



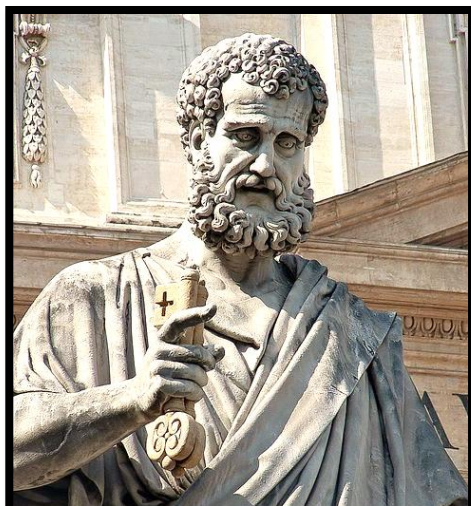
Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



All things work together for the good of those who love God

Pretty much every year, usually during Lent, we watch the film *Jesus of Nazareth* during our recreation time. Some sisters look forward to those six epic hours, split up throughout the course of a week, more than others. But one thing we all seem to agree on is how much we love the portrayal of St. Peter. In addition to his part being both written and acted out very well, Peter is probably one of the most relatable figures in all of Scripture. It makes sense, too, because as our first Pope - the Rock on which Christ built His Church - he serves as an archetype or model of discipleship for all of us living stones. And as we all well know, Peter teaches us most profoundly through his mistakes. That's

probably why everyone loves him so much!



The Achilles heel...both Peter's and ours

Peter has so many wonderful qualities. He's full of good will, holy passion, genuine love for the Lord, and a sincere desire for holiness. Throughout the Gospel, Peter also seems unafraid to step up, speak up, and take a risk. He's a born leader, but with one debilitating flaw that we all suffer from to some extent: *unholy self-sufficiency*. Peter relied way too much on himself and way too little on God. But before judging him, honestly ask yourself: *Do I not do the same?* Even as you journey in the Divine Will, whose ability, whose strength, whose reason, whose holiness - *whose will* - are you really relying on?

Fun fact: Did you know that June 29th - the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul - is a holy day of obligation? Some conferences of bishops have dispensed the faithful of the obligation to attend mass (like in the U.S.), but it still remains in effect in many counties of the world.

Don't be afraid of what the Holy Spirit might reveal to you, because none of our miseries are a surprise to Jesus nor does He let them get in His way. Peter's own journey

should give us great courage. Our Lord knew exactly who He was choosing and exactly how to prepare him for the great mission that awaited him. And the same goes for us! This truth really hit home for one sister during a scene she's watched a thousand times before at the end of the movie. Though it wasn't taken from Scripture, a line uttered from her favorite Apostle's mouth struck Sister in a whole new light.

Mary Magdalene had just announced to the Eleven that she saw the Lord risen, but no one seemed to believe. After she left, Thomas - the most obstinate in his doubt - questioned his brothers and finally Peter, who remained quiet and pensive the whole time. In the brief silence before answering, the actor brilliantly portrayed a mix of sorrow, remorse, and hope that Jesus' denier must

The gospels tell us that just three days earlier at the Last Supper, when Jesus foretold the abandonment of His Apostles and Peter's three denials, the latter was the first to declare his loyalty: *"Though they all fall away because of You, I will never fall away...Even if I must die with you, I will not deny You"* (Mt 26:33-35). In Luke's account, Jesus even assures Peter that He prayed for him, that he would be able to arise again in faith and strengthen his brethren as well. Instead of thanking the Lord for His mercy or imploring greater help in his weakness, the prince of Apostles continues to insist that he is already ready for the trial, for prison and even death. Peter didn't want to hear anything about falls or failures, even if he was promised forgiveness and strength afterwards. He probably didn't want anyone else to hear about his weakness either. So Peter did what so many of us so often do when faced with our human frailty – he justifies himself. And the others follow their leader's example. We all know how the story ends. John is the only Apostle who remains faithful throughout the Way of the

