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Carmelites of the Holy Face

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



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“...Elias said to Eliseus: Ask what thou wilt have me to do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Eliseus said: I beseech thee that in me may be thy double spirit.” — 4 Kings 2:9

On the 20th of July, Carmelites celebrate the feast of our spiritual Father and Founder, the Holy Prophet Elias. Today we find ourselves living amidst a widespread apostasy and moral decadence which had its parallel in his times. Similar evils call for similar remedies. The “double spirit” which the saintly prophet bequeathed to the Carmelite Order as its distinguishing



feature and precious legacy is of great importance in counteracting present-day evils. It is easy to imagine Elias giving to his faithful followers the same warning found in the Apocalypse: *“Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown;”* while to those who have already lost what they once had, he says: *“Be mindful therefore from whence thou art fallen: and do penance, and do the first works.” — Apocalypse 3:11; 2:5*

There are various interpretations given as to the meaning of this “double spirit.” Quite a few commentators say that it refers to the double portion of the inheritance customarily reserved for the eldest son. Some interpret it as prayer and penance, others as action and contemplation, while still others would see it as faith and love. Since numerous passages of Holy Scripture allow for a variety of meanings, each of them both true and edifying, we do not intend to choose one interpretation to the exclusion of the others. However, we wish to suggest yet another explanation of the “double spirit,” which is in harmony with them all. It is the spirit of Jesus Christ, the perfect unity of God and man.

Carmelite spirituality is centred on the doctrine of Jesus Christ and the great mystery of Redemption; prefigured and foretold by the prophets, accomplished through the unique intervention of our Blessed Lady, and continually re-enacted in the spiritual life of each member of Christ's Mystical Body. The Order of Carmel is likewise renowned for its dedication to prayer and

penance, its zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and most especially for its mystical or contemplative doctrine, so admirably expressed in the writings of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. However, it would be a mistake to consider these things as something exclusively reserved for Carmelites and non-essential for the ordinary Christian. On the contrary, the life of the true Carmelite is merely the Christian life lived to the full and with a greater degree of perfection that is generally attained in the world.

The doctrine of Jesus Christ is of paramount importance for salvation. While the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is, in a sense, the fundamental dogma of our Faith, it is only through Jesus Christ that we come to know the Father and likewise the Holy Ghost who proceeds from them both. As St. John says: *“Whosoever revolteth, and continueth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that continueth in the doctrine, the same hath both the Father and the Son.”* – 2 John 1:9

Every heretic and dissenter can be recognised by their denial of this doctrine (i.e. the teaching that Jesus Christ is both God and Man), whether it be openly proclaimed in word, or merely implied by the way they act. The same criteria enables us to distinguish true Christians from false ones, and likewise those who possess the true Carmelite spirit from those who do not. Every erroneous philosophy can be traced to a distorted view of the right relationship between God and man. Only the true Christian maintains the right balance. In Jesus Christ we see the perfect ideal and the model of perfection for all mankind. He is God and He is Man at one and the same time. We are called to participate in that union; to become truly God-like. This is an instinctive craving in every human heart, but there are many illusions about how to realise this in practice. Every one of these illusions springs from one error: trying to separate what God has united.

When Jesus was preaching on the subject of marriage, He said: *“What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”* – Mark 10:9 This principle applies to everything which God has united, not only to the husband and wife united by the bond of matrimony. On the natural level, if we separate the body and the soul which together form a living person, death is the immediate result. On the spiritual level the consequences are just as disastrous when we try to separate things like prayer and penance or action and contemplation by overemphasising or focussing exclusively on one to the detriment of the other. History is full of examples. Arius distorted the doctrine of Jesus Christ by affirming His humanity while denying His divinity. The Arian heresy drew numerous souls away from the unity of Catholic Truth by this false teaching. Martin Luther taught that faith without works is sufficient

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Hermitage News

- ✦ 13th April 2024 - Rosie, our milking goat, gave birth to two large and healthy kids. Billy has since been rehomed while Blanche is growing rapidly and will eventually be a replacement milker for her aged mother who has unfortunately had to be put down since then, due to a broken leg and increasing lack of mobility.
- ✦ 8th May 2024 – Fr. John of the Beloved Disciple, OCDS, from the USA, arrived just in time for the Rogatian day blessing of our land and an evening Mass. We had four weeks of daily Mass. A great blessing.
- ✦ 31st May 2024 – Feast of the Queenship of Mary. The crowning of Our Lady's statue with flowers, the singing of hymns and the offering of a Rosary brought the month of May to a fitting close.
- ✦ Early June - By placing a nuke beehive box next to the wall of our neighbour's shed, we caught a swarm of healthy honey bees which had temporarily taken up residence there. Our neighbour was happy to be rid of them and we were happy to have a second hive of bees with a queen. It has been a mild summer in Ireland so far this year with the average temperature between 17°C -19°C (62.6 - 64.4°F). Once again we cannot expect to have the luxury of super frames full of sweet honey.
- ✦ 4th - 14th June - A mature lady from the UK spent 10 days at the Hermitage to discern her vocation with us. Her help was much appreciated in outdoor garden work: weeding, construction of a new trellis for one of the shrines, and staining some of the wooden Cells.
- ✦ 22nd June - Pat, an antique dealer from Co. Kerry, very kindly donated an outdoor statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. In the coming months we hope to make an outdoor grotto for her where she will be able to welcome visitors to St. Joseph's Hermitage.

