



Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs.” *Luke 18:16-17*

And a little child shall lead them...



Who doesn't enjoy this time of year? Decorating the tree, setting up a Nativity scene, singing so many beautiful Advent hymns. And like kids can't wait to open up presents on Christmas morning, we can't wait to finally place our infant Jesus statue in the manger at Vespers on Christmas Eve.

Pretty much all of us sisters have a little baby Jesus displayed in our cells year round, with the exception of Advent when we hide Him away. If you don't have one somewhere in your home all year long, we highly recommend it for two reasons. First of all, looking at such an adorable image of our Lord and Savior everyday urges us on to adore Him more. Who can resist kissing, caressing, and sweet-talking such a beautiful babe? And as you might also imagine, it reminds us to stay



little ourselves. Some of you may be a bit tired of reading about this *littleness* that we perhaps write about ad nauseam, but it's kind of a key element if we want to live in the Divine Will here on earth or even make it to Heaven at all: **“In truth I tell you, anyone who does not welcome the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it”** (Luke 18:17).

So how exactly do we get little and stay that way, in addition to prayer and grace of course? Well, Jesus gives us a big hint: *look at the little children and imitate them.* I think we can all admit that, though we love them, kids are not perfect and we certainly don't want to copy some of their less than holy behaviors. But let's take a look at what does make them so loveable, so much so that the Almighty God Himself chose to enter the world as one and set them up as our model.



They're simple, uncomplicated, and not yet jaded by the world. When you tell a child something, they generally believe it and still have that beautiful ability to be wowed. A parent once brought her two young sons to us for a few English lessons. When we took the boys into the chapel to greet Jesus, they at first looked around to see where He was. After one of the sisters pointed to the Blessed Sacrament exposed and briefly explained how Jesus is really and truly alive right there, the younger brother's eyes widened with awe and a huge smile of belief spread across his face. Do we receive Holy Communion or approach every tabernacle with that same kind of amazement?



They trust and love unconditionally. Ever notice that you don't have to convince children that they are loved? And when they do something wrong, they have no problem asking for mercy and believing that they will be forgiven. They also forgive easily, don't stay mad for too long, and have a wonderful innate gift of compassion. For those of you who have ever been comforted by a child, you know what we're talking about. How freely and easily they express their own love and affection! Is it any wonder that Our Lord also wants to be compassionated by little ones?

They're joyful, free, and know how to have fun. A few friends of ours asked to use our chapel for a charismatic prayer meeting. As the parents prayed, sang, and meditated before the Blessed Sacrament, their kids began getting a bit restless. So a couple of sisters sat on the floor with them and taught them how to do Rounds in the Divine Will. After just a couple of minutes – for no time was wasted with doubts and lengthy explanations – the children and sisters made a game of putting their “I love You” to God on lots of different things in creation, in their own lives, and in the life of Jesus. They couldn't wait for their turn to come again. And now every time the Eternal Father looks down on a bowl of gelato (ice cream), He will see their return of love! Do we enjoy our prayers with that same innocence and freedom?



They're dependent. Kids are constantly seeking out their parents for everything, just as Our Lord longs for us to do: *“I want you to be like a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, who can move neither a foot to take a step, nor a hand to work, but expects everything from his mother. In the same way, you will stay close to Me like a baby, always praying me to assist you and to help you... in sum, expecting everything from Me”.* (Jesus to the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta, Book of Heaven, Vol. 1)

They're not perfect. Kids fall, they make mistakes, but they bounce back really quickly, not taking themselves as seriously as we adults do sometimes. And when they do have a hard time getting up off the ground, they cry out to Mommy and Daddy for help...knowing they can't do it on their own and looking for comfort from the right source. What parents don't love still being needed by their children?

The Inspiration

A Drop in the Immense Sea of the Divine Will

A few months back, Sister Maureen mailed us a couple of copies of something called the “Drop Book Series” – three grown-up books in children's clothing based on the writings of Luisa Piccarreta. They basically explain the many teachings Jesus gave to Luisa in her 36 volumes from a simple and childlike perspective as an instructional tool for anyone wishing to share the gift of living in the Divine Will with kids. We had never heard of it before, but we immediately fell in love...especially with the charming illustrations that enhance every written point.



