

Carmelites of the Holy Face

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



Website: carmeliteshollyface.com

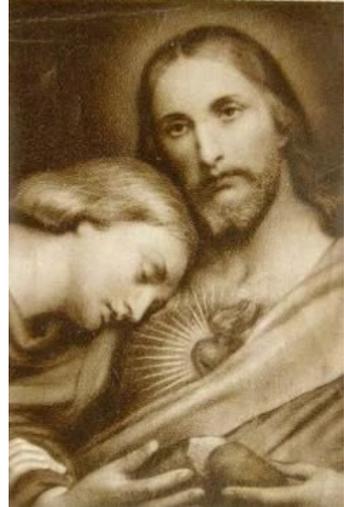
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"It is written, that man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of God." — Luke 4:4

While a few of God's little remnant are voluntarily observing the Lenten fast, it is no exaggeration to say that everywhere souls are spiritually starving, even without being fully conscious of the fact. Catholics in general are experiencing *"not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord."* — *Amos 8:11* The true Sacraments are not as readily available as they once were. Many of the faithful have to wait long weeks and even months for the visit of a priest. Nevertheless, we are assured by the infallible voice of Holy Scripture that *"the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear Him: and on them that hope in His mercy. To deliver their souls from death; and feed them in famine."* — *Psalms 32:19* Our Heavenly Father continues to provide solid spiritual food for His faithful children, but we must know where to look for it and how to effectively partake of it.

The holy season of Lent invites us to refine our tastes and sharpen our appetites for the true nourishment of our souls. While we mortify our bodies by fast and abstinence, Holy Mother Church daily presents us with specially chosen readings in the Divine Office and Mass. It is here, in the inspired Word of God, that we will find that spiritual sustenance which our souls require.

The observation has often been made that Catholics do not attach nearly as much importance to the Bible as Protestants do. There is, unfortunately, a certain amount of truth in this. While the official Liturgy of the Church abounds with Scriptural passages, it is safe to say that, apart from those passages contained in the Missal, the average lay Catho-



lic seldom makes a habit of reading his or her Bible. It may be argued that Catholics have the Sacraments while Protestants have nothing but Scripture. However, that does not diminish the fact that the revealed Word of God has

always held a place of great importance in Catholic Tradition, nor does it mean that the Sacraments are the only source of spiritual nourishment for Catholics. Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical, 'Providentissimus Deus,' taught that the Books of Scripture "*are a heavenly gift, through which God, by a certain divine condescension, communicates Himself and His counsels to men.*" Moreover, St. Jerome, the great Doctor of Scripture, boldly declared that "*ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.*"

The true knowledge and understanding of Sacred Scripture is important, since by it we learn the will of God. But this knowledge must be accompanied by humility and the intention of putting what we read into practice. It is not enough merely to possess a Bible or to read a passage hastily. It is possible to read through the entire Bible and remain unchanged—indeed, to grow only more proud of our supposed knowledge. The devil, after all, knows Scripture far better than we do. The important question is whether or not God's word takes root in a good and honest heart. St. Alphonsus Liguori insists that a single verse upon which we meditate and seek to practice is of more value than whole chapters read merely for intellectual curiosity. The purpose of sacred reading is transformation, not merely information. As the Psalmist prays: "*Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths*" — *Psalm 118:105*



A lamp is not simply an ornament to be admired; it is rather a practical means of enlightening our path which prevents us from stumbling. This is exactly the purpose of meditation— which in the ancient monastic tradition is known as *Lectio Divina*.

This method of prayerful reading, refined over centuries by monks and spiritual masters, consists of reading slowly, reflecting on what God is saying to us personally, responding in prayer from the heart, and resting quietly in His presence. It is not a hurried skimming of verses to fulfil some duty, but a lingering with the Lord as Mary lingered at His feet while Martha busied herself with many things.

The Sacred Scriptures, the Liturgy of the Church, the writings of the Fathers and Saints—these provide us with an abundance of food for the soul. Why, then, do so many remain hungry? Because they seek only the literal sense, the surface meaning. Our Lord reproached the Pharisees for doing exactly that. They were well versed in the Law of Moses and the teachings of the Prophets, but the true meaning was hidden from them because their hearts were hard. The ancient Fathers of the Church, following the tradition of the

Apostles themselves, teach us to read the Scriptures in a deeper manner. Besides the literal sense, which tells us what happened, there is the allegorical, spiritual or mystical sense which finds parallels between the Old and the New Testaments and so helps to strengthen our understanding of Catholic doctrine and of the spiritual life in general. Our Lord Himself taught us this method of interpreting His parables. Then there is the moral sense, which teaches us what we are to do; and some passages also have a prophetic sense, which shows us what we are to hope for both in this world and in the life to come.

In order to find true spiritual nourishment in Sacred Scripture, let us consider three practical counsels drawn from the wisdom of the saints. First, we must approach the Scriptures with reverence and with the mind of the Church. When we read, we should seek to understand the passage as the Church understands it, consulting reliable commentaries and measuring our thoughts by the teaching of the Catechism. The Bible is not a private letter to us alone, but the book of the Church, and it is in the Church that we find its authentic meaning explained.

