



# Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



## Restoration

One of the sisters was talking to someone the other day about trust. They both honestly shared their tendency to worry or even obsess over difficult situations rather than surrender them to the Lord. After laughing a bit at their silly, unproductive and, quite frankly, exhausting interior habits in the face of trial, one finally exclaimed to the other: "But why is it so hard? It shouldn't be. Trust in God should, in itself, be the easiest thing in the world." Amen! And yet...it's not.

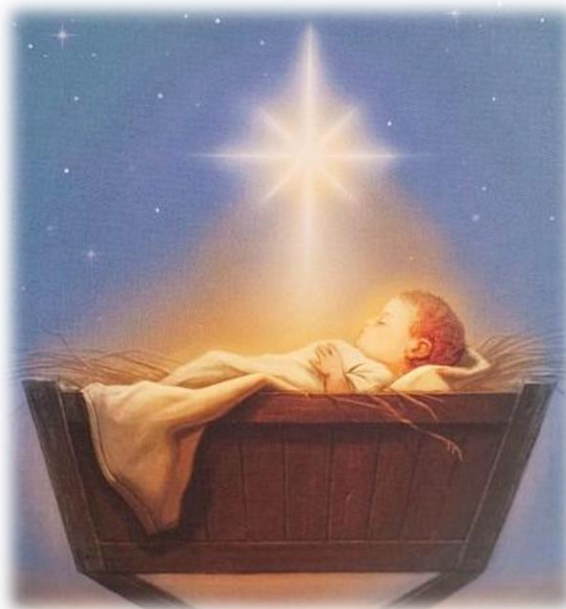
According to Fr. Mike Schmitz, host of *Bible in a Year* podcast and popular Catholic speaker, surrender means giving God dominion over everything. And if God has dominion over everything, that means I have dominion over nothing. That very definition, particularly the release of control part, is what scares the pants over all of us. Deep within our broken hearts, we doubt the Father's love, goodness, and even wisdom. We forget that He has no agenda or ulterior motives and that He wants nothing but our eternal good and happiness.

This fear of our Heavenly Father is probably one of the gravest consequences of original sin. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains:

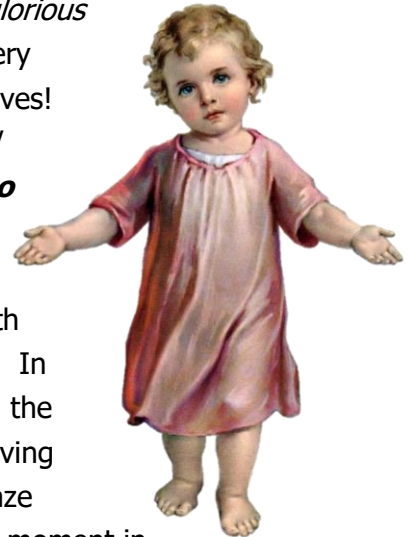
"Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command...All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in His goodness...Constituted in a state of holiness, **man was destined to be fully divinized by God in glory**. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to be like God but without God, before God and not in accordance with God. Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately lose the grace of original holiness. *They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image.*" (397-399)

Though our brains may know better, our woundedness often convinces us that God has forgotten or will eventually abandon us. And so we walk through life in a state of continuous struggle, constantly treading water in our attempt to handle everything alone and crippled in our relationships with the Lord, ourselves, and others. Frustrated, we cry out with St. Paul: "*I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate*" (Rom 7:15).

You may be thinking: *What does any of this have to do with Christmas?* Everything! Jesus didn't come to earth so we could just survive our time here until finally making it to Heaven. "*I came that they*



*may have life, **and have it abundantly***" (John 10:10). The great mystery Incarnation involves not only our redemption, but our complete restoration – through Christ - to the original glory God intended for man from the beginning. Can you imagine walking through life in "*the glorious freedom of the children of God*" (Rom 8:21), filled with the Holy Spirit at every moment? God has much higher expectations for us than we have for ourselves! As St. Pope John Paul II put it: "*We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures, we are the sum of the Father's love for us and our **real capacity to become the image of His Son Jesus.***" Believing this is what it all boils down to.



