

Carmelites of the Holy Face

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



Website: carmelitesholysface.com

Issue 22 — February 2023

“Why should they say among the nations: Where is their God? — Joel 2:17

Dear Friends & Benefactors,

There is something so unsatisfying about the spirituality generally encountered in our modern world. It leaves a great emptiness in the human heart which can never be entirely obliterated or filled by anything this world can offer. Even those who have been blessed to discover the true Faith and are sincerely trying to live up to it sense this emptiness, which, whether or not we realise it, is the yearning of our spirit for God, Who alone can fully satisfy us. As St. Augustine put it:

“Thou hast made us for Thyself; O Lord, and our hearts are ever restless until they find rest in Thee.”

We know for a fact that there are many souls crying out for someone to show them the way to God, since hardly a week passes by without bringing in a request from someone in search of spiritual direction. We are very sorry to have to disappoint such people who are genuinely seeking guidance when there are so few to provide it; however, we cannot allow ourselves to be drawn away from our contemplative vocation by engaging in this much-needed apostolate. Our mission is to pray, not to preach and teach! Nevertheless, these heartfelt appeals highlight a genuine need, so we hope that the few thoughts we are able to share with you in our newsletters will bring comfort, encouragement, and an incentive to persevere on the narrow way, however lonely it may seem.

If Faith did not reassure us that God is with us still, it would certainly seem as though He had abandoned us. Like St. Mary Magdalene who found the tomb empty and her Lord absent, we also cry out:

*“They have taken away my Lord; and I know not where they have laid Him.”
— John 20:13*

Where can we find God? Who will show us the way? How truly the words of the Psalmist echo our own sentiments! *“Save me, O Lord, for there is now no saint: truths are decayed from among the children of men.” — Psalm 11:2*

In times past there were many saints – holy men and women renowned for sanctity even in their lifetime – to whom the faithful could look for guidance, example and inspiration. Surely even now there are at least a few saints still living on this earth, but they are so hidden that it is easy to doubt their existence. If we wait until we find them before beginning to live our spiritual lives in earnest, the chances are that we will never begin, nor ever reach the heights of sanctity to which God has called us. Should such a misfortune befall us, whose fault will it be? Not God’s fault, certainly, for it is not He who has forsaken us. It is we who have forsaken Him to the extent that we no longer know how to find Him. Or perhaps we do not want to know. We say we do, and we think we do, but do we really? Are we prepared for all that implies? Are we truly willing to have Him take complete control of our lives and to give Him everything without reserve? If so, then *nothing* – not even the absence of a spiritual director to teach us by word, nor of a living saint to teach us by example – can keep us from advancing to the perfection of the Christian life: union with God. The things which prevent the grace of God from acting freely in us and which hinder us from advancing are always those obstacles which it depends upon ourselves to remove.



“It happens sometimes that God leaves a soul without any direction: the trial is terrible, but if the soul is generous and faithful, it will not lose anything by this, and will only be all the better directed, being under the infallible direction of God Himself... God alone can draw us and unite us to Himself. He alone knows what means are necessary; He knows how to take each individual soul, and by what way to lead it: we have nothing to do but to give ourselves up to Him, to allow Him to act in us, and to follow Him step by step.”
– ‘Manual for Interior Souls’ by Fr. John Nicholas Grou, S.J., Chapter XLI

The book from which we have just quoted is an excellent one for those seeking practical guidance on how to advance in the spiritual life, and we highly recommend it to all who have made a firm resolution of seeking God, regardless of what it costs them. Without such a resolution, we are in danger of being led astray by a false spirituality, for self-sacrifice is a necessary preparation for union with God, which is the goal of all true spirituality. In fact, some of the saints had no other book or teacher than the crucifix. The knowledge and love of Jesus Crucified leads to imitation of Him in His life of suffering and perfect conformity to the will of the Father. This, in turn, leads to union with Him. Thus the crucifix is the summary of all the doctrine of the spiritual life, as St. Paul discovered:

“For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” – Galatians 2:2

In seeking God, it is very helpful to recall what Faith teaches us concerning the places where He dwells, and His manner of dwelling in each. Too often we think of God dwelling in Heaven in a manner very remote from this earth and hard to relate to. Of course He does dwell in Heaven in all His fullness, yet He is much nearer than that. Firstly, He is as present to us as the air we breathe, in the sense given by St. Paul: *“in Him we live, and move, and are.” – Acts 17:28* Thus there is nowhere on earth we can hide from Him, nor can we be buried so deep in sin that we cannot find Him again if we repent. In this sense, God is present even to the pagans.



