

Carmelites of the Holy Face

St. Joseph's Carmelite Hermitage, O.Carm
Inchincurka, Dunmanway, Co. Cork, Rep. of Ireland



Website: carmelitesholysface.com

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"...beloved of God, called to be saints. Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 1:7)

Dear Friends & Benefactors and all of you who are the beloved of God,

You are, no doubt, already aware that each of us has a particular vocation chosen for us by Almighty God. For many it is the married state, while others are called to the Religious or solitary life, to the priesthood or to remain chaste and single. The term "vocation" is more often than not understood to mean the Religious or priestly life. Nevertheless, there are numerous kinds of professions or trades and to be called to one or other of these is also a vocation, for vocation means, quite literally, a calling. But amongst all these different vocations, there is one calling which all of us have in common. We are all called to be saints, and that is what Saint Paul meant when he beseeched the Ephesians

"that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called." (Ephesians 4:1) Our particular vocation in life, regardless of what it may be, is simply our means of reaching sanctity which is the general vocation of all.

When we read the lives of the Saints and compare them to our own lives, we are left with the impression that we will never be saints and will be fortunate if we even make it to Purgatory. This, of course is a rather discouraging view to have. So we want to share with you a few reflections regarding sanctity and its attainment in our own lives which may help in forming a more accurate idea of how to be faithful to our noble calling.



First of all, what is a saint? Many answers could be given, but a simple definition is “one who does the will of God in all things as perfectly as possible.” Those whom the Church officially recognises as Saints must have practiced heroic virtue. This heroic virtue is often practiced in such little things that it escapes attention. There are countless Saints in Heaven who have never been officially canonised.

Miracles, ecstasies and visions are not essential to sanctity, although they often do accompany it. When we read the lives of the Saints, these extraordinary occurrences are usually recorded in such a way that we are left with the impression that they are inseparable from sanctity. Far from it! They were simply God’s gifts to those who had already made generous efforts to practice heroic virtue. If only a book were written on the struggles, temptations and sufferings of the Saints, we would begin to realise that we actually have something in common with them, and that holiness is not so unattainable after all!



One thing that is essential is a generous resolve to do God’s will at the present moment and in the particular circumstances in which we find ourselves. It is of no use promising ourselves we will begin tomorrow. *“Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation.”* (2 Cor.6:2) We cannot change the past, we cannot be sure of the future, we have only the present time to use or to lose as we choose.

Including the Immaculate Mother of God, Mary most holy, there is not one single Saint who constantly found themselves in what we would term ideal circumstances. The circumstances they found themselves in were, humanly speaking, far from perfect, but from God’s point of view, they were precisely what was needed to form them into Saints. Even those who seem to have been Saints from the cradle (with very few exceptions) have still had their setbacks, struggles, crosses and natural defects to overcome. The Saints closest to the Throne of God in Heaven are not those who had the least struggles but rather those who courageously bore their daily crosses — often heavy and hidden ones — in loving union with Christ Jesus saying with St. Paul, *“I can do all thing in Him who strengthens me.”* (Philippians 4:13)

If we could only succeed in grasping the truth that crosses are our surest means of reaching union with God and realise that they are His gifts to those

He loves best, we would rejoice at them and try to thank Him for them in spite of the groaning of our weak human nature. It is daily crosses, (usually hidden ones), lovingly accepted, carried and not dragged, which make saints. Which of us can claim we cannot be a saint because we have no cross? It may not seem very attractive when Our Lord hands it to us piece by piece, in little splinters rather than all at once; nevertheless, Faith and Love, along with a spirit of holy abandonment, will help us look beyond our daily trials (e.g. the crying baby, the mountain of dishes, the annoyances at work or difficulties at home...), and see that precisely in these lies our path to sanctity.

The way of holiness is the way of the cross, and it is by this way alone that the Kingdom of Heaven is gained. When we have learnt how to suffer, we will have found the key to happiness and holiness, for the two go together. Suffering is an inescapable fact in this mortal life, but our very sufferings will become a source of joy if we accept them in a truly Christian — that is Christ-like — spirit. Nothing unites us to God more closely than the cross which we carry for love of Him.



When Our Lord said *“Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me... for My yoke is easy and my burden light,”* it was our daily crosses that He was referring to. A yoke is designed to be used by two animals to pull a load together. The burden when thus shared, is considerably lighter as long as they work in harmony. So it is in our spiritual life; the crosses God sends us are meant to be carried in union with Our Lord Jesus Christ, and He Himself strengthens and

assists us. If we refuse to accept them, we will still suffer, but we will do so alone and so our burdens will be much heavier.

One of the effects of real and genuine sanctity is a burning zeal for souls. While making every effort to overcome vice and practise virtue on our own part, we must not become so preoccupied with ourselves that we forget about others. Nor must we lose that balance and concern ourselves so much with sanctifying others that we neglect ourselves. The best way of assisting others is by prayer, example and charity. It was charity which prompted St. John Vianney to do such harsh penances, depriving himself of food and sleep. He did so partly because he believed it was his duty and partly for the sake of saving the souls of his parishioners. We know what wonderful results followed such a genuine emptying of self.

While it is true that God does not ask such extreme penances from everyone, it is certain that many of us could do more. Which of us does not have a friend



or a relative in need of conversion? If we offer even a portion of our daily crosses for that intention, uniting them to Our Lord's own Passion, we will taste the joy of suffering with Him, and we too may confidently expect the happiest results.

Lastly, the circumstances in which God has placed us are those which He wishes to use in order to form us into saints, if we only let Him. Each of us has a different path to sanctity — different at least in its external details — but the goal we are striving for and the Christian spirit which should animate us, are one and the same for all.

