



Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



New Wine

In the crushing, in the pressing
You are making new wine
In the soil I now surrender
You are breaking new ground



Make me Your vessel, make me an offering
Make me whatever You want me to be
I came here with nothing, but all You have given me
Jesus, bring new wine out of me...

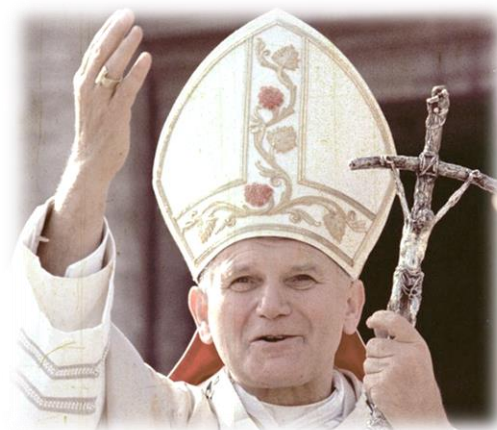
So I yield to You into Your careful hand
When I trust You
I don't need to understand

'Cause where there is new wine, there is new power
There is new freedom and the Kingdom is here
I lay down my old flames to carry Your new fire today

"New Wine" lyrics © Hillsong Publishing/Words and music by Brooke Ligertwood

By living in the Divine Will, Jesus promises us great peace, joy, and freedom... *"the glorious liberty of the children of God,"* as St. Paul describes it (Rom 8:21). But Jesus never promises that this will come without struggle, without difficulties or sufferings. In fact, both in the Gospel and in Luisa's writings¹, He prepares us for just the opposite. As the above song by the Christian band, Hillsong Worship, so beautifully illustrates, it's in those very moments when we feel crushed and tilted that God is making of us a new creation. It's in those moments of obscurity where Christ wants to shine His light most powerfully in our souls. He wants to bring us out of darkness and gloom, breaking our bonds asunder, as Psalm 107 reminds us. *"Even there Your hand shall lead me, Your right hand shall hold me fast...for even the darkness is not dark to You, the night is as bright as the day; for darkness is as light with You"* (Ps 139:10,12).

The evil one, however, is telling us a different story as he continuously tries to drive us to discouragement and despair. When crosses come, he maliciously whispers deceptions in our ears, lies that strike at the points where we are most vulnerable – our wounds and weaknesses, our mistakes and sinfulness. He steals our hope, making us believe we will never be able to please God, we will never arrive at holiness, and we could never, ever live in the Divine Will. In short, we're destined to remain broken and alone, unlovable and unworthy. But Pope St. John Paul II cut off this diabolic mentality right at the knees in his homily at World Youth Day Toronto 2002 when he proclaimed to the future of the Church: *"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."*



¹ The Divine Will writings of the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta (1865-1947)



These are the truths that we must hold onto when journeying in the Divine Will, for it is indeed a journey...a journey of falling and getting up, learning and growing, working and resting. Everything that God allows in our lives He uses to transform us into the image of His Son, molding our hearts to love as Jesus loves and to enjoy that same intimacy He shares with the Father from all eternity. This eternal, reciprocal, Trinitarian love – that one Single Act of God from which all other acts flow – is our destiny! And God is a good, good Father who knows how to get us there, who knows exactly what His children need to live happily in His Kingdom. Does this just not take your breath away?!

No doubt this Lent has brought many of you trials. Some will probably remain until after Easter or new ones may even arise. However, as you continue to carry your crosses with Christ, we invite you to shift the way you look at them. Perhaps you've wondered what you've done wrong or how you can fix it. Maybe you've questioned why this is happening to you or how long it is going to last. But now, instead of focusing on these questions, ask the Holy Spirit just one thing: *How are You loving me in this, right here and right now?*

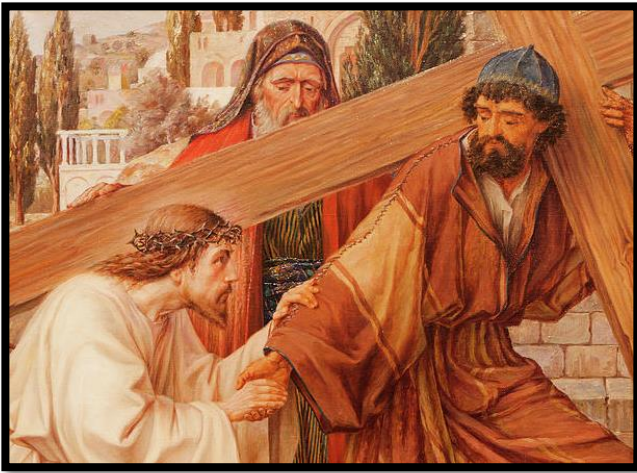
Just remember, whenever we ask God a question, it's imperative that we leave Him the silence to respond. We need to give Him the time to gaze upon us, speak to us, and love us in contemplative prayer. This is where, little by little, the transformation happens...where we find healing and conversion, peace and joy, light and love. And most especially, prayer is where we develop that union with God which is absolutely necessary to living in the Divine Will even when busy about many things. Life does the crushing and the pressing, but relationship with Jesus is what turns us into new wine.

