesus. Though Our Lord made many promises to those who read and pray with these meditations, let’s do it for the simple purpose of making up for the hurt we have caused God because of our sins. And finally, let’s immerse everything in the Sacred Heart of Jesus – throne of the Divine Will - where all souls of all generations can be found. Then, as St. John Chrysostom urges, we’ll be glorifying God and impetrating the grace of true conversion not just for ourselves but for all.



The Cross



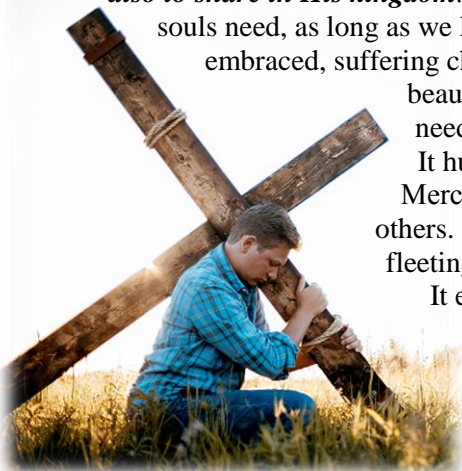
The cross is the spiritual tool that none of us lack. Praise God for that, for as St. Benedict reminds us in his little Rule for beginners: *“We shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in His kingdom.”* The cross is a great gift that has the power to accomplish all that our

souls need, as long as we learn to appreciate its value and render it effective in our lives. When embraced, suffering chisels our souls, smoothing out the rough edges and making of us something

beautiful. It draws us closer to our Father in Heaven, helping us to recognize the need for His paternal love which is sometimes forgotten in times of prosperity.

It humbles us, brings us to our knees, and makes us cling more tightly to Divine Mercy...consequently showing us how to be merciful and compassionate with others. The cross endows us with wisdom and fortitude, detaching us from the fleeting things of the world while fastening us to the eternal treasures of Heaven.

It espouses us to Jesus, allowing us to comfort Him in all His pains and participate in His work of Redemption - so that the Father may be repaired and as many souls may be saved as possible. And this is true of all types of suffering, whether big or “ridiculously” small, whether physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual.



Don't know about you, but we sisters need daily reminders of these truths in order to carry our crosses well. In addition to divine grace, we find much nourishment in Sacred Scripture and the writings of Luisa Piccarreta – who grew not only to accept the cross of Christ with resignation, but to long for it. The simple Italian mystic learned both from Our Lord's direct teachings and her experiences as a victim soul that suffering in the Divine Will was not only the most sure means of purifying her own soul, but of loving both God and neighbor as well. Here are a couple of morsels to help you along your own personal journeys to Calvary:

“I saw a person who was very oppressed by various crosses, and blessed Jesus was saying: ‘Tell her that in the act in which she feels as though dogged by persecutions, by punctures, by sufferings, she should think that I am present with her, and that whatever she suffers she can use to heal and medicate My wounds. So, her sufferings will serve to medicate now My side, now My head, now My hands and feet, which are too much in pain and embittered by the grave offenses that creatures give Me. This is a great honor that I give her, by giving her, Myself, the medicine to medicate My wounds, and by also giving her the merit of charity for having medicated Me’.” (Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta, Book of Heaven, Vol. 7, 10/2/1906)

*“Let us exult, too, in our hardships, understanding that **hardship develops perseverance, and perseverance develops a tested character, something that gives us hope**, and a hope which will not let us down, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us... You received the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’ The Spirit Himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God. And if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs with God and joint-heirs with Christ, **provided that we share His suffering, so as to share His glory.**”* (Romans 5:3-5, 8:15-17)

The Rosary



We could go on and on about how important it is to pray the Rosary every day. We could quote numerous saints and recount lots of miracles that have been attributed to this spiritual sword fashioned out of simple beads. But we're not going to. You write the article in your own hearts. Reflect on the many graces that have blessed your lives and families since starting to pray the Rosary and thank the Lord for them. If you're not in the daily habit yet, we challenge you to begin now. Witness firsthand how generous your Heavenly Father is when you meditate on the life of His Son and renew your love and devotion to the Blessed Mother through the Most Holy Rosary – the prayer that Pope St. John Paul II called his favorite.



The Eucharist

We should not only seek to attend mass and receive Holy Communion as often as possible*, but to always do so with the right dispositions and in the Divine Will. Look what happens when we do!