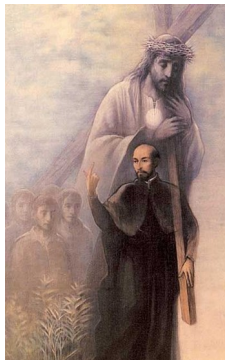
Secondly, He is present in a very special manner in the Blessed Sacrament where He dwells *“Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.”* Our Lord Jesus Christ is present in the Holy Eucharist as really and truly as He was present to His disciples when He lived upon earth 2,000 years ago; yet because we cannot see Him in the form of a Man, it is only by Faith that we can find Him there. He is never closer to us than when we receive Holy Communion, which is a foretaste of the eternal union we are called to have with Him in Heaven and which may be begun by grace even here on earth. That is why it is very important not to omit our thanksgiving when we receive Holy Communion. Even His Eucharistic

Presence, however, is not always a source of much consolation, especially if we are deprived of receiving this Sacrament (as many of the faithful are) for days, weeks, and even months on end.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly and most consoling of all, provided that we have been baptised and are not in the state of mortal sin, Christ dwells in our souls by grace; not in His Humanity, as in the Host, but in His Divinity alone. The reason is because we ourselves must provide the human nature, the body and soul, which He is to unite to Himself and animate with His Spirit to form but one Person: *“Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”* Yet just as His Incarnation only took place when Mary freely consented to the accomplishment of His will in her, so also this sublime transformation only takes place when we freely consent to it. It does not happen automatically. Almost always this will mean sacrifice, for there is a price to be paid for the great joy of union with God. If there were not, we would never learn to appreciate and value so great a favour. But the paying of that price is the secret of obtaining all we could desire.

It is a weakness common to human nature that we shrink from suffering – a dread which Our Lord Himself experienced – and it is this fear of suffering which makes us so reluctant to wholly abandon ourselves to God’s will. In reality, however, when we do make up our minds to carry our cross and earnestly strive to accomplish His will, He Himself strengthens us to dare to do that which we could never achieve alone, saying with confidence:

“I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.” – Philipians 4:13



To reach union with God, therefore, and to find Him even here on earth, one thing is necessary and that is to will it: perseveringly, practically and efficaciously. When He sees us trying, He Himself will come to help us. All the requirements of our duties, whatever they may be, as well as the good inspirations which come to us, are the messengers which He sends to invite us to the wedding feast. If we wish to find God, we must follow them, for they are sent to show us the way. May God grant each one of us the grace of making a firm resolve to seek Him at all costs, for then we shall certainly find Him, and shall reach the divine goal to which He has called us!

Where God is Found

The Lord is our Bridegroom; each soul is His bride.

He knocks on our hearts till we let Him inside;

And yet He is already dwelling within,

So where does one find Him, and how to begin?

He knocks from outside when He bids us to act

As He did Himself, and to suffer, in fact.

He asks us to open our lives to His will,

But He does not force us – the choice is ours still.

His nature is twofold and so is the part

He plays in the winning of each human heart.

His dwelling within us is wholly Divine,

While we are just human. The two must combine.

He calls us to penetrate deeper within,
By practising virtue and rooting out sin;
But also by striving for great recollection –
A wonderful help in the way of perfection.

Perfection consists in a union of wills.
By active endeavours a creature fulfils
God's will; and, consenting to all that is done,
Both actively, passively, two are made One.

The Host is our Pattern to which we must look;
The Crucified God-Man; our Mystical Book.
We must become like Him and be sacrificed,
Divested of self to become Jesus Christ.

Our Crucified Saviour bids us to pursue
His life on the altar, on Calvary too.
Ourselves must be offered in constant oblation,
Becoming Himself – O sublime transformation!

