

Our Lady's Brown Scapular

Sign of Consecration to Mary.

By Fr Peter Davies, O. Carm.

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WHAT THE POPES HAVE SAID.

"Prompted by Our constant love for the tender Mother of God, and mindful also of Our own enrolment from boyhood in the Confraternity of this same Scapular, most willingly do We commend so pious an undertaking, and We are certain that upon it will fall an abundance of divine blessings. FOR NOT WITH A LIGHT OR PASSING MATTER ARE WE HERE CONCERNED, BUT WITH THE OBTAINING OF ETERNAL LIFE ITSELF, WHICH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THAT PROMISE OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN, WHICH HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN TO US. We are concerned with that which is of supreme importance to all, and with the manner of achieving it safely. For the Holy Scapular, which may be called the Habit or Garment of Mary, is a sign and a pledge, of the protection of the Mother of God. But not for this reason, however, may they who wear the Scapular think that they can gain eternal salvation while remaining slothful and negligent of spirit, for the Apostle warns us: "In fear and trembling shall you work out your salvation."

"Let all of you have a common language and a common armour; the language, the words of the Gospel; the armour, the Scapular of the Virgin of Carmel... which enjoys the singular privilege of protection even after death."

— Pope Benedict XV.

"This most extraordinary gift of the Scapular — from the Mother of God to St. Simon Stock... brings its great usefulness not only to the Carmelite Family of Mary but also to all the rest of the faithful who wish, affiliated to that Family, to follow Mary with a very special devotion."

— Pope Pius IX.

"The Carmelite Scapular, because of its nobility of origin, its extraordinary spread among Christian peoples for many centuries, the spiritualizing effects produced by it and the outstanding miracles worked in virtue of it, render the Scapular of Carmel commendable to a wondrous degree."

— Pope Leo XIII.

"Let us now make a novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and I shall be ready to die."

— Pope Leo XIII during his last illness.

"The Scapular is, in a true sense a 'habit'. Those who receive it are, by their clothing, associated in a more or less intimate way with the Order of Carmel. Those who wear it profess to belong to Our Lady in the same way as the Knight of the Thirteenth Century, the century of the Scapular Vision,

felt that he was ever under the watchful eye of his Lady. He was valiant and sure in battle, and when wearing his 'Colours', would rather have died a thousand times than allow them to be tarnished.

— Pope Pius XII.

"It becomes clearer day by day that the way for men to return to God is assured by Mary, that Mary is the basis of our confidence, the guarantee of our security, the foundation of our hope."

— Pope John XXIII.

"Therefore, all Carmelites, whether they live in the cloisters of the First and Second Orders, or are members of the Third Order Regular or Secular, or of the Confraternities, belong to the same Family of our Most Blessed Mother and are attached to it by a special bond of love. May they all see in this Keepsake of the Queen herself, a mirror of humility, and purity; may they read in the very simplicity of the Garment a concise lesson in modesty and simplicity; and above all, may they behold in this same Garment, which they wear day and night, the eloquently expressed symbol, of their prayers for the divine assistance; finally may it be to them a Sign of their Consecration to the most Pure Heart of the Immaculate Virgin, which (consecration) in recent times We have so strongly recommended.

"And certainly this most gentle Mother will not delay to open, as soon as possible, through her intercession with God, the gates of heaven for her children who are expiating their faults in Purgatory — a trust based on that Promise known as the Sabbatine Privilege."

— Pope Pius XII.

OUR LADY'S BROWN SCAPULAR.

Suppose that Our Lady were to appear to you today, and suppose that she were to promise you that you would certainly save your soul on the fulfilment of one simple condition — would you be interested? Would you not say "Yes"? Would you not promise to accept such a condition? Would you not feel that when your time came to die, her promise would make death easier for you?

If you can say "No" to these questions, then this pamphlet will hold no interest for you. But it will interest you if you sincerely wish to save your soul, because the Queen of Heaven has made this promise to you; and she will keep her promise if you do what she asks.

What is Our Lady's Condition?