*“My daughter, how content I am that you have come to receive Me united with My Humanity, Divinity and Will! You have renewed in Me all the contentment I received when I communicated Myself. And while you were kissing Me and embracing Me, since all of Myself was in you, you contained all creatures, and I felt I was given the kiss of all, the embraces of all, because this was your will, as was Mine in communicating Myself - to return to the Father all the love of creatures, even though many would not love Him. The Father made up for their love in Me, and I make up for the love of all creatures in you. **Having found in My Will one who loves Me, repairs Me, etc., in the name of all – because in My Will there is nothing that the creature cannot give Me – I feel like loving creatures even if they offend Me, and I keep inventing stratagems of love around the hardest hearts in order to convert them. Only for love of these souls who do everything in My Will, do I feel as though chained, captured; and I concede to them the prodigies of the greatest conversions.**”*
(Jesus to Luisa, Book of Heaven, Vol. 11, 10/2/1916)



* For those who still cannot attend Holy Mass due to restrictions surrounding the pandemic, watching mass on television or online and making spiritual communions is no less fruitful. Remember, everything lies in the intentions of our hearts and in abandoning all to the Will of God.

The Sacrament of the present moment

“For today is sacred to our Lord. Do not be sad: the joy of the Lord is your stronghold” (Neh 8:10).

We can extend that to mean for our lives that every *moment* is sacred to the Lord. Every moment belongs to God and can be used to encounter Him, love Him, and serve Him in and with His own Will. Thoughts of the past and future can often weigh us down, but focusing in the graces and opportunities that await us in each “now” make our spirits light and are a cause for great joy. And as we develop this habit of finding Christ in each instant and in all situations, the joy that follows will indeed be our strength. *“You are sad now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be filled with joy, and that joy no one shall take from you...I have told you all this so that you may find peace in Me. In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous: I have conquered the world”* (John 16:22, 33).



“And above all these put on LOVE...

...which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col 3:14).

“My daughter, if you want to be always transformed in Me - even more, to be one single thing with Me – love Me always and you will maintain your transformation with Me...Love is fire that transmutes the soul in God; love unites, its flames invest all of the human operations and give them the form of divine operations.”

(Jesus to Luisa, Book of Heaven, Vol. 9, 10/1/1910)

“My daughter, do you really want to love Me? Say: ‘Jesus, I love You with Your Will.’ And since My Will fills Heaven and earth, your love will surround Me everywhere, and your ‘I love You’ will resound up there in the heavens and down to the bottom of the abysses. In the same way, if you want to say: ‘I adore You, I bless You, I praise You...’, say it united with My Will, and you will fill Heaven and earth with adorations, blessings, praises, and thanksgivings.

In My Will, things are simple, easy and immense.” (Vol. 11, 10/2/1913)



The Good News

One of Our Lady of America’s most widely known messages states that the youth of America will lead the world in purity. With so much darkness running rampant and bad news consuming all of the media’s attention, that’s often hard to imagine. However, while evil puts itself on display, Our Blessed Mother is quietly making good news all over the U.S. and, we suspect, the world, too. She’s lighting torches and preparing little, yet strong, armies to help usher in the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart. This past summer, three of us were invited to visit what we later witnessed to be one of the Celestial Queen’s outposts: an unassuming campus ministry program called Colonel Catholics which just happens to rank among the top ten Newman Centers in the country.



A statue of Our Lady of America recently ended up in the southern Louisiana parish of St. Thomas Aquinas, home base of the Colonel Catholics located on the campus of Nicholls State University in Thibodaux. In fact, it’s *the* statue – the one that was blessed by Pope St. John Paul II in 1993 at World Youth Day in Denver and traveled all over the U.S for years as a pilgrim statue. After Mother Gabrielle Marie, Sister Francesca, and Sister Gloria spent a week with the parish’s large student population, we were convinced that this was no accident and easily understood the Blessed Mother’s choice for a new home. Grace surely could be seen in



abundance among the Nicholls youth – an amazing group of bright, talented, kind and loving young men and women who, despite having the world at their fingertips, placed God first in their lives.

So what exactly did we witness? Our trip began with a 9pm candlelit mass at St. Thomas on September 8th, an idea initiated by the students who wanted to do something special for Our Lady’s birthday. It was packed...with all of the social distancing requirements obeyed, of course. As their pastor - Fr. Mitch Semar – often marvels, at a time when even the Sunday mass obligation has been lifted, you’ll still find the mid-week noon mass at capacity with parishioners and students occupying the overflow room, as well. The next morning we attended a 7am student-led bible study. Yes, they wake up earlier than necessary to meditate on Scripture before classes begin. Almost every afternoon during the break between classes, we joined students on their routine Rosary walk around campus. It was led by FOCUS missionaries in their twenties who can be

found volunteering in colleges and universities all over the U.S., teaching students not only how to own their Catholic faith but evangelize it to others, as well.

