

Carmelites of the Holy Face

Holy Family Carmelite Hermitage O.Carm
Corran, Leap, Co. Cork, Rep. of Ireland.



Website: carmeliteshollyface.com

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“The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is sad...” Isaias 1:5

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

During the holy season of Lent as we commemorate more especially the sufferings of Christ in His Passion, we are drawn to meditate also upon the Passion of the Church, His Mystical Body. Although it has been the theme of several of our previous newsletters, it is a vast subject with many different aspects on which we can focus. It is of great importance that we should not lose sight of the fact that the Church has been suffering Her Passion ever since Vatican II, since it is a reality which has affected all of Her members; and so we return to this topic as the theme of this Lenten newsletter.

Many of our readers may be familiar with the concept of the Church as a Body, with Christ as Her Head and we, Her members; since it is a thought frequently expressed in the Epistles of St. Paul. The visible hierarchy, and especially the Pope as the Vicar of Christ, have always been understood as representing the Head of the Mystical Body. Today more than at any other point in history, the words of Isaias may be applied to them; for truly “the whole head is sick” – infected with the deadly cancer of modernism and all other errors which proceed from it. This poison has spread from the visible head throughout the Body to such an extent that it is scarcely recognisable as the Catholic Church founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ; at least if we judge by appearances.

How then can we still regard the Church as the pure and spotless Bride of Jesus Christ? How can we pray in Her name:

“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption.” Ps. 15:10

For this it is necessary to go beyond appearances and to regard the Church not only as a visible hierarchical society (Her body), but even more importantly as the holy and invisible society of baptised souls (Her soul), adhering to the solid doctrine received from Our Lord Jesus Christ. In his book entitled “Christ the Life of the Soul”, written over a hundred years ago, Dom Columba Marmion likewise found it necessary to make this distinction between the visible and the invisible Church. By applying this theory to our

present situation, we come to the conclusion that although in normal times they were inseparably united, today the visible hierarchical society (the body or the new church) and the invisible society of baptised souls (the soul or the True Church) have been separated; for the things being promoted in Rome (idolatry, worship of nature, condoning sodomites and heretics to name just a few) are evidently far from Catholic.

We seem therefore to have arrived at that point in the Church's Passion where, like Her Divine Spouse, She has been entombed. On Holy Saturday Our Lady was the only one who believed and hoped that Jesus would rise again. With her, we who form the soul of the Church must suffer and mourn over the apparent death of the visible hierarchical society; yet our grief is not without hope, for we believe in the promised restoration of the Church when She will rise again, and Body and soul shall be re-united.

Although it seems that the Catholic Church as we know Her is dead, in some mysterious way we are still able to work for the good of that lifeless body. Although physically and visibly separated from Her outward structures, spiritually we remain united to Her afflicted members, and we have a duty to perform in striving to bring them back to life and health.

For the past half century, the Church has been drained of Her Lifeblood – the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Where the New Mass has replaced the True Mass, Christ's members have been supplied with a watery fluid carrying the infection of modernism instead of the life-giving blood and the healthy flow of grace which the Holy Mass brings. As a result, there are few healthy members left today, and these few must work extra hard to bring, if not the Lifeblood Itself, at least the grace received through It, to the less fortunate members of the Mystical Body.



Contemplative nuns have long been acknowledged as the praying heart of the Church – even one of the more recent documents from Rome (Cor Orans) admits this fact. The devil is doing his utmost to destroy all that remains of contemplative life because he knows how important the heart is for the survival of the Body – the Church. The veins are also of great importance, for they work together with the heart to bring the blood throughout the body; just as we depend upon you, dear friends and benefactors, to help us continue the task which has been assigned to us for the good of the entire Church.

“For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office: so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members of one another” Romans 12:4-5

Regardless of whether we pray and suffer in a physical cloister or in the cloister of the heart, it is certain that if we truly love the Catholic Church and are taking our Faith seriously, we are all sad at heart. Besides the lack of Faith which has so greatly disfigured 99% of the visible hierarchical society, the visible appearance of the Church, She has also been weakened by experiencing the fulfilment of Our Lord’s words:

“And because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold.”
Matthew 24:12

Sadly this lack of charity has affected many who still profess the Faith, it is true, but because they have no toleration for those who hold a different view or who fail to match up to their own standards, these members are also in need of that Life-giving Blood to rekindle in them the fire of charity. The heart of the Mystical Body therefore has a double function, just like the human heart: not only to pump the blood but also to love. You also dear friends and benefactors, are invited to share in this work.

There is no better way of doing this than by uniting ourselves to Christ Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to share in His victimhood. We can do this even from a distance when we are prevented from assisting at the renewal of Calvary’s Sacrifice in person. Dom Columba Marmion tells us how:

“And how are we to unite ourselves to Christ Jesus in this character of victim? By yielding ourselves like Him, to the entire accomplishment of the Divine good pleasure...”

Let us offer the Divine Son to His Eternal Father and offer ourselves with this “holy Host” in the same dispositions that animated the Sacred Heart of Christ upon the cross: intense love of His Father and of our brethren, ardent desire for the salvation of souls, and full abandonment to all that is willed from on high, above all, if it contains what is painful and vexatious for our nature.”