Our Lady simply asks you to wear her Brown Scapular during your life, as a sign that you are her child, and because you love her and want to do what she asks. That is all. She doesn't ask you to say any special prayers, or to do any special "acts"—just to wear the Scapular because you love her, and because she has given it to you.

What Our Lady promises.

She promises that if you do wear her Scapular she will take you under her special protection, and she will see to it that you do not lose your soul. Remember, she promises this, and she will do it. She is the Queen of Heaven, and everything she asks of her Divine Son is granted.

How Did Our Lady Make the Promise?

Our Lady made her Scapular Promise over 700 years ago. In 1251 a holy Carmelite priest, St. Simon Stock, who had devoted his whole life to the loving service of the Queen of Heaven,

implored her for some sign of her special protection. She appeared to him, all radiant and loving, and gave him the Scapular. She then made him a promise far beyond what he sought. She said: "THIS SHALL BE FOR YOU AND FOR ALL CARMELITES A SPECIAL FAVOUR — THAT WHOSOEVER DIES WEARING THIS, SHALL NEVER SUFFER ETERNAL FIRE." That was the promise of the Mother of God — that whoever dies wearing the Scapular will be saved. That promise was for you.

What do the Theologians and Spiritual Writers Say?

Our Lady does not mean by her promise that anyone dying in mortal sin will be saved. Theologians and spiritual writers explain the promise to mean that anyone dying while clothed with the Scapular will receive from the Blessed Virgin Mary at the hour of death either the gift of perseverance in the state of grace, or the grace of final contrition.

This is what Blessed [now Saint] Claude de la Colombiere, S.J., says: "Because all the forms of our love for the Blessed Virgin, all its various modes of expression cannot be equally agreeable to her and therefore do not assist us in the same degree to Heaven, I aver, without a moment's hesitation, that the Scapular is the most favoured of all..."

"I know well that the Saints have spoken most encouragingly on the powerful protection of Mary, but enlightened and holy as they have been they are, after all, only men. Here it is the Queen herself who in that celebrated revelation, reveals all the tenderness of her heart to Saint Simon Stock! Those great Saints have assured me that with Mary to protect my interests I need fear nothing. That does not suffice me. I wish to know if she does protect my interests. Yes. She gives me proof unequivocal. I have but to glance at my Scapular, tangible proof before my eyes, and recall the promise attached to its devout wearing: "Whosoever dies wearing this shall never suffer eternal fire."

How we must wear the Scapular.

At the same time that he joyfully professed: "I learned to love the Scapular Virgin in the arms of my mother," Pope Pius XI warned all the faithful that "although it is very true that the Blessed Virgin loves all who love her, nevertheless those who wish to have the Blessed Mother as a helper at the hour of death, must in life merit such a signal favour by abstaining from sin and labouring in her honour." When that great Carmelite, Saint John of the Cross, received the habit he said: "I desire to practice with fervour all the virtues of Mary which this holy habit symbolizes."

With Love and Reverence.

We must wear the Scapular with the same dispositions, striving to love and reverence Mary and doing our best to keep sin out of our lives. If we do this we can be sure that we are wearing it in the right spirit. As a matter of fact, if anyone had no real desire to avoid sin, then that person would not bother to wear the Scapular faithfully and perseveringly. The Scapular is no magic talisman — we shall still be tempted when we wear it — but Our Lady has promised us the final victory over sin if we are faithful to it.

The Scapular Makes You Mary's Child.

When you are enrolled in the Brown Scapular, Our Blessed Lady becomes your Mother in a special way. The Scapular with which she clothes you reminds you of your dependence upon her. Child-like simplicity is one of the silent lessons it teaches. As long as we wear it we shall be reminded that we

are in a spiritual state in which we need to be clothed by Our Blessed Mother, and it will keep us in her arms always.

