

Carmelites of the Holy Face

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



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Issue 33 — March 2025

“Take hold of arms and shield: and rise up to help me.” – Psalm 34:2

Dear Friends & Benefactors,

Nearly eighty years ago while giving a remarkably prophetic talk on the Antichrist, Abp. Fulton Sheen, (one of the most gifted Catholic preachers), remarked that *“in these times the devil has been given a particularly long rope.”* We have even greater reason to echo this statement today, when the widespread decline in faith and morals has become so openly manifest! The holy season of Lent is always a time when the spiritual battle rages most strongly; and this is especially true in these modern times.

As members of the Church Militant, we need to be frequently reminded that our life on earth is a time of war, not of rest. If we are fitting comfortably into society and enjoying ourselves so much that we don't like to think about eternity, or if the world is accepting us exactly as we are, then we have reason to be alarmed. The most dangerous foes are always those which we fail to recognise. It is one of the tactics of the enemy to create an illusion of peace so that we will let down our guard and lay down our arms before we have really gained the victory. That way we will be easily conquered, even without the need for an open and bloody fight. *“So long as we live in this world we cannot escape suffering and temptation. Whence it is written in Job: ‘The life of man upon earth is a warfare.’ Everyone, therefore, must guard against temptation and must watch in prayer lest the devil, who never sleeps but goes about seeking whom he may devour, find occasion to deceive him.” – Imitation of Christ, Book I, Chapter 13, no.1*



Serious Catholics (that is, Catholics who take their Faith seriously) are well aware that there is a spiritual war going on; but our tendency in this spiritual battle is to adopt a merely defensive position instead of actively taking up arms against our foes. Also, because it is primarily an invisible war, it is difficult to remain constantly on the alert. We believe, dear friends, that this is why Heaven has given us two forms of spiritual aid, each with a visible element as well as a mystical or

spiritual significance. These are the Instruments of the Passion (Arma Christi) and the Holy Face Devotion. This is why, in addition to the two books we have published, which describe in more detail how to effectively use these weapons, we also want to bring them to your attention in this newsletter.

The Instruments of the Passion are much more than sacred and historical relics associated with the Passion, death and burial of Our Lord. They are the trophies of His victory over the devil, sin and death; and they are the weapons of our warfare as well. Each instrument is symbolic of the reparation Jesus made for our sins and of the reparation which we are called to make in union with Him by prayer and penance. In addition, they are powerful visual aids when meditating on the Passion. By focussing on each particular instrument in turn – the nails, the blindfold or the crown of thorns, for example – and reflecting upon the circumstances in which it was used, we notice a lot more details than we would if we tried to take in the whole scene at once.



But why is it so important to meditate on the Passion? Unlike those who wrongly claim that we are already saved because Jesus died for us, Catholics acknowledge that personal suffering is necessary if we are to benefit from the grace of redemption. Yes, Jesus has redeemed us if we will to be redeemed; but our will is weak and easily returns to its fallen state. It is therefore necessary to strengthen our will by mortification so that we can overcome our sinful tendencies and keep the laws of God when we do not feel like doing so.

Everything about our modern culture encourages us to do what we feel like. If we go along with this trend in our daily lives, it is bound to affect our spiritual lives too. Inadvertently, perhaps, but nonetheless persistently, our feelings endeavour to determine how we fulfil our religious duties which then come to be valued and persevered in, only insofar as they make us feel good. This is the reason why so many souls have fallen into lukewarmness and indifference in the practice of religion. Self-denial is therefore necessary to help restore and maintain the right order in man's relationship with God. The Instruments of the Passion are visible symbols of this truth as well as tools to aid us in utilising the sufferings which we encounter in daily life.

Self-denial is too often seen only in its negative aspect; as a way of making satisfaction for our sins and overcoming our disorderly passions. That is only one side of the picture, however; and we need to see the positive side to

provide us with an incentive to take up our cross and persevere in carrying it. This is precisely what the Holy Face Devotion does. Self-denial is not just about getting rid of sin. Its purpose is to remove the obstacles to God's grace so that His Image and Likeness can be perfected in us. All our happiness consists in being like God. And the God whom we are called to resemble is the Most Holy Trinity – One God in Three Divine Persons – Who is not a mere imaginary Being dependant on our whims, but an eternal unchanging Reality. Just as there are Three Divine Persons in one God and three powers in the human soul, so also our worship of God has a threefold aspect: knowing, loving and serving. How well we fulfil our duties towards God depends upon our knowledge of Him, for we cannot love what we do not know. It is by prayer as well as by studying the Bible and Catechism that we deepen our knowledge of God and thus come to love and serve Him more perfectly.