Purification and preparation

Peter's passion was a death to himself...a death to his pride, to his ego, and to the image he so desperately wanted to maintain. But it was also a passion of love, for Peter had to face the painful reality that he was completely and utterly incapable of loving Jesus in the way he sincerely desired. His self-sufficiency – that unholy reliance on his human will – needed to be crucified. In a way, he had to fall lower than the other Apostles. If Peter was going to lead both them and the nascent Church, he first needed to taste his nothingness, touch his weakness with his own hands. The Rock had to be absolutely convinced, with every fiber of his being, that he needed a savior and not the other way around. And if Peter was going to preach the Good News and convince a multitude of lost sheep to trust in God's love and forgiveness, then he needed to be an indisputable proof of that mercy himself.

Whether we are called to assume big and prominent responsibilities in the Church or to service in a more hidden and humble capacity, every one of us must pass through the same crucible as Peter. This is especially

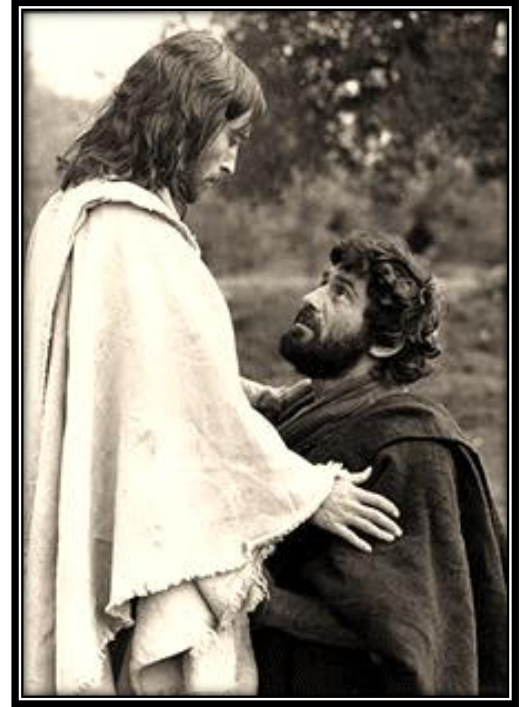


Praying at the tomb of Sr. Clare Crockett – a sister from Derry, Ireland who died in an earthquake at 33 yrs. old in 2016. Clare decided to become a nun at 18 when she had a profound realization of how much Jesus suffered for her sins. After giving up a promising career as an actress and her dream of fame, Sr. Clare spent the 15 years of her religious life truly living the motto she left to the world: “All or nothing.” Check out her documentary on Youtube to learn more about how Sr. Clare found both happiness and holiness dying to herself completely and giving everything to the Lord.

true for those striving to live in God's Most Holy Will. Though our purification may not necessarily occur in the same dramatic fashion as the head Apostle, every humiliation we face, every failure, every crushing encounter with our own limitations, and even every one of our falls into sin (for which we are truly sorrowful) should be looked at through the same lens. They are opportunities of grace which give us a healthy dose of self-knowledge, humbling us and emptying us of our fallen human tendencies to make room for the divine. They are the hard ways in which we learn to surrender, to willingly exchange reliance on self for dependence on God. And they are the raw materials that the Lord uses to prepare us for the mission He has entrusted us with and the heights of sanctity He created us for.

Redemption and sanctification ●●●●●●●●●●

Peter's leadership skills or other talents didn't make him a good shepherd, one destined for great sanctity and even martyrdom. Though useful to his mission as the first Pope, they weren't the secret to his "success." If we fast forward to the breakfast Our Lord fixed for the Apostles on the beach after His resurrection, the key lies hidden in the conversation between Jesus and Peter (see John 21:15-19). According to the Italian translation of the original Greek text, when Our Lord asks Peter three times if he loves Him, two different verbs are used. The Italian verb *amare* (in Greek, *agape*) refers to the highest form of love – a deep, pure, selfless, willing to sacrifice one's own life kind of love. The first two times Jesus asks, "Simon, do you love Me?", He uses the word *amare*. However, when Peter responds, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You," he uses the verb *volere bene* (in Greek, *philia*) – a love that denotes more of a friendly affection.



