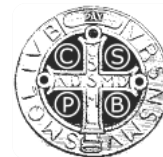




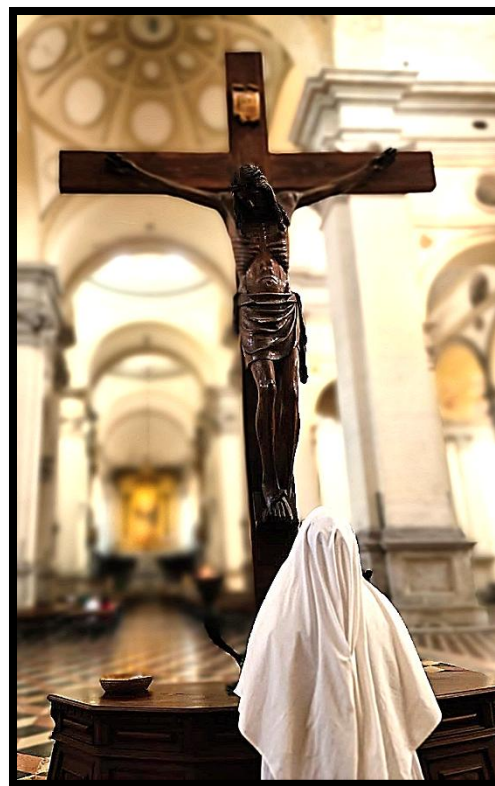
Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



Go Forth and Bear Much Fruit

One of our sisters recently went to confession with an elderly priest who has the gift of reading souls. After confessing the sins and weaknesses she had committed since her last confession, the mystical priest with piercing eyes looked at her intensely and said: "I see two more sins in you." "Oh boy...yes, please tell me them, Father," Sister responded both nervously and with relief. Though she was a bit fearful of what he might say, she really did want to know where her heart was in need of deeper conversion. He responded: *"Why don't you trust God? You are very self-reliant. You also condemn yourself, but it's not true. You are beautiful! You are beautiful because Jesus lives within you - through your Baptism, through your Confirmation, and through the Eucharist that bursts inside of you. You are Jesus to others."*

That struck right to Sister's heart. Self-reliance, self-condemnation – they had become a habitual soundtrack in her mind. They were sins that, often masking themselves as virtue, blocked her relationship with the Lord and stunted her growth in the Divine Will. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, we've all been hiding in self-protection behind one or both of these two giants, afraid to trust and sinning against God's mercy, power and love. We share this story with you, with Sister's permission (of course), because perhaps these words could have been spoken to any of us on "the journey to the Father's Heart," as Pope St. John Paul II described the Christian life. If this resonates with you, know that you're not alone!



Overcoming Self-Condemnation



We've hopefully spent these past forty days of Lent focusing on repentance, opening up those areas of our hearts to the Lord that still struggle with sin. However, keep in mind that the Church gives us *fifty* days of Easter to rejoice in God's mercy, forgiveness, and *power* to transform darkness into light. Christ did not bear all the weight of our sins and sufferings on the Cross in order to hold them over our heads. He did not suffer His Passion and death in order to remain in the tomb. Christ rose on the third day to obtain the *victory* for us, to set us *free* – free to love and "worship him *without fear*, holy and righteous in His sight all the days of our life" (Lk 1:74-75). With His Resurrection, "He obtained triumph over the human wills, weakened and almost extinguished to true good, *to make triumph over them the*



life of that Divine Will which was to bring to *creatures the fullness of sanctity and of all goods.*¹ Yet, how often do we lack true trust and humility, choosing to remain in the mud of our shame?

How appropriate is the Gospel reading for the fifth Sunday of Lent, the last one before Palm Sunday? It's the story of the woman caught in adultery, probably one of the most comforting reminders we find of God's merciful love in the Scriptures. In it we find three important elements of repentance or, rather, the three *fundamental needs* that must be met for true conversion of heart. We need to bring our sins into the light, before

our Savior. We must resolve to sin no more. But the one in the middle is arguably the most crucial: We need to place ourselves under the tender gaze of Jesus and *encounter* His merciful love. Knowing that we have a faithful Father who never abandons us and who looks upon us with great love, even in our lowest moments, is what will lead us to both true contrition and a courageous transformation of heart.

