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Carmelites of the Holy Face

St. Joseph's Carmelite Hermitage, O.Carm

Inchincurka, Dunmanway, Co. Cork, Rep. of Ireland



Website: carmeliteshollyface.com

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“Behold I send My angel, and he shall prepare the way before My Face.” — Malachias 3:1

Dear Friends & Benefactors,

Those who live by faith, as we are all trying to do, are well aware of the existence of invisible spirits, both good and bad. However, there are two kinds of mistakes we commonly make in our attitude towards spiritual realities. Some of us, while we acknowledge them in theory, are inclined to forget about them in practice, being too caught up with the cares, riches and pleasures of this present life. Others feel acutely the need for a closer contact with and deeper experience of the spiritual world, yet seek it in the wrong manner. How often we hear someone claim to be “a spiritual person” without defining any further what they mean by that term; and without seeming to realise the danger of being misled by spirits of darkness, error and deception! In this newsletter, therefore, we intend to share with you a few thoughts on the discernment of spirits, especially some practical considerations on how to recognise and respond to the good angels who are messengers of God.

St. John tells us: *“Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” — 1 John 4:1*

The third chapter of Genesis and the first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel present us with classic examples of the manner in which the different spirits work. The evil spirit generally presents himself and his temptations under an appearance of good. However, if we take time to pray about the matter instead of acting impulsively, the light of truth will show us that by following his suggestion we would be seeking our own pleasure in preference to the will of God. The good spirit, on the other hand, always inclines us to reverence the will of God, even though it usually involves a certain amount of suffering which nature would prefer to avoid. The bad spirit questions the wisdom of God's decisions. The good spirit only seeks to know what is God's will and how to carry it out in practice.



St. Paul warns us that *“Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light.” – 2 Corinthians 11: 14* Our Lord likewise spoke of the need for discernment when He referred to wolves in sheep’s clothing. The golden rule to follow is this: “By their fruits you will know them.” It is not sufficient to judge by appearances. We must take time to ponder in our hearts, as Mary did, and prayerfully reflect before acting so as to do what God wants of us rather than what we ourselves would prefer.



Almost 500 years ago, St. Ignatius of Loyola composed a famous set of rules for the discernment of spirits, based on his own experience. According to his own definition, *“spiritual discernment is the art of finding God’s will for us in the concrete life situations that confront us each day. It is the link between prayer and action.”* The 6th of these rules is known as ‘the counter-attack,’ or ‘agere contra’ which is a Latin term that means to go against self. This rule is an extremely

important one for those who wish to avoid the illusions of the evil spirit and grow in virtue. The following anecdote from the life of St. Ignatius explains what is meant by that term. When St. Ignatius was still a layman studying in the university in Paris, a young priest, a fellow classmate of his named Fr. Peter Faber, told him that he was suffering from many temptations. Ignatius responded: *“I will teach you a secret on how to get rid of the temptations. Meanwhile the more temptations you will endure, the more you will advance in perfection.” “Teach me your secret!” “Well, as soon as you are tempted, multiply the acts of the opposite virtue. Are you tempted to gluttony? Fast! Tempted to anger? Keep quiet! To hate? Pray for your enemy! To pride? Humble yourself! To sensuality? Do penance!”*

One of the great advantages of acting in this way is that it helps us build up our strength in the spiritual combat and take the initiative against the enemy, instead of merely defending ourselves when we are attacked. The devil, like any coward, only bullies those who are timid, weak or fearful; but quickly flees from those who stand up and resist him with courage and firmness. ‘Agere contra’ likewise strengthens us by uniting us to the Passion of Our Lord. When we wage war upon ourselves, allowing grace rather than nature to be victorious in us, we are not fighting alone. God Himself comes to our assistance and strengthens us with His presence.

But how does God come to us? Because we do not see Him in any visible form, it takes a mind and heart tuned in to spiritual realities by prayer, as well as a spirit of faith, to be able to recognise and welcome Him at each moment in the

postulant; however, she is experiencing some unforeseen delays. Please continue to pray for her, and also for another young lady from the UK who is planning to visit in mid-September.

With the assurance of our prayers, as we mutually endeavour to accomplish the holy will of God,

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
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Small & Thin Blessed 100% Beeswax Candle (188x5 mm).....	offering, €0.50
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Hermitage News

- ✦ June 2025 – After three prayerful processions around the priest's house and a special prayer against pests, the plague of pantry moths began to gradually diminish. Had we been as holy as St. Teresa, perhaps they would have departed immediately, without putting our faith to the test! An army of flying ants has succeeded the moths, but we are confident this will be a short-lived visitation which will cease when the winter weather arrives.
- ✦ 23rd June 2025 – At long last, after eight years of paperwork, expense and frustration, Sr. Anne Marie became an Irish citizen at an official ceremony in Co. Kerry.
- ✦ July 2025 – A benefactor of ours who frequently purchases Holy Face sacramentals from us for distribution wrote to inform us of a wonderful miracle of the Holy Face: after receiving some Holy Face prayer cards and attending the prayers of reparation after Mass in her local parish, a woman who had been in a wheelchair and who was mute for 28 years has been completely cured and is now able to walk and talk like any normal person! We are confident that this is but one miracle of many, which Our Lord is prepared to work for those who have confidence in His promise: "By My Holy Face you will work miracles!"
- ✦ 16th July 2025 – Our two goats, Flossie and Blanche, were rehomed. We decided it was best until the Community grows a little more, since they were giving more milk than we could use and taking more work time than we had to spare. Many of the ducklings and a few young chickens were also sold, while those which we have kept are growing rapidly and are doing great work catching slugs.
- ✦ 18th August 2025 – On this Monday after the Assumption, in accordance with Our Lady's request to Marie-Julie Jahenny, we offered to Our Lady all the hawthorn leaves we had gathered since last year, asking her to bless them.

