

Carmelites of the Holy Face

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



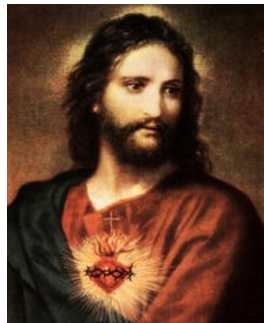
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“Despise not the discourse of them that are ancient and wise, but acquaint thyself with their proverbs.” — Ecclesiasticus 8:9

Dear Friends & Benefactors,

The month of the Sacred Heart is always an opportune time to examine ourselves upon the most fundamental virtues of the spiritual life; namely, humility and charity. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the visible emblem of Divine Charity; the symbol of God's love for mankind. Since Jesus instructed us to learn from His meek and humble Heart, we cannot find a more fitting subject for reflection in this month of June. Pious meditations, however, need to be practical if they are to be of any lasting benefit to the soul. There is not much point in reading and reflecting about humility and charity if we never learn to practice those difficult yet loveable virtues. That is why we want to focus in this newsletter upon a very practical piece of advice which comes from the Fathers of the Desert.



Abba Alonios, echoing the monastic tradition, expressed a profound truth of the spiritual life in the following sentence: *“Unless a man says in his heart, ‘Only I and God exist in this world,’ he will not have rest.”* This is a very thought-provoking statement. Taken at face value, it appears quite selfish and even contrary to the fraternal charity taught by Our Lord in the Gospel. In reality, it goes right to the heart of the difficulties we experience in the practice of charity and humility.

By this time, you are probably saying to yourself, “If only God and I exist, what about my neighbours? Since I can't deny the evident fact of their existence, am I to regard them as part of God or part of myself?” The answer is, both! Either interpretation is useful in combating pride, our life-long enemy, which we must constantly fight against if our devotion to the Sacred Heart is really deep and genuine and not merely an empty façade.

It is quite right to consider our neighbours as part of ourselves, for *“we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” — Romans 12:5* Even though some of our fellow men do not yet belong to the

Church of Christ, they are still potential members of His Body, having been created in the Image of God, just as we have. And we all share in common the struggles and weaknesses of human nature. If God were to withdraw His grace from us and leave us to ourselves, we would be just as capable of sin as anyone else. By our pride, we expose ourselves to the danger of such a fall, *“for God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace.”* – 1 Peter 5:5

If we find ourselves, by the mercy and grace of God, a member of His Church in the state of grace, this is not merely a privilege to glory in as though we are somehow better than our neighbours. Greater graces bring greater obligations. God has decreed that we should discharge our debt of gratitude towards Him, (whom we cannot see, and who is in no need of our goods) by kindness towards our fellow men, regarding all that He has given us as a sacred trust to be used for their benefit. Far from boasting of our debts or trying to keep our talents for our own personal enjoyment, we must be ever mindful of our obligations to God and use our gifts for the benefit of others, recalling the account we shall have to give for them some day. Since we cannot know with absolute certainty how much grace anyone has received from God, nor how well they are making use of that grace, this uncertainty should suffice to keep us from claiming to be better than others.



One of the most deeply-rooted effects of pride is our tendency to find fault with other persons, things, events – even sometimes with God! – but never with ourselves; and to blame anything or anyone but ourselves for our unhappiness. To really act as if only

God and ourselves exist is an effective cure for this evil tendency. Although in our worst moments we might be tempted to think that God has abandoned us or that He is unjust in letting us suffer certain trials which He could have prevented, certainly no one would dare to claim after careful reflection and full deliberation that God makes mistakes. Anything He allows to happen to us is part of His providential plan for our eternal salvation and sanctification. If it does not contribute to this end, the fault is certainly on our part. There is no one else we can blame without indirectly finding fault with God! Even the very real faults of others and the sufferings they cause us are not without value if we accept them meekly as coming from the hand of God, just as David did when he was reproached by Semei. Let us say to ourselves when tempted to grow resentful towards those who make us suffer: *“The Lord has bidden it, and who is he that shall dare say, why hath He done so?”* – Cf 2 Kings 16:10 God’s grace is always sufficient to bring good out of evil. It is a mistake to think otherwise. If we do not experience this, it is our own dispositions we must find fault with.