Sometimes real-life, concrete examples are valuable aids on our spiritual journeys. They help us to feel understood and not so alone. So here are just a few drops of the lights we received when asking the Lord the very question we posed to you.

The Way of the Cross

As one of the sisters was meditating on the Way of the Cross, she tried to unite herself to Jesus in all that He suffered. She was at a lack of what to say or pray or do for Him in such horrendous pains. Nothing seemed sufficient, so Sister simply kept her Spouse company and hoped to console Him with her presence. In the Divine Will, she entered into His interior and followed Him through the darkest moments of His life. She knelt next to Jesus as He agonized in the garden, alone and desolate. She watched as He was betrayed, abandoned and denied by those closest to Him. Sister cringed as He was stripped naked and mercilessly scourged. She followed Him up to Calvary, where He fell several times under the weight of His cross, was





beaten, mocked, and even denied the comfort of His Mother. The only help He received was a reluctant bystander, forced into the task. And Sister gripped Mary's hand tightly as Jesus was nailed to the Cross and hung there for three hours in agony...forgiving, thirsting, crying out in abandonment, and surrendering His spirit to His Father.

Two things came to mind in these moments of prayer. Carrying in her heart both her own personal struggles along with the pain of someone very close to her, Sister realized that as

we follow Jesus throughout His Passion, He is also following us as we walk our own Way of the Cross. For in every whip, thorn, and nail that tore His flesh, we will also find Our Lord bearing interiorly all that we and all souls would have to suffer too, including our very deaths. So as we enter into Christ, He enters into us...bringing with Him, yes, both reparations for our sins and coins of redemption for all of humanity. But from the depths of His pierced Heart, He also brings us His tender company, His own strength, and most especially a deep understanding of our pain as well. What can bring two people closer together than a sorrow shared with one another? This is what it means to invite Jesus to come suffer in our suffering. And what we'll always discover is that He's been there, waiting for us, all along.

Secondly, Sister was reminded of the importance of surrendering everything to the Divine Will with childlike trust, especially in our darkest hours when things don't seem to make any sense at all. Could there be a blacker moment in human history than the torture and killing of God Himself? Yet in every horrific event, the Divine Will was present, orchestrating our salvation and sanctification with the greatest proof possible of God's love for man. Jesus was able to be "*obedient unto death, even death on a cross*" (Phil 2:8) because He trusted the Will of His Father, especially when the external circumstances seemed to be screaming otherwise. He didn't need to wait for the Resurrection to be at peace, to remain in love, or even to find interior joy. Yes, even in the midst of unimaginable sorrow, the Bridegroom was also filled with divine bliss while winning back His Bride on the wedding bed of the Cross!

So if you find yourself feeling that the Resurrection is too far away, remember that the Divine Will is also in your here and now, loving you, allowing you to participate in the work of Redemption, and weaving a beautiful story with the sorrows of your life. Or maybe, like the Apostles, your present circumstances have caused you to forget what Jesus promised. Well, let this Easter season

remind you that Christ *is* indeed risen. Our God is faithful...so, so faithful! May that be enough for us all. "*Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but He said to me,*

'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness'." (2 Cor 12:7)



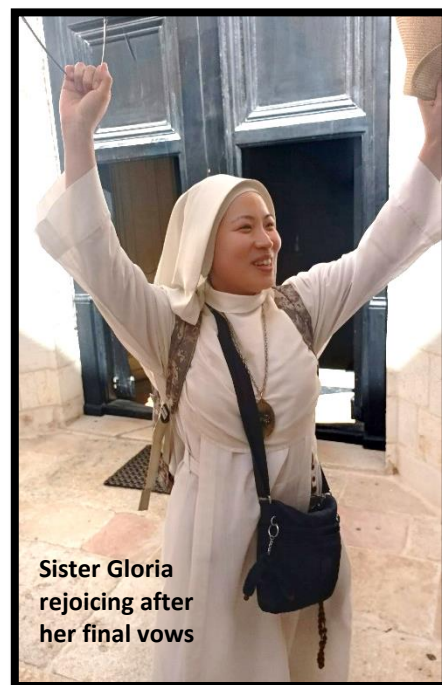
Liberation

If we really, truly desire to live in the Divine Will, we are going to be stripped. It's a definite and there's no halfway about it. Whether we're aware of it or not, all of us (in varying degrees) have been living in bondage most of our lives and our chains have taken various forms: people, relationships, possessions, work, talents, achievements, esteem, ways of thinking, etc. They are often people or things in which we've placed our worth or formed our identity. But our heavenly Father loves us too much to let us keep living this way, in constant fear of losing what ultimately cannot fully satisfy us. God desires our liberation so that we may *freely* love Him and choose His Will above all else – the source of our happiness both in Heaven and here on earth. He wants us to find our worth in His safe, consistent, unconditional love for us that never ends. And He wants us to find our identity in the fact that we are His children, made in the image and likeness of our Father! So the Lord liberates us from all that gets in the way.