Of course all men are her children because she is a Mother to the human race; but when you put on her Scapular you put on her special uniform and dedicate yourself to her service. When a young man puts on an army uniform it is a sign that he is in the Queen's service; from that time onward he is serving his country in his daily life — and, in return, he receives special privileges. So with you when you wear Our Lady's own uniform — the Scapular. You belong to her and are consecrated to her in a special way. It is as if you were to say: "I want to be your special child, so I promise to wear your uniform to show this." In return Our Blessed Lady promises you that your salvation will be her special care and that she will not allow you to lose your soul. Although she loves every person in the world, her care and affection for you will be something special, more than others receive.

For Your Part...

Of course we who wear Our Lady's Scapular and are proud to be her children will strive in our daily life to treat her as a loving Mother. It will be our joy to pray to her, to imitate her, to honour her publicly, to be chaste like her, to look to her with loving trust for all our needs. We shall, out of our love for her, find time by her side in saying the Rosary, or the Little Office of Our Lady; we shall find time in our busy lives for some spiritual reading; like her, we shall try to live in God's Presence, training our minds to turn easily and naturally to spiritual things.

During your Lifetime.

Our Blessed Mother's love and care for us will extend to every moment of our life. Every day we are faced with temptations — she will give us the extra graces we need to conquer them. And if, through our weakness or malice, we do fall into sin, a loving appeal to her will obtain the grace of repentance for us. Then also, she will offer us many more opportunities of gaining merit, and of loving her Divine Son more. She will help us to make good use of these. She will help us to be pure, to be honest, to be good-tempered and kind to others. Our Blessed Mother will always be at hand to assist us in times of sorrow or pain or trouble. Even in our everyday difficulties we will not ask her in vain for help. Whatever will help us to love her Divine Son she will obtain for us — every year, every day, every minute and every second of our life, she will be near us.

"Other pious practices," writes Fr. Chaignon, S.J., "are attached to certain times and to certain places, but the devotion to the Scapular belongs to all time and places. Thanks to my little habit, wherever I am, whatever I am doing, Mary never sees me without seeing on my body evidence of my devotion to her. Always and everywhere my Scapular pleads for me, recommends me to her tenderness, tells me that I love her and that I confide all my interests in her maternal care."

At Your Death...

Speaking of the Scapular, Bl. [Saint] Claude de la Colombiere says: "It is not enough to say that the habit of the Blessed Virgin is a mark of predestination. Because of the alliance which Mary contracts with us, and which we enter into with her, no other devotion renders our salvation so certain."

Few of us like to think about dying. We dread it. We don't often think about it. Yet nothing is more certain than that we must all die. We know that, and we know too, that the moment when we die is the most important moment of our whole life. The whole of eternity depends on it. If we die with unrepented mortal sin on our souls, we condemn ourselves, not to a lifetime, but to an eternity of

misery and agony and suffering. If we die with the love of God in our hearts, then, not a lifetime, but a whole eternity of love and complete happiness lies before us. If we could only realize this, how lovingly we would wear the Scapular during our lives! Our loving Mother, the Queen of Heaven, has made us a tremendous promise — "Whoever dies wearing this will never suffer eternal fire"! She will be beside us at that fateful hour. She will see that we have true sorrow for our sins; she will see that our hearts are filled with love for her Divine Son. She will take the terror away from the moment of death, and will strengthen and encourage us. She will remind us that her own beloved Son, Jesus, will not condemn those who have lovingly worn His Mother's uniform during life. Her promise is clear — she will not let us lose our soul.

And After Death?...

Our Blessed Mother's special interest in those who wear her Scapular during life does not cease with their deaths. We would expect her, as a loving Mother, never to cease helping her children until they are released from Purgatory and united forever in Heaven with her Divine Son and herself. But we have far more than a mere hope of such assistance — Our Lady of Mount Carmel has made a second clear and explicit promise on the help she will give to those in Purgatory who wore her Scapular during their lives.

The Second Scapular Promise...

Our Lady has made a second wonderful promise to those who wear her Scapular. Seventy-one years after she had made her amazing promise to Saint Simon Stock she is said to have appeared to Pope John XXII, in the year 1322, and promised in favour of those who wear her Scapular speedy release from Purgatory, particularly on Saturday, provided certain conditions are fulfilled.