Far from being discouraging or depressing to acknowledge ourselves to be at fault, it is a truly liberating experience. Of course it is painful to our pride to admit our mistakes. It cannot be otherwise! However, it is by this humble admission of our failure that we allow God to take His rightful place as our Saviour, who saves us because of His mercy and not because we have earned this favour by our own intrinsic worth. The humble, who regard only God and themselves, claim nothing but the lowest place as their due. They cannot be depressed, but only uplifted, just as no one can fall when already lying on the ground. They cannot be told, like the proud guests at the wedding feast: *“Go and take a lower place,”* but only, *“Friend, come up higher.”* Cf. Luke 14:7-11

If we neglect the sound advice contained in this saying of the Desert Fathers, it is no wonder that we find it so difficult and even impossible to imitate the saints in the lowly opinion they had of themselves. After all, compared with those around us, we might not appear to be a greater sinner than everyone else. We might not even be so in reality. Mathematically it is impossible for each of us to be the worst of sinners. Out of the 8.2 billion people alive on this planet right now, only one person qualifies for that place, and so the chances are objectively quite small that we are that one. However, we shall not be judged in comparison with others. It is very important to remember that. The perfection of our Heavenly Father is the standard we are expected to strive for without ever being able to satisfy ourselves that we have attained it; and when there are but two places, one for God and one for ourselves, how can we honestly claim anything but the lowest?

To see things in this way brings a deep and abiding peace of soul – that peace of Christ which is the tranquillity of order in our relationship with God. That inward peace, that rest of soul, also finds outward expression in our relationship with our fellow men. Humble people are loveable people. They reveal in themselves something of Christ’s love which always has the eternal welfare of others in view. Theirs is a sacrificial love, a truly divine charity, in which there is no room left for selfish complaints or bitterness towards others.

It is the destruction of pride, the death of the ego, which makes it possible to experience a foretaste of Heaven on earth. What is Heaven, after all, but the perfect satisfaction of all our desires? And when we are truly humble, we will desire only that which God wills and nothing more. With the help of faith, we will be able to recognise His will and welcome it in all the events of our lives. Faith is believing on the testimony of another; believing what we cannot see; holding fast in the darkness to that which we have seen in the light; acting according to principle rather than feeling; doing or omitting things just



because they are God's will and not because we feel like it. We cannot have faith like that without mortification, the death of the ego, and at least the beginnings of humility of heart; whereas pride is completely opposed to all this and keeps us in a state of perpetual unhappiness.

There is another saying we would like to bring to your attention, since it harmonises so perfectly with all we have just said. This one comes from St. John of the Cross, the great Mystical Doctor, whose writings have a gift of bringing souls to the heart of Carmelite spirituality and of a life of prayer in general. Like all proverbs, it expresses a profound truth in a few words: *"Where there is no love, put love, and you will draw out love."* There are a number of ways of

interpreting this sentence. As with all truths of the interior life, we come to understand it better by making it the subject of prayerful reflection and faithful practice than by mere speculative or intellectual reasoning about it. One way of interpreting it is this:

"Wherever you encounter difficult situations or persons whom you find it impossible to love, put Love by thinking of God and recognising the action of His Providence even in them. They might be unloveable, but God is always loveable. Love them for His sake; love Him in them, and you will receive an increase of love in return, either directly from God, or from His creatures whom you formerly found it so difficult to love."



This is how we reach the perfection of charity, loving in Christ's manner of loving. He loved us when we were at enmity with Him, in a state of sin. And why? Because we were created in His Image. Recognising and loving this Image, in spite of its disfigured appearance, He yearned to restore the resplendent beauty of the Divine Likeness to our souls. He did not let our ingratitude or the enormity of our sins discourage or deter Him. He looked upon us with compassion, not condemnation; and in doing so He taught us by the power of example how we are to regard the difficult people in our lives. If only we set our ego in its rightful place, humility and charity will enable us to be co-redeemers and co-saviours of our fellow men in union with Christ. By remaining ever mindful of God and keeping ourselves in loving subjection to Him, we shall become the loveable, humble and Christ-like souls whom God has called us to be; the true devotees of His Sacred Heart and adorers of His Holy Face who are His consolation; and who are, in turn, most wonderfully consoled by Him – in time and in eternity.

