



The Brown Scapular of Mount Carmel: “Our Lady’s Garment”

What Is The Brown Scapular?

Part One of a Two Part Series



The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is best understood in the context of our Catholic faith. It offers us a rich spiritual tradition that honors Mary as the first and foremost of her Son's disciples.*

From the time of the first Pentecost, devotion to God’s Mother became the treasured spiritual legacy of the hermits on Mount Carmel. **It was to St. Simon Stock, the successor of these hermits of Mount Carmel, that Our Lady appeared centuries later. On July 16, 1251** he poured out his heart to the Blessed Virgin Mary — the Flower of Mount Carmel — asking Her to help him and all the Carmelites. Then, **accompanied by a multitude of angels, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him, holding in Her hands the Scapular of the Order,** and said: “This shall be to you and to all Carmelites a privilege that anyone who dies clothed in this [Scapular] shall not suffer eternal fire.”**

The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is the habit of the Carmelite Order. For the laity it takes the form of a two smaller pieces of brown or dark cloth, preferably plain, joined over the shoulder by ribbons, and falling, one to the back, the other to the front. As the Order's habit, the scapular signifies some degree of affiliation to the Carmelites.*

The Brown Scapular is a sacramental. A sacramental is a special prayer, action or **object which, through the prayers of the Church, prepares a person to receive grace and to better cooperate with it.** Unlike a sacrament, a sacramental does not itself confer the grace of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, like a sacrament, a sacramental **helps the faithful to sanctify each moment of life and to live in the paschal mystery of our Lord.*****

The **scapular is not** a magical charm to protect us, an automatic guarantee of salvation, or an excuse for not living up to the demands of the Christian life. ***

The Brown Scapular is a sacramental which:

- has been approved by the Church for over seven centuries
- stands for the decision to follow Jesus like Mary: - open to God and to His will, - guided by faith, hope and love, - close to the needs of people, - praying at all times, - discovering God present in all that happens around us
- introduces people into the family of Carmel
- points to a renewed hope of encountering God in eternal life with the help of Mary's protection and intercession ***

The scapular finds its roots in the tradition of the Carmelite order, which has seen in it a sign of Mary's motherly protection. It has, therefore, a centuries' old spiritual meaning, approved by the church. It stands for a commitment to follow Jesus, like Mary, the perfect model of all the disciples of Christ. This commitment, in turn, finds its origin in Baptism by which we become children of God. It leads us into a community of religious men and women, which has existed in the church for over eight centuries, and calls on us to live out the ideal of this religious family: intimate friendship with God in prayer. It also reminds us of the example of the saints of Carmel, with whom we establish close bonds as brothers and sisters to one another, and is an expression of our belief that we will meet God in eternal life, aided by the intercession and prayer of Mary.***

Finally, the scapular is a constant reminder to live like Mary, open to God and to His will as shown to us in the events of our lives: to listen to the Word of God in the bible and in life, to believe in this Word and to put its demands into practice; to pray at all times, as a way of discovering the presence of God in all that is happening around us; and to be involved with people, being attentive to their needs.***

(Coming next week...Part Two of this Series)

*http://meditationsfromcarmel.com/sites/default/files/pdfs/brown_scapular_handout.pdf

** <http://www.ewtn.com/library/ANSWERS/WHATBLES.HTM>

***<http://carmelitesfeldridge.org/scapular.html>