Has Peter's love lessened since that Holy Thursday evening, when he boldly declared his *agape* love for the Lord? Has he fallen into lukewarmness, unwilling to give Christ the supreme love He is asking for? Or maybe this is a response of honesty and humility. Perhaps Peter's heart is really crying out, "Lord, You know how much I desire to love You, but You also know how far I fall short!" So he uses the lesser verb. And Jesus, questioning him for the third time, meets Peter where he's at and uses the term *voler bene* also. This time He only asks His dear friend for what he's capable of - the affection of friendship.

This scene is so very consoling for us all because the only reparation, the only penance Jesus seems to seek from Peter is littleness and love. And despite the Apostle's failures and limitations, Our Lord continues to entrust His Church to Peter. He repeats it three times! *Feed My lambs. Tend My sheep. Feed My sheep.* What's even more incredible, Jesus then goes on to foretell Peter's martyrdom. It's as if He is saying, "Yes, one day you will, indeed, love Me to the point of death because I will give you the grace and strength you need. I will place you in the hands of My Mother and fill you with power of My Holy Spirit. *Now that you've realized your nothingness*, I can accomplish everything and anything I want in You."

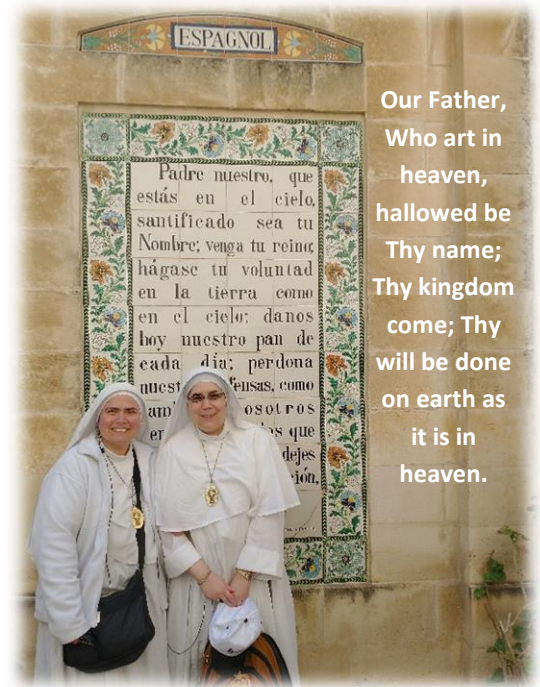
Peter's prideful self-reliance led to his fall, but his fall led to his sanctification. Encountering his total poverty, Peter was also able to encounter divine love like never before. The merciful Heart of Jesus tenderly reached down to him at rock-bottom, transformed his darkness into light, infused him with heroic trust, and - seeing the broken man in his wholeness - continued to believe in him. This is what disposed Peter's own heart to receive the promised Spirit. This is what transformed a very imperfect fisherman into the humble, compassionate and wise father whom Jesus chose to guide His flock. And this is what rendered Simon Peter firm and stable, a rock strong enough to build a whole Church upon. So everything, in a certain sense, did have to happen just as it did.

The Road to Consummation ●●●●●●●●●●

Living in the Divine Will is demanding. God wants all of us to belong all to Him. Our Lord tells Luisa¹, *"My Divine Will truly does want everything, knowing that even one tiny act, one desire or one shred of the human will would spoil Its best works. Its divine order and sanctity would be blocked, Its love restricted, and Its power limited. This is why I cannot bear to let even one fiber of the human will have a life of Its own"* (Book of Heaven, Vol. 34, 7/4/1936). Though this radical abandonment is the greatest of sacrifices, the gift we are promised in return is infinitely greater. Allowing God's Will to act in, with, and through us – to have free reign in every aspect of our lives - is the only way in which we find true freedom, lasting happiness, and a love that satisfies every longing of our heart. This is the holiness we were made for, but the journey towards it involves trial.