Since we fundamentally attach ourselves to that which promises us love, security, and a soothing of our wounds, the stripping process can be quite painful. If you've ever read the story of Jesus healing of the Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8:26-39, it's an amazingly accurate image of what we go through. This man has been possessed by a legion of demons and living in profound misery for a very long time. But when he encounters Jesus, who offers the sure hope of deliverance and commands the unclean spirits to leave him, the poor enslaved one surprisingly cries out, *"I beg You, do not torture me."* How often do we feel tormented when, through our daily crosses, Jesus is actually in the act of healing us, trying to free us of the unhealthy attachments through which the evil one has gained access to our free will?

Or let's look at the scene from Exodus, right before the Lord parts the Red Sea. When seemingly trapped by Pharaoh's soldiers and facing possible death, the Israelites lose all faith in the God who just worked numerous prodigies for them in Egypt and complain, *"It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness"* (Ex 14:12). How often do we prefer to remain enslaved to the fleeting satisfactions of our attachments rather than die to ourselves and face the wilderness of liberation with faith and courage? But it gets better. The Lord doesn't magically divide the water in peace and calm. He sends a strong east wind at night, a storm, to do it. When we read this in the Divine Office the other day, it struck one sister that it's precisely the storms of life that save us, that lead us to freedom!

When you find yourself in times of inner turmoil, crushed under the winepress of fears and anxieties, bring those disturbances to prayer. What are you afraid of giving up or unwilling to let go of if the Lord asked? Who or what may be blocking your total union with God and keeping you from loving Him alone? When do you find it difficult to give your *fiat*? In short, who or what do you trust in more than the Will of God? Let the Holy Spirit enlighten your mind and bring you to the roots. Ask Jesus to free your heart in those very areas, healing whatever maybe broken and binding you. And



Sister Gloria
rejoicing after
her final vows

then rejoice, for your deliverance is close at hand: "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (Jn 8:36).

*"In living **for** God, the soul can be subject to disturbances, bitterness, inconstancy, the weight of passions, and the burden of earthly affairs. But living **in** God is completely different. The most important condition for one person to dwell inside another is for that person to lay down all that belongs to him – to strip himself of everything, to leave his own passions – in short, to leave everything so as to find God. When the soul has not only stripped herself exteriorly but interiorly, then she can enter through the narrow door of My Heart to live in Me according to My ways and by My own Life...My daughter, that is why I tell you to try to live in Me – so that you can possess Paradise ahead of time."*

(Jesus to the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta, Book of Heaven, Vol. 3, 7/10/1900)



Alone with the ALL

One of the paradoxes of the Christian life is our call to live for God alone while also living in communion with others, in sincere and deep love for our neighbor. From the very beginning, from before the Fall, God sought to find Adam a companion. That's why we're born into families, seek marriage and children, have circles of friends and parish communities with whom we can worship together. That's why even religious brothers and sisters – totally consecrated to the Lord – are called to live, not alone, but in community. Jesus Himself lived ninety percent of His earthly life at home with His Mother and father and then chose twelve companions to follow Him closely during His public ministry. And even as He carried His cross up to Calvary, Jesus willed to have the help of Simon of Cyrene. This is really a reflection of the great mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. For one, They are three Divine Persons living in eternal communion. But also, though They contain perfect happiness, love, and satisfaction among Themselves, They still thirst for man. There is almost a *need* for God to not only create man, but to love Him and be loved by him in return. That "need", however, doesn't arise from a lacking on the Trinity's part (making man an end in himself), but rather from Their desire to reproduce Their divine life and love in beloved children.



Living in the Divine Will is the call to live in this kind of love. However, being born with original sin and raised in this broken world, our relationships with God, ourselves, and others have become all distorted. The people the Lord has placed in our lives are intended to be *icons* that draw our hearts closer to Him and His divine way of loving – human means through which we can both receive and communicate His tenderness, compassion, and delight. But instead, we subtly turn our relationships into *idols* that we worship in place of God and serve in place of His Will. And that needs purifying.

