

THE LIVERY OF MARY

By Fathers François Turner, O.P., and Alfred Combe

*O beautiful flower of Carmel,
Most fruitful vine,
Splendor of heaven, Virgin most singular,
Who brought forth the Son of God,
While remaining ever a Virgin,
On the children of Carmel,
Bestow your gifts,
O Star of the Sea!*

—Flos Carmeli

The Order of Carmelites, though Marian like other Orders, could rightfully claim a special distinction. Rather than having a clearly identifiable founder as the Franciscans or the Dominicans for example, the Carmelites traced their origins to the Marian piety of the first hermits of Mount Carmel. This special devotion to the Virgin Mary had taken on a distinctive character, quasi-exclusive and totally unique. Thus the Order of Carmel was said to be "Totally Marian."

Early in 1251, during the Crusades, the Carmelites were driven out of the Holy Land by the victorious Saracens, and looked for refuge in the West. The Superior General of the Order at the time was St. Simon Stock, an Englishman who served from 1245 until his death in Bordeaux on May 16, 1265. His relics are venerated in the cathedral of that city. Faced with grave difficulties in the bosom of his Order from Church authorities and other religious Orders, he implored the help of the Virgin Mary by singing her hymn *Flos Carmeli*—Flower of Carmel (above).

The Blessed Virgin appeared to St. Simon. She told him to have recourse to Pope Innocent IV and to implore his in-

tervention. During the course of these apparitions, Our Lady, on one occasion, appeared with a multitude of angels. She held in her hands the scapular that the Carmelites wore as part of their religious habit and said: "Here is the privilege I give to you and to all the Carmelites. Whoever dies clothed in this habit will not suffer eternal fire. That is to say whoever dies wearing this habit will be saved."

The Sabbatine Privilege

Since the beginning of the 14th century or earlier, many nobles, including King Edward II of England and Henry I of Lancaster, have worn the scapular under their court robes. Later on the popes extended this privilege of Mary by granting a plenary indulgence of a very particular kind. The Holy Virgin would rescue from purgatory on the Saturday after their death all those who faithfully wore the scapular.

This was called "the Sabbatine Privilege" and was said to have been included in a bull of Pope John XXII dated March 3, 1317. However, since this bull was never found in the pontifical archives, its authenticity was questioned causing controversy in the following centuries.

For a variety of reasons too numerous to mention here, this bull was thought to be false. But other popes familiar with the controversies, notably Clement VII (1523-1534) and St. Pius V (1566-1572), ratified the privilege. Its existence is thereby established with or without the authenticity of the controversial bull.

Furthermore, Pope Paul V (1605-1621) directed that the controversies cease and published a decree that stated: "It is granted to the Carmelites to preach that the Blessed Virgin will, by her intercessions and by a special protection after death, specifically on Saturdays, aid the souls of those brothers and sisters who die in the state of grace and who during their life wore the habit."

Our Lady of Mount Carmel as she appeared at Garabandal.



It is noteworthy that St. John of the Cross, Carmelite and Doctor of the Church, died on Saturday, exactly at midnight, in full conviction of this privilege.

A Sacramental

The scapular that Our Lady held in her hands when she appeared to St. Simon Stock measured 2.5 meters long and 45 centimeters wide (6 3/4' x 1 1/2') with an opening in the center to fit over the head. This type of scapular is also common to the Benedictines, Carthusians, and Dominicans.

The scapular worn by the faithful today is a greatly modified version of this original scapular and consists of two small rectangular pieces of brown cloth (with or without images on them) held together by cords. The scapular is not a talisman of the Virgin Mary that automatically assures salvation. It is a sacramental, that is, a sign of Our Lady's special grace and power, and to gain its benefits, certain conditions must be met.

First of all, one does not simply put the scapular on; he must be "enrolled." Once enrolled and initiated into the confraternity of Mount Carmel, the benefits derived by the wearer of the scapular will be directly proportionate to his faith in its privileges and his love for the Virgin expressed in true Christian living.