Work has begun on making a secure chicken run where we soon plan on keeping a few ducks and chickens. Since we have been experiencing an infestation of slugs and have had to go out each night to rescue our young plants from these predators, we are hoping that the Indian Runner ducks will be able to relieve us of this duty as well as providing us with eggs.

Please continue to pray for our intentions: our perseverance, a permanent chaplain and more vocations. In particular, please pray for Marta who spent some time with us last year and will hopefully be returning to Ireland soon.

With the assurance of our grateful prayers in return,

Mother Irene of the Holy Face O.Carm and Community

for salvation. To back up his claim and silence opposition, Luther went so far as to rewrite the Bible, removing from it any Books which contradicted him, including the Epistle of St. James which clearly states that faith and good works must go together.

It was precisely at the time of the Protestant Revolt that St. Teresa of Avila began to reform the Carmelites in response to the grief she felt at seeing so many souls misled by the Lutherans. In establishing the Carmelite Reform, St. Teresa laid great emphasis on the importance of mental prayer as well as a healthy measure of corporal penance. This is one aspect of the "double spirit" of Carmel which had fallen into decline. In the first chapter of the Way of Perfection, she tells us that *"...the first thing we have to do is to rid ourselves of our love of the body...for if the devil once begins to inspire us with the dread of injuring our health, we shall never do anything."* Of course at the same time we must avoid going to imprudent extremes, but this is a far less common problem, especially today! Prayer and penance go together. Penance is not an end in itself. Its value lies in the fact that it helps us remove the obstacles to a life of prayer by making our bodies subject to reason, our wills submissive to God and our hearts attentive to the promptings of grace. Prayer obtains courage and grace to persevere in the struggle to overcome our lower nature. It is prayer which helps us discern the will of God and impels us to carry it out. Since our penance – and everything else for that matter – is profitable only when it is done in accordance with God's will, it is evident that prayer is necessary to maintain the right balance, avoiding both extremes of doing too much or too little. Here we are referring especially to mental rather than vocal prayer, although both have their place in the spiritual life.

The practice of mental prayer begins with meditation. If fruitfully practised and faithfully persevered in, it should ultimately lead one to the more simplified prayer of contemplation. Practice and perseverance are both essential if we wish to make any progress in prayer. By reflecting upon the truths of our faith and the examples contained in the lives of Jesus and Mary, we draw from them useful and practical lessons on how to become more like Christ and how to apply these lessons to our particular circumstances. It is therefore very important, whatever our state in life may be, to set aside some time each day for mental prayer. It is equally important that it should result in a more perfect fulfilment of our duties of state. It is by harmonising these two aspects: prayer and practice, faith and good works, the



will of God and our own co-operation, that we bear witness to the doctrine of Christ which has been so sadly distorted by modern society. This bearing witness to the Truth which one has personally encountered is the duty of every Christian. It is a prophetic role, prompted by charity, in which the love of God and neighbour are perfectly harmonised. It is also the way in which we practice true devotion to Mary – a devotion which is best shown by imitation.

The brown scapular which many of you wear is not only an outward sign of devotion to Mary, but it is also a visible reminder of the “double spirit” which ought to accompany it. Two pieces of cloth are joined together to make this garment of salvation and cannot be separated without destroying the scapular. We treat our scapular with reverence; in the same way, it is fitting that we should be practical Christians, not separating what God has united, but striving to realise this unity ever more perfectly by constant fidelity to His will. Then we shall certainly attain that happiness for which we are all yearning – union with God – bearing witness to Jesus Christ our Saviour in a world which has forgotten Him though it needs Him so greatly.

“For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” – 1 Timothy 2:5



The Double Spirit of Carmel

The Carmelite spirit is needed so much, but those who possess it are few. Since spirits of error may counterfeit such, how sort out the false from the true?

The answer is simple: consider God’s plan, revealed in Christ Jesus, His Son. The true double spirit is God joined with man, when two are united as one.

The doctrine of devils is starkly opposed to keeping this unified whole. Half-truths and deceptions are subtly proposed, deluding the unwary soul.

When God’s will is seen as a hindrance to man’s, and Truth is denied the first place, Then external practices, personal plans, and self, block the action of grace.

This error can easily lead to damnation, but man is as likely to fall If he gives up trying to merit salvation, alleging that God will do all.

The Carmelite spirit opposes both errors by penance united with prayer. This duty extends unto scapular-wearers; its double importance is clear.

True penance should render us prompt in obeying the dictates of reason and grace. It conquers the passions and keeps us from saying that nature must have the first place.

A loving remembrance of God is enkindled by penance pursued for His sake; While prayer obtains courage, when comforts have dwindled, to follow the path we must take.

The goal and the object of holy endeavour is Jesus, in whom are combined The Godhead and manhood in union forever – one spirit, one heart, will and mind.

The true double spirit brings participation in union so great and sublime By actions which lead to divine contemplation, transcending our journey in time.

This unity closely depends on another which Carmelites always revere: The union of Christ and Our Lady, His Mother, whose role in salvation is clear.

Since Christ is the Model of mankind’s perfection, the Christian must follow His way; By joining good actions with prayerful reflection, becoming more like Him each day.

He calls and invites us (but does not compel us) to use our free will to consent To all whatsoever our conscience may tell us; to follow the way which He went.

Our Lady has taught us the best way to do so: by total surrender to grace; And when her response finds within us an echo, a new Incarnation takes place.

The Carmelite spirit impels us, with fitness, to harmonise faith and good deeds; Affirming the God-Man – a prophetic witness to Christ, whom mankind greatly needs.

Cf. 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 1:9