The rest of the time we spent getting to know our new friends and discovering things you don’t hear about every day with regards to youth. Quite a few were discerning religious vocations. Others were undertaking year-long dating fasts, choosing to focus on their relationship with the Lord before seeking romantic relationships. Practicing chastity wasn’t an anomaly, but the norm. Their idea of a fun day off from school was heading to New Orleans for Sunday mass at the Shrine of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, where we also venerated the local hero’s remains and enthusiastically chitchatted about the many saints whose relics were on display. Then off to Café duMonde for beignets (French donuts) and café au lait, followed by a little church hopping and a Rosary walk along the streets of the French Quarter. Did we mention that one of the first-year students who came on the trip had covered the 2-5am slot that morning at the new Two Hearts Perpetual Adoration Chapel on campus? When asked if she was tired, she simply replied, *“Yeah, a little, but I really enjoyed my time with the Lord.”*



Early morning Bible study

At any given moment, you could find kids praying in the adoration chapel or hanging out at the Colonel Catholic student center. They just loved being together in fraternal charity, whether talking about the last saint movie they saw, playing Christian songs on the guitar, making rosaries, conversing about the spiritual life, or

shooting the breeze. And what surprised us most, they were just so excited to be with nuns...not because of anything special on our part, but because of the spiritual motherhood that they’ve been craving and which our vocation represents. More than just experiencing typical southern hospitality, we felt as if welcomed into St. Thomas’ little Nazareth for a week. Thank you, Fr. Mitch, for the invite. Thanks to everyone we met – student, staff, and parishioner – for the warmth and generosity you showered us with while there. And thank you, Blessed Mother, for reminding us that the light of Your Son continues to shine brightly in the darkness of this present age.



Fr. Mitch (right) and Fr. Dan (left) giving us our first taste of real Cajun food.



Adoration and Contemplation... Essential Business

A young college student recently asked one of the sisters, “How do you pray always?” It was actually the very first thing the education major so earnestly came out with when the two sat down for a little spiritual chat. Sister totally sympathized, and probably ninety-nine percent of you out there could also relate. We often feel our time consumed by so many very real responsibilities and prayer seems to be the one thing that often gets sacrificed at the altar of our busy schedules. So, like that student who beautifully recognized her need and desire to connect with the Lord on a deeper level despite the numerous demands of this world, we try to multitask. And that’s actually a really good thing.

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, St. Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing”... not coincidentally sandwiched between his commands to “rejoice always” and “give thanks in all circumstances.” How often does Our Lord Himself explain to Luisa that the sanctity of sanctities – that of living in His Divine Will – doesn’t so much involve what we specifically do? Rather, it’s about asking Jesus to accomplish everything in and with us, through the power of His Holy Spirit, for the love, honor, and glory of the Father. So whether we’re brushing our teeth, writing a ten-page paper, changing a diaper, or meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, it all contains an equal, divine value if that’s what God wants to be doing in us at that very moment. And there you have it: praying always! But there’s a catch.

We’ll never really be able to arrive at this type of continuous prayer in our activities unless we first learn how to contemplate with our minds, bodies, and souls at rest. This, of course, requires making room in our daily schedules for some quite time with the Lord, time to simply enjoy *being* in His presence and *adoring* the majesty of God. It will take some sacrifice and discipline, too – maybe waking up a little earlier, giving up an entertainment, or heading to a church during your lunch hour. If you’re able to spend this time before the Blessed Sacrament, all the better! That’s what Jesus is waiting there for. Don’t be afraid to pull out your rosary beads or

use Sacred Scripture (or another type of spiritual reading) as a doorway into contemplation. Just make sure that it doesn’t take up the bulk of your time, for contemplation is passive prayer. We dispose ourselves the best we can, but the ball is in God’s court. Start off small if you’re new to this type of prayer and/or if your days are particularly hectic. Give yourself reasonable time goals that you can stick to...and then stick to them. You’ll find that as you taste the sweetness of Christ’s company in solitude and silence, you will crave more.



Though initially it won’t seem as indispensable as some of your more pressing tasks, adoration/contemplation really will begin to set the tone for the rest of your day. You’ll experience more peace in everything you do, thereby getting things done quicker, better, and with less stress. With a heart refreshed by God’s love, the pressure of success or failure won’t weigh on you as much. You’ll find yourself relating to others better, sharing all of the graces you received in prayer with all those you encounter. With a soul fortified with the divine virtues, you’ll be able to handle setbacks and crosses with greater strength. Even your spiritual works - the more verbal and active prayers which can sometimes feel a bit like holy homework - will suffer less distractions and take on more of a contemplative character. And after having spent time before Jesus’ Humanity and Divinity, offering Him your nothingness so that He could give you His everything, you will slowly yet steadily learn to live more and more in



His Most Holy and Divine Will. Then praying always – even as you are busy about the many things, the little missions, to which God has called you – will become a profound reality and not just a nice idea.

