

Carmelites of the Holy Face

Holy Family Carmelite Hermitage O.Carm
Corran, Leap, Co. Cork, Rep. of Ireland.



Website: carmeliteshollyface.com

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“Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee...” Psalm 54:23

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

As we find ourselves once again in the holy season of Advent, our thoughts naturally turn to the mystery of Our Lord's Incarnation. We cannot help noticing the perfect example of trust in God's Providence which Our Lady has given us by her prompt and willing cooperation with God's plan of salvation. As our embryonic Carmelite foundation is being attacked and torn to pieces by the malice of the Devil and his human co-workers, this is therefore an important meditation to keep before our eyes at present.

Perhaps for many of you also, this past year has turned out differently than expected. In any case, we can all derive great benefits from meditating on the Providence of God. For those who wish to read more on this subject than the little we have been able to include, we highly recommend the book; “Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence” by Fr. Jean Pierre Caussade.

Let us try to imagine the state of the world when “the fullness of time” had come. Around 4,000 years had passed since Adam and Eve received the first promise of the coming of the Redeemer. Many generations since then had hoped to see the fulfilment of this promise. Doubtless there were many who had grown tired of waiting. But not Our Lady. As early writers tell us, she prayed with great humility and eager expectancy, asking that she might be allowed to wait upon the woman chosen to be the Mother of the Messiah. Picture to yourself then, if you can, her great surprise when the angel



announced that she had been chosen to become the Mother of God. This message must have raised many perplexing questions for her, particularly regarding the vow of virginity she had made. But notice how perfectly she replied: *“How shall this be done, because I know not man?”* (Luke 1:34). She did not refuse the angel's proposition; she only wanted to know how God wished her to act. At that moment (as indeed at every moment in her life), she was ready to set aside her own plans completely in order to please God.



It is this docility to the arrangements of God's Providence which we should strive to imitate, making our own the words of Our Lady's 'Fiat': *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word."* (Luke 1:38) By acting in this manner, we obtain many benefits; first and foremost being a participation in that wonderful mystery of the Incarnation by which Christ is pleased to dwell in the soul, drawing it to a more perfect life of grace and of union with Himself. This union with God is the goal of the spiritual life and there is no simpler or swifter means of reaching sanctity than by this abandonment of oneself to Divine Providence.

Secondly, we obtain for ourselves as an immediate result of this disposition, a great inner peace. When we know we have done all that God expects of us, the rest is His concern. What profit does it bring us to worry about those matters which are out of our control? We have nothing to lose and everything to gain by leaving the results to God.

A third benefit of abandoning ourselves to God's Providence is the inner joy we experience at the thought of belonging to God as His children, dependant on Him for all our needs of body and soul. Once this disposition becomes deeply rooted in the soul, it naturally overflows and brings peace and happiness to those around us.



There is however, one important point which we must not overlook: by this abandonment of oneself to Divine Providence, we do not mean to say that we can sit back and do nothing, leaving everything to God. There is a saying: "God helps those who help themselves." We must do all that which our duties and state in life require of us, being prepared to do even more in response to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost and the promptings of our Guardian Angel. But the results of our efforts and all other matters which are out of our control should not disturb us, for they are in God's Hands.

"Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they?" (Matt. 6:26)



Our Lady acted with such perfect disinterestedness because she had a pure intention of pleasing God in all that she did or planned to do. She did not even stop to question why God had arranged for His Son to be born in the poverty of a stable, why the King of kings had to flee into Egypt from the wrath of a wicked king or why Jesus had chosen such a painful death, as though she objected to God's will. On that one occasion when after finding Jesus in the temple she asked, *"Son, why hast Thou done so to us?"* it was with great humility so that she might better understand God's mysterious ways.

Such, then, is the way in which we ought to meet the unexpected difficulties in our lives: with a whole-hearted acceptance and submission to God's will. We may even question why, but always with humility so as to learn from experience, as Our Lady did, of the ways in which Divine Providence arranges everything for our good. Like her, we also may receive the reply, *"Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"*

Let us then seek no further (as the Imitation of Christ tells us – Book III, Chapter 58) into matters which we cannot comprehend, but trusting that Our Lord knows what He is doing, let us leave Him free to work in our souls, until He takes possession of them so completely that it may truly be said once more: *"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."* (John 1:14)

To this end, we may pray that beautiful prayer of the Church which She gives us in the Mass and in the Breviary for the Second Week of Advent:

Lord, make our hearts more diligent in preparing the way for Thy Only-Begotten Son, since His coming will enable us to serve Thee with purified souls. This we ask of Thee through Him Who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen. – pre-1962 Missal



Fiat

I love to contemplate this word –
Our Lady's "Be it done";
I think of how it brought to earth
God's own Beloved Son.

This word remained her disposition
Throughout her life on earth;
This word through which was brought about
That wondrous Virgin-Birth.

A simple word, yet hard to say
When questions fill our mind;
But when it's said, a blissful peace
The troubled heart shall find.

One question only should we have:
"Lord, what is asked of me?"
Then, "Be it done as Thou hast said;
I give myself to Thee."