All of us, whether we live alone or are surrounded by a house full of people, have experienced loneliness at some point in our lives. Though it is probably the greatest of human sufferings, it can also be a tremendous grace when we bring it to Christ. God often allows trials in our relationships and



periods of social dryness in order to be alone with His bride. In the emptiness and loneliness we feel with no other human support to clasp onto, there the Lord can do His greatest work on our souls.

Remember the sinful woman of Samaria in John 4? Jesus seeks her out when she is alone at the well, when His disciples went off to get some food and at a time of day when she wouldn't be surrounded by the condemning eyes of her neighbors. He wanted her to Himself - not to shame her - but to thirst for her love, to speak truth to her heart with tenderness, and to let her drink from the fount of His living waters. You may also want to reread chapter

eight of the same gospel, when Jesus forgives the woman caught in adultery. Notice that He only looks up at her after everyone has already left, gazing at her with mercy and speaking His words of forgiveness. Even before some of His healings, Jesus chooses to be alone with the afflicted one. He does so with the deaf man in Mark 7, *"taking him aside from the multitude privately."* Perhaps He wanted to fix the man's attention on His face alone. Jesus also places His fingers in the man's ears...maybe to make sure the first voice he heard was His and not the murmuring of the crowd.

Whether we are in need of healing, forgiveness, deeper union with God, or all of the above, times of solitude (both interior and exterior) are a must. Jesus, who was perfect - and the Savior of all! - needed time away from the crowds to pray and be alone with His Father. So fear not loneliness. There, Our Lady is whispering: *Be ALL for My Son*. There, our Heavenly Father is confirming us in the truth: *You don't have to try and earn from anyone else what I have already freely given you – unconditional and eternal love*. And there, in the freedom and detachment that comes from loving God alone, we also find the means by which we actually deepen our relationships with others and become a true gift of self to those around us.



"You can see that My Heart is very large, but the door is very narrow. No one can fill the void of this Heart but souls who are detached, simple, and poor in spirit. Indeed, you can see that the door is so small that any hindrance – even the slightest shadow of an attachment, an impure intention, or an action done without the purpose of pleasing Me – prevents souls from entering into My Heart's delight. Love of neighbor reaches deep into My Heart. But it must be so joined to My love as to form one single love – so that one cannot be distinguished from the other." (Book of Heaven, Vol. 2, 5/7/1899)



Sister Gloria alone under the pall at her final profession – dying to all that may separate her from her Spouse

Tennessee Update: It was a very rainy winter in the diocese of Knoxville, TN, placing the construction of our new monastery at a temporary standstill. Though there's not much news to report, we would appreciate your continued prayers for us and all those helping to make this new project a reality. A small request for good weather would be nice, too! May all be in God's timing and according to His Most Holy Will, for He always knows what is best.

Double Profession March 4, 2023

Final Vows of Sister Gloria Marie and First Vows of Sister Maria Jacinta

(76th Anniversary of the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta's entrance into Heaven)

Sister Maria Jacinta of Our Lady, Queen and Mother of the Divine Will professing her first vows.



Sister Gloria Marie of the Holy Family, surrounded by all of her perpetually professed sisters, makes her final religious profession.



The consummation of the Bridegroom and bride.



I, **Sister...**, responding to the grace the Lord has granted me, for the glory of God and with the will to live more perfectly the Gospel of Christ, vow to God into your hands Mother Gabrielle Marie to live for **one year / my whole life** in obedience, poverty, chastity, and charity according to our Way of Life based on that of the Holy Family of Nazareth and the Rule of Saint Benedict...

(continued on the next pg.)

Receiving of the wedding ring, sign of Perpetual Profession



...I consecrate myself to Adoration of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament and to the Divine Will in Creation, Redemption and Sanctification on behalf of Holy Church. I give myself with my whole heart to this religious community of Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will so that by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the intercession of the Immaculate Mother of God, our Father, Saint Benedict and our Mother, Saint Scholastica, under the protection of Good Saint Joseph, and with the help of my Sisters, I may live more perfectly my consecration. Amen. (BDDW vow formula)



Meet our newest postulant, Pamela Ramirez! She's originally from Mexico, but has been living in Texas with her family for the past several years. We've known Pamela for a while now, through video calls and a month-long vocational visit. After more than a year of waiting to finish her kinesiology degree and obtain American citizenship, the 22-yr. was more than ready to enter this past January 24th - Feast of St. Francis de Sales. So please keep her and her vocation in your prayers. By the way, Sister Pamela is the one with the black veil, not the furry paws!

If you feel called to financially support the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will this Easter 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/money order to the address of our U.S. non-profit below:
(All donations are tax-deductible)

**Benedictine Daughters
of Divine Will
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We will be offering up nine days of prayer for you and your needs and intentions this Pascal season. Holy Mass will also be celebrated both in Talamello and San Marino for all of our family members, friends, and benefactors. Thank you for all you do for us and especially for who you are!