This Advent and Christmas season, we invite you to contemplate, with more intimacy than ever before, the Word Made Flesh who dwelt among us. In Jesus we find a God worthy of all our confidence, willing to suffer even from the moment of His conception to set us free and bring us back to the Trinity's loving embrace. He is the true, perfect image of the Father that we must fix our gaze upon - a Father who not only sent His only-begotten Son into the world at a moment in time but, through Him, desires to remain with us perpetually. As Jesus told the little children when exiled in Egypt<sup>1</sup>:

*"He loves you so much, that He was not content with being your Father from Heaven, guiding you, creating for you a sun, a sea, a flowery earth to make you happy; but loving you with exuberant love, He wanted to descend into your hearts, to form His royal palace in the depth of your soul, making Himself sweet prisoner of each one of you... To give life to your heartbeat, breath and motion."*



The Nine Excesses of Love in the Incarnation of the Eternal Word<sup>2</sup> given by our Lord to the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta is excellent food for contemplation. These descriptions of the love with which Jesus burned for man in Our Blessed Mother's womb are some of the earliest teachings recorded in Luisa's mystical diary. She began meditating on them in preparation for Holy Christmas at only seventeen years old and never abandoned the practice for the rest of her life. It makes sense, because if we don't understand the extent to which God loved us (and continues to love us) in taking on our humanity, we can never, ever hope to be fully restored and live in the Divine Will here on earth. As distrust gave birth to sin and the fall of humanity, trust will be the means through which we are restored. Fear and ungodly self-reliance will be transformed into security and holy dependence, giving birth to our loving and free obedience (aka, our "fiat") to God's Will. To put it simply: *We are not loved because we are good, but we learn to be good because we are loved!*

A little sneak peek into the Excesses of Love...



<sup>1</sup> From the diary of the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta, *Book of Heaven*, Vol. 35, 1/10/1938

<sup>2</sup> The full text of this Christmas Novena can be found on our website. Click on "Family Tree" page and scroll down to Luisa.

“Ah! My daughter, look well into the womb of your Mama; fix well your eyes on My conceived Humanity, and you will find your soul conceived with Me and the flames of My love that devour you. Oh! How much I loved you, and I do love you!...I want to speak with [souls] to tell them of My joys and sorrows – that I have come into their midst to make them happy and to console them; that I will remain in their midst as a little brother, giving My goods, My kingdom, to each one of them at the cost of My life.” (from the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Excesses of Love)

“In the womb of My Celestial Father, I was fully happy. There was no good which I did not possess; joy, happiness – everything was at My disposal...Ah, excess of My love! I could say that it made Me change My destiny...it stripped Me of all My joys, happinesses and goods to clothe Me with all the unhappinesses of creatures – and all this in order to make an exchange, to give them My destiny, My joys and My eternal happiness.” (from the 7<sup>th</sup> Excess of Love)

“My child, give Me your heart. I will give you everything you want, provided that you give Me your heart in exchange...Is this not a greater excess of My love; that the Creator, in order to approach the creature, takes the form of a little baby so as not to strike fear in him; that He asks for the heart of the creature, at least as alms, and in seeing that he does not want to give it, He supplicates, moans, and cries?” (from the 8<sup>th</sup> Excess of Love)



## Magnificat



On October 22, the memorial of Pope St. John Paul II, Sister Gemma, Sister Benedicta, and Sister Teresa spent their first night in our new convent at San Marino. Earlier that evening, our bishop, Msgr. Andrea Turazzi, celebrated a beautiful inauguration mass at the Basilica of San Marino followed by a Eucharistic procession ending in the sisters' private chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Though the separation was a bit sad, we all felt a supernatural joy and peace that evening and the days to follow. It was a momentous step for our community. Though at times there were doubts and concerns as the move got closer, we felt that night as if the Lord was confirming that this, indeed, was His Will.

But as many of you already know firsthand, doing God's Will doesn't exempt us from trials. Logistically speaking, both the sisters left at Talamello and those at San Marino had to get used to living in a smaller community. That involved tweaking our schedule more than once, balancing our hours of adoration, and assigning more responsibilities to each sister. If we're going to be totally honest, this wasn't easy. Have you ever had moments when you just cried out to the Lord, begging Him for more





hours in the day to do everything He was asking you to do? Though stressful, frustrating, and sometimes accompanied by tears, these are moments of grace and learning. God never gives us more than we can handle, so if we're feeling utterly overwhelmed and incapable of fulfilling His Will, chances are we've fallen into one of two traps: we've either taken on more than He's asked or we are doing His Will in our own way.

