



Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



And the Word became Flesh

One afternoon not that long ago, while recording an episode of Radio Maria¹, one of the sisters glanced up at a painting that has been hanging in our parlor of Talamello for the past ten years. She has obviously looked at this image of Mary holding the infant Jesus a million times before, but this time Jesus' penetrating gaze caught her eyes and spoke these words to her heart: *"This one at last is bone of My bones and flesh of My flesh!"* (Gn 2:23). The New Adam was looking at His bride. He was *seeing* her with delight. And for sister, seeing Jesus see her was very healing.

One of the reasons that the Word became flesh was "so that thus we might *know* God's love" (CCC 458). In fact, the very first words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, taken from John's Gospel, are:

"Father...this is eternal life, that they may *know* You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." In other words, knowing God is Heaven. And in Luisa's diary, aptly entitled *Book of Heaven*, Jesus tells us that "the happiness, joy and glory of the blessed will be in proportion to how well they will have *known* Us [the Most Holy Trinity]" (Vol. 36, 6/12/1938). He emphasizes over and over again that acquiring the *knowledges* and truths of His Divine Will are essential for living in It. But what does it mean to know God, His love, and His Will? We can find our answer, once again, by going back to the beginning: *"Now Adam **knew** Eve his wife, and she conceived"* (Gn 4:1). Knowledge of God is intimacy with Him - a real, lived intimacy that brings forth divine life.

If you break down the roots of the word "intimacy," it means entering into the deepest, innermost parts of a person. It can also derive from the Latin verb for "be not afraid." Isn't it interesting that these were the first words the angel spoke to the shepherds at Bethlehem, the first ones invited to behold the Almighty in the flesh? *Be not afraid!* For in the Incarnation, God is calling us to radical intimacy with Himself - to see Him and be seen by Him, to know and be known, to love and be loved. ***"God loves His people more than a bridegroom his beloved...God's very being is love."***



¹ *School of Mary, A Kindergarten of the Divine Will*, Radio Maria program hosted by Peter DePalma where we are his regular guests. Visit the "Family Tree" page of our website and scroll down to the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta for more information about how to listen.

By sending His only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed His **innermost secret**: God Himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and **He has destined us to share in that exchange**" (CCC 219, 221). Jesus has come to wed our humanity to His Divinity! And by choosing to enter our broken world as an infant, naked and utterly vulnerable, He is giving us full access to Himself in such a way that we may not fear giving Him full access to ourselves. Because if we truly want to participate in that ineffable *exchange* of Trinitarian love, even here on earth, we



must allow Love Himself to penetrate the innermost secrets of our own hearts as well.

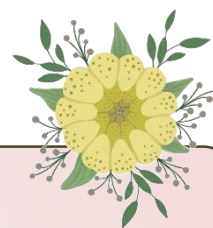
As we get ready to start a new year, we invite you all to spend some time every day in silent, contemplative prayer...preferably before the Blessed Sacrament, if at all possible. Make that your only resolution. Enter the bridal chamber with Christ, your Bridegroom. Behold Him as He beholds you – *the real you* - with delight. Be not afraid to show Him everything. Jesus is drawing us back into the garden, out of our hiding and fig

leaves, saying: "*Who told you that you couldn't come to Me in your nakedness?*" Let His loving gaze swallow up your shame, heal your wounds, and transform your heart.

This ongoing, ever-deepening *experience* of intimacy with the Lord is really the key to living in the Divine Will. For a bride who knows she's profoundly loved will refuse her Spouse nothing. She will live in a natural state of surrender to the Beloved of her soul, Who has not only proven that He can be trusted, but that He is, indeed, the fulfillment of her deepest longings. And amazingly, when we open our human will to receive the gift of the Divine Will - when we most willingly allow Jesus to be the Master of our greatest treasure - we actually become the fulfillment of His desires as well. As Our Lord tells Luisa, "*I can say I am only completely satisfied when I see [the soul] giving Me her life in every moment – giving Me her will. To see her giving Me her human will is My greatest triumph and, seized by love, I sing My victory*" (Vol. 36, 8/6/1938). Just think...we have the opportunity to live this mutual self-gift, this ecstasy of reciprocal love in each one of our acts. Incredible!



