

Mount Carmel Novena

Being the First of Three Novenas.

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Mt. Carmel; Our Lady of Fatima; St. Joseph.

MOUNT CARMEL NOVENA.

FIRST DAY:

There is something splendid about a uniform.

We honour the soldier who returns with ribbons on his chest and wound stripes on his sleeve, and we salute his uniform.

Romance has attached itself to the uniform of a sailor or a marine.

The plain white uniform of the nurse has become a gleaming symbol of mercy and tender service.

The uniform donned by the doctor in the operating room is ugly — and wonderful.

The priest is proud of his cassock, Christ's uniform; the nun regards her habit as her cloister, her dwelling place of peace.

The scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is a uniform, the splendid uniform of those who enlist under Christ and Mary to battle evil and defend the right.

Wear that scapular, love it, honour it. Be proud of this, your uniform and sign of grace.

In this pride we say:

The Prayer of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

O God, who has honoured the Order of Carmel with the special title of your Blessed Mother Mary, ever Virgin, grant in your mercy that we who keep her memory this day may be shielded by her protection and be found worthy to attain unto joy eternal. Who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

SECOND DAY:

Almost from the dawn of history uniforms have suggested war.

Soldiers wore them when they went out to do battle.

Now with the coming of Christ a new kind of war was emphasized: the war of truth against lies, of right against wrong.

Naturally enough in this new war, in which there were armies on the side of Christ, the men and women pledged to fight the good fight and thrust Satan back into hell came to wear uniforms. These

were the religious habits of early Christian times, the special garb worn by priests and brothers and nuns.

The most distinctive feature of this uniform was the cloth cape worn in front and in back. This was called the scapular.

When lay men and women, eager to join the fight of right against evil, asked to be enrolled in the army of Christ, they wanted a uniform. So the scapular, the long cloak, was given to them too. And since this scapular was difficult to wear in ordinary workaday life, the cloth was cut to a small square in front and in back. That is our modern scapular. It is the badge of our allegiance to Christ and His Mother in their fight against the forces of Evil. It is a distinctive emblem of a Catholic.

We who in our youth were enrolled in the scapular say:

The Prayer of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

O God, who has honoured the Order of Carmel with the special title of your Blessed Mother Mary, ever Virgin, grant in your mercy that we who keep her memory this day may be shielded by her protection and be found worthy to attain unto joy eternal. Who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

THIRD DAY:

How strange it seems to think of Mary as a warrior.

The gentle maid of Nazareth, the Virginal Mother, the Mother of the Prince of Peace, is still called — and properly called — "More terrible than army in battle array."

And so she is. For when Satan, the great and immortal enemy of the human race, won the preliminary skirmish of Eden, the voice of God Himself foretold that the foot of a conquering woman would crush the devil's head.

Mary, conqueror of heresies...

Mary, triumphant always in the battle with sin...

When then we put on the scapular, which is Mary's uniform, we join in a special way the regiment of which Mary is queen and honorary colonel.

We pledge ourselves to do battle against the enemy of the human race.

We will be victorious as Mary is victorious, and conquering as Christ is conquering.

Part of the always-beaten and the never-vanquished, the always-attacked and the never-overcome army of Christ's kingdom, we wearers of the uniform of Mary know the certainty of victory and the clear prospect of eternal peace.

To Mary, queen of the armies of Christ, we say:

The Prayer of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

O God, who has honoured the Order of Carmel with the special title of your Blessed Mother Mary, ever Virgin, grant in your mercy that we who keep her memory this day may be shielded by her protection and be found worthy to attain unto joy eternal. Who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

FOURTH DAY:

Among the many uniforms that are worn by members of the various regiments in Christ's army of peace, none is more widely known or better loved or most historically honoured than the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

The legend and tradition of the great Carmelite Order, which gave this uniform to the Christian world, goes far back into history.

On the heights of Mount Carmel the great Prophet Elias (Elijah) lived a life of hunger for Christ. Looking forward into history, he saw the Saviour who was to come, and the Virgin who would be His Mother.

He honoured her whom he had never seen and spoke of her to the disciples that he gathered around him. Sons of the Prophets they were called. They lived together on Mount Carmel and kept their souls in alert expectation of the coming Saviour. They sang in advance the praises of the Saviour's Mother. They were a religious vanguard of Christianity.

When their uniform, their scapular, became known throughout the world as the special badge of Mary's soldiers, they gave it to lay men and women too — and with it a share in their fight to advance the kingdom of Christ.

To the Lady foreseen and beloved by Elias (Elijah) we say:

The Prayer of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

O God, who has honoured the Order of Carmel with the special title of your Blessed Mother Mary, ever Virgin, grant in your mercy that we who keep her memory this day may be shielded by her protection and be found worthy to attain unto joy eternal. Who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

FIFTH DAY:

A uniform is a splendid and shining thing.

Beyond all else it is unmistakable.

One has no doubt about the differentiating characteristics of one who wears a general's stars, or a Roman collar, or the red coat of the Mounties, or the veil of a nun.

A uniform says to friends: "Here I am, and you may call upon me if you need me."

A uniform speaks to enemies: "I am on guard, and you must reckon with me."

So it is that a scapular, the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, is a public profession of the wearer to fight.

Before all observers that scapular says: "I am a soldier of Christ and of Mary. I am a sworn enemy of evil."

"Do not disgrace the uniform," cries the general to his soldiers. And they know that they merit death if they turn traitor.

