



Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them;
for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs.” *Luke 18:16-17*

The Family is Complete

We've got big news for all of the laity out there who feel drawn to the Benedictines of Divine Will, yet not to the religious life. You can now live our charism from outside of the monastery walls as Oblates!

But we must warn you, despite our noblest efforts, the Lord made it very clear early on that our community is not called to outward perfection...or anything visibly impressive for that matter. As a whole, we don't have a remarkable gift of music or great artistic talents. Neither are we accomplished spiritual authors or the most eloquent preachers and teachers. Even our conversational Italian has much to be desired. And a few months back, when our bishop gave us his permission and blessing to found the Third Order (or lay branch) of our religious family, we also learned that we're not the best of organizers and administrators either. Though we try to put our whole heart and soul into everything, we can only laugh at our many shortcomings. External results are not our main goal (nor are they even in our control). Whether doing something big or small, easy or difficult, routine or extraordinary, our efforts are always aimed in the same direction...Will of God.



So if you have many skills or none at all, if you want your greatest talent to be giving honor and glory to God, if your loftiest ambition is to live in love and joy...come and join our family! Fr. Elijah will explain how.



The Benedictine Oblates of Divine Will

From the desk of Fr. Elijah Joseph...

Peace of Christ! Mother Gabrielle Marie and I are grateful to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary that many of you have expressed an ardent interest in sharing in our charism as Third Order members. To this end, we would like to clarify what we feel it means to be a Benedictine Oblate of Divine Will.

The first thing that we would say is that our community is *little*. We see ourselves as and will always strive to be a little family, regardless of our numbers. Our model is the Holy Family of Nazareth. The Holy Family was very hidden and very simple. They did not have great, worldwide apostolates. Rather, they lived daily life with extraordinary love: *divine love*. I like to imagine Mary sewing by the hearth-fire as St. Joseph plays with the Child Jesus on the floor. I imagine, too, the neighbors who probably loved to visit their house and taste Mary's homemade bread. I doubt the neighbors knew that the child playing on the floor was



the Eternal Word Incarnate. I'd bet, though, they knew there was amazing love and peace in that holy place.

It seems to us that there are a wide range of oblate communities in the world. Some are highly organized with sophisticated formation programs. Others are much more loosely organized, private, hidden, and personal in nature. They are, in a word: LITTLE. The Benedictine Oblates of Divine Will are more like this second type. In this sense, our oblation is very similar to a simple consecration. Many of you will be familiar with St. Louis Marie De Montfort's *Total Consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary*. While this consecration is powerful, serious, and even life-changing, it also is hidden and simple, and can be done privately without anyone knowing about it.



Sr. Maureen with a group of Oblates from NY.

The main thing that an oblate needs is a fervent desire and commitment to live in God's Most Holy and Divine Will on earth as it is in heaven. To this end they should live a faithful Catholic life, which would include:

- Mass on Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation (daily Mass when possible)
- Regular confession (monthly when possible)
- Faithful and loving obedience to Holy Mother Church in all matters of faith and morals
- Prayerful study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and Sacred Scripture
- Respect and filial submission to the Pope, Bishops, and Pastors

Additionally, they should:

- Read the Divine Will writings of the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta for at least one half-hour a day (exceptions to this should be made only when absolutely necessary).
- Pray the Rosary daily
- Participate in Eucharistic Adoration whenever possible
- Cultivate a fervent devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph as well as to St. Benedict, St. Scholastica, St. Annibale di Francia, and the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta
- Learn about the Benedictine life, especially the Holy Rule
- BE LITTLE!

Finally, we have a few little suggestions:

- It is helpful to have some guidance when reading the Divine Will writings, either from a priest who reads the Divine Will or is open to it, or someone with some theological training. Remember these are mystical writings and must always be interpreted in the light of the Deposit of Faith and any interpretations that go against it are to be avoided! The Benedictines of Divine Will do not espouse any particular theological interpretation of the Divine Will writings. Instead, we insist only on the fact that the interpretations must be solidly and authentically Catholic.

Fr. Celso and a few Oblates on a trip to Talamello.