True humility is always coupled with audacious confidence, as St. Thérèse tirelessly taught and modeled through her "little way." Jesus also tells the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta, "Humility is the littlest plant that can be found, but its branches [of confidence] are *so high* as to reach Heaven...*penetrating deep into My Heart*...Humility without confidence is false virtue" (*Book of Heaven*, Vol. 2, 4/3/1899). Luisa offers some practical advice in many of her letters, stressing the same point: "Don't think about the past, *this harms you a great deal*; rather, even today, *begin your life with Jesus and you will find out for yourself how all things change for you*. You will feel like another man, born again in all that is holy" (Letter #13). She's echoing Isaiah 43, the first reading from that same Sunday: "Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; *see, I am doing something new!* In the desert I make a way, in the wastelands, rivers."

When Luisa would feel the weight of her own weakness and misery, Jesus would encourage her not to look at herself but at Him inside of her. We must all learn to see ourselves through the Father's loving gaze, who dwells within us and has called us each by name. He never gives up on us or disqualifies us, nor does He compare us to others. Rather, God is always at work, pouring His merciful love into our hearts and making *all things new!* When tempted to discouragement, let St. John Henry Newman speak truth to you:

"God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work...Therefore, I will trust Him. Whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about."



¹ *The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will*, Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta, Day 28.

Overcoming Self-Reliance



John's Gospel doesn't tell us what happens next with the woman caught in adultery, but we do know how the story continues for the Apostles, who were also found unfaithful at a time when Jesus needed them the most. Our Blessed Mother tells Luisa: "As they heard that Jesus had died, touched by special graces, all moved and weeping, one by one, they drew around Me, surrounding Me like a crown; and with tears and sighs, they asked for My forgiveness for they had so cravenly abandoned their Master and had run away from Him. *I welcomed them maternally in the ark of refuge and salvation of My Heart.* I assured all of them of the forgiveness of My Son, and *I encouraged them not to fear.* I said to them that *their destiny was in My hands*, because He had given them all to Me as My children, and I recognized them as such" (Day 29). Mary "confirmed them all in the faith of the Resurrection" until they encountered the Risen Christ for themselves. But have you ever wondered what transpired in those nine days leading up to Pentecost after Jesus' Ascension? How did Mary teach the Apostles to pray during that very first novena? How did She prepare them for the descent of the Holy Spirit?

Our Blessed Mother taught them what She did thirty-three years prior at the Incarnation - *how to open themselves up in longing to receive the gift of God Himself.* She taught them to **pray and wait**, *trusting in the Lord's promise.* And as She recounts to Luisa, Mary spent that time remaining close to the Apostles, telling them stories about Her Son – "the details of His birth, His baby tears, His loving traits, the incidents that happened in Egypt, the so many wonders of the hidden life in Nazareth" (Day 30). She kept the focus on Jesus.

Having tasted their own weakness, the Apostles knew how fruitless it was to rely on themselves. They now relied on the Blessed Mother, through whom all graces flow. They learned from Her how to let go of control and just surrender. Through Her Immaculate Heart, the Holy Spirit descended upon them and, as Our Lady continues to describe, "What a transformation! As they were enveloped, they acquired new knowledge, invincible strength, ardent love. A *new life* flowed within them, which rendered them intrepid and courageous, in such a way that they scattered throughout the whole world to make Redemption known, and to lay down their lives for their Master." Do you believe the Lord wants to do the same with you, perhaps in distant lands or perhaps right where you are in the state of life He has called you to?



Bearing Much Fruit



"Be who you were created to be and you will set the world on fire" (St. Catherine of Siena).

The Easter season ends with Pentecost, with *individual* flames of fire descending upon the Apostles, with the Holy Spirit confirming each one in their particular mission and filling them with all the gifts and graces they would need. The reign of the Divine Will on earth has been referred to as a second Pentecost. That will happen when more and more individual souls open themselves up to



the power of the Holy Spirit and, one by one, set the whole world ablaze. They will be fully surrendered to the Will of God with Christ living within...Christ who is risen indeed and longs to bring forth much fruit in each one of us!

But this takes the confidence of the Prodigal Son who, in Fr. Elijah's playful song, rejoices: "I don't deserve the bright red carpet or the fatted calf, but I'll take it!" Could you imagine actually living life from your identity as a beloved son or daughter, nourished by the Father's delight who delights to give *you* the kingdom? What would we not be capable of?! It takes the boldness of the Apostles, who just *expected* the Spirit to show up as they proclaimed the Gospel to

the ends of the earth with both words and deeds. As St. Paul reminds us, God hasn't given us a spirit of fear or timidity but a Spirit of *power, love and sonship*. We also need the littleness, honesty and sass of Luisa, whose deep intimacy with Jesus was evidenced in the fruitfulness of her life. Being confined to bed for her entire adult life was no hindrance, but rather the means *through which* God worked the wonders of His Will. So, there are no excuses for any of us! And most importantly, we need Our Lady – Spouse of the Holy Spirit, bearer of Jesus, and Mother of all. She's the burning bush aflame with the fire of divine love and the one "who *believed* that the word spoken to Her from the Lord would be fulfilled" (Lk 1:45).