"I belong to my beloved and his desire is for me." (Song of Songs 7:11)



Volume 35 - August 29, 1937

Book of Heaven, diary of the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta

[Jesus]: "How much more should I tell you, My daughter, of the great gift We gave to the soul by creating her human will? ...By creating the human will, We created the vacuum, the place, in which to place the great gift of Our Most Holy Will that We gave to man...I gave man this gift, forming this space within him to have a place where I could communicate with him—to relate to him individually in sweet fellowship. I wanted to have My secret chamber. My love wanted to tell him many things, but I wanted the right surroundings in which to speak with him and where My love could come to give itself completely to man—while he would completely abandon himself in God. This is why I so love the thought of man living in Our Will—because I want what I created to be only for Myself. I reclaim My resting place, My throne, My divine chamber. I cannot complete Creation until man comes back into My Divine Will and gives Me My royal place within his will."



FROM:
Maryville,
TN - USA

Postcards from around the world: updates and Christmas greetings from all three convents



Sr. Maria Jacinta and Sr. Pamela. The day we left was very heartfelt and emotional with hugs and tears.

Since our arrival we've been living in temporary housing until the house next to the monks can be made ready for us. At the moment we've been spending our days painting, putting in floor boards and door frames. Some of our volunteers have generously helped us move in the appliances. Perhaps we're learning some carpentry skills in order to help when the monastery is being built. Hopefully, we'll be able to move into the building during this next week or two.



Sr. Gloria working with our friend, Stephen, who volunteers & actually built this temporary housing for us.

We marvel at the beauty of nature here in TN. The beautiful mountains, farms and wild animals have given us such pleasurable moments. There are many deer in the area and since we're far out in the country, we do a lot of travelling in order to go anywhere. Along the way, we seem to encounter many deer, squirrels and rabbits. God is so good! We have many opportune moments to put our "I love You's" on everything we see in our travels.

A few weeks after we arrived, we had our first aspirant come for a visit. She hopes to enter the community in the next few months. There are three more aspirants coming to visit during the month of December. Please pray that the monastery will be built very soon in order to house these future vocations.

As we are getting close to the wonderful season of Christmas, let us remember each other in prayer as we strive to live more totally in God's most Holy Divine Will. God Bless!

Prayerfully, Mother Gabrielle Marie, Sr. Maddalena, Sr. Gloria, Sr. Jacinta, & Sr. Pamela

On October 25th, some of our sisters moved to Maryville, TN since we're in the process of opening another monastery there. It was the anniversary of the death of our dear friend Fr. Jacques Daley and also the feast day of Our Lady of Palestine. The sisters who left Italy were Mother Gabrielle Marie, Sr. Maria Maddalena, Sr. Gloria Marie,



Sr. Maddalena painting



Sr. Jacinta cleaning

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Mother & Sr. Pamela nailing floor boards to the wall.

FROM:
Talamello,
ITALY



When it was suggested that each convent reflect on how they are living this period of transition for our community, the four of us in Talamello – Sr. Teresa, Sr. Francesca, Sr. Gemma, and Sr. Elizabeth – sat down at the dinner table to brainstorm. Crickets could be heard, along with the occasional sound of our chewing and swallowing. None of us really had any concrete ideas to share because life hasn't really changed for us here that much, at least on the surface level. Sure, with less people in the house, there is a little more silence and a little more work. Our predominant language has shifted, as we speak and pray far more in Italian now. Whenever we talk to Mother Gabrielle Marie and the sisters over the phone or reminisce about an old memory

when all of us were together, there's definitely a sense of nostalgia. Of course we miss the other half of our family and pray for them every day; yet strangely, these past few weeks since their departure have felt pretty normal.