Only God and Me

*The Desert Fathers recommend
That everybody ought to tend
To such detachment as to be
Concerned with only God and me.*

*At first it seems quite poor advice,
For selfishness is never nice;
And charity cannot exclude
All men on plea of solitude!*

*The meaning is much more profound.
The phrase is good; the doctrine sound.
When it is rightly understood,
It does my soul a lot of good.*

*One lesson is to learn to see
My neighbours as a part of me.
Their struggles really are my own;
We're one in needing God alone.*

*Perhaps they do not recognise
This fact, and so the Lord supplies
Some extra graces unto me,
On their behalf, and at my plea.*

*It is my mission to transmit
His grace to souls and to admit
I am a sinner, just as they;
A fellow pilgrim on life's way.*

*Another lesson is to view
Whatever others say or do
As part of God's eternal plan,
And welcome it as best I can.*

*God's part is always wisely done.
If things go wrong, I am the one
To blame for my imperfect views
And all the graces I misuse.*

*I have no reason for complaint
If I do not become a saint.
This is God's wish; I hear His call.
None else can hinder it at all.*

*If God is good, then I am bad –
The only reason I am sad.
There is nobody else to blame
But me, no matter what I claim.*

*If there is only God and me,
I must endeavour to agree
With all He does and all He wills.
This is the greatest of life's skills.*

*Now if I keep these thoughts in mind
And practice them, I'm sure to find
There's joyful peace and harmony
In seeing only God and me.*



Hermitage News

- ✦ Mid-March 2025 – Our small flock of Indian Runner ducks has rapidly increased! Sixteen ducklings, including one brown one and fifteen yellow ones, hatched in our incubator just in time for the Feast of St. Joseph. They are already nearly fully grown, and several have been sold. As well as that, we have been enjoying fresh duck eggs, so our two-legged livestock have truly been earning their keep!

Our four-legged livestock, (that is, our two white goats, Flossie and Blanche) have also been earning their keep by providing us with fresh milk and soft cheese besides keeping the grass and weeds nicely trimmed.

- ✦ Early April 2025 – A few necessary developments were carried out by a digger and its driver: the repair of the driveway and drains; a fence for the orchard to protect our young fruit trees from the deer; a new well which can be accessed manually so we have a back-up supply when the electric pump and rainwater fails; and finally an enclosure fence to keep visitors from accessing the nuns' cells.
- ✦ 11th-20th April 2025 – From Friday in Passiontide until Easter Sunday we were blessed to have the visit of Fr. Elias Mary and a young seminarian who provided us with all the Holy Week ceremonies. This year we had a total of 4 servers for the Easter Vigil – the first time we have had so many in our little temporary Oratory!
- ✦ 27th May 2025 – An aspirant from Dublin arrived for a two week live-in. The prospect of an Irish vocation is encouraging, since there will not be any difficult obstacles with visas as there have been with so many other potential candidates.

A multitude of pantry moths have taken up their abode in the walls of the priest's house and have stubbornly resisted all human measures to eradicate them. We suspect they have found their way into the sheep wool which we used in place of some of the regular insulation, and from there they have spread over the entire house. Though we have been able to kill many of them, there is an endlessly renewed supply of dead corpses which makes it impossible to keep the place clean. Hence we have resolved to have recourse to the same means which St. Teresa of Avila used to free her convent from fleas. Three years ago when bothered by a plague of cluster flies, we held a prayerful procession, begging God to drive them away which met with wonderful success. We are confident that a similar procession which we intend to hold in the coming days will free us from this plague of moths.

We thank you, as always, for your financial, moral and prayerful support which enables us to continue out life of prayer in the heart of the Church.

Though all of us share in this prayerful apostolate to some extent, contemplative religious strive to do this in a special way on behalf of all the other members of Christ's Mystical Body. By our lives of prayer and sacrifice, we obtain spiritual blessings and strength for you in exchange for the material blessings and protection you afford us. May God help us in our mutual efforts to fill the role He has assigned to us and to grow together in our likeness to Christ for the glory of His Name and the uplifting of His Holy Church.

In the love of the Holy Face and Sacred Heart 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 Wooden Holy Face Chaplet Beads (blue/brown).....	€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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