- As St. Francis so eloquently put it, "Preach always, and if necessary, use words." Concentrate on living in the Divine Will and leave the teaching to those that are properly trained and called by God to teach it.
- Be humble and charitable, especially to those who, like you, are striving to live in God's Most Holy Will on earth as it is in heaven.

Therefore, with these guidelines in mind, if you would like to consecrate yourself to being a Benedictine Oblate of Divine Will, all we require is that you faithfully live the above practices. Then when you feel ready, read and sign the oblation that is included at the end of this letter in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Every year on the same date your consecration should be renewed. We also suggest that you wear a blessed Benedictine Cross as a sign of your consecration. It does not need to be visible, but it can be if you prefer.



As simple as this may sound, this is what it means to be a Benedictine Oblate of Divine Will! While we cannot offer anyone an elaborate formation program or a formal canonical connection with our community, we can joyfully share the gift of our charism with all those that would like to unite themselves with us spiritually. We also can pray for and with each of you that we may all live more deeply in God's Most Holy and Divine Will, and that the Kingdom of Divine Will in its fullness on earth as it is in heaven may come quickly!

In union with my Bishop, I extend my priestly blessing to all those that faithfully live this little consecration. We entrust this letter to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary and allow Them to do with it what they would want.



With much love,
Fr. Elijah John Joseph of Our Lady of Guadalupe

OBLATION



†
*In the Name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit*



I, _____,

responding to the grace the Lord has given me, for the glory of God and with the will to live more perfectly the Gospel of Christ, promise to God to live according to the Way of Life based on that of the Holy Family of Nazareth and the Rule of Saint Benedict.

I consecrate myself to the Divine Will in Creation, Redemption and Sanctification on behalf of Holy Church. I give myself with my whole heart to the Benedictine Oblates of Divine Will so that by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the intercession of the Immaculate Mother of God, the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta, our Father, Saint Benedict and our Mother, Saint Scholastica, under the protection of Good Saint Joseph, I may live more perfectly my consecration.

Signed _____

Place _____

Date _____

Printable PDF version available on the "Oblates" page of our website.

A great, big welcome to those who became Benedictine Oblates of Divine Will this past summer. What a grace to be united in prayer with all of you in God's Most Holy Will! May you be the first of many more to come. Want to spread the news of our Third Order? Direct your family and friends to the new "Oblates" page of our website where they will be able to find Fr. Elijah's full letter along with the oblation formula.

"...Indeed the Kingdom of My Divine Will has existed upon earth, and therefore there is the sure hope that It will return again to Its full

force. Our house of Nazareth was Its true Kingdom; however,

We were without peoples. Now, you must know that...one who lets the Divine Will reign within herself can be called a little Kingdom of the Supreme Fiat. So, she is a tiny little house of Nazareth that We have upon earth; and, though little, since Our Will is in her, reigning, Heaven is not closed for her; she observes the same laws of the Celestial Fatherland, she loves with the same love, feeds herself with the foods from up there, and is incorporated into the Kingdom of Our interminable regions." (Book of Heaven, Vol.29 – May 31, 1931)



Memories of a Saint:

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

When the date for Mother Teresa's canonization was first announced, we began tossing around the idea of whether or not we should go. Though Rome is just a drive away, it had finally been decided that a day trip would be too tiring and an overnight pilgrimage too expensive for the whole community. But feeling a certain unrest with her decision, Mother Gabrielle Marie prayed a secret prayer just days before the event, telling the go-getter saint: "Well, Mother Teresa, if you want me at your canonization, you'll have to make it happen." Less than twenty-four hours later, Fr. Elijah calls with two last-minute tickets that a friend had allocated specifically to them. And once affordable, even miraculous, rooms became available in the packed Eternal City, Mother Gabrielle could no longer deny God's hand at work.



Though we all consider Mother Teresa a community favorite, Mother Gabrielle Marie always felt a special connection to her after a Providential encounter in 1992:

"I was living north of Rome as a Poor Clare at the time with two other sisters, praying for the success of EWTN's radio network that Mother Angelica hoped to establish in Italy. One weekend while visiting various churches around the Vatican, we ran into a seminarian that we knew. He had been guarding the gate of a Missionaries of Charity convent when he called us over and invited us to visit the sisters. Soon after greeting us, the sister who answered the door asked, 'Would you like to meet our Mother?' Thinking she meant the house superior, one could only imagine what we felt when Mother Teresa entered the room.