The series does not intend to replace the Divine Will writings themselves. In fact, the author repeats several times the necessity of reading and rereading the truths found fully and completely in the volumes. The Drop Books only skim the surface. However, we feel the series could also serve as an excellent introduction for those who know nothing about the Divine Will or who have just begun to read Luisa's many writings. Since it takes a while to get to the end, it's often very helpful to have the big picture in mind when trying to comprehend each individual teaching along the way.

For those who have already been reading the Book of Heaven for however many years, the Drop Books offer us a fresh way of absorbing what we read - a priceless example of how to “welcome the Kingdom of God like a little child”. Jesus often tells Luisa how easy it is to live in the Divine Will. So why do we still find it so difficult, almost impossible at times? For one, God wants to test our perseverance and see our efforts in order to first be sure that we really want the gift before granting it to us in its fullness. But we have another theory too: it's also because our grown-up minds and hearts don't fully believe in the truths that we read. We lack

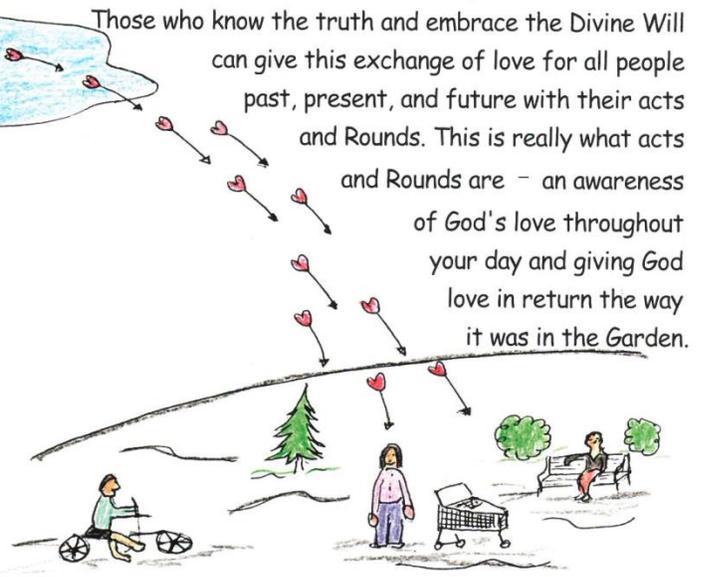
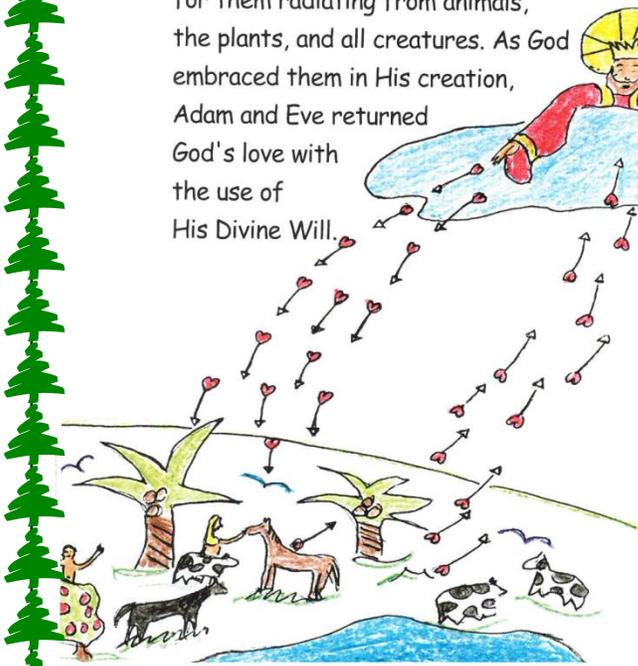
that pure, innocent, childlike faith, that ability to be wowed by every page. However, with a little practice and lots of grace, we can get it back. And the Drop Book Series may just give you the jumpstart that you need.

So see for yourself. Here's just a small sample of the many simple treasures found in each book. To download the whole series for free or purchase a beautifully printed hardcopy at cost, visit the author's website at [dwdropbooks.com](http://www.dwdropbooks.com). And don't forget – have fun!