"Do not disgrace the scapular," cries Our Lady, to those who wear it. And they know that they cannot go over to the side of the devil or become party to lies or accomplices in evil. They cannot

be cowards when temptation threatens, and they dare not, in the life-and-death struggle that is constantly waged between the powers of heaven and the powers of hell, grow slack and fall asleep.

Pledging ourselves anew to the great fight for Christ against evil, we say:

The Prayer of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

O God, who has honoured the Order of Carmel with the special title of your Blessed Mother Mary, ever Virgin, grant in your mercy that we who keep her memory this day may be shielded by her protection and be found worthy to attain unto joy eternal. Who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

SIXTH DAY:

Mary knows her own.

Mary watches over her own.

She has a Mother's love for those who profess openly before the world their love for her.

So she watches with eagerness and guards with care those sons and daughters who wear her uniform and profess by her scapular their consecration to her.

A wedding ring is a sign of love pledged and fidelity preserved.

A locket is eternal reminder of the one whose picture the locket frames.

A scapular is public manifestation in the sight of God, of men, and of angels that we belong to Mary, that we love her virtues, and that we are trying to live her life before all observers... a beautiful "spectacle for God and men."

How wise is the person who in this age of temptations marks himself clearly as Mary's property. Mary guards her own. She will guard him.

How full of divine common sense is the person who makes it clear that he wants Mary near him in danger and that he hopes her eyes will find him easily when he is in peril. Mary watches over her own. She has no doubt that this one who is marked clearly with her uniform is her own.

Confident in the protection that Mary grants to those who are her own we say:

The Prayer of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

O God, who has honoured the Order of Carmel with the special title of your Blessed Mother Mary, ever Virgin, grant in your mercy that we who keep her memory this day may be shielded by her protection and be found worthy to attain unto joy eternal. Who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

SEVENTH DAY:

Since it is part of a great tradition, the story of the Carmelite scapular should be told — even if only briefly.

Saint Simon Stock, a Carmelite of heroic stature, loved Our Lady, as the Order of Mount Carmel was vowed to do.

He saw the temptations that threatened the purity of young people.

He watched with horror as the devil won to his side cleverness and strength and power.

"Mary," he prayed, "what can I do to safeguard your beloved sons and daughters?"

In a vision Mary presented him with her scapular.

Saint Simon placed it upon the tempted breasts of the young, and their temptation fled. In all simplicity he gave it to the wise and the learned, and they suddenly knew that the highest wisdom is faith in Mary and in her Son. He consecrated cleverness by enlisting it in Mary's army and clothing it in her uniform. He made power and strength humble as he dressed them in the simple livery of the maid of Nazareth.

Mary saw her uniform worn now by millions. Down through the ages the priests of the Order of Carmel continued to clothe the followers of Mary in her uniform.

And Mary continued to watch over and protect her own. To her we pray:

The Prayer of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

O God, who has honoured the Order of Carmel with the special title of your Blessed Mother Mary, ever Virgin, grant in your mercy that we who keep her memory this day may be shielded by her protection and be found worthy to attain unto joy eternal. Who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

EIGHTH DAY:

When a soldier dies, he is buried in his uniform. In a way his burial is his final dress parade.

When a priest dies, he is clad as for Mass, vestments covering his human form with divine disguise.

When a man or a woman religious dies, he or she is clothed for the last time in the habit; he or she goes to the grave and to final judgment unmistakably marked as one consecrated to God.

In life the scapular is a public profession of the wearer's love for Mary.

It is an assurance that the wearer will do Mary's work and fight her fight if she will protect and guard and mother Him.

In death that scapular is a fresh pledge of immortality.

The wearer of the scapular goes down into the grave marked clearly as Mary's soldier.

God sees this sign. The angels recognize and honour it. The devils know it and in hatred flee it.

We pray to Mary, "Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death."

As wearers of the scapular we give that prayer new meaning when in death we are marked as soldiers who have tried to fight the good fight and who wanted to be buried in the uniform of their queen.

To Mary, our hope in death, we say:

The Prayer of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

O God, who has honoured the Order of Carmel with the special title of your Blessed Mother Mary, ever Virgin, grant in your mercy that we who keep her memory this day may be shielded by her

protection and be found worthy to attain unto joy eternal. Who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

NINTH DAY:

The great moment in a soldier's career is the moment of home-coming.

Battle over and victory won, he walks into the city of his birth and is welcomed by the citizens, thanked by the rulers, and embraced by his mother.

His uniform, battle-stained though it may be, is something of which he is proud.

He wears it whenever he and his comrades gather for a grand review.

The great moment in the life of a Christian soldier, a warrior of Christ and of Mary, is the moment of home-coming to heaven.

He is the conquering hero; there is no chance of his having been forgotten.

The citizenry of heaven greet him with applause.

His palm of victory and his crown are waiting for him.

He will be presented as one of the conquering army to the Blessed Trinity.

Mary, his beloved Mother, folds him to her heart.

How splendid if at that moment of entrance into heaven the soldier of Christ proudly wears the uniform that is the scapular and with utter confidence and a sense of a fight well fought smiles into the grateful eyes of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

To her we say:

The Prayer of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

O God, who has honoured the Order of Carmel with the special title of your Blessed Mother Mary, ever Virgin, grant in your mercy that we who keep her memory this day may be shielded by her protection and be found worthy to attain unto joy eternal. Who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

The Feast day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is 16th July.