What It Signifies

Before being enrolled in the scapular, one should be fully aware of what it signifies. The scapular initiates us into the (totally Marian) Carmelite family. It also has a symbolic character much in the same way as does a coat of arms. It indicates that we devote ourselves to Mary and her service. It is the Livery of Mary.

Like the Japanese kimono or the ceremonial cloak of the American Indians, the scapular, though very small, has its own language. In its simplicity it says, "Yes, I belong to Mary."

The Scapular at Lourdes, Fatima and Garabandal

Since the fourth centenary of St. Simon Stock's vision, the village of Lourdes, fief of Mary since the late Middle Ages, was the site of a confraternity of the scapular in the parish church.

This congregation soon became the most thriving one in the region and in 1654, a chapel was built in honor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Despite its intense persecution of the Church, the French Revolution was not able to extinguish the Marian devotion of Lourdes, and it was perfectly natural that Bernadette Soubirous received the scapular on the day of her First Communion.

After the seventeenth apparition at Lourdes, three months went by without Bernadette seeing "the Beautiful Lady." Then came July 16, 1858, feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Bernadette put on her scapular. She re-

ceived "the call" which did not deceive and again went to the grotto, where she saw the Virgin "more beautiful than ever." It marked the eighteenth and final apparition of the Immaculate Virgin Mary at Lourdes.

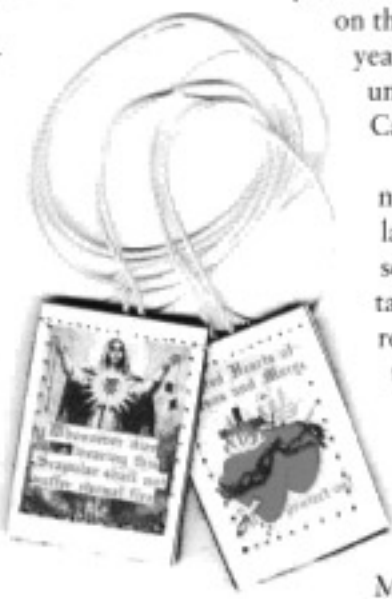
On October 13, 1917, at Fatima, Our Lady appeared in the Cova da Iria for the last time. Lucy, the principal visionary, recalls: "Upon arriving, I saw Our Lady of the Rosary, St. Joseph and the Infant Jesus. Later, I saw Our Lord alone, then Our Lady of Sorrows, and finally the Lady appeared to me to be Our Lady of Mount Carmel. She held something hanging from her hand."

Lucy later became a Carmelite and is convinced that it was at the prompting of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. She has also said that the scapular is very important.

On July 1, 1961, in the little mountain village of San Sebastian de Garabandal, St. Michael the Archangel appeared to the four visionaries and announced that on the following day, feast of the Visitation that year, the Blessed Virgin would appear to them under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

St. Michael and another angel accompanied the Virgin, who appeared with a scapular on her right arm. On one panel of the scapular, the seers noticed a small mountain; on the other was a cross. The mountain recalls for us the dramatic confrontation between Elijah, the prophet of Yahweh, and the idolaters; the seal of original alliance given on Mount Sinai and later restored there.

The cross on the other panel recalls the New Covenant sealed by the Son of Man in His very own blood.



The type of scapular worn by the faithful today that says "Yes, I belong to Mary."

Widely Propagated Throughout the World

Ever since the end of the sixteenth century, the scapular has been worn by a great number of Catholics from all walks of life: kings, princes, nobles or simple folk; monks, nuns, brothers, priests, bishops and popes. The list of saints who wore it is endless. To cite only a few: Robert Bellarmine, Charles Borromeo, Benoit Cottolengo, Alphonsus Liguori, John Bosco, Dominic Savio, Bernadette Soubirous.

Most of the popes of the last three centuries have worn the scapular as a sign of their consecration to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, most notably Pope Pius XII, John XXIII and our present Pope John Paul II. On August 6, 1950, the seventh anniversary of his election, Pope Pius XII said of Our Lady's sacramental:

The scapular is a Marian habit... How many souls, from the circumstances of human despair, owe their final conversion and their eternal salvation to the scapular in which they were clothed! How many also, in danger of body or soul, are saved by the grace of the maternal protection of Mary. □

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