Think about what it must have been like for Adam and Eve to live in the Garden of Eden. They were surrounded by the beauty and wonders of creation. They not only knew God had made everything for their enjoyment, but they could feel God's love for them radiating from animals, the plants, and all creatures. As God embraced them in His creation, Adam and Eve returned God's love with the use of His Divine Will.

Look at our world today. How many people think about God when a bird sings a song outside their window, when a gentle breeze blows their hair, when the sun warms their face - very few. The human will and sin have distanced man from God. Man is so far from God that he doesn't feel God's love and so he gives God no love in return. For 6,000 years God has been without this exchange of love. We are a long way from the garden of Eden.

Those who know the truth and embrace the Divine Will can give this exchange of love for all people past, present, and future with their acts and Rounds. This is really what acts and Rounds are - an awareness of God's love throughout your day and giving God love in return the way it was in the Garden.



The best medicine

As we all probably know from first-hand experience, it can sometimes be difficult to enter into the joy of the Christmas season when we've suffered a big loss during the year and/or continue to carry a particularly heavy cross. In fact, all of the yuletide cheer and festivities seem to deepen our pain, driving some even to the point of depression. And the reason we often can't snap out of it is because we don't seek out the best - and really only - medicine that can truly heal our wounds: the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Only His love can turn our mourning into dancing and our weeping into joy (Psalm 30:11). Yes, we'll still have to suffer...for that's an indispensable part of the Christian life. But when we realize that we're not alone in the suffering, that we have a God who understands our every pain and can bring out a greater good from each one, an incredible thing happens: we get happy, we feel stronger, and we develop an invincible peace of soul that cannot be shaken.

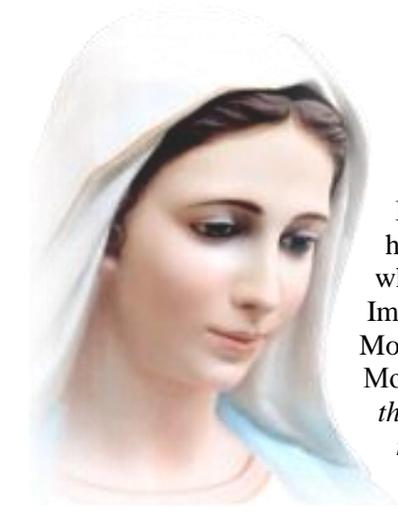
So before the holiday blues grab hold of us, let us crawl into the maternal womb of our Mama Mary and cuddle up with the Incarnate Word. There our own broken hearts will witness and draw great comfort from the excesses of love that Jesus suffered for each and every one of us before He was even born. In feeling ourselves so very much loved, we won't be able to help but love Him in return. And the more we learn to live in that reciprocal love, the more we will find ourselves whole, healed, and complete.

In her preparation for Holy Christmas, Luisa did exactly this. In addition to various acts of virtue and mortification, she especially honored the nine months which Jesus dwelt in Our Lady's womb with nine different meditations concerning the mystery of the Incarnation. If you'd like to join us in making the same novena beginning on Dec. 16th - *The Nine Excesses of Love in the Incarnation of the Word* – just go to the “Family Tree” page of our website and scroll down to Luisa for the full PDF.

“Then, my mind brought itself into the maternal womb, and remained stupefied in considering a God so great in Heaven, now so annihilated, restricted, constrained, as to be unable to move, and almost even to breathe. The interior voice told me: ‘Do you see how much I have loved you? O please, make Me a little space in your heart; remove everything which is not Mine, so you will give Me more freedom to move and to breathe.’ My heart was consumed; I asked for His forgiveness, I promised to be completely His own, I poured myself out in crying; but – I say this to my confusion – I would go back to my usual defects. Oh Jesus, how good You are with this miserable creature!” (excerpt from day two of novena)