*"I so much love to enclose in you the life of the Divine Will - **and operating life** - because everyone has It, but the majority of them keep It suffocated and to their service. And while It could operate **prodigies of sanctity, of grace, and works worthy of Its power**, It is forced by creatures to remain with folded arms, unable to carry out Its power. Therefore, be attentive, and **let the Heaven of the Divine Will extend within you and operate**, with Its power, whatever It wants and however It wants."* (Our Blessed Mother, Day 29)



Sr. Angela's journey to the Novitiate

Congratulations to Sr. Angela Marie of the Holy Trinity who entered the novitiate on her birthday - March 2nd, receiving both the white habit and her new religious name as a Benedictine Daughter of Divine Will. How fitting it seemed to celebrate both her first birth as the Father's baby girl and her new birth as a future spouse of Christ on the same day! Sr. Angela shares a bit of the journey that brought her here...





Sr. Angela with her family

"Reflecting back on the many sweet moments of Jesus inviting me to be His bride, my heart is filled with gratitude and joy.

I was blessed to grow up immersed in our beautiful Catholic faith. My dear mama had discerned the religious life before feeling called to marriage and offered me the best advice when I began to discern my own vocation: *You will know God's calling for*

you by the fruit, and specifically by the peace only He can give to your soul. That ended up resonating very much with me throughout my entire discernment process.

In high school, I felt in my heart that Jesus was calling me to take the first steps in my fiat, in my yes to His call. My hometown church of Saint George has a beautiful chapel consecrated to the Divine Will. When my parents learned about the Divine Will, our whole family became consecrated to It as well. I loved the fact that we lived right next door to the chapel, and I loved going on dates with Jesus...simply spending time with Him in Eucharistic Adoration. It was truly my second home.

When I began going on "come and sees" with several different religious communities, experiencing their daily lives firsthand as part of my discernment, I was so excited to share this most beautiful and wonderful gift of the Divine Will with the sisters. I also wondered if there was a community out there totally devoted to living out this gift. I still remember the day I found out about the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will. It was one of the greatest joys of my journey!

After finishing out the school year as a teacher, I came to visit the sisters in Italy in July of 2022. I spent three months discerning in Talamello, which ended with a trip to Medjugorje with some of the sisters. There, my vocation was reconfirmed, but I also felt Our Lady asking me to wait to enter.

The Lord spent the next couple of years preparing both the soil of my heart and the grounds of Little Mountain in Maryville, TN. During my time of waiting, the Benedictines of Divine Will received this land in donation as the site of their future Motherhouse in the U.S. Mother Gabrielle Marie and a few sisters moved to temporary housing in Maryville in October of 2023, to oversee the building of the new monastery and begin planting roots. In God's perfect timing, I entered as a postulant in March of 2024 and, exactly a year later, was invested as a novice. I'm so grateful for all the prayers and support of so many holy souls. Please keep praying for us. Thank you, Abba, for your Perfect Will!"



Grace at work in Sr. Camilla's call to the consecrated life

When it comes to places of origin, we cover a lot of ground in our community. In addition to our American sisters hailing from over seven different U.S. states from north to south and east to west, there's also a pretty long list of countries from which we originate. As you may already know, we have sisters who were born in the U.S., Italy, Mexico, Croatia, South Korea and the Philippines. And as of this

past February, we can now add the U.K. to our roster. Sr. Camilla, who was born in Wales and later moved to England, entered our convent in Talamello as a postulant earlier this year. Please keep her in your prayers as she begins her life as a Benedictine Daughter and continues to discern the Will of God during this first step of her religious vocation. Here's a brief snapshot, in her own words, of how the Lord led her to this point...

"After my dad died from cancer in early 2022, I decided to leave my job as a nurse in London to spend more time with my mum. It was during this sabbatical period I felt drawn back to church. I started attending daily Mass and, as night follows day, I began to feel a growing desire to be near the Blessed Sacrament in much of my free time.

Needless to say, Jesus drew me deeply into His Sacred Heart...and knee-deep into my dad's library collection of extraordinary Catholic books, where I discovered *The Hours of the Passion* by Luisa Piccarreta. Reading about Jesus' interior Passion gave me a thirst to explore my own interior spirituality, so I started researching how to live in the Divine Will. With a little guidance from the Holy Spirit (and YouTube thumbnails), it wasn't long before I discovered the Benedictines in white.

