

Carmelites of the Holy Face

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



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Issue 24 – June 2023

“...you shall pray to Me, and I will hear you. You shall seek Me, and shall find Me: when you shall seek Me with all your heart.” – Jeremias 29:12-13

Dear Friends & Benefactors,

This month of the Sacred Heart is an opportune time to deepen our devotion to Our Lord Jesus through a more earnest practice of prayer. There is no more effective way of learning humility of heart and of growing in the love of God and neighbour, which are the principal virtues the Sacred Heart wishes to teach us. Prayer is at once the most important and the most challenging duty of the spiritual life. If we neglect this duty we will not make much progress in virtue, for our growth in holiness depends a great deal upon the way we pray.



Prayer is not optional. It is a duty imposed on every soul who has reached the use of reason, and without it we cannot be saved. What then is prayer? Many definitions could be given and answers based on personal experience would vary greatly, but in general we may say, along with many Catholic authors, that prayer is an elevation of the mind and heart to God; or more simply, a loving awareness of God.

“And all the days of thy life have God in thy mind, and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God.” – Tobias 4:6

It is a common mistake to imagine that prayer is a duty – and oftentimes a rather burdensome one – reserved for certain moments of our lives when we have particular need of something. But prayer is much more than that – it is the very life of our souls. It ought to proceed from a loving relationship with God which continually urges us on to seek union with Him. Yes! Prayer is meant to be continual! And it isn't meant to be a burden but a joy, in much the same way that we delight in being in the company of those we love.

Our Lord Himself exhorted us to pray at all times. St Paul likewise bade the Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing”; a practice which he faithfully

observed himself, as is clear from several other passages in his Epistles. And around 200 years earlier the wise man, inspired by God, had written:

“Let nothing hinder thee from praying always...” – Ecclesiasticus 18:22

It is abundantly clear, then, that continual prayer is not only an obligation for monks and nuns, but a duty which everyone is bound to fulfil. It is equally certain that all of us are capable of such prayer, for God never commands the impossible. However, it is important that we should understand what is meant by this precept of continual prayer and how we can put it into practice, otherwise we shall very likely dismiss it as something impractical and far beyond our reach.

Reason alone will tell us that we cannot be praying vocally all the time. Frequent ejaculations are useful in many cases, for they help renew and keep alive our loving awareness of God; but there are also times when our duties demand our full attention, making it impossible to be consciously thinking of God without interruption. And yet continual prayer is not incompatible with such duties, for it consists rather in our habitual attitude towards God and His will, a constant effort to please Him, the diligent performance of these same duties and the tranquil acceptance of all that His Providence allows to happen to us.

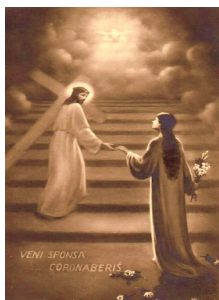
When we deliberately make our own self the centre of what we do, losing our pure intention of pleasing God, that is when we cease to pray. Everything in our modern world tends to keep us focussed on ourselves and the pursuit of temporal things which are pleasing to the senses. It leads us to ignore God and the eternal happiness He offers us, making us slaves to our passions. This is one reason why the spirit of prayer is so much needed and at the same time is so seldom found.



Every human heart craves for love, and the Heart of Jesus is no exception. He offers us that infinite love which alone can fully satisfy this craving. In return, He asks only for a complete surrender of ourselves to Him so that He can unite us to Himself, elevate us and divinise us. But too often we forget that true love means sacrifice. A mother who loves her children spends herself for them and puts their needs before her own. Likewise, a father who loves his family or a priest who loves his parish will work even to the point of exhaustion in order to support them. But who loves God in this way?

And if our love for God is lukewarm, if we hold back from making the sacrifices He asks of us, is it any wonder that prayer becomes burdensome?

“The whole spiritual life is a partnership with Christ and His Spirit; prayer is, as it were, the meeting or interview — one might well call it a lover’s tryst — where we assure God of our love and of our co-operation, where we manifest our union with Him and even find joy in that union. Now, if the rest of our day gives the lie to our protestations and contradicts our promises, we cannot meet God with sincere sentiments of love or co-operation; thus, prayer becomes ‘difficult’ and even impossible. That, probably, is why so many souls fail to advance far in the way of prayer.” — Difficulties in Mental Prayer by Fr. Eugene Boylan, Ch. X, p.50



In addition to the spirit of continual prayer which ought to fill our entire day, it is the will of God that we should also set aside certain times in which we can attend exclusively to Him. Whether this be through vocal prayer, mental prayer, or a combination, such as the Rosary, and how often and how long we ought to give ourselves to such prayer will vary for each of us depending our state in life and the degree of prayer to which God has raised us. We shall therefore do no more than offer a few practical suggestions which apply to everyone.

Vocal prayer, as St Teresa of Avila wisely observes, should never be entirely separated from mental prayer. We must not be content to recite our prayers without any attention to what we are saying or to the One whom we are addressing. Otherwise we may well deserve Our Lord’s reproach to the Jews:

“This people honoureth Me with their lips: but their heart is far from Me.” — Matthew 15:8

How common it is, nevertheless, even for devout souls to suffer from distractions; and how natural it is to find our minds wandering! Sometimes this is due to an inordinate attachment to material things or people; sometimes to our own lack of effort to be recollected, while other times it is merely owing to our human frailty. Whatever the cause may be, it is comforting to know that as long as distractions are resisted and not deliberately yielded to, they can become for us a source of great merit. We must never be discouraged, because the value of our prayer is not based on what we get out of it, but on the effort we put into it; and it certainly takes more effort to resist distractions than to be lost in ecstasy! Dryness, desolation and distractions are not only punishments for past infidelities. They are purifying trials which are common to us all in some degree. They were not infrequent even in the prayers of the saints. St. Therese, for example found the

recitation of the Rosary “the greatest of penances,” in spite of her deep love for Our Lady. A prayer that humbles us is better for us than a prayer which makes us satisfied that we have prayed well; and what could be more humbling than to experience our own weakness through these involuntary distractions?