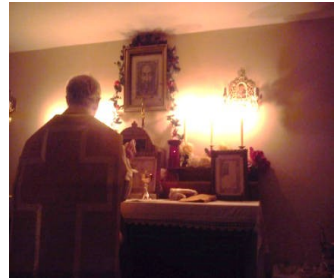
Our souls and our bodies, the bread and the wine,
Are changed to His substance and rendered divine
By means of our "Fiat," our suffering union
With Jesus – the purpose of Holy Communion.

So heed Him, however He chooses to call
(Within or without you) and give Him your all.
The dear Divine Prisoner entreats you to free Him;
To let Him live in you; to actually **be** Him.

Cf. Exodus 25:40, Canticle of Canticles 5:2, 1 Corinthians 3:16, Apocalypse 3:20

Hermitage News

- ✦ 29 November 2022 – We began a novena to the Holy Face of Jesus, including a Commemoration of the Holy Face at Lauds and Vespers, for the intention of obtaining a permanent chaplain. Since Our Lord Himself has promised that nothing we ask in offering His Holy Face to the Eternal Father will be refused, we are confident our petition will be heard.
- ✦ December 2022 – A priest from the USA promised to visit the Hermitage and will arrive in time for the Feast of the Holy Face of Jesus on Shrove Tuesday (21st February). God is good!
- ✦ 25 December – A truly blessed Christmas day! Not just one, but *three* Masses were offered in the Hermitage. The day was brought to a fitting close with Rosary, Benediction and Compline.
- ✦ 3 January 2023 – We began a second novena to the Holy Face, in which we were joined from afar by many of our friends and benefactors. A novena of Masses was also offered simultaneously in honour of the Holy Face of Jesus. Our intention was that our hopes of securing a permanent chaplain may soon be realised. We continue to pray, and ask you to do the same, for this much needed grace.



On the 12th of February we shall begin our annual novena in preparation for the Feast of the Holy Face of Jesus, in which we warmly invite you to participate. Your intentions will be included in ours, even as we hope that you will include ours in yours.

A recent video showing a few additional glimpses of life in St. Joseph's Hermitage is available on YouTube, entitled "*All For God*." It has already brought in a number of vocational enquiries and has captured something of the tranquillity which is so conducive to a life of prayer and union with God. Please share it with any young ladies you know who might be interested in our way of life; and pray for us too, so that we might be faithful to our calling.

With the assurance of our gratitude and prayers, we remain your Sisters in Christ and fellow companions in the spiritual combat,

Mother Irene of the Holy Face O.Carm and Community



Available from our Carmelite Shop:

Cord of St Joseph (with explanatory leaflet and holycard).....	€5.00
Hand-made Wooden Holy Face Chaplet Beads (dark orange).....	€6.00
Miraculous Medal, Standard Size (silver).....	€1.00
Miraculous Medal on Coloured Leather Necklace (var. colours avail.).....	€5.00
Blessed Oil of the Holy Face.....	Free
1 Decade Chaplet Rosary Beads.....	€4.00
Hand-made blue plastic Rosary beads with Miraculous Medal.....	€6.00
Hand-made wooden Rosary beads with Miraculous Medal (purple).....	€6.00
Brown wool Scapulars of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.....	€3.00
Large Ornate St. Benedict Medal.....	€7.00
St. Christopher & St. Anthony Bronze Medal.....	€4.50
Heavy Copper-Coloured Crucifix Key Ring.....	€9.50
St. Benedict Copper- Coloured Crucifix.....	€2.00
St. Benedict Medal, Silver-coloured, oval, standard size.....	€1.00
Holy Face Medal (Shroud Image).....	€1.00
Holy Face Medal 3D (bronze/gold/silver).....	€2.00
Pardon Crucifix (gold/silver/bronze).....	€7.00
Greeting and/or Mass Cards.....	€3.00 each or €10.00 for 4
Hand-made plastic Holy Face Chaplet Beads (red/green).....	€6
Blessed 100% Beeswax Candle.....	offering, €1.00

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
Carmelite Nuns of the Holy Face
St. Joseph's Carmelite Hermitage
Inchincurka, Dunmanway,
Co Cork

Bank Name: **Bank of Ireland**
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- ✓ **PayPal**: monabyrne@rocketmail.com
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