After becoming acquainted with the sisters through email and Zoom calls, I spent the summer of 2024 with them in Italy as an aspirant (someone discerning or *aspiring* to join a particular religious community). I felt a continuous, underlying joy during those three months and realized that the religious life is not the rigid, dry servitude I expected. It was filled with serenity, commitment to entering into deeper intimacy with Jesus and Mary, and a dose of gelato from time to time (though the joy came *mainly* from the first two).



When I returned home from my vocational visit, a friend at my parish approached me after Mass one evening and gifted me a set of 200-year-old rosary beads from a local convent with a short note written inside the case. They were blessed on February 11th, 1829 by Bishop Thomas Weld (later Cardinal) who incidentally moved from England to Italy. Somehow, this felt like a sign that I should be in Italy. Deep within, I also understood that giving my fiat to this calling was the only path to true happiness and to the deep union Jesus was seeking with me.

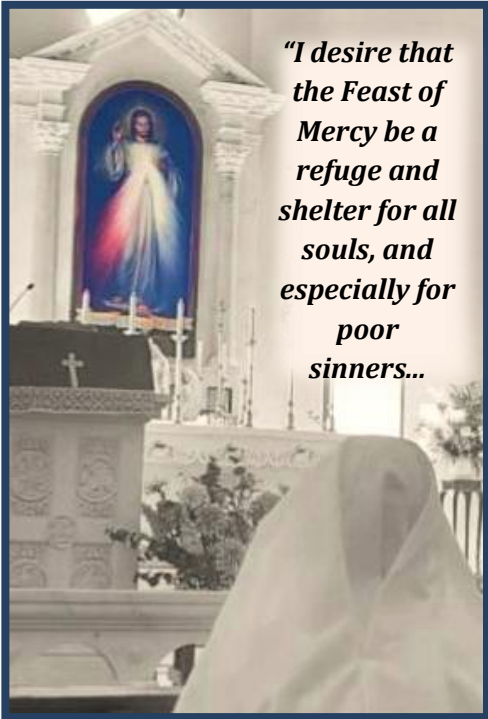
Before returning to Italy, I consecrated myself to the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and found myself reflecting on what my entrance date would be. I decided that I wanted to enter as a postulant on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes (February 11th), affirming my consecration to Mary's Immaculate Heart. When I eventually deciphered the handwritten date inside the rosary box, I realized that this gift may have also been the Holy Spirit's gentle invitation to enter on this feast day.

I'm looking forward to cultivating the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, by imitating the daily example of my wonderful sisters and contributing to the humble community here in Talamello. Fiat."



Divine Mercy Sunday: *Don't miss your chance!*

Just a quick reminder that Sunday, April 27th is Divine Mercy Sunday, an extraordinary day of God's great mercy that we don't want to miss. We get to start over with a clean slate - all sins forgiven and the penalty for them washed away in the blood of Jesus – by simply observing the following...



1. **Celebrate** the Feast on the Sunday after Easter.
2. Sincerely repent of all your sins and go to **Confession** (preferably less than eight days before or on that Sunday).
3. Receive **Holy Communion** on the day of the Feast.
4. Place your complete **trust** in Jesus. No self-condemnation allowed!
5. **Venerate** the image of the Divine Mercy.
6. Be **merciful** to others, through our actions, words, and prayers on their behalf.

...Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity.” (Our Lord to St. Faustina, #699)

Benefactors Needed



As work continues with the construction of our new Motherhouse on Little Mountain in Maryville, TN, we are still in need of benefactors to help fund the building. The finished monastery will be 7,500 square feet and cost approximately \$2.7 million, with the capacity to house 17 – 20 sisters. Would you prayerfully consider making a donation?

If you feel the Holy Spirit calling you to financially support the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will this Easter 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 following address:
(All donations are tax-deductible)

Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will
2425 Tipton Loop Rd.
Maryville, TN 37803

Your generosity will provide for the basic needs and expenses of our sisters in the U.S., Italy and San Marino as well as help us to carry out God's Most Holy and Divine Will in any capacity He asks of us. If you would like your donation to be allocated to the building of our Motherhouse in Tennessee, just make sure to write "*For the purposes of constructing the new monastery*" on your check or in the note section if donating online by credit card.

Please know how grateful we are for your friendship, generosity, and prayer support. We never stop praying for you! In gratitude for your goodness to us, three Holy Masses will be celebrated for all of our benefactors, family members and friends during this beautiful season full of hope.



**Happy
Easter !!!**

