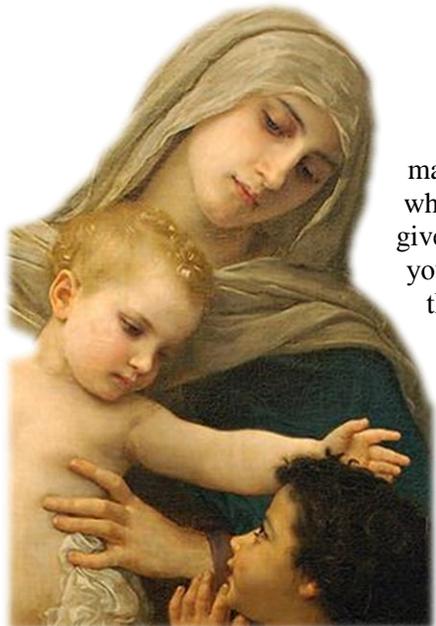




Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will



Divine Life through Mary



According to its Latin roots, the word “consecrate” literally means to make or declare someone or something sacred by association. For those of you who have ever made a Marian consecration, you did just that. You promised to give yourself entirely over to the Blessed Mother, trusting that She will make you a holy, sacred vessel through association with Her Immaculate Heart. It’s that old “not what you know but who you know” tactic of getting ahead, but with holy ambitions: for the sole purpose of glorifying God, fulfilling His Most Holy Will, and winning for Him lots and lots of souls.

St. Louis Marie de Montfort – the Marian heavyweight who gifted the Church with his *Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary* – knew this was the quickest, easiest, and most secure way to become a saint. And, may we add, it’s the quickest, easiest, and most secure way to live in the Divine Will. But easy doesn’t mean consecration should be taken lightly, so de Montfort suggested a 33-day preparation period to make sure we’re really ready to make such a solemn pledge.

If you haven’t renewed your consecration in a while or maybe haven’t done it for the first time yet, prayerfully consider taking on this beautiful, powerful, and very worthwhile commitment. We have fallen in love with a newer model formulated by Fr. Michael E. Gaitley, MIC and entitled [33 Days to Morning Glory: A Do-It-Yourself Retreat in Preparation for Marian Consecration](#). It’s basically an updated and simplified version of de Montfort’s Total Consecration preparation, combining the heart of the saint’s epoch teachings with the wisdom of three other modern Marian giants who came after him – specifically, Saints Maximilian Kolbe, John Paul II, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. The daily readings are much shorter and the prayers simpler, though no less profound and effective, making the process accessible to those with even the busiest of schedules.

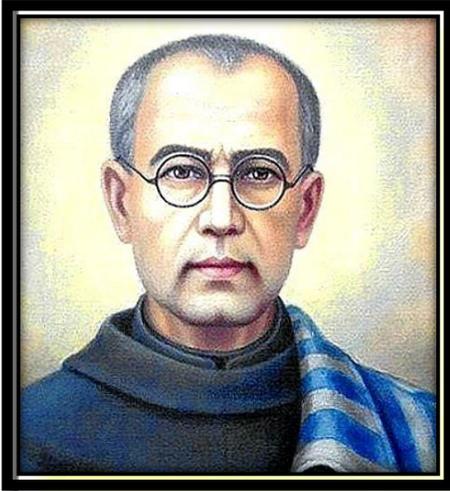
Many of us sisters made our first Marian consecration before entering the religious life and we try to individually renew it every year or so, with the whole 33-day kit and caboodle. But it never gets redundant. Each time the Holy Spirit speaks to us in different ways based on what we need most at these particular moments of our life. This last time around, we felt inspired to share some of what we’ve been pondering in our hearts...maybe as clarification for some, to spur on others, or simply because the treasures of Mary revealed during each preparation period are just too cool to keep secret.

Spouse of the Holy Spirit

During the second week of his consecration preparation, Fr. Gaitley quotes the following passage from a reflection Saint Maximilian Kolbe wrote just two hours before his arrest by the Gestapo, which eventually led to his martyrdom of love at Auschwitz. It’s basically the culmination of years spent contemplating the mystery Our Lady presented to the world at Lourdes when She revealed not just an attribute but Her very identity to St. Bernadette:

I AM the Immaculate Conception





“What type of union is this [between the Holy Spirit and Mary]? It is above all an interior union, a union of Her essence with the “essence” of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in Her and lives in Her. This was true from the first instant of Her existence. It was always true; it will always be true...He Himself is uncreated Love in Her; the Love of the Father and of the Son, the Love by which God loves Himself, the very love of the Most Holy Trinity...

