

THE BROWN SCAPULAR - A SIGN OF DEVOTION TO MARY

The Brown Scapular is a Roman Catholic devotion to Mary under her title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. **Our Lady of Mount Carmel** is the title given to the Blessed **Virgin Mary** in her role as patroness of the Carmelite Order. The first Carmelites were Christian hermits living on **Mount Carmel** in the Holy Land during the late 12th and early to mid-13th century. The brown scapular is worn as a sign of love and devotion for the Mother of God. The Carmelite Order, to which the Scapular belongs, originated on Mt. Carmel in the Holy Land and the Scapular is itself a reflection in miniature of the habit (scapular: a sleeveless outer garment falling from the shoulders) which the monks wear as a sign of their vocation and devotion. Over the years the scapular, at least for lay people, became much reduced in size to but small pieces of wool cloth suspended front and back.

OUR LADY APPEARS TO ST. SIMON STOCK

The Scapular was presented by Our Lady to St. Simon Stock, the Father General of the Carmelite Order, on July 16, 1251. St. Simon's story is very interesting. He was an English hermit and lived in the hollow of a tree. He received the name "stock" because he lived in the hollowed trunk or stock of a tree. In time he became a Carmelite and later the Father General of the order. He led the order during a time of struggle. The Carmelites originally were hermits on Mount Carmel, near Nazareth in the Holy Land. When they migrated to Europe, in this case England, some saw great wisdom in no longer being hermits and instead becoming friars who would work among the people. St. Simon guided them through this state of transition. In the year 1251 a most momentous vision took place. St. Simon Stock, newly transplanted to England, prayed earnestly to Our Lady for help. Then: To him appeared the Blessed Virgin with a multitude of angels, holding the Scapular of the order in her blessed hands ...



MARY'S PROMISE TO THOSE WHO WEAR THE SCAPULAR

Our Lady gave St. Simon a scapular for the Carmelites with the following promise, saying : Receive, My beloved son, this habit of thy order: this shall be to thee and to all Carmelites a privilege, that whosoever dies clothed in this shall never suffer eternal fire It shall be a sign of salvation, a protection in danger, and a pledge of peace. Another important aspect of wearing the Scapular is the Sabbatine Privilege. This concerns a promise made by Our Lady to Pope John XXII. In a papal letter he issued, he recounted a vision that he had had. He stated that the Blessed Virgin had said to him in this vision, concerning those who wear the Brown Scapular: "I, the Mother of Grace, shall descend on the Saturday after their death and whomsoever I shall find in Purgatory, I shall free, so that I may lead them to the holy mountain of life everlasting."

VALUE AND MEANING OF THE SCAPULAR

Many popes and saints have strongly recommended wearing, the Brown Scapular to the Catholic Faithful, including St. Robert Bellarmine, Pope John XXII, Pope Pius XI, and Pope Benedict XV. For example, St. Alphonsus said: "Just as men take pride in having others wear their livery, so the Most Holy Mary is pleased when Her servants wear Her Scapular as a mark that they have dedicated themselves to Her service, and are members of the Family of the Mother of God."

Pope Pius XII went so far as to say: "The Scapular is a practice of piety which by its very simplicity is suited to everyone, and has spread widely among the faithful of Christ to their spiritual profit." In our own times, Pope Paul VI said: "Let the faithful hold in high esteem the practices and devotions to the Blessed Virgin ... the Rosary and the Scapular of Carmel" and in another place referred to the Scapular as: "so highly recommended by our illustrious predecessors."