

The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

For over 700 years, the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel has been one of the most precious gifts and highly indulgenced Sacramentals. It is a garment given to us by Our Blessed Mother herself, one which makes us her special children. Within the Church there is a longstanding custom of enrolling children to receive First Communion in the Brown Scapular. Blessed and clothed with the Scapular, each child becomes a member of the Scapular Confraternity and shares in all the spiritual works performed by the Carmelites.

In the year 1251, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared with the infant Jesus in her arms to a very holy priest. It was July 16th and the priest was St. Simon Stock, a religious in the order known as the Carmelites. Our Blessed Mother held a Scapular in her other hand and gave it to St. Simon with the promise that “whosoever dies wearing this Scapular shall not suffer eternal fire . . . It shall be a sign of salvation, a protection in danger and a pledge of peace.” The brown scapular became part of the brown habit worn by all Carmelites from that time forward. It wasn’t long until the lay faithful sought to be clothed in Mary’s Scapular. They, too, wished to be under the Blessed Mother’s special protection. Smaller scapulars were made available and lay people began to be enrolled in the Scapular Confraternity and so united to Mary’s Carmelite Family. This practice is still in effect today.

All priests have the faculty to enroll the faithful in the Brown Scapular. Scapulars are blessed at the time of enrollment. Replacement cloth scapulars do not need to be blessed as the blessing goes with each scapular. Scapulars may be made of any cloth material and may be enclosed in plastic. They are to be worn over the shoulders with one piece in front and the other in back. Worn-out scapulars, because they are sacramentals (holy objects), should be burned or buried in the ground and not just thrown out with the trash as a means of showing respect for things used for God’s service.

Those enrolled in the Brown Scapular are consecrated to Mary’s Immaculate Heart and belong to her in a very special way. Pope Pius XII noted that those who wear the scapular should “go out and convince the world that it must be dedicated to the Blessed Mother if it will find peace.” At Fatima in 1917, Our Lady appeared to the children as Our Lady of Mount Carmel, holding the brown scapular. Sister Lucia, one of the three children to see Our Lady at Fatima, often reminded us over the years that Our Lady wants all to wear the Scapular as a sign of their Consecration to Her Immaculate Heart. Our Blessed Mother says it best in giving the reason to wear this blessed garment . . .

“To save poor sinners, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.”

Wear the Scapular always . . . the sign of Mary’s Heart.