Among creatures made in God’s image, the union brought about by married love is the most intimate of all. In a much more precise, more interior, more essential manner, the Holy Spirit lives in the soul of the Immaculata, in the depths of Her very being. He makes Her fruitful, from the very first instant of Her existence, all during Her life, and for all eternity. This eternal ‘Immaculate Conception’ [in that the Holy Spirit proceeds, or springs forth, from the Father and the Son] produces in an immaculate manner divine life itself in the womb (or depths) of Mary’s soul...

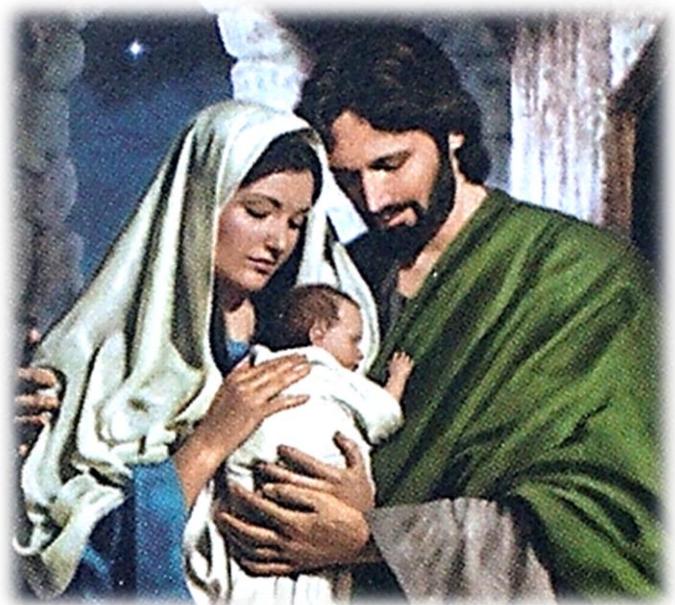
If among human beings the wife takes the name of her husband because she belongs to him, is one with him, becomes equal to him and is, with him, the source of new life, with how much greater reason should the name of the Holy Spirit, who is the divine Immaculate Conception, be used as the name of Her in whom He lives as uncreated Love, the principle of life in the whole supernatural order of grace?”

By consecrating ourselves to Jesus through Mary, we actually get to take part in this. Kolbe described it as being “possessed” by the Immaculata, belonging totally to Her in an even deeper way than as a mother with her child. Mother Teresa expressed her idea of Marian consecration in two small prayers: *“Lend me Your Immaculate Heart”* and *“Keep me in Your most pure Heart.”* What is the heart but the whole of our interior, the very essence of our souls. So with Mary’s Heart dwelling in us and us dwelling in Her, doesn’t it make sense that we also get to participate in Her profound union with the Holy Spirit and all that comes along with it? Will the love of Our Blessed Mother and Her Divine Spouse not bring forth the fruit of divine life in our souls? Yes, with and through Mary, *“the Love of the Father and of the Son, the Love by which God loves Himself, the very love of the Most Holy Trinity”* will reign in us as well.



Imitation of St. Joseph

Found in her Notebook of Childhood Memories, one of the earliest teachings Our Lord gave to Luisa was to live in the midst of the Holy Family at Nazareth. More specifically, He told her: *“... You must give one hand to Me, the other to our Mama, and your gaze on Saint Joseph.”* As we gaze upon him, what do we find? We find the most chaste spouse of the Blessed Virgin...Mary’s husband. Though Mary and Joseph never shared a physical spousal relationship, that didn’t render their marital bond any less deep. The two *were* one. To continue with Kolbe’s logic, just as a wife belongs to her husband, “is one with him, becomes equal to him”, wouldn’t the reverse also hold true? Wouldn’t marriage render everything that belonged to Joseph Mary’s and everything that belonged to Mary Joseph’s? If Mary was in full possession of the Divine Will, wouldn’t Joseph have possessed It on earth as well?