Your Mother wears combat boots



We heard this line referring to Our Lady recently and couldn't resist repeating it because it's so true. In looking at the delicate, gentle images of the Blessed Mother kneeling before the manger this time of year, we often forget how strong Mary is as well. This is the same humble handmaid of the Lord whose little heel will crush the head of the infernal serpent, whose triumphant Immaculate Heart will usher in the Kingdom of the Divine Will. And this tough Mother is trying to form an army of tough children, for as St. Louis Marie De Montfort says: *“Together with the Holy Spirit, Mary produced the greatest thing that ever was or ever will be: a God-Man. She will consequently produce the marvels which will be seen in the latter times. The formation and the education of the great saints who will come at the end of the world are reserved to Her, for only this singular and wondrous Virgin can produce in union with the Holy Spirit singular and wondrous things”* (from True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary)

Whether we're living in those last times or not, I think we can all agree that our world has gone crazy and the battle for souls seems to be raging more than ever. But with what weapons can we fight such a seemingly undefeatable Goliath? Our Lady, who has been appearing in Medugorje for the past thirty-five years to form, educate, and prepare souls for the reign of Her Son, repeatedly reminds this generation of the five stones She knows we need (and have neglected) the most:

1. PRAYING FROM THE HEART, ESPECIALLY WITH THE HOLY ROSARY
2. FASTING
3. THE EUCHARIST
4. READING FROM THE HOLY BIBLE
5. MONTHLY CONFESSION



Which stones do we lack in our own spiritual arsenal? With another year ending and a new one beginning, let's make a fresh start and try to incorporate them more into our daily life. Only then will we earn the right to march with Mary toward the victory...and She *will* win!

A bit of news...



Sister Gemma Marie and Sister Rita meditating on the Hours of the Passion

The Divine Will hits the road in bell'Italia! In September, the Luisa Piccarreta Association in Corato kicked off a monthly series of Divine Will retreats to be held in various regions of Italy. Honored to be personally invited, a few Benedictine Monks and Daughters have so far taken turns heading to Padua in the northeast and Benevento in the south in order to participate. Having very much enjoyed the catechesis along with the opportunity to meet and share with other members of the Divine Will family, we look forward to attending future retreats scheduled for Rome, Sicily, and Loreto, along with a few other areas scattered throughout this rich and beautiful country.

In order to help out our local parish of Talamello, a couple of sisters have joined its religious education program as catechists. Though the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will are and intend to remain a fully contemplative religious community, we've chosen not to be cloistered in order to accommodate the second call we feel to share our life of prayer with others. And what more fertile ground could we find than children? It's only been a few weeks so far, but the one hour weekly commitment has not yet interfered with our contemplative schedule. In fact, the two sisters who teach are really enjoying the vivacity, sincerity, and openness of their students who range from first to seventh grade. Just another reminder to us of why God so much loves the little ones.

Our two new postulants have arrived and both are already settling in wonderfully to the religious life and community life. Just a couple of months after her vocational visit, Marylou Rodriguez was able to officially enter after having promptly quit her job, settled accounts, and said goodbye to her family back in the U.S. Rita Valentino from southern Italy, after having consecrated an impending debt to St. Joseph, was able to join us months earlier than expected when Divine Providence swooped in with a solution to her financial problem. Like new additions to any family, we can't remember what our community was like without them.

Postulants Sister Rita (left) and Sister Marylou (right).



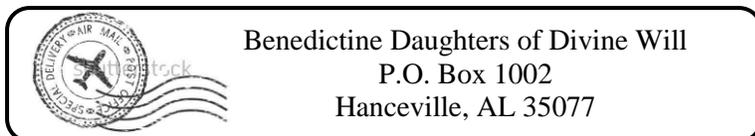
If you think Jesus and Our Lady may be nudging you to join the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will, don't hesitate in taking the next step. You don't have to be sure to contact us. Just visit the "Vocations" page of our website or drop us an email at daughtersofdivinewill@gmail.com and we'll begin the process of discerning together.

Supporting the Sisters

As the Lord continues to bless us with new vocations, our basic living expenses have increased as well. Would you prayerfully consider becoming an instrument of Divine Providence for our growing community? 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

Or simply send a check or money order to the address of our non-profit organization below:



(All donations are tax-deductible)

Thank you so much for your prayers, your generosity, and your friendship in 2017 and over the past seven years. All of our family members, friends, and benefactors will be remembered in each of our prayers this Holy Advent and Christmas season. And in thanksgiving for your goodness to us, Holy Mass will also be offered for all of your needs and intentions.



Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will!