If thus we act, there is no doubt
That things will turn out well;
We'll save ourselves and other souls
From falling into Hell.

Besides, we'll taste the joy she did,
(And many others since) –
The joy of those who place their trust
In God's sweet Providence.

What Is Christmas Really About And How Should We Prepare?

For many people today, Christmas means little more than a time for giving and receiving presents, having a feast with family and/or friends, and putting up Christmas decorations (lights, trees, figures of Santa Claus etc). That is the secular view.

For Christians, it is a time to commemorate Our Lord's Birthday, meditating on that first Christmas over 2,000 years ago.

As Catholics, we have the opportunity to share in the fullness of this mystery. The Christmas Crib and carols assist us in this, and especially the Midnight Mass, where it is possible for us to attend.

Yet there is one aspect of Christmas which is all too often overlooked. It is the fact that in a spiritual way, the Child Jesus comes to us again each Christmas, looking for a place to dwell and to rest; a place where He can find shelter from the coldness of the hearts of so many people who have 'no room' for Him. In other words, dear readers, He knocks at the door of our hearts seeking admittance. The time of Advent ought to have prepared us, just as the Jews were prepared by 4,000 years of waiting for the coming of the Messiah. (Each week of Advent represents 1,000 years.)

Many hearts, like the innkeeper, have 'no room' for Him. They are filled with material concerns and make their Christmas consist in externals only.

There are others (unfortunately even among Catholics) who place too much importance on externals as well. They sing their carols by the Crib and even attend Midnight Mass, but they have little charity for their needy fellow Catholics. Our Lord turns away from them as He turned away from the Pharisees, because although they may keep the letter of the law, attend daily Mass, finger their rosary beads or preach from the pulpit, nevertheless, their hearts are cold.

Then there are those (God-willing we may be included in that number!) who make every effort to prepare for Christ's coming by charity towards those in

need as well as by waging war upon their own shortcomings. In these hearts, the Infant Jesus finds a warm and loving welcome.

This therefore is the most important preparation we can make for Christmas, namely, preparing our own hearts by practicing the virtues – especially charity. As St Paul tells us, if we have everything else without charity, it profits us nothing. Our charity also must not consist in externals only, but proceed from our love for God and a desire for the salvation of souls. Thus, even the poorest person is always able to practice charity, for a prayer costs nothing besides a little effort, and can be of more value in God's sight than a bag of gold given to the poor without love.

Dear readers, when Christ comes, may He find our hearts prepared.

Hermitage News

- ✦ 11 Oct. – At long last, the 2 remaining sections of the modular building were removed. There continue to be many enquiries regarding our site for sale, but potential buyers are put off by the fact that there is no retention on any of the buildings.
- ✦ 6 Nov. – Through our (now former) solicitor, we enquire about getting retention on the wooden cabins as sheds, so as to have a better chance of selling the land. The Council states that retention is unlikely to be granted. They seem to be already fully determined to employ the letter of the law, in all its petty details, to make things difficult for us.
- ✦ 22 Nov. – Workmen arrived to begin dismantling the 24x18ft wooden cabin which has served for over 3 years as our Oratory, sacristy, kitchen and refectory.
- ✦ 29 Nov. – We began dismantling the cells ourselves.
- ✦ 1 Dec. – We began preparing our defence for the upcoming court case with the assistance of a good benefactor.
- ✦ 4 Dec. – Two volunteers spent the afternoon helping us to dismantle 2 of the 5 remaining cells. The last 3 serve us



as temporary kitchen, oratory and sleeping quarters until other arrangements can be made.



- ✦ 10 Dec. – Having decided to dispense with our former solicitor so as to state our case more clearly, Mother Irene was put on trial at court by Cork County Council for an alleged breach of planning laws. Sr. Anne Marie was permitted to speak only as a first-hand witness. We pleaded ‘not guilty’, as we believe under

certain sections of the planning laws, our developments can be classified as exempt, being only temporary structures. The judge did not share our views, having little time to read the relevant quotes; but he took into account the fact that we have made a lot of effort to comply with the enforcement notice, and deferred imposing any penalty until April. He did, however, strongly urge us to move as soon as possible. This was and is our plan, in any case. A kind gentleman has offered us the use of an empty house in East Cork until God opens the way for us to settle down more permanently. For now, any mail may continue to be posted to our current address as we shall be getting our mail redirected. Once we move, we shall inform you of our new postal address.



- ✦ We are deeply grateful to all of our benefactors, and would like to use this opportunity to say a big thank you to all of you who have assisted us in any way over the past year. Be assured you are remembered daily in our prayers, and especially so during the holy Christmas Season. May the Christ Child reward your generosity a hundredfold and more!

Your Carmelite Sisters

Mother Irene of the Holy Face O.Carm and Community

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 made payable to **Mother (Sr.) Irene Gibson**

NSC: 903998

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- ✓ **By a PayPal donation to monabyrne@rocketmail.com or via our web site:**

<http://carmelitesholyface.com/donations>