When we do this, we can be sure that we are playing our part in this Passion of the Church and doing what we should to bring back life and health to Christ's Mystical Body. We may not see the results, but we can be sure that we are keeping watch with Our Lady until the dawn of her triumph when the Church will arise, body and soul, from the tomb, and there will be a wonderful restoration of all that now seems lost.

TILLING THE SPIRITUAL SOIL IN MODERN TIMES

Recently we had the great privilege of visiting and praying at the grave of Nano Nagle in Cork City. She was the foundress of the Presentation Sisters. She performed a great work of charity in educating the poor children, both in the Faith and in secular knowledge. Eighteenth century Ireland was oppressed by the Penal Laws which reduced many Catholics to extreme poverty. God raised up many holy founders and foundresses to meet the needs of that time by forming active Religious Orders to care for the material, physical and intellectual needs of the poor, as well as instructing them in the Faith. These souls were fertile ground in which the seed of Faith flourished.

A few days after our visit to Nano Nagle's heritage centre, we had the parable of the Sower as the Gospel for Septuagesima Sunday. This led us to develop a little further our meditation on the seed of Faith.

In our present times, the need for a religious is not so great as in the previous centuries, and the results of the active apostolate are far less fruitful than in former times when there was widespread poverty. Today, the souls of the majority of people in the New world, are so entangled in the thorns of material concerns and pleasures that in general they are hardened to the seed of Faith. Even if active religious could succeed in forming a school to teach the ordinary youth of today, for the most part their good influence would be undone in the modern homes especially by means of TV and internet.



How then can one reach these souls? How can one soften this hardened ground so that the seeds of the Faith might fall on softened rich soil and take root? The answer is by prayer and penance to draw down God's grace through the Precious Blood of Jesus and the sorrowful tears of Mary. Therefore while the need for active religious has diminished, the need for contemplatives has never been so great.

It is true we cannot all spend our lives in the cloister, for the world needs good priests and holy Catholic families too; but we all must devote ourselves to this silent, hidden, spiritual apostolate of prayer and penance, assured that such efforts will gather a harvest of souls for the Kingdom of Heaven.



TILLING THE MODERN GROUND

By a Carmelite

The Sower went out to sow His seed-
 (That parable we know);
Today there is abundant need
 For souls to help it grow.

In Ireland under Penal Laws,
 Poor souls were fertile soil;
And fervent Catholics had great cause
 For active work and toil.

Then many holy nuns were found
 To meet that desperate need;
By works they planted in this ground
 The Faith – the Sower's seed.

But in our wealthy modern age
 When few are really poor,
When earthly things are all the rage
 And God is sought no more,

Most souls are dry and barren ground
 And hardened to that seed;
While few are they whom God has found
 For grace to intercede.

The seed which then so quickly sprung,
 Now choked with worldly cares,
In many hearts – both old and young-
 Is only helped by prayers.

Therefore the need for cloistered nuns
 Has never been so great;
Although our tasks are hidden ones
 Which many underrate.

To offer up unceasing prayers,
 To soften hardened souls,
With Jesus' Blood and Mary's tears-
 This is our crucial role.

Unfruitful it may seem to be,
 But Faith inspires our love;
And Hope assures us we shall see
 The harvest up above.

Hermitage News

- ✦ Contrary to our hopes and expectations, we have very little news to share with you. The door has not yet opened for us to move on. The accommodation we were offered in Youghal, East Cork, is not yet ready for us. In any case it would only be a short term solution since it is too small to provide adequate solitude and space, especially if God should see fit to send us more vocations. We therefore ask you to join us in praying for a solution to our needs, as well as for the success of the next court hearing on 28th April.
- ✦ As already mentioned, we recently visited the tomb of Nano Nagle, the holy Irish Foundress of the Presentation Sisters. We derived great encouragement and strength from learning of the struggles she faced in establishing her community. At her death, there were only four Sisters. Seventeen years later the community still only numbered six Sisters – and this was at the time of abundant vocations in the Church! After that, however, the Order grew rapidly, making foundations all over the world. Perhaps our struggles to survive are only preparing us for a similar growth. We therefore live in hope, praying and waiting on God to show us His most Holy Will.
- ✦ We have included you all in our annual novena in preparation for the Feast of the Holy Face of Jesus (Shrove Tuesday), and wish you a fruitful Lent.
- ✦ We have opened a gofundme.com campaign so benefactors will have the alternative means to assist us in purchasing suitable property: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/carmelites-nuns>. We would be delighted to receive more volunteer team members to spread the word.

May God bless and reward you all for your on-going support and charity to us.

Your Carmelite Sisters

Mother Irene of the Holy Face O.Carm and Community

HOW TO HELP US?

- ✓ **By your prayers**, especially that Our Lord will send us good vocations, courageous “Veronicas” to wipe and honour His Adorable Face and make reparation for poor sinners.
- ✓ **By your generosity**: bank transfer made payable to **Mother (Sr.) Irene Gibson**

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