What else do we see in St. Joseph? Dependency on his beloved wife and the divine Child entrusted to his care. But we also see *Their* dependency on Joseph and his perfect response. God willed for Jesus and Mary to

need him just as He chooses to rely on us in His plan of salvation. Jesus told Luisa to look at St. Joseph for a reason. He was paving for her (and us) the safest and most secure road on the journey of learning to live in His Most Holy Will. In a sense, our imitation of St. Joseph would involve us “marrying” Mary too, becoming one with Her through consecration. And just like our spiritual father, if we remain faithful to the Blessed Virgin, handing all that we are and have over to Her and Her Son with total trust and profound humility, we’ll also receive the fullness of Jesus’ divine life in our custody.

The Marians of the Immaculate Conception have come out with a new 33-day preparation guide, but this time for St. Joseph. It’s also pretty great. Visit their website - shopmercy.org - to purchase Fr. Donald H. Calloway’s latest book, Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father. They’re also giving away free eBooks of 33 Days to Morning Glory if you register.



Living the Consecration



Ever experienced a spiritual high while on retreat? Then, little by little, that tangible grace fades and you feel like you’re right back where you started before the retreat – back to your usual defects, as Luisa calls them. That can often happen with Marian consecration, too. We’re on fire for a little while until we eventually forget about Mary’s presence in the nitty gritty of our daily lives. In our humble opinion, that’s why Our Lady dictated thirty-one lessons to the Servant of God and mystic, Luisa Piccarreta (compiled in the book The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will). Though originally written in and for the month of May, we need our Mother’s wisdom and guidance all year long, even if that means reading just a few minutes every morning.

In these very readable and “light” meditations, Mary gives us a glimpse into both the interior and exterior life of the Mother we have consecrated ourselves to and promised to imitate. We learn how She lived and behaved as daughter of the Eternal Father, Mother of the Savior, and humble Spouse of the Holy Spirit. Mary recounts all that the Divine Will accomplished in Her soul, how It manifested Its power, wisdom, and love in the various events of Her life, and how She responded to such grace in the normal, everyday situations in which She lived. Through Her simple narratives and the simple prayers and sacrifices She asks of us each day, our Blessed Mother also teaches us how to be simple...how to live in the Divine Will, day by day, like the little children we are. In this way, our consecration doesn’t end with a momentary high, but rather evolves into a concrete reality which will transform our entire being.



From the Head to the Heart

Though it’s very important to prepare for and nourish our consecration to Jesus through Mary with good and holy readings, don’t get too wrapped up in understanding and remembering every word. The most important part of Marian consecration is the supernatural reality that takes place...and this takes a lot of abandonment on our part. We belong to the Mother of God. She’s got everything in Her safekeeping, so there’s no need to worry about anything...anything! Her Immaculate Heart will be what triumphs over our poor heart and human will. And She can do it pretty easily, too, if we would only trust. Just ponder the mystery of the Visitation. What was the catalyst that filled St. Elizabeth with the Holy Spirit and sanctified John the Baptist? Mary’s greeting. A simple “hello” enflamed with the Divine Will that reigned in Mary’s soul. Let that be your courage and comfort when you’re feeling weak and incapable of everything. Jesus works miracles in the simple, humble, and very ordinary things done with His Mama in His Will.

“[The Divine Will] has the virtue of changing everything that is done in It – the littlest things, the drops of water – into unending sea...Therefore, the little ‘I love You’ in My Will becomes sea of love; the little prayer turns into sea of prayer, the ‘I adore You’ into sea of adoration, the little pains into sea of pains...Therefore, one who lets herself be dominated by My