She led us to their chapel, where we all prayed for some time together, before directing us to a private room. There, Mother Teresa spoke for three hours about all that the Lord had been doing in her community. In fact, the already elderly nun was on her way to Romania to open up a new house. With childlike joy on her face, she said, 'I'm 81 on the outside, but 16 on the inside'.

Mother Teresa then invited the three of us into her bedroom, opened the drawer of her nightstand, and pulled out enough Miraculous Medals for all of our sisters in Birmingham...kissing each one before handing them to me. At that point I noticed a small hand-painted sign on her wall with praying hands and the words: 'I will, I want with God's blessing be holy'. I asked if that was one of her mottos in addition to 'I thirst'. She said yes and explained a bit of its significance before inviting us back to her convent for mass the following Sunday. After the sisters and I had left and were about to get into our car, Mother Teresa came running out and handed me the sign that I had admired. She even signed the back when I had asked.



The next Sunday, Mother Teresa and I sat on the floor side by side at mass, sharing the same music book. Before saying our final good-byes, I offered my new friend a picture of Rosa Mystica to replace the sign that she had given to me the week before. I explained the promise Our Lady made to Pierina Gilli for all religious



houses with an image or statue of Her depicted in this way: if they remained faithfully devoted to Our Lady Mystical Rose, all members of the house would receive special graces to live their vows. Deeply touched by this message, Mother Teresa said she would take the picture with her and bring it back to the Mother House in India.

And that was the last time I ever saw her. Even before our meeting, Mother Teresa had always been special to me. I very much admired her work and even considered entering her community during my discernment of the religious life. But the grace of having had such a personal interaction with Mother Teresa left me moved beyond description. I left her presence feeling so uplifted, so joyful, so filled with grace. I just knew then she was a living saint."

Seventeen years later, Mother Gabrielle Marie would receive her own "call within a call" when the Lord asked her to leave the cloister she called home to found a new religious community. Feeling a deep spiritual bond with Mother Teresa and considering her a powerful intercessor for all of the Benedictines of Divine Will, Mother Gabrielle Marie knew that she and Fr. Elijah needed to be present when she was proclaimed a saint. Now the small sign, or relic, of Saint Teresa of Calcutta hangs in our own Little Chapel of the Eternal Father. Continue to pray for us, Mother, so that with God's blessing, we may be holy too.

Keeping those lamps burning...



Thank you all for your concern and prayers after the devastating earthquake in central Italy last month. We were deeply moved by how many people reached out to us with such sincere love. We live about three hours from the heart of the earthquake, so through the grace of God, our area was not affected. Some slight tremors awoke one sister the night it hit, but that was about all we felt.

However, looking at the pictures of towns almost entirely flattened not so far from home, reading stories of those who lost numerous loved ones, and watching the fatality count continue to rise did shake us all up a bit spiritually. We were reminded of how we can take each day for granted and how easily everything can be taken away in an instant...even in the midst of a peaceful night's sleep. How grateful we must constantly be for God's blessings, yet without allowing ourselves to be attached to them. To Him alone we must attach ourselves, always ready with our lamps alight.

Let us all continue to pray for the poor victims of the earthquake, those who have died and those who are suffering great loss. May they soon experience the triumph of the Cross!

Gentle Reminder: Election Day is right around the corner. As Catholics, we have the moral obligation to vote for life. Even though one may believe him or herself to be pro-life, there's often the temptation to consider other issues more urgent than abortion when choosing a candidate. But such a thought process is nothing more than a deception of the devil. What can be more important than defending human life from conception to natural death? And any candidate who believes the murder of an unborn child to be a civil right can never lead our country into true peace and prosperity, regardless of where they stand (or claim to stand) on any other issue. For God will not bless those who do not protect His little ones.



“Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not He who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not He who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will He not repay man according to his work?”
(Proverbs 24:11-12)



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www.benedictinesofdivinewill.org

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**Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will
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