In prayer we present ourselves in spirit before the Face of God. He is always present of course, for there is no place so remote that we can be hidden from His gaze. We, however, easily forget His presence because we cannot see it;



and distractions, arising from a multitude of causes, frequently assail us. Prayer simply means redirecting our attention to our ever-present God. It is that simple – at least in theory. In practice our difficulties in prayer may be greatly diminished by having a visible image before us of the One whom we are addressing. And what better

or more suitable image can we find than the Holy Face of Jesus, *“Who is the image of the invisible God...”?* – *Colossians 1:15*

He is the model of what we can become with the help of His grace. The image of the Holy Face which we venerate helps us to remember the goal set before us: to become like God. It also shows us the means of reaching this goal: to suffer with Christ in order to repair His Divine Likeness in souls. The process of deification demands a kind of self-emptying; a setting aside of our natural inclinations in order to give precedence to the promptings of grace. This is our passion; the means by which the beauty of the Divine Likeness within us is freed from the disfigurement which sin has inflicted upon it. By doing good and avoiding evil, we glorify the Face of God; and through us the light of His Countenance – the light of truth, mercy and grace – shines out upon the world.

The Holy Face of Jesus is likewise our shield. It is the Face of Christ, disfigured in the Passion, which heals the Divine Image in souls where it has been disfigured by sin. It is this Face, so pleasing to the Eternal Father, which appeases Divine Justice, and obtains pardon and mercy for repentant sinners.

The Sacred Countenance of Jesus and His Divine Likeness in our souls are also a shield of protection from the devil, whose power is greatly diminished, both in individual lives and in society, when he encounters a soul in the state of grace. Self-denial, penance and mortification, represented by the Instruments of the Passion, help us to remain in the state of grace ourselves. They also help to restore and increase the Divine Likeness in others by applying to them the infinite merits of Christ's Passion. Thus they draw down special graces on other needy souls as well as our own.



The verse from Psalm 34 which we chose as the heading for this newsletter takes on a deeper significance when interpreted in this way. We can imagine Our Lord addressing these words to us on behalf of His Church and of souls; or even of His Image which we carry within our own soul: *“Take hold of arms and shield: and rise up to help Me.” – Psalm 34:2* It is as if He had said: “Take up the instruments of My Passion by penance and self-denial, for these will help you to conquer your passions and tendencies to sin. Take up also the Devotion to My Holy Face which is none other than the life of virtue, the development of the life of sanctifying grace and the perfecting of My Divine Likeness in your soul. This will shield you from Divine Justice and will also be your protection from the attacks of the devil. Rise up with zeal and courage to help Me. We will fight together, you and I, for the honour and glory of My Holy Face, and together we will be victorious.”

Surely Lent is the most fitting time of all to respond with greater generosity to Our Lord's appeal. The very day before Lent begins, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Face of Jesus, Disfigured in the Passion. On Easter Sunday we shall contemplate His glorious Face – a tiny foretaste and pledge of eternal glory. Lent is a journey from one to the other; from a sin-stained soul, a disfigured Image of God, to a virtuous soul, radiant with the Divine Likeness. It is a journey which requires our active co-operation as well as our passive acceptance of the grace which is offered to us. Let us therefore take up and use the weapons of penance and prayer; the arms and the shield; the Instruments of the Passion and the Holy Face Devotion, knowing that this is God's own battle. If we do not neglect our part, we can be confident that He will not fail to do His; and thus we can be certain of victory.

“...wilt not thou, O God, go out with our armies? Give us help from trouble: for vain is the salvation of man. Through God we shall do mightily: and he shall bring to nothing them that afflict us.” – Psalm 59:12-14

Spiritual Warfare

*There is a battle taking place
In every human heart.
Devotion to the Holy Face
Will teach the martial art.*

*To be like God – this is man's goal;
But only with His grace
Is this achieved by any soul.
We need His Holy Face!*

*Against this truth our natural pride
And Satan both wage war.
"Non serviam," the devil cried,
Rebelling from God's law.*

*He wished to be like God without
Reliance upon grace;
And by his pride he blotted out
His vision of God's Face.*

*He tempts us all to share his pride,
Becoming slaves of sin;
While grace takes an opposing side
To guard Christ's Face within.*

*To give us courage in the fight
And peace amidst commotion,
We need to keep our goal in sight
By Holy Face Devotion.*

*We likewise need to take up arms
Against our deadly foe;
For tepid souls shall meet great harms,
As Faith and reason show.*

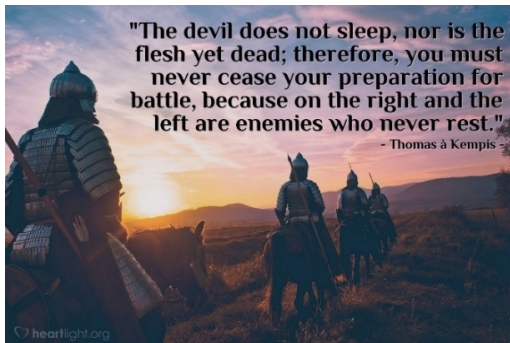
*God's grace is offered. We'd be fools
To leave His gifts ignored;
And Arma Christi are the tools
By which grace is restored.*