Two words have been helpful to us: expectations and limitations. More often than not, the expectations of others or our own unrealistic expectations are what weigh us down. A huge part of living in the Divine Will is learning to fix our attention only on the Lord's expectations, what He's asking of us in the present moment. This will definitely involve learning to say no to others at times, setting

healthy boundaries, asking for help and abandoning our to-do lists to God's timing. As for limitations, they are the hardest things to accept about ourselves. When we have limited time, resources, strength, or even talents, we have to let go of doing things according to our own ideas of perfection and allow the Holy Spirit to work wonders with the little we have to offer, or even with our very mistakes and failures. We're reminded of what Our Blessed Mother once told Luisa: fulfilling the Divine Will requires detachment even from the good and holy things *we* want to do.



Let's take a look at the Holy Family. Don't you think St. Joseph would have wanted to provide at least a decent room in a warm, comfortable inn for his beloved wife as She prepared to give birth to the Savior of the world? He tried, but when his efforts proved unsuccessful, Joseph trustingly accepted the poor stable his Heavenly Father provided instead...laboring with love and humility to make it as suitable as possible. When faced with the threat of Herod's evil

decree, how many fathers from the line of great King David would have been tempted to stay and fight rather than flee to a foreign land, entertaining dreams of valiantly protecting their families and rescuing all of Bethlehem? Not Joseph. He patiently waited for the Lord to speak and then obeyed His word without question. Some of the mystics tell us he had trouble finding work in Egypt and struggled very much with the language. But good St. Joseph persevered, always giving everything that he could, even if it *seemed* to amount to very little. How much comfort this brings us as we fumble with our Italian!

Materially speaking, Our Lady also had very little to give Her newborn Son, but She lovingly offered what She did have: poor but clean swaddling clothes (no doubt worked with Her own hands), milk from Her maternal breast, Her warm embrace and Immaculate Heart...and most importantly, Her "yes" to everything without complaint. This is all the Lord really asks of us, as well. We can often fantasize about doing great deeds for God, but this is not what living in the Divine Will is all about. Remember Our Lady's words in the Magnificat? *"He has looked with favor on His **lowly** servant...**the Almighty has done great things** for me and holy is His name"* (Lk 1:48-49). It's not about us, but about Him. Don't worry about what you don't have or what you can't do. Whatever you do have, offer

it all to God. Whatever you're called to do, do it with your whole heart and do it in the Divine Will. As at Bethlehem, allow the Father to use your very poverty to bring the light of Christ into the world, into every heart past, present, and future.

San Marino is one of the few counties left in the world in which abortion is still considered a punishable crime. Sadly, its citizens recently voted to legalize this horrible sin against humanity up until the ninth month of pregnancy. But it hasn't become law yet, so please join us in prayer! We can't help but wonder if that's exactly why the Lord chose to open our second house in the political and spiritual center of the oldest independent republic in the world...to bring Eucharistic Adoration right to the heart of the battle. Our Lady of Guadalupe and San Marino, pray for us!



## Joys and Sorrows



Meeting the cousin of Sts. Francisco and Jacinta outside of their childhood home.

Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary



Spreading the Divine Will in Fatima where Mother Gabrielle Marie was invited to give a talk at a *New Dawn Portugal* conference.







Sister Maddalena's father, Daniel B. Cuevas, passed away on Saturday, October 23rd from heart failure at 85 years old after a brief yet painful battle with Covid-19. Though travel restrictions in the Philippines prevented Sister from physically accompanying her father in his last days, the many miracles of grace that surrounded Daniel's transition from this life to his eternal home reminded us all of two important truths: prayer and sacrifice can move mountains (even from a distance) and though we may not always be able to help our families in the way we desire, Jesus and Our Blessed Mother never leave the side of those whom we love. Please continue to pray for Daniel's soul as well as for Sister Maddalena's family as they mourn his loss.

## Merry Christmas

If you feel called to financially support the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will this Christmas season or throughout the following year, 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](http://www.benedictinesofdivinewill.org)**

You can also simply send a check or money order to the address of our U.S. non-profit organization on the right:  
*(All donations are tax-deductible)*



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In love and gratitude 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!