Saint Teresa of Avila insists that self-knowledge is very necessary at every stage of the spiritual life and in every degree of prayer. By self-knowledge, of course, is meant the realisation of what we really are on the inside; not what we appear to be in the eyes of others or even in our own. Prayer is like the mirror of the soul, for the more perfect our prayer, the more clearly we see ourselves in the light of Truth. We begin to realise our poverty, our absolute need for God. If we turn to God in our need, such self-knowledge becomes the basis of true humility. Otherwise it would lead us to despair, because we cannot be saved by our own efforts. God alone can save us.

“Destruction is thy own, O Israel: thy help is only in Me.” – Osee 13:9

The humble acknowledgement of this truth is an eloquent appeal for God’s mercy and allows Him to do for us all that His Heart is longing to do. He wants our happiness even more than we do, and He well knows we cannot find it outside of Him; yet at the same time, He respects our free will. He does not force us, for union with God is like a spiritual marriage between Christ and the soul, and it will not take place without our free consent. We have all received this proposal and we all have the freedom to say “yes”. What joy if we accept! What tragedy if we say “no”! It is a constant invitation, for the Heart of Jesus is generous; and until we breathe our last it is never too late to say “yes”.



“The Lord is gracious and merciful: patient and plenteous in mercy. The Lord is sweet to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works.” – Ps. 144:8-9

Let us therefore strive to pray always and with ever-increasing perfection, regarding prayer not as a burden but as a loving relationship with God; the means by which we give ourselves to Him and He to us. Let us love as the Heart of Jesus has taught us to love: without limit, without reserve, keeping nothing back from the gift of ourselves. That is the goal of all true prayer, the surest way of reaching union with God and the best way of practising true devotion to the Sacred Heart, in which is found a tiny foretaste of Heaven on earth. May this happiness be ours, both here and hereafter!

Deep Calls On Deep

God's love for the soul is a boundless abyss,
Beyond what the mind can conceive.
Another abyss is our misery – this
Is greater than we can perceive.

Softly, persistently, deep calls on deep:
God's mercy inviting the soul;
But many are heedless, distracted, asleep,
And never draw nearer the goal.

The world is abounding with pleasurable snares
Which never give full satisfaction.
The spirit craves freedom from temporal cares
To follow a deeper attraction.

Our hearts yearn for God. Although many deny it,
Without Him there is but a void.
To find Him the soul must be peaceful and quiet;
Only thus is His presence enjoyed.

By prayer we must enter the depths of our hearts;
Self-knowledge itself is our cry;
And He from the depths of His riches imparts
The pardon He will not deny.

Each pledge of His love is a calling renewing
The echo awakened within;
The soul must respond by a constant pursuing
Of virtue, and hatred of sin.

His Heart calls to ours as He lovingly pleads
For the miserable gift of our soul:
The depth of His love calls the depth of our needs
And union with Him is the goal.

In prayer we must listen in order to learn
How best to accomplish His will;
And look at the Lord who is looking in turn
When we remain tranquil and still.

Though nature is fearful, the soul must press on
By Faith in the darkness of night,
Till self-love is stifled, and cowardice gone;
And the cross becomes wondrously light.

The Lord woos the soul, and the soul on its part
Surrenders as well as it can,
As deep calls on deep and as heart speaks to heart
Until God is united with man.

Cf. Psalm 41:8; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10



Hermitage News

- ✦ 15 May 2023 – Rogation Monday. We were privileged to have the Rogation Procession, Blessing of the Fields and Mass, and now confidently await a bountiful harvest.
- ✦ 22 May 2023 – Upon checking our beehive for the first time since the winter, we discovered that the bees had died; leaving us, however, with 7 jars of honey. We are hopeful we may catch a new swarm this summer.
Rosie, our milking goat, is providing us with an abundance of fresh milk as well as yoghurt and soft cheese. We thus find ourselves dwelling in “a land flowing with milk and honey” as God promised.
- ✦ Early June 2023 – A mature Asian lady arrived for a short live-in experience. Her visit was very timely and the extra pair of hands was much appreciated during these busy summer months of outdoor work.

We are deeply grateful to you all, dear friends, for your support. Please continue to pray for us as we do for you. We especially ask you to join us in beseeching God to send us a permanent chaplain and good vocations. On our part, we “cease not to pray for you, and to beg that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding; That you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing; being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God: [Colossians 1:9-10]

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus impart to us all the spirit of true prayer.

United in His love,

Mother Irene of the Holy Face O.Carm and Community

Available from our Carmelite Shop:

Cord of St Joseph (with explanatory leaflet and holycard).....	€5.00
Hand-made Wooden Holy Face Chaplet Beads (dark orange/purple/brown)....	€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 plastic Rosary beads with Miraculous Medal (var. colours. avail.)	€6.00
Hand-made wooden Rosary beads with Miraculous Medal (purple)	€6.00
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
St. Benedict Copper- Coloured Crucifix	€2.00
St. Benedict Medal, Silver-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
Greeting and/or Mass Cards	€3.00 each or €10.00 for 4
Hand-made plastic Holy Face Chaplet Beads (red/green)	€6
Blessed 100% Beeswax Candle	offering, €1.00
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

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