Let us conclude with this beautiful and encouraging passage from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans:

“And we know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints.” (Romans 8:28)

The Way of the Saints

Some Saints received visions — of these we are told,
Which leads us to think they were often consoled.
Hence many don't realise the sufferings endured
By souls who are cherished and loved by the Lord.

We judge of the Saints and the heights they achieved
By outward appearance of favours received;
Yet seldom we realise or have understood
That crosses make saints more than ecstasies could.

As sons by their fathers are trained with the rod,
Chastisements are given to souls loved by God.
In love He is silent, the Scriptures declare,
Which trial, perhaps, is the hardest to bear.

Because of the cross they were willing to hold,
By mystical favours some saints were consoled;
Yet from Thabor to Calvary gladly they passed,
And clasping their cross, persevered to the last.

If sainthood's our goal and our greatest desire,
Its visions and raptures we do not require.
Although if they're given we should not refuse,
The way of the cross is the one we must choose.

We all have our crosses, we all can be saints,
If we but accept them, avoiding complaints.
We'll thus tread the path which the saints have all trod —
The only sure way to the kingdom of God.

Our virtues by men may be unrecognised;
We may not be destined to be canonised;
But if we accept all our crosses with love,
Our haloes will shine in God's kingdom above.

So turn your eyes upward, remember your goal,
And carry your cross as a good Christian soul.
Then bravely continue and you may be sure
That the crown of the saints will be yours evermore.

Cf. Sophonias 3:17, Ecclesiasticus 2:5, Wisdom 3:4-6, Proverbs 3:11-12

Hermitage News

- ✦ 9th of June, 2022 – Two new additions to our Community – four-legged ones – arrived: a milking goat and a young kid destined to provide us with fresh milk. Rosie and Flossie both seem content in their new home.
- ✦ Mid-June, 2022 – Both plumbing and electricity were finally connected to the main house. After over 6 years without running water, this is a welcome improvement!
- ✦ Late June, 2022 – One of the completed rooms in the main house was set up as a temporary Oratory, and the Blessed Sacrament was transferred to a more suitable home in time for Mass on the Feast of the Sacred Heart.
- ✦ Early July, 2022 – We began moving in to the newly refurbished farmhouse, cleaning, unpacking boxes, and putting everything in order. Because of the shortage of manual labourers, we ourselves undertook the task of making cupboards beneath the kitchen sink, which we successfully accomplished with the help of St. Joseph.
- ✦ 25 July 2022 – We joyfully welcomed two more additions to our Community – two-legged ones this time! Our two new postulants, Ivena and Hilary from Canada/Malaysia, seem to be settling in well. Needless to say, we are full of gratitude to God and to you for this wonderful answer to prayer, and we rely on your continued prayers for their perseverance as well as for the blessing of a permanent chaplain.
- ✦ Early August 2022 – During the summer holidays, a kind benefactor named Michael has been giving us two days of his time every week to help with manual labour. Thanks to his assistance, we were able to harvest our crop of potatoes just in time to save them from the potato blight. With the help of our new Postulants, the other vegetables are also being harvested and some much-needed weeding is likewise being accomplished at last.



Through your ongoing generosity in bestowing upon us your moral, prayerful and financial assistance, dear friends, God is truly fulfilling His promise of giving a hundredfold here below; and our hearts are full of gratitude both to

Him and to you. Our Community has doubled in size since our last newsletter, and it is quite possible that it will do so again before long, in which case our temporary Oratory will be too small. For this reason, we are continuing to set aside funds for a permanent chapel. No contribution is too small, and we endeavour to acknowledge each one; however, with donations received through direct bank transfer we cannot always ascertain the donor since little information is given on our monthly printed statement. Nevertheless, our Divine Spouse is keeping a careful account, and preparing for you a heavenly reward in return. So strive that you may obtain it!

Be assured, as always, of our deep and heartfelt gratitude for all you do and have already done for us.

United in prayer, as we strive together to walk in the way of the saints,

Mother Irene of the Holy Face O.Carm and Community

Available from our Carmelite Shop:

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| Cord of St Joseph (with explanatory leaflet and holycard)..... | €5.00 |
| Hand-made Wooden Holy Face Chaplet Beads (dark green/dark orange)..... | €6.00 |
| Miraculous Medal, Standard Size (silver)..... | €1.00 |
| Miraculous Medal on Coloured Leather Necklace (var. colours avail.)..... | €5.00 |
| Blessed Oil of the Holy Face..... | Free |
| 1 Decade Chaplet Rosary Beads..... | €4.00 |
| Hand-made blue plastic Rosary beads with Miraculous Medal..... | €6.00 |
| Hand-made wooden Rosary beads with Miraculous Medal (brown/purple)..... | €6.00 |
| Hand made Greeting & Mass Cards..... | €3.00 each or €25.00 for 10 |
| Brown wool Scapulars of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel..... | €3.00 |
| Large Ornate St. Benedict Medal (silver)..... | €7.00 |
| St. Christopher & St. Anthony Bronze Medal..... | €4.50 |
| Heavy Copper-Coloured Crucifix Key Ring..... | €9.50 |
| St. Benedict Copper- Coloured Crucifix..... | €2.00 |
| St. Benedict Medal, Gold-coloured, oval, standard size..... | €1.00 |
| Holy Face Medal (Shroud Image)..... | €1.00 |
| Holy Face Medal 3D (bronze/gold/silver)..... | €2.00 |
| Pardon Crucifix (gold/silver/bronze)..... | €7.00 |
| Blessed 100% Beeswax Candle..... | offering, €0.50 |
| Blessed Salt..... | Free |

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
Carmelite Nuns of the Holy Face
St. Joseph's Carmelite Hermitage
Inchincurka, Dunmanway,
Co Cork

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