*“Sometimes the groom is pleased to deal with his bride and to entrust his most intimate secrets to her. Other times, then, he delights with greater pleasure in resting, as they contemplate each other’s beauty. Speaking impedes resting, and the mere thinking of what one has to say and of what one has to deal with diverts one’s attention from looking at the beauty of the groom or of the bride. However, this [rest] is necessary, **for after having rested and comprehended each other’s beauty more, they come to love each other more, and with greater strength they enter the field again to work, to deal with and defend their interests.**”*

(Jesus to Luisa, Book of Heaven, Vol. 2, 9/30/1899)



Moral Obligation



For most of you, we’ll be preaching to the choir about the upcoming United States presidential elections. However, millions of Catholics have helped vote in pro-abortion presidents, governors, mayors, senators, and congressmen in the past, so we take nothing for granted. All Christians have the moral obligation to vote for candidates who respect the dignity of life from the moment of conception to natural death. Mother Angelica went so far as to say that any

Catholic who knowingly votes for a pro-abortion politician in any election commits a mortal sin. And not only do we agree, but more importantly, the Church agrees.

Paragraphs 2270-2272 clearly state: *“Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception... Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable.*

Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an

*end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law... **God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes. Formal cooperation in an abortion constitutes a grave offense.**”*

The abortion issue is not just another issue or even an issue of lesser importance, but rather *the* most important issue – a non-negotiable. Unfortunately, after almost 50 years of legalized abortion in the U.S., we’ve become desensitized to the gravity of its evil, to the effects that this evil has had on our society, and to the hope that one day *Roe vs. Wade* will be overturned. The devil has been very patient, creeping in little by little, deceitfully working under the guise of justice, using his smoke and mirrors to make even followers of Christ confuse good with bad and bad with good. And where have we arrived? Our three sisters from New York could tell you, shuddering as they remember the most radical abortion legislation in U.S. history being passed by elected lawmakers in their home state about a year and a half ago. It was a law the State of New York longed to pass for years but couldn’t until both chambers of the Legislature were controlled by Democrats. It was a law so extreme, that even people who considered themselves pro-choice were horrified and began to rethink their positions.

Every election is important. President Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 presidential elections has given America one of the most pro-life presidents in our nation’s history. It has allowed him the opportunity to nominate three conservative, pro-life justices to the U.S. Supreme Court in just four short years, giving the unborn and their defenders the greatest cause for hope in decades. However, America’s system of checks and balances makes every vote we cast vital. It’s just as imperative to elect pro-life Senators, who have the power to confirm or reject presidential nominees to both executive and judicial branch posts. Did you know that the Congressmen and women we vote for have the power to elect the President in the case of an Electoral College

tie? Both branches of the Legislature make the laws that govern our country and its people. As we've seen in New York, local elections – even those filling the smaller political offices on a city or statewide level – can have serious and lasting consequences, as well. Again, we have the moral responsibility to know who we are voting for, what they and their political party stand for, and especially if their track record has proven to defend life at all of its stages.

Placing pro-life values at the top of our priority list when it comes to politics does not mean devaluing other issues that face the American people. In fact, it does just the opposite. It raises the bar, providing a type of ethical litmus test with regards to political candidates or parties. For anyone who believes it just to allow a child to be murdered in its mother's womb and therefore refuses to protect the most vulnerable population in our society, he or she will lack the proper moral compass needed to serve in public office and inevitably fail to make just decisions in other areas as well. On the other hand, those who recognize the dignity of the defenseless, unborn child and are willing to fight for the lives of voiceless little ones who can offer them nothing in return, they are the public servants most likely to govern according to what is good, decent, and right for all.

As pro-lifers and as Christians, we also have the fundamental obligation to love *all* souls with the merciful Heart of Christ and pray everyone into Heaven. With as much fervor as we beseech Our Lord for the victory of our pro-life candidates in the upcoming elections, let us also beg Our Blessed Mother to obtain the grace of conversion for those who support the sin of abortion in any way, shape, or form. Finally, let us never forget to do everything in all humility, knowing that we are also recipients of the Father's mercy and live in constant need of His grace, love, and healing. May the conversion of St. Paul be our hope and his example be our guide! Never fail to speak and uphold the truth, but always "*make love your aim*" (1Cor 14:1).

Supporting the Sisters

If you feel called to help support the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will this fall or on a regular basis, visit 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 send a check or money order to the address of our non-profit organization in the U.S.:
(All donations are tax-deductible)



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Thank you all so much
for your generosity!
Know that you never
leave our daily prayers.