When the Lord allows us to pass through the *necessary* fires of purification, let us turn to St. Peter for guidance. He jumped out of his own boat and ran through the waters of the sea, to the shore where his Savior was waiting...waiting to enter into conversation with Peter. Jesus waits for you in prayer as well. As the spiritual master Fr. Jacques Philippe says, *"Faith and prayer enable us to discover the presence of God in us, a pure, ever-flowing spring of water by which we are washed and renewed. We discover the true face of God, God in His fatherhood, His mercy, His absolute and unconditional love...It is through faithfulness to prayer that we enter into a real experience of God and a real knowledge of ourselves"* (The Way of Trust & Love: A Retreat Guided by St. Thérèse of Lisieux).

In littleness, present yourself to the Lord as you are, and let Him speak to you and love you right there. Receive His love and love Him back. Prayer is that simple. Offer Jesus all that you can - all that you are capable of, like Peter - and let Him make up for the rest. With trust and perseverance in prayer, you will experience firsthand how Christ wants to redeem and sanctify EVERYTHING in you.



¹ Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta (1865-1947) – a mystic from southern Italy to whom Our Lord entrusted 36 volumes of beautiful teachings about the fulfillment of the Our Father's most important petition: *Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven*. If you want to learn more about how to live in God's Most Holy and Divine Will, visit the *Family Tree* page of our website and scroll down to Luisa to access all of her Church-approved writings.

You will see just how masterfully His love can transform your wretchedness into beauty and use the most shameful moments of your life to lead you to glory.

So give Jesus permission. Allow Him to enter into every corner of your being, body and soul. Let Him purify you and bring you into full communion with the Father...through any means necessary. For the Lord is longing to fill the beautiful vessel of your humanity with His Divine Will, making it a channel through which His living waters flow to many, many other souls as well.

"When a soul decides, steadfast and unchanging, that she wants to live in My Will, allowing It to rule and reign in her, she will feel the great outpouring of the love of My Will. Our infinite goodness and love is such, that it cannot resist a soul's true decision – nor, especially, does it want to see actions that are unlike Ours.

*So, what does My love do? It covers with My Will everything that the soul did until then, forming the acts, transforming them in Its light, until It sees...that everything within the soul is Its Will. And with a love that's entirely divine, It continues to form Its life and Its acts within the soul. Isn't this an example of My Will's excessive, amazing love? It leads every soul – including the most ungrateful – to allow My Will to live within her, knowing that It wants to put everything aside, covering the soul and supplying what is missing out of My Will. What's more, Our absolute Will proclaims that It wants to reign among souls, without worrying about what might be missing, since **It wants to give Itself not as a type of reward to those who deserve it – not at all! – but as a free gift of Our great generosity, and to fulfill Our own Will.** For Us, fulfilling Our Own Will is everything." (Jesus to Luisa Piccarreta, Book of Heaven, Vol. 34, 11/3/1936)*



The Land of a Thousand Welcomes

This past May, Our Lady of Knock blessed our whole community with a long dreamed-of trip to Ireland! Mother Gabrielle Marie and all of us sisters were invited to speak at and participate in two Divine Will retreats in Derry and Newry. It was truly a grace-filled week as we listened to inspired DW teachers, met so many beautiful people in the DW family from Ireland and around the world, and visited some of the holiest sites in all of the Emerald Isle. The gift of living in the Divine Will is spreading like wildfire there...but that's no surprise to us. The humble, joyful, and childlike spirit of the Irish make them fertile ground!



Just landed at Dublin airport! Waiting for our ride after a sing-along of our favorite Church hymns with Sr. Gloria playing the piano at the arrivals terminal.



Praying at the apparition site of
Our Lady of Knock



Tomb of St. Patrick, St.
Brigid, & St. Columba



Thank you to all those beautiful souls who organized,
funded, and realized every moment of our amazing
pilgrimage. We love you and will pray for you always!



Hanging
out with
Greg
Dunne
and
Frances
Hogan



If you feel called to financially support the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will this summer 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:
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**Benedictine Daughters of
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Thank you for your goodness to us, whether through friendship, prayer or financial support. Have a grace-filled summer and know that we're praying for you all!