

The feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is celebrated on July 16<sup>th</sup>. The patroness of our missionary Diocese of Fairbanks is Saint Therese of Lisieux who was attracted to the Carmelite Rule of Life and became a religious sister to devote her life in prayer to God. Carmelite nuns live a cloistered life, cut off from the world, so that they may pray for the needs of the world that often closes itself off from God.

Mount Carmel has overlooked the Mediterranean Sea since long before the time of Christ. There, the prophet Elijah successfully challenged 450 priests of Baal to start a fire and light a sacrifice. Of course, they failed despite their numbers and there many attempts throughout the day. To show the power of the one true God, Elijah then built an altar, dug a huge trench around it, and prepared a sacrifice. With 4 large jars of water poured over the sacrifice and altar three times, he drenched everything before calling on God to accept the sacrifice. Fire fell from the sky consuming everything. Not even the water in the trench was left untouched. Having proven his point, Elijah praye for rain to end the famine (1 Kgs 17:1–19:21).

From this same holy mountain, the Carmelite order traces its roots back to twelfth-century hermits. Overcoming many obstacles and setbacks, the community built a monastery and church dedicated to the Virgin Mary on Mount Carmel in 1263. “The spread of the Carmelites in Europe is largely attributable to the work of Saint Simon Stock (1247-1265).”<sup>i</sup> Mary, under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, clothed Simon with a Brown Scapular as “a sign of salvation, a protection in danger, and a pledge of peace.”<sup>ii</sup>

A number of popes in recent times have recommended wearing the Brown Scapular:

- John Paul II reminded the faithful to ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to “clothe each of us with the wisdom and love of her divine Son.”
- Pope Pius XII said: “The Scapular is a practice of piety which by its very simplicity is suited to everyone and has spread widely among the faithful of Christ to their spiritual profit.”
- Pope John XXII wrote that the Blessed Virgin came to him in a vision stating: “I, the Mother of Grace, shall descend on the Saturday after their death and whomsoever I shall find in Purgatory, I shall free, so that I may lead them to the holy mountain of life everlasting.”

To participate in this spiritual privilege, you must “wear the Brown Scapular, observe chastity according to your state in life, and pray the Rosary.”<sup>iii</sup> It is also necessary to be formally enrolled in the Brown Scapular by a priest. The scapular is not a guarantee of salvation apart from being a faithful disciple. One must always live up to the demands of the Christian life that come with baptism.

The scapular reminds us to imitate Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Mary always points us to her son. For more than 7 centuries, the faithful have worn the scapular and accepted a commitment to:<sup>iv</sup>

Follow Jesus like Mary.

Be open to God and to his will.

Be guided by faith, hope, and love.

To pray at all times.

To discover God present in all that happens around us.

The scapular, like other sacramentals and devotions, are “a reminder that the Church is the sacrament of our salvation, and that the tangible expressions of the faith the Church gives us are gifts, meant to guide us to intimacy with Jesus, and, ultimately, to salvation.”<sup>v</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> catholicnewsagency.com/resource/55429/our-lady-of-mount-carmel

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> catholicnewsagency.com/news/38885/our-lady-of-mount-carmel-aids-in-spiritual-warfare-bishop-say (Bishop Conley, who also quoted from JP II).