The second Scapular Promise does not depend on the alleged vision. It has been ratified by the authority of the Church exercising its power of "binding and loosing".

The conditions are:

1. To wear the Scapular faithfully after valid enrolment;
2. To observe chastity according to one's state;
3. To recite daily the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin.

The first two conditions are unchangeable, namely, to wear the Scapular and to observe chastity, but in regard to the third condition, anyone who cannot read the Office may substitute abstinence from flesh meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays. No commutation is necessary to substitute abstinence for the Office in this case. But, if the Office is too difficult, any priest with power to enrol in the Scapular may change it for something else. The usual commutation is the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be, etc., seven times each day, or the recitation of the Holy Rosary.

The Sabbatine Privilege...

This second promise in favour of those who wear Mary's Scapular is known as the Sabbatine Privilege. It is called the Sabbatine Privilege because of Our Lady's special mention of Saturday (in Latin, *Sabbatum* means Saturday) as the day when she will come to the assistance of her children.

Saturday is traditionally honoured as Our Lady's day — the liturgy provides special Masses in her honour and we are encouraged to turn our thoughts and prayers to her on that day.

This privilege has been approved again and again by later Popes, and it is a common practice for devout Scapular wearers to hope and pray for the grace of dying on Saturday. The great Carmelite mystic, St. John of the Cross, used to pray for this grace, and his prayers were answered. Before he died, in the year 1591, he said: "The Mother of God and of Carmel hastens to Purgatory with grace on Saturday and delivers those souls who have worn her Scapular. Blessed be such a Lady who wills that, on this day of Saturday, I shall depart from this life!" Pope Benedict XV. moved particularly by the thought of this great privilege, said to the seminarians of Rome: "Let all of you have a common language and a common armour; the language, the sentences of the Gospel; the armour, the Scapular of the Virgin of Carmel which enjoys the singular privilege of protection even after death."

Pope Pius XII wrote in his Scapular letter for the Seventh Centenary of the devotion: "And certainly this most gentle Mother will not delay to open, as soon as possible, through her intercession with God, the gates of heaven for her children who are expiating their faults in Purgatory — a trust based on that Promise known as the Sabbatine Privilege."

Too good to be true?

These then are the two amazing promises made by Our Blessed Lady in person, for those who faithfully wear her Brown Scapular. You may be tempted to say: "It is too good to be true — it makes the work of saving my soul too easy." But you would be forgetting the great fact that underlies this devotion — Our Blessed Lady is the Mother of God, and at the same time she is your Mother. She is the Mother of God, of Jesus Christ who is really God, and who can do all things. What He wants she wants, and whatever she desires her Divine Son gives to her. And, at the same time, she is your Mother, loving you far more than your earthly mother, prepared to give you far more, wanting only that you shall be united with her in Heaven in the love of her Divine Son. Who could say that she cannot carry out her promises? Who can say she does not want to do so? She can and she will. If you honour her during your life by wearing her Scapular, she will certainly be true to all she has promised.

Other Privileges of the Scapular.

So far we have only considered the two great promises of Our Lady — but they by no means exhaust the spiritual treasures that may be gained by wearing the Scapular faithfully. There are many others which, even apart from Our Lady's promises, would be enough to make us wear it. The Scapular is a storehouse of spiritual treasures — the extent of which we shall only fully understand in Heaven.

You Share in the Merits of the Carmelite Order.

The Scapular is a privilege granted by Our Blessed Mother to the religious Order especially dedicated to her — the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, better known as the Carmelite Order. You receive the Scapular through this Order, and become in this way the sharer of its spiritual goods. When you reflect for a moment on the holiness of an Order that has, for many centuries, given great Saints to the Church, you will realize that this is no mean privilege. You know the holiness of Saints like St. Albert of Sicily (died 1306), St. Angelus, St. Peter Thomas, St. Therese the Little Flower, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, and many others. There were Carmelite Saints who loved the Scapular and share it with you as the precious gift of Our Blessed Mother. You share it with all of them, and you share in their merits too.

