

THE BROWN SCAPULAR

One hot summer day in 1251, St. Simon Stock, Superior General of the Carmelite Order, weighed down by his many cares and concerns, withdrew to their Monastery at Cambridge, England to implore Heaven's help. He begged Our Lady, the Protectress of the Order, to pour out Her graces and benedictions upon the spiritually arid and floundering community.

Mary, in the boundless charity of Her most loving maternal Heart, appeared to the Saint in a vision. Surrounded by multitudes of Holy Angels, She held in Her beautiful hands a brown religious Scapular made of wool. Gazing upon St. Simon with eyes full of love and compassion, She placed the Scapular in his hands with these words:

*“Receive, My beloved son, this Scapular of thy Order; it is the special sign of My favor, which I have obtained for thee and for thy children of Mount Carmel. **Whosoever dies clothed in this Scapular shall not suffer eternal fire. It is the badge of salvation, a shield in time of danger, and a pledge of special peace and protection.**”*

After also reassuring him of Her continued protection, and of the swift correction of the present difficulties plaguing the Carmelites, the Blessed Virgin departed, leaving St. Simon greatly consoled and encouraged.

This vision, in which Mary gave to humanity this garment of salvation, occurred on July 16, 1251. From that hour forward, the apparel of the Carmelite Order was transformed by the Mother of God from its Arabian stripes (the order originated on Mount Carmel in the Holy Land) into the brown and cream habit that we know today.

In fact, on the very day that St. Simon Stock received the Scapular, he was called by Lord Peter of Linton to the bedside of the nobleman's dying brother. The unfortunate sick man, after leading a life of sin and scandal, was now trapped in satan's grasp, obstinately remaining in his sins and refusing the Last Sacraments. He was now possessed by the devil, blaspheming God, and on the edge of dying in despair.

St. Simon's confessor, Fr. Peter Swanington, accompanied him to the home of the possessed man. He tells us that:

“We entered the house and he (the sick man) foamed with rage, was grinding his teeth and rolled his eyes like a furious animal. **St. Simon, seeing that he was about to expire and had already lost the use of his senses, made the Sign of the Cross and placed upon him the Holy Scapular of Carmel.** Then, lifting his eyes to Heaven, he prayed to God to give the unfortunate man time for repentance, so that a soul, bought with the price of the Blood of Jesus Christ, might not become the prey of the demon.

“All at once the sick man regained his strength, recovered the use of his senses, and making the Sign of the Cross, cried against the demon, saying with tears, ‘Alas, wretch that I am, how terrible is the fear of my damnation! My sins are more numerous than the sand of the sea! O my God, Thy Mercy is above Thy justice, have pity on me, and you, my Father, help me.’”

The poor sinner, having received this precious grace from Heaven's Queen, renounced his sinful past, went to Confession, and received the Last Sacraments. He died in the peace and friendship of God just a few hours later. That night, in a dream, Lord Peter saw a vision of his deceased brother, who told him that: **“I have been saved through the most powerful Queen and with the Habit of that man as a shield.”**

This first miracle, while proving so completely the promise which Mary had given St. Simon that same day, served also to rapidly spread awareness of this newest benediction from Heaven. And within the Carmelite Order itself, the blessings which She had promised were soon blossoming forth. The saintly Superior General lived to see the Carmelites flourish marvelously; not only in his native land, but throughout all of Europe as well. He died on May 16, 1265 at the Monastery of Bordeaux at the age of 100, fourteen years after receiving the Brown Scapular from Our Lady.

Over the centuries, our Holy Mother the Church has generously extended the powerful promise of the Scapular to those outside the Order who wish to avail themselves of it. **All that is necessary is to have oneself enrolled in the Confraternity of the Brown Scapular.** Any priest can do this enrollment.

Once enrolled by a priest, all that is left is to wear the Brown Scapular which he will bless. It must be worn around the neck, draped over the front and back of the chest. It should be made of wool. It is recommended that, unless *extraordinary* need compels its removal, it should be worn at all times. If it should ever *need* to be removed, restore it as soon as possible. Also, if your Scapular wears out, simply replace it with a new one – you do not need to be re-enrolled.

Certainly, the greatest consolation for those who are clothed in the Brown Scapular as they are dying is the promise of salvation which the Blessed Virgin has attached to it - ***“Whosoever dies clothed in this Scapular shall not suffer eternal fire.”*** Mary promises to obtain from God all of the graces necessary for the dying person to save their soul. The devout will persevere in sanctifying grace, and sinners will convert and repent in time to make their peace with God.

Because of this promise, the Blessed Mother has sometimes delayed the death of sinners, giving them more time for repentance. And tragically, there have been times when obstinate sinners (attempting to abuse the Mercy of God and His Blessed Mother) have perished, either by their own choice or neglect, without wearing their Scapular. In fact, some have attempted suicide without success, only to accomplish their miserable plan after removing this garment of Mary’s protection.

The benefits derived from wearing the Brown Scapular are not limited to solely at the hour of our death. All those who wear it receive a share of not only the spiritual treasures of all the Carmelites throughout the world, but actually participate also in the fruit of the good done by the entire Catholic Church, as was decreed by Pope Clement VII and Pope Clement X.

The Virgin Mary’s promise of peace and protection is also not restrained to merely the deathbed. There are countless examples of protection and deliverance from all types of dangers, both physical and spiritual, to those clothed in Mary’s Scapular. She regards them as Her special, privileged children. Those invested in the Scapular should realize this themselves, and strive to remember it always.

The Brown Scapular is not a ‘good luck charm’, but a visible sign to ourselves, to others, and most especially to our Heavenly Mother, of *our* love for Her. She is ever ready to help us and assist us; let our Scapular serve as an every day reminder to call on Mary always, in all of our problems, doubts, trials, struggles, sorrows, and necessities.

Our Lady Herself, has emphasized Her great desire for us to wear this precious garment of grace - especially in these modern times. When She appeared at Fatima, Portugal, on October 13, 1917, She appeared as Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, holding a Brown Scapular in Her hand. Lucy (the eldest of the three child seers) asked Our Lady the meaning of this, and then reported the answer: ***“She wants everyone to wear the Scapular... because it is our sign of consecration to Her Immaculate Heart.”***

Thus we see Our Lady’s saving plan, as She urges us once more to consecrate ourselves to Her. For more information on the great importance of this practice, see “Devotions that can Save Your Soul #3 - Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

In 1950, Pope Pius XII, when speaking of the Brown Scapular, affirmed the clear and crucial message of our Blessed Mother, with this exhortation: “Let it be your sign of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which we are particularly urging in these perilous times.”

“One day, through the Rosary and the Scapular, I will save the world.”

- The Blessed Virgin Mary

“... We should not wait for an appeal to the world to come from Rome on the part of the Holy Father; to do penance. Nor should we wait for the call to penance to come from our bishops in our dioceses, nor from the religious congregations. No! Our Lord has already very often used these means, and the world has not paid attention. That is why now, it is necessary for each one of us to begin to reform himself spiritually. Each person must not only save his own soul but also the souls that God has placed on our path.”

- Sister Lucy, seer of Fatima (during the 1957 interview with Father Fuentes)

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