

# The Brown Scapular - Garment of Grace

By Victoria Maria Fatima Rocus

"Whosoever dies wearing this Scapular shall not suffer eternal fire." Our Lady's promise. The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel is a precious gift to us from Our Lady Herself, to wear Our Lady's garment means we are continuously thinking of the Blessed Mother and She in turn is always thinking of us. Wearing the Brown Scapular is like a silent prayer saying we love and trust Her. The Brown Scapular that most of us are familiar with was given to St. Simon Stock on July 16, 1251, when Our Lady appeared to him. In the apparition Our Lady appeared holding the Brown Scapular in Her hand, it was at this time that Our Lady made Her promise of "Eternal Salvation." It is documented that devotion to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel goes back far beyond the time of St. Simon Stock even before the time of Our Lord. The Catholic Church tells us that it goes back all the way to the 8th Century B.C. Carmel is a holy mountain in Palestine; it was there that the Prophet Elijah began his contemplative life of prayer. Holy Elijah and his followers dedicated themselves to God's Mother-to-be, Mary Queen of Mt. Carmel.

Three thousand years later this devotion to Our Lady with its strong roots in prayer and contemplation continues to prevail in the Catholic Church. Jesus gave to us and the world the Holy Catholic Church to teach, govern, and sanctify His name.

The Church celebrates Pentecost; it was on this feast day, the birthday of the church that the spiritual descendants of Elijah and his followers came down from Mt. Carmel. On this special day they were the first to accept the message of Christianity and they were baptized by the apostles. They at last were presented to Our Lady; they heard Her sweet voice they were filled with Her sense of majesty and sanctity which they carried with them for the rest of their lives. When they returned to the holy mountain they built the first chapel ever, honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary.

From that point forward, devotion to God's Mother was handed down by the hermits of Mt. Carmel.

It was in England in the year 1241 that the Baron de Grey returned from the crusades in Palestine, with him brought a group of holy men from Mt. Carmel. The Baron de Grey generously gave the monks a manor house in the town of Aylesford. It was ten years later in that very place where the

famous apparition of Our Lady to St. Simon Stock took place and Our Lady spoke the profound words "This shall be the privilege for you and all the Carmelites that anyone dying in this habit shall not suffer eternal fire." Over time the church extended this awesome privilege to all of us who are willing to be invested in the Scapular of the Carmelites and who wear it perpetually and devoutly.

Many Catholics are invested in the scapular at the time of their First Holy Communion, when a person is enrolled in that tiny habit of wool the priest says "receive this blessed Scapular and ask the Most Holy Virgin Mary that by Her merits it may be worn with no stain of sin and may protect you from all harm and bring you into everlasting life."

Many saints and popes had special devotion to the Brown Scapular: the word scapular comes from the Latin "scapula" meaning "shoulder blade." The Scapular is to be worn over your shoulders, and not carried in your purse, pocket or left on your bed post.

St. Alphonsus Ligouri, founder of the Redemptorist order and St. John Bosco founder of the Salesians, had special devotion to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. When they died both were buried in their priestly vestments and their Scapulars. Years later when their graves were opened their bodies and their vestments had turned to dust; the only thing found in their caskets were their Brown Scapular of

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel that each of them were wearing. St. Alphonsus' Scapular can be seen on display in his Monastery in Rome.

In 1951 on the 700th Anniversary year of the Scapular St. Pius XII told the large audience at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome to wear their Scapulars as a sign of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Our Lady asked for this consecration in the last apparition in Fatima, Portugal at the end of Her apparition to the three shepherd children on October 13, 1917, just before the miracle of the sun. The Blessed Mother appeared to the shepherd children under the titles of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and also Our Lady of Sorrows; St. Joseph also appeared in the sky with the Baby Jesus. The Holy Child and St. Joseph blessed the world three times. We celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel on July the 16th. Many Catholics attend Holy Mass and participate by processing through the streets in Her honor, all over the world.

