

Dolorosa

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JULY 2018

THE PERFECT EFFORT



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Off the coast of the Mediterranean Sea lies a mountain in Israel that has special significance to our holy Faith. The Hebrew name of the mount is *Hakkarmel*, which means “the garden,” “the garden-land,” or “the garden of God.” The Hebrews gave the mountain this name because of its exquisite flowers and shrubs, as well as for its fragrant herbs. In English this mountain is called *Mount Carmel*.

It was on Mount Carmel, as we read in the Third Book of Kings, that the prophet Elias defeated 450 priests of the false god Baal in a spiritual contest. During a long drought, Elias and the priests of the pagan

god each prepared a sacrifice. Elias then proposed a challenge. “Call ye on the names of your gods,” he said, “and I will call on the name of my Lord: and the God that shall answer by fire, let him be God” (18:24). The prophets of Baal called upon their god from morning until evening to no avail. Almighty God, however, heard the prayer of Elias and let fire fall from heaven to consume Elias’ sacrifice. The true God was thus revealed.

After this triumph Elias went to the top of Mount Carmel, knelt down, and began beseeching God to end the drought. At length his prayers were again heard. After some time, a little cloud appeared—a cloud which the Roman Breviary refers to as “a remarkable symbol of the Virgin” (Office of the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel). Theologians see this little cloud as a figure of the Blessed Virgin because the cloud heralded the coming of rain which would save Israel from the drought, just as Our Lady heralded the coming of the Divine Savior Who would redeem mankind.

According to a certain tradition, a number of years after Elias left this earth, a small group of hermits established themselves on Mount Carmel in the very place that Elias had seen the cloud. These men were followers of Elias. They were edified by the life of prayer, penance, and silence that Elias had led, and they were determined to devote their lives



—Domenico Fetti. *The Sacrifice of Elijah Before the Priests of Baal*. 1621-1622. Buckingham Palace, Royal Collection Trust, UK.

MOUNT CARMEL NORTHERN ISRAEL



to prayer and penance. They dedicated themselves, in particular, to pray for the coming of the Virgin spoken of by the prophet Isaias (7:14). Thus, after Elias was taken up to heaven by a fiery chariot (IV Kings 2:11), this group of hermits continued his way of life on Mount Carmel.

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Centuries later, as related in the Roman Breviary in the Office for the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a number of these men who had walked in the footsteps of Elias on Mount Carmel were instructed by Saint John the Baptist and were prepared for the coming of Christ. They, then, embraced the Faith on the first Pentecost Sunday and began to venerate the Blessed Virgin “whose conversations,” the Breviary states, “and familiarity they were happily able to enjoy. . . .” In fact, it was these holy men who, according to this pious tradition, erected the first chapel in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They built it on Mount Carmel in the place that Elias saw the cloud so many years before. In time, these hermits came to be called the “Brethren of Blessed Mary of Mount Carmel.” They thus formed, so to speak, the first religious order devoted to Our Lady.

In 1241, as is related in the pamphlet *Garment of Grace*, the Baron de Grey of England brought with him some monks from Mount Carmel on his return

from the Crusade in Palestine (6). The violence of the Muslims in Palestine posed a threat to the Carmelites, so they went with the Baron to England. There, he gave the monks a house in Aylesford.

Four years later, in 1245, Pope Innocent IV gave his approbation to the Carmelite rule. Soon after, a priest named Simon Stock was elected Superior General of the Order. It was to this holy priest and fervent servant of God that the Blessed Virgin appeared on July 16, 1251.

With the Christ Child in one arm, Our Lady appeared in the early hours of the morning. Holding the Brown Scapular out to Saint Simon, Our Lady said: “Take



SAINT SIMON STOCK



this scapular. Whosoever dies wearing it shall not suffer eternal fire. It shall be a sign of salvation, a protection in danger, and a pledge of peace” (*Garment of Grace* 43). Having addressed these most consoling words to Saint Simon, Our Lady then vanished from his sight, leaving him holding the scapular.

“Take this scapular. Whosoever dies wearing it shall not suffer eternal fire. It shall be a sign of salvation, a protection in danger, and a pledge of peace.”

The Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel—the Brown Scapular—is one of the most cherished sacramentals in the Church; it is one of the most loved devotions of the faithful. The name *scapular* comes from the Latin *scapulae* [skah-pu-lay] which means “shoulders.” It thus refers to the outer part of a religious habit that is worn over the shoulders. The scapular we commonly see and wear is a miniature of the actual scapular that was given to Saint Simon Stock and which is worn by Carmelites as part of their religious habit. The promises of Our Lady to those who would wear the religious scapular were so

great that in time they were extended to all the faithful by means of the enrollment in the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, also known as the enrollment in the Brown Scapular.