Though we are not embarking on any new adventure, our normal here is anything but boring. As St. Faustina articulated it so perfectly in her famous diary: *"O life so dull and monotonous, how many treasures you contain! When I look at everything with the eyes of faith, no two hours are alike, and the dullness and monotony disappear (62) ...O you days of work and monotony, you are not monotonous to me at all, for each moment brings me new graces and opportunity to do good (245) ...O Supreme Good, I want to adore You with every moment of my life and unite my will closely to Your Holy Will. My life is not drab or monotonous, but it is varied like a garden of fragrant flowers, the lily of suffering or the rose of love neighbor or the violet of humility. I will not enumerate these treasures in which my every day abounds. It is a great thing to know how to make use of the present moment"* (296).

If we were to enumerate some of the things our days have been filled with these last two months, very little would be out of the ordinary. You'd find a combination of feasting and fasting, conversation and silence, working hard and praying hard, hosting guests, and welcoming all the joys and trials that come with everyday life. Some special treats included spending a week with a lovely sister and priest from Korea, showing them around our area and talking about the Divine Will. Sister Gemma's mom also came to visit, spoiling us with her Calabrian cooking skills. In November, we all took an online course from the TOB Institute entitled *Theology of the Body and the New Evangelization*. That



Sr. Francesca with her catechism students.

was a real gift to share together. But actually, everything was an extraordinary gift...even Sister Elizabeth getting the flu! What makes every moment a treasure – no matter what that moment contains - is the union with God we can enjoy right there, right in that very act. Each “here and now” offers us the opportunity to say with Mary, *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy word,”* and allow Jesus’ Life and Love to fill our very being. This is the joy of living in the Divine Will.



Sisters Teresa, Elizabeth, & Gemma enjoying our decorating party.

Please continue to keep us in your prayers and be assured that we’re praying for you too, especially as Christmas quickly approaches. We understand that this season can be bittersweet for those of you who have lost loved ones or endured particularly difficult trials this past year. Know that

you hold a special place in our hearts, for Jesus is closest to those who suffer. He chose to come into this world in the cold and darkness of the night.

With much love,
Sr. Teresa, Sr. Francesca, Sr.
Gemma, and Sr. Elizabeth

The view from our kitchen window



With our groundbreaking move to the United States, the rest of us here in Europe must adapt with change as well. Our numbers

have decreased, but fear not! This gives us room for our future Sisters to arrive in God’s timing. Until then, we carry on...

Through change, one must adapt, be open to different ideas, and be understanding with each other’s limitations which we here in the San Marino house have been learning in more depth. Plus, patience is key, not just with your fellow sister but especially with yourself. We’ve seen God’s hand working in this new dynamic of ours. This new reality has challenged us and encouraged us to grow spiritually. But most of all: to practice and receive charity towards each other which has been very beautiful to witness.

In speaking of beauty and change, at the Basilica where we serve, a donation was recently given to have potted flower plants for the main altar and the Blessed



FROM:
San Marino

Sacrament and Our Lady of Mercy's side altars. The Basilica, also, begins their preparations for the Advent/Christmas season with a nativity crèche, plus the city's initiation for their decorations.

All in all, we are grateful to continue our mission in the oldest Republic in the world. Thank you for your support, and we humbly ask you to keep praying for us. May God bless you and your families throughout the Advent, Christmas, and New Year seasons. We love y'all!

Reporting from the top of *Monte Titano*,
Sr. Scholastica & Sr. Benedicta

The crypt where we pray
two hours in Eucharistic
Adoration everyday



2015

MEMORIES OF Christmas PAST



If you feel called to financially support the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will this Christmas season or throughout the 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

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)*

Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will
P.O. Box 1002
Hanceville, AL 35077

Your generosity not only helps support our sisters in the U.S., Italy and San Marino, but it will also contribute to the building of our new Motherhouse in the diocese of Knoxville, TN.

Thank you for your goodness to us and be assured you and your intentions never leave our daily prayers.
Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!