

# YOUR BROWN SCAPULAR

BY

MOST REV. E. K. LYNCH, O.CARM

WITH A PREFACE BY

FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN

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## **DEDICATION**

To my mother who from my cradle-days  
taught me to love the “Mother of fair love,  
of knowledge and of holy hope.”



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## **Letter of His Holiness, Pius XII, for the Occasion of the Seventh Centenary of the Brown Scapular**

To our Beloved Sons, Kilian Lynch, Prior General, and Silverio de Santa Teresa, Master General, of the Order of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel. There is no one who is not aware how greatly a love for the Blessed Virgin Mother of God contributes to the enlivening of the Catholic faith and to the raising of the moral standard. These effects are especially secured by means of those devotions which more than others are seen to enlighten the mind with celestial doctrine and to excite souls to the practice of the Christian life. In the first rank of the most favored of these devotions that of the Holy Carmelite Scapular must be placed—a devotion which, adapted to the minds of all by its very simplicity, has become so universally widespread among the faithful and has produced so many and such salutary fruits. Therefore it has pleased Us greatly to learn of the decision of our Carmelite Brethren, both Calced and Discalced, namely, to take all pains to pay homage to the Blessed Virgin Mary in as solemn a manner as possible on the occasion of the Seventh Centenary of the Institution of the Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

Prompted therefore by our constant love for the tender Mother of God, and mindful also of Our own enrolment from boyhood in the Confraternity of this same Scapular, most willingly do We commend so pious an undertaking and We