Secondly, we must read with a good will of putting what we read into practice. Learning how to translate theory into practice, and applying the teachings of the Gospel to our own particular circumstances, is exactly the purpose of daily meditation. Meditation is the means by which we penetrate the meaning of Sacred Scripture and make it our own; without this, the words remain on the surface of the soul and bear no fruit.

Thirdly, let us pay special attention to the Sacred Liturgy. The readings of the Mass and the Divine Office are not chosen at random; they are given to us by the Church as the daily bread of our souls. As St. Jerome reminds us, we cannot separate the Word made flesh in Scripture from the Word made flesh in the Eucharist; both are given to us for our salvation.

St. James tells us: *“be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”* – James 1:22

We have a perfect model of this fruitful hearing in the Blessed Virgin. Of her it is written that she *“kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.”* – Luke 2:19 The Greek word *sumballousa* used by St. Luke in the original text of this passage signifies a bringing together, a piecing of events as in a mosaic, seeking their hidden meaning. Mary is therefore a perfect model of attentiveness and docility to the Word of God. Jesus Himself drew attention to this fact. When a certain woman praised His Mother for having given birth to such a Son, He made it clear she was more blessed because she heard the word of God and kept it. We all have this same opportunity of blessedness.



We see in Mary's Magnificat how completely familiarised she was with the language of Scripture. She spoke and thought with the word of God; the word of God became her word. Her example shows us how to listen to the divine Word in order to know it, assimilate it, and put it into practice. According to the teaching of St. Ambrose, the soul that hears the word of God with faith and keeps it with perseverance in some way conceives Christ spiritually, even as Mary conceived Him physically.

Let us, then, embrace this Lent as an opportunity to grow in our love for Holy Scripture, following the example of Our Lady. Let us read and listen prayerfully, meditating upon what we have read and heard in order to discover how it applies to us in particular. Then the word of God shall indeed become the life and nourishment of our souls, and by it we shall be prepared to celebrate with greater joy the glorious Resurrection of Him who is the Word made Flesh, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Word

*The pages of Scripture with treasures abound
And wonderful teachings within them are found.
There's two different sections: the Old and the New,
With history and mystery uniting the two.*

*The history is truthful. It helps and augments
The mystical meaning, the spiritual sense.
There's practical value for each to derive
When mystical meanings keep history alive.*

*The Bible directs us to Heaven, our goal.
This Bread must be broken to nourish the soul.
While priests have a duty to preach and explain,
Their words cannot help if we listen in vain.*

*God's word must be savoured: both loved and obeyed;
Yet often it's this which we try to evade.
For want of reflection, despite our good will,
We hear and admire, yet do not fulfil.*

*We fast and abstain in the Season of Lent.
By means of this practice our spirits are meant
To seek things eternal, with vices subdued,
And grow in their hunger for spiritual food.*

*The Church, like Our Lady, possesses the role
Of giving Her children the food of the soul;
While we have a duty to love and revere
What She has provided with motherly care.*

*Liturgical readings are done for our sakes.
Instructions and sermons are bread which She breaks.
By hearing and practice we eat and digest
The food which enlivens and strengthens us best.*

*Our Lady's the model of love for God's Word.
She carefully pondered those things which she heard
And prayerfully studied how best to fulfil
The least indication of God's holy will.*

*In Mary the Word of the Lord became flesh.
When we act like Mary, this happens afresh.
Like her, let us ponder the readings we've heard;
May practice make perfect our love for God's Word.*

Cf. Luke 11:28, James 1:22

Hermitage News

- ✦ December 2025 — Thanks to the help and encouragement of the Transalpine Redemptorists, a new charity application form was submitted to the Irish Charities Regulator together with all the supporting documents. We continue to wait and hope that this time it will be successful.
- ✦ January 2026 — Maria from the UK returned for a full two-week live-in, and on the Feast of St. Anthony the Great she renewed her request to be admitted as a postulant.
- ✦ 5th February 2026 — Fr. Elias Mary arrived for a 5-week visit which provided us with the blessings of a full Liturgical life, daily Mass, and a part-time chaplain! We are truly grateful for his support and for this spiritual treat.
- ✦ 16th February 2026 — The Carmelite Sisters in Colorado very kindly offered to promote our book on the Holy Face Devotion, *Beyond the Veil*, in their newsletter, and placed an order for numerous copies which we were pleased to provide at a discounted rate. If anyone else wishes to purchase this book or our other book, *Arma Christi*, in bulk (5 copies or more), please contact us directly to receive a similar discount.
- ✦ 17th February 2026 — The Feast of the Holy Face of Jesus provided a fitting introduction to Lent and a reminder of the positive goal of this penitential season; namely, the restoration of the Divine likeness in our souls. The day ended with a Sung Mass, inspiring sermon, Chaplet of the Holy Face and Benediction. A new set of vestments, featuring the Holy Face of Jesus in the Eucharist and some of the Instruments of the Passion, was completed literally just in time for the occasion.
- ✦ 7th March 2026 — With great joy we welcomed our new postulant, Maria, who is equally joyful to be “back home!”



Please continue to pray for us as we do for you. May the Word of God become ever more and more the life of our souls as we journey towards our heavenly home.

In the love of the Holy Face,

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 Holy Face Chaplet Beads (back in stock soon).....	€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 (please make offering to cover cost of P&P)
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 (silver) with attached Miraculous medal & St. Benedict Medal	€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 (please make offering to cover cost of P&P)

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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