Moreover, you share also in all the prayers and merits of every Carmelite Monastery throughout the world. You share also with the immense body of the faithful who wear and love the Brown Scapular — the hundreds of millions of people of every race and in every part of the globe. All belong to the same family and have the same Mother, and the prayers and merits of the other members help us in our particular difficulties. The Brown Scapular is the badge of that big family — by wearing it you are entitled to every privilege as one of Our Lady's special children.

Indulgences.

The Church has shown its wholehearted approval of the Scapular by opening to it the store-house of indulgences. The list of indulgences is so long that it would be impossible to give it here; indeed a complete list of them would almost fill the pages of another A.C.T.S. pamphlet. The late Prior-General of the Carmelite Order, Father Magennis wrote: "Through the generosity of the Church, we thus have — apart from the two promises of Our Blessed Lady to all who wear her Scapular — a rich field of spiritual favours from which we may reap an abundant harvest, not only for ourselves, but also for those souls who, whilst on earth, were united to us by the bonds of love and friendship and fraternal charity." So, by wearing the Scapular, we are able to assist far more effectively the holy souls in Purgatory. Those who were near and dear to us during life will, even after their deaths, be helped greatly by our faithful wearing of the Scapular.

What the Popes Say About the Scapular.

As good Catholics, we always look to the Holy Father for a lead in matters of devotion, and we know that what is approved by the Pope is safe for us to follow. For many centuries, the Popes have publicly voiced their approval of the Scapular, and have themselves worn it faithfully and lovingly. When Leo XI was being crowned as Pope [in 1605], his Scapular was accidentally removed from his shoulders, and he said: "Leave me Mary lest Mary should leave me" — an eloquent tribute to his faith in Our Lady's promises.

Pius IX.

Pope Pius IX was notable for his special love for the Mother of God. It was he who defined the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. This saintly Pontiff said: "This most extraordinary gift of the Scapular from the Mother of God to St. Simon Stock, brings its great usefulness not only to the great Carmelite family of Mary, but also to all the rest of the faithful who wish, affiliated to that family, to follow Mary with a special devotion."

The Workingman's Pope — Leo XIII.

Pope Leo XIII is known to all of us as the author of the great encyclical letters on social and labour reforms. All his life he had a tender devotion to the Scapular. When he knew his death was near after his long and fruitful reign, he called his close friends to his bedside and said: "Let us make a novena to Our Lady of the Scapular, and I shall be ready to die." Earlier in his Pontificate he had said of the Scapular — "Its nobility of origin, its venerable antiquity, its extraordinary spread in the Church, the spiritualizing effects produced by it, and the outstanding miracles worked in virtue of it, make the Scapular of Carmel commendable to a wonderful degree."

Saint Pius X.

This saintly Pontiff, often called the "Pope of the Eucharist" because he permitted children to receive Holy Communion, not only wore the Scapular — he was also a Carmelite Tertiary, a member of the Third Order of Carmel.

Pope Benedict XV.

Pope Benedict XV ascended the throne of St. Peter in 1914, the year in which the terrible First World War broke out. His pleas for peace fell on deaf ears — but his stirring appeal for the wearing of the Scapular should be heard by every Catholic. He declared: "Let all of you have a common language and a common armour; the language, the sayings of the Gospel; the common armour, the Scapular of the Virgin of Carmel which you all ought to wear, and which enjoys the extraordinary privilege of protection even after death."

The Pope of the Missions — Pius XI.

Many of us remember Pope Pius XI who died in 1939. It was he who canonized the great Carmelite Saint, Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, and made her the Patroness of Missions throughout the world. But, long before he knew little Therese, he was devoted to the Scapular. He said: "I learned to love the Scapular Virgin in the arms of my mother." He never tired of urging the faithful to wear the Scapular faithfully and so obtain the protection and promises of Our Lady.

Pope Pius XII.

Pope Pius XII, shared the devotion of his predecessors to the Scapular — a devotion which went back to his boyhood days. His very beautiful letter on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the Scapular is quoted in the introduction to this pamphlet.

A Sign and Pledge of Mary's Protection.