*They call to mind the victory
Which penance must secure.
The Passion's not just history –
It's taking place once more.*

*And we, Christ's members, have to share
The struggle and the pain
To rescue souls and to repair
His Image from all stain.*

*"Rise up," He bids us. "Think of Me,
And come to My defence.
Let prayer and penance set you free
From pride and vain pretence."*

*"Receive the light of truth and grace;
Repent; atone for sin;
Defend the honour of My Face,
And I will help you win."*



Hermitage News

- ✦ December 2024 – A benefactor from Spain to whom we had previously sent some Blessed Oil of the Holy Face wrote to inform us that a friend of hers has completely recovered from stage 4 cancer after using some of this Blessed Oil, and that she attributes her cure to the Holy Face of Jesus! Since this devout woman had been praying the prayers of reparation and anointing herself daily with the Holy Oil, we are inclined to think that her cure was God's way of rewarding her for her faith and devotion. At the same time, it is a consolation to hear that He is granting such favours through the oil from the lamp which burns in our little Oratory before the image of His Holy Face. We ask that anyone else receiving similar favours by means of this sacramental would please inform us, so that these favours may be recorded for the honour and glory of Our Lord's Holy Face.
- ✦ 5th January 2025 – Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. Our 15th Holy Face prayer meeting was the smallest on record owing to a snowfall earlier that day and freezing temperatures which made the roads treacherous with snow and ice – something which we are not accustomed to in this part of Ireland. Only two faithful managed make it, while others made a valiant attempt. No doubt God rewarded their efforts and intentions as much as if they had been more successful! The following day, the Feast of the Epiphany, the weather conditions had not improved and so we were thoroughly blessed to have Mass offered in our little Oratory with no one but ourselves and the angels and saints in attendance.
- ✦ Late January – We received no less than four vocational enquiries in the space of one week, after months of silence in this regard! Though as yet it is too soon to say whether or not anything will come of them, it seems that Our Lord is reminding us not to lose hope; and to confide in His plan for the future of our little Carmel.
- ✦ Late February – Agnes from Singapore came for a brief live-in at St. Joseph's Hermitage, and is now spending time with another Community before returning to her homeland. Please pray for her and for us in our mutual discernment so that she might follow wherever Our Lord is calling her.



We carry you in our hearts and in our prayers, as always. May Jesus grant that our every effort in the spiritual combat will be a source of blessings for

you, (and yours for us,) until we meet in the eternal joy of the vision of His glorious Face in Heaven!

In the love of the Holy Face of Jesus,

Mother Irene & Community

Available from our Carmelite Shop:

<i>Arma Christi: The Weapons of Our Warfare</i> (193 pages).....	€10.00
<i>Beyond the Veil: The Holy Face Devotion in ... Sacred Scripture</i> (328 pages).....	€15.00
Assorted Greeting and/or Mass Cards... 4 or more	€2.50 each, otherwise €3.00 each
Marie-Julie Jahenny's herbal teas.....	In stock - contact us for further info
Holy Face (Painting) A4 Prints.....	€1.00 each, 10 for €5.00
Holy Face (Painting) 4x6 Postcards.....	€0.50 each, 10 for €4.00
Holy Face (Shroud Image) A4 Prints.....	€1.00 each, 10 for €5.00
Holy Face Protection Cross (silver-colour).....	€3.00
Hand-made Plastic Holy Face Chaplet Beads (turquoise/blue/pink).....	€6.00
Holy Face Prayer Booklet (44 pages).....	€2.50
Holy Face Medal (Shroud Image).....	€1.00
Holy Face Medal 3D (bronze/gold/silver).....	€2.00
Large Holy Face Scapular (white).....	€9.50
Blessed Oil of the Holy Face.....	Free
Hand-made plastic Rosary beads with Miraculous Medal (var. colours. avail.).....	€6.00
Brown wool Scapulars of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.....	€3.00
Miraculous Medal, Standard Size (silver).....	€1.00
Large Ornate St. Benedict Medal (silver).....	€7.00
St. Christopher & St. Anthony Medal (silver).....	€4.50
St. Christopher & Our Lady of Guadalupe Medal (silver).....	€4.50
St. Benedict Medal, Silver-coloured, oval, standard size.....	€1.00
Pardon Crucifix (gold/silver).....	€7.00
Cord of St Joseph (with explanatory leaflet and holycard).....	€5.00
Small & Thin Blessed 100% Beeswax Candle (188x5 mm).....	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 or cheque made payable to
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