In the rite of enrollment in the Brown Scapular, the priest says:

Receive this blessed habit; praying the most Holy Virgin, that by her merits thou mayest wear it without stain; and that she may guard thee from all evil and bring thee to life everlasting.

The Brown Scapular is thus, as Our Lady said, a sign of salvation, a protection in danger, and a pledge of peace. It is a sign of salvation because those who wear the scapular with devotion, who strive to live as children of Mary, and who die clothed in the scapular shall never see the fires of hell, as Our Lady herself promised. It is a protection in danger because it is our armor in the spiritual combat—the battle which each and every one of us must fight every day of our lives in order to save our souls from hell. Finally, the Brown Scapular is a pledge of peace; that is, it is a source of many graces and blessings for those who wear it.

As if these blessings and favors were not enough, Saint Alphonsus de Liguori tells us of another wonderful grace Our Lady has promised to her children who wear the Brown Scapular faithfully. In *The Glories of Mary*, Saint Alphonsus relates that

Mary appeared to Pope John XXII [in the fourteenth century] and commanded him to make it known that all those who should wear this scapular would be delivered from purgatory on the Saturday after their deaths; and this he did by a bull, which was afterwards confirmed by Alexander V, Clement VII and other Pontiffs [including Saint Pius V]. (517)

This favor is commonly referred to as the *Sabbatine Privilege*. It consists, as Saint Alphonsus mentions, in being freed from purgatory, through the special intercession of the Blessed Virgin, on the Saturday following one’s death. However, there are three principal conditions that must be fulfilled to obtain the Sabbatine Privilege. Pope Paul V enumerated these conditions in 1612. In a papal bull of that year, he declared, as Saint Alphonsus relates, that

Christian people may piously believe that the Blessed Virgin will help them after death by her continual intercession, her merits, and special protection; and that on Saturdays, the day consecrated by the Church to her, she will, in a more particular manner, help the souls of the brethren of the Confraternity of Our Blessed Lady of Mount Carmel who have departed this life in a state of grace, provided they have worn the habit, observed the chastity of their state, and recited her office. . . . (208)

The principal requirements for the Sabbatine Privilege, then, are these three:

- (1) wear the Brown Scapular devoutly;
- (2) observe chastity according to one's state in life;
- (3) recite the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin or five decades of the Rosary.

Originally, the third requirement consisted of the Little Office only, but by a decree of the Congregation of Indulgences in June of 1901, Pope Leo XIII sanctioned a change to this requirement. He decreed that five decades of the Rosary may be substituted for the Little Office.

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Let us, then, as we strive to give a perfect effort each day in imitating the life and virtues of Our Heavenly Mother and Queen, wear her Brown Scapular faithfully, even if others should mock us for it or if it feels uncomfortable. Let us also make it a point each day to strive to fulfill the conditions necessary for the Sabbatine Privilege. It is truly a gift of love and mercy from our Mother. The purifying pains of purgatory are truly dreadful. This is attested to by numerous saints. For instance, Saint Bonaventure holds, as the dogmatician Msgr. Joseph Pohle, Ph.D., D.D., relates in his *Eschatology*, that "the severest pain of purgatory exceeds the most violent known on earth." Furthermore, Saint Thomas Aquinas, the Prince of Theologians, is of the opinion that "even the slightest torture of purgatory is worse than all sufferings one can endure in this world" (84).



We should, therefore, do all in our power while on earth to expiate the temporal punishment we have merited by our sins. We should do this by means of indulgences, prayers, sacrifices, and other good works. However, since some temporal punishment may still remain, we should strive while we still can to ensure a speedy deliverance from purgatory through Mary's intercession by doing our best to obtain the Sabbatine Privilege.

At our baptisms, we were enlisted into the army of Jesus Christ and of His Blessed Mother. We are thus soldiers in the army of Mary. The Brown Scapular is both our uniform and our armor. It marks us as children of Mary and identifies us as warriors of her Immaculate Heart. May the sight of our scapular, then, be an everlasting reminder of our commitment to wage war against the powers of hell and save our soul.

May Our Lady of Mount Carmel, as the priest prays in the enrollment of the Brown Scapular, "in the hour of [our] death, crush the head of the old serpent; so that [we] may in the end win the everlasting palm and crown of the heavenly inheritance."