Could anyone have any doubts of the value and the sincerity of Our Lady's promises when the Popes have so un-hesitatingly accepted them? Pope Pius XII called the Scapular "the keepsake of the Queen herself, and the Garment of Mary." His predecessors for 700 years loved it and trusted to its protection. We need have no fear of doing what they have done, and what they have so constantly urged us to do. Let us put it on then with confidence and love for our Heavenly Queen, knowing that in doing so we are honouring her, and that, in return, she will do all she has promised for us.

Consecration to Mary.

When Our Lady appeared at Fatima in 1917, she reproached the world for its laxity and commanded us all to pray for sinners. She promised peace to the world if only the world would turn to her, and she requested the consecration of ourselves and of the world to her Immaculate Heart. In the last vision to the children of Fatima, on 13th October, 1917, the children saw Our Lady clad in the Carmelite habit and holding her Brown Scapular down towards the crowd. This was her last appearance. It was an eloquent sign of her desire that all should wear the Scapular in her honour, and as a sign of their consecration to her. Pope Pius XII no doubt had this in mind when he wrote these words in the Scapular letter: "May it (the Scapular) be a sign of their consecration to the Most Pure Heart of the Immaculate Virgin, which consecration we have so strongly recommended in recent times."

Each and every one of us has the duty of taking part in the crusade to bring God back into the lives of men and of nations. Our Lady herself promised at Fatima that this would be effected by the

consecration and devotion of the world to Her Immaculate Heart. She said: "If my requests are heard, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace." Here then is your task, and the means are within your reach. By wearing the Scapular faithfully you are consecrating yourself to the Queen of Heaven in the way she desires, and in the way that the Holy Father has recommended. You will be doing your part towards winning peace for the world, and for the triumph of God and His Church over all the evil influences which today are attempting to overthrow it.

Are You Enrolled in the Scapular?

Most children are enrolled in the Brown Scapular when they make their first Holy Communion. If you were enrolled as a child and have perhaps not worn the Scapular for a long time, you do not have to be enrolled again. All that is necessary is to obtain a new Scapular and wear it. A new Scapular does not have to be blessed, but is simply worn immediately you get it.

If you have never been enrolled in the Brown Scapular, any priest with diocesan faculties in Australia and New Zealand may do so — parish priests and curates have the necessary authority, as well as all priests of Religious Orders who are authorized to hear confessions in the diocese. Any of them will gladly enrol you if you ask him.

The Scapular Medal.

Because of the difficulty of wearing the cloth Scapular in very hot climates, Pope Saint Pius X permitted the use of the Scapular Medal as a substitute. The medal must have the image of Our Lady on one side and that of the Sacred Heart on the other, and it must be blessed. For the actual enrolment in the Scapular a cloth Scapular must be used.

All except one of the spiritual favours and indulgences of the Scapular, including the Sabbatine Privilege, may be gained by wearing the Scapular Medal. In order to encourage people to continue wearing the cloth Scapular, Pope Saint Pius X granted an indulgence of 500 days each time we kiss our cloth Scapular. This does not apply to the medal. [The Indulgence is now termed a 'partial Indulgence', since Vatican II. Please note that God is in no way less generous to His people either before or after an Ecumenical Council.]

The cloth Scapular is to be preferred to the medal since it is the habit of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in miniature. When its place is taken by the medal much of the rich symbolism of the Scapular devotion is lost. It is true that the medal is more convenient to wear; but one should remember that little sacrifices are highly pleasing to Our Lady. It is recommended, therefore, that all who can should wear the cloth Scapular, and when that is inconvenient during the day and the medal is substituted, the cloth Scapular should be worn at least during the night.

Your Brown Scapular.

Now that you have read about the Brown Scapular, can you fail to be impressed with its importance for yourself? Our Blessed Lady has made her promises for you; she promises that you will save your soul if you wear it faithfully, and that she will, after your death, shorten your time in Purgatory. To neglect such promises would be rash indeed! Take then Mary's Scapular, wear it faithfully with love and with reverence in her honour — if you do, it will most surely be for you a pledge of her maternal protection in life, in death, and even after death!