Our monthly Holy Face prayer meetings, led by Fr. Elias from Wales, have been growing in size and popularity, with faithful coming from as far away as Dublin and Limerick to attend. This is helping to promote the Holy Face Devotion here in Ireland, thanks be to God! Your continued prayers for vocations and for a permanent chaplain for our Community are much appreciated. Agnes from Singapore, who spent time with us last March, has requested to return as a



course of the day. God's normal way of coming to us is to send messengers to prepare the way before Him. So long as we are in the state of grace, He is already present within us; but every moment brings the possibility of gaining a greater measure of that grace and a higher degree of intimacy with Himself. It all depends on the way we respond to God's messengers. Every manifestation of His will, whatever form it might take, is a message; a word from God, asking for our consent and co-operation. Whatever circumstance, event, decision or duty, or whichever person it might be that reveals God's will for us in the present moment is His messenger. Even as angels can adopt many different forms, so do God's messengers reveal themselves in unexpected ways. No matter how far from angelic these messengers might seem to be, they fulfil a parallel mission to that of St. Gabriel at the Annunciation. We are asked, even as Our Lady was, to give God our humanity, to allow Him to suffer in us, and to accompany Him in that redemptive suffering. So much depends upon our response!

Very often the plan of God seems impossible or incomprehensible to us. It makes no sense to our natural reasoning, and so we are very much inclined to follow our own judgement rather than submitting to Him in a spirit of faith. Our Lady's own faith was put to the test when the angel delivered his message to her. How easy it would have been for her to say "No way! That is impossible!" But she did not. Instead she asked for an explanation of how she was expected to co-operate with God's plan. That is exactly what we ought to do when the will of God seems to demand impossible or difficult things from us.



Soon after the Incarnation of Our Lord, St. Elizabeth said to Mary: *"Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished in thee that were spoken to thee by the Lord."* – Luke 1:45 This is a very instructive passage. Mary believed that God would accomplish His word in a way which was humanly impossible, and God blessed her for having believed the angelic messenger who revealed God's word to her. Her initial hesitation in accepting the angel's message did not arise, as Zachary's did, from a lack of faith; but rather from a prudent reserve, praiseworthy caution, and discernment.

In addition, the words of St. Elizabeth show us the importance of our human co-operation with God's plan. Though He is Almighty, He respects our free will and does not compel us to do what He desires of us. If Mary had not believed and consented to the message of the angel, God would not have become

incarnate in her at that moment. It is the same with us. The mystery of the Incarnation is spiritually renewed within us every time we consent to God's will for us. However, that consent depends upon our faith, for almost always God's plan for us is not what we expect.

This opportunity to consent to the Incarnation, to allow Christ to live in us and through us to continue His life on earth — this is not a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It is a constantly recurring situation, though the outward circumstances vary. Each moment God's word is revealed to those who are listening for it. If we haven't experienced this yet, perhaps it is only because we haven't learnt how to listen. Or perhaps we do not believe God's messengers because they do not look like angels, and the message they bring is not what we want to hear.

Detachment from our own will in little things will help us be more attentive to the promptings of the good spirit. Our Guardian Angel is ever present at our side to help us be receptive to the inspirations and words conveyed to us by God's messengers. God's grace is likewise offered to us at every moment to enable us to accomplish His will. He is waiting for our reply, for His messengers do not return empty-handed. The way we respond to them will tell Him whether or not we consent to His plan for us in the present moment. Our Lady has shown us what great things God is capable of doing in a soul which is fully surrendered to His will. May she help us to be like her, and to imitate that generous response which is capable of bringing God back into the midst of a world which is greatly in need of its Redeemer.



God's Messengers

*The angels contemplate God's Face.
As messengers they bring us grace.
God's Word by them to earth is brought.
A resting place for Him is sought.*

*Sometimes this Word is well received;
More often, though, It's not perceived.
Who do not listen, do not hear.
Our hearts must be tuned in by prayer.*

*Transcending predetermined norms,
God's messengers take many forms
Which only faith can recognise.
God's ways are strange to human eyes.*

*Sometimes He speaks through fellow men,
Or things which happen to us when
We simply go upon our way
To do our duties of the day.*

*The fallen angels visit too.
This danger is perceived by few;
Yet it is crucial to discern
And so we must attempt to learn.*

*The Tempter shows us pleasant things.
God's will, when followed, often brings
A cross which nature hates to bear;
Though faith assures us God is there.*

*'Agere contra' in this case
Will keep us safe and bring us grace;
While other gifts of joy and peace
Will make initial pain decrease*

*A prudent and discerning mind
Reflects on matters of this kind
To find God's will and then obey.
Good angels visit when we pray.*

*Our Lady listened. Then she heard
And welcomed the Eternal Word.
God's will by her was well received.
He blessed her much, for she believed.*

*And yet at first she wondered, "How?"
It's good to ask that question now
And ponder in our hearts, as she,
Not answering too hastily.*

*God's will is cherished by the soul
Which keeps emotion in control;
Subjecting all to His decrees
And seeking how to follow these.*

*As we consent to godly plan,
The Word-made-flesh joins God and man;
While messengers return on high
And hymns of gladness fill the sky.*

*Throughout life's journey, it would seem,
The messengers in Jacob's dream
Descend to earth, then rise above,
To help us climb to perfect love.*

*Each moment something is revealed
Which hitherto has been concealed.
God's grace invites us to comply.
The angels wait for our reply.*