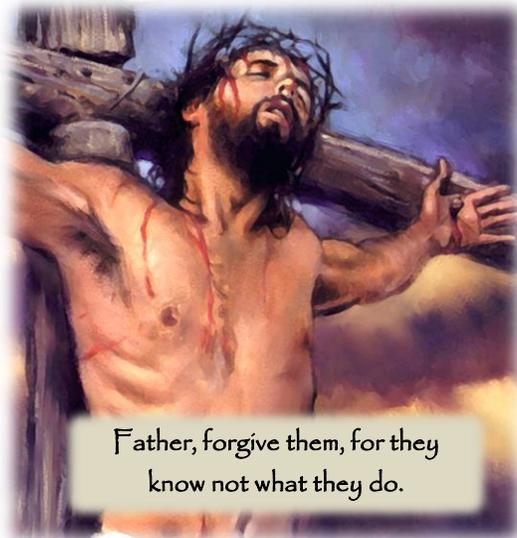
Will possesses as many seas for as many acts as she does in it; and while she does little, she has much. She has a Divine Volition which delights in turning the little act of the creature into a sea; and only with these seas can she impetrate the longed for Kingdom of the Divine Fiat.”

(Jesus to the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta,
Book of Heaven, Volume 20, 11/4/1926)

It's How God Wants It

[Jesus to Luisa]: “*Oh, how beautiful was the Celestial Queen, as We [the Most Holy Trinity] saw in Her not only Our copy, but all of Our works enclosed in Her. And this because She enclosed Our Will within Herself...Now, in the Kingdom of the Supreme Fiat, We will have the copies of the sovereign Queen. She, too, longs for and awaits this Divine Kingdom on earth in order to have Her copies.*

What a beautiful Kingdom it will be – a Kingdom of light, of infinite riches, a Kingdom of perfect sanctity and dominion. Our children of this Kingdom...will all be members of the divine and royal family...they will have the resemblance, the characteristics of Our Celestial Father, and therefore will be the fulfillment of Our glory.” (Volume 20, 11/4/1926)



Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

—◆◆◆— Forgiveness —◆◆◆—

Hopefully you've been spending this Lent examining your conscience, making good confessions, repairing for your sins with sacrifices, meditating on Our Lord's Passion, and marveling at His great mercy and love for you. Ironically, that last part is the most difficult for many of us...trusting that God really does love us in all of our miseries and is always ready to forgive without exception. We are so insecure and need so much convincing. Part of the reason is because we ourselves lack mercy. We compare God's capacity for forgiveness with our own very limited and very human version of it. However, there's a second factor involved in our insecurity, one based on the naked truth and not on our own distorted image of God: “*Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive you your failings*

either” (Mt 6:14-15). Jesus doesn't sugar-coat anything, does He? And He said this immediately after teaching the crowds the *Our Father*, the prayer we pray numerous times every day. But do we really and truly mean it?

There are lots of similar passages from Scripture that we can quote here, but - let's face it - we know the truth already. Our mind knows we're supposed to forgive, but our hearts never seem to be ready. And as we procrastinate, relationships are destroyed, families are divided, years pass in stubborn silence with those we once loved and, worst of all, emotional callouses form around our hearts. So for the remainder of the Lent, we challenge you (and ourselves) to offer the greatest, most difficult sacrifice of all, one that will please Our Lord much more than 40 days without coffee or chocolate: *mercy*.

Spiritually bring to prayer three things: (1) the person (or people) you're struggling to forgive, (2) your wounded and hardened heart with all the resentment it's harboring, and (3) your *will* - the conscience decision - to forgive them. Don't worry about the feelings. Jesus will eventually take care of them as He heals you, but His hands will be tied without your cooperation. The Divine Will can only flow where the human will has surrendered. That'll involve letting go of your justifications, your excuses, and even your denial that you're still holding onto some bitterness. But if you sincerely ask for a forgiving heart, the Holy Spirit will guide you in

everything. Though reconciliation with others is a two-way street, forgiveness will keep *you* always moving in the right direction...toward Heaven, with a soul truly free to receive Christ's merciful love and whole-heartedly ready to love thy enemies.

A little bit of homework: Search the internet for a prayer called the *Litany of Dust*. Print it, bookmark it, and pray it whenever you feel resentment bubbling up inside. It'll help you not only beg God to forgive those who have hurt you, but to recognize your faults and need for forgiveness, too. You'll love just how real and relevant it is. While you're at it, look up the *Prayer of St. Francis*, as well. Let it switch the focus from your own wounds to compassion and understanding for the woundedness of others.

Yearnings for Sanctity

In listening to an audio file of Volume 1 recorded by a dear friend of ours, one of the sisters just happened upon a "bonus track" with a little treasure that she had never heard or read before. On a hunt for the text, she found a document entitled "Yearnings for Sanctity" hidden among numerous Divine Will resources given to us by that same friend years ago. As written in the introductory note, these "Yearnings" were prayed by Luisa Piccarreta with "longing and trust" at the beginning of her mystical life and dictated to a little *disciple* of Luisa named Rosa, who would go to her home to learn the art of embroidery at the *tombolo*. This prayer was just too beautiful not to share, especially during Lent, so here's a little sneak peek. The entire three-page document can be found on the "Family Tree" page of our website by scrolling down to Luisa.

"O my Love, who will give me enough to repay You and to satisfy You if not You, Yourself? O please, reign, You alone, in this meager heart of mine. May I love You alone, O Jesus, and may I love You equally when Your love caresses me and when it scourges me. May my spirit rest in You alone, O Jesus. And when the whirlwind of my passions or the breath of Your tests put my soul in agitation, even then, O Jesus, may each beat of my heart be a praise, a thanksgiving, an adoration for Your Divine Heart. Let it be that, all ties being broken, I may once and for all make a generous leap and immerse myself inside your Crucified Heart, divine center of charity, of zeal, of purity, of annihilation and of most perfect renunciation...O Jesus, by your infinite Mercy, make me holy!"

*O Mary, Mother of sweet Hope and of beautiful Love, I hide myself in the pious shadow of Your mantle. Saint Joseph, my dear most perfect example of the highest sanctity, You be my singular protector and my model in the interior life of holy sorrow and of holy love. In the midst of Your three Hearts, O Jesus, O Mary, O Joseph, I remain secure and will fear no more on my journey...
O Jesus, O Mary, O Joseph, make me holy. I implore You, O please, make me holy!"*

According to Luisa, those who sincerely yearn for sanctity will find an effective tool in meditating on **The 24 Hours of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ** (the PDF can also be found on our website). So find a little time each day to comfort Our Lord in all His sufferings, praise Him for His goodness, and make worthy reparation together with Him for the sins of all generations...including your own!



Renewing our vows in the hometown of Sts. Benedict and Scholastica

“I believe that if one who meditates them is a sinner, he will convert; if he is imperfect, he will become perfect; if he is holy, he will become more holy; if he is tempted, he will find victory; if he is suffering, in these Hours he will find the strength, the medicine, the comfort. And if his soul is weak and poor, he will find spiritual food and the mirror in which he will reflect himself continuously...to become similar to Jesus, our model.”

(from a letter of Luisa Piccarreta to St. Annibale Maria di Francia)



San Marino Update

We haven't sent a few sisters across the border to the independent Republic of San Marino yet, but our diocese hopes that all will be ready shortly after Easter. To ensure our privacy, safety, and comfort, the bishop and Curia have undertaken a bit of construction on the structure that will soon become the second Benedictine Daughter of Divine Will foundation house. Once that work has been completed, we'll be able to make our own finishing touches before moving in...renovations that will make a house into a home and a home into our convent. The Lord's scheduling is always best. We're cherishing and are grateful for this time together before having to split up and branch out. Yet, the time is also drawing near when we'll need more space in Talamello to accommodate a new postulant from Sardinia planning to enter this month, as well as five different aspirants who expressed interest in making vocational visits during the coming months. So that's where we are for now. If you want to learn more about this important step for our community, check out last year's September newsletter on our website. As always, we count on your prayers that God's most perfect Will may be done in this and in all things.



Lenten Alms

If you feel called to help support the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will this Lenten and Easter season or on a regular basis, 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 you can simply send a check or money order to the address of our non-profit organization in the U.S.

All donations are tax-deductible.



Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will
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All good things come from God, but He needs willing instruments to help spread them out. So thank you for responding to the fruit of generosity that the Holy Spirit has placed in your heart. In gratitude for the kindness of our benefactors, all of our prayers and sacrifices this Lent are being offered for you, your families, and all of your needs and intentions. Holy Mass will also be celebrated in our little chapel this Easter Season for each and every one of our friends who have supported us in any way, shape, or form.



With much love
and many
blessings for a
happy and holy
Easter from
all of the
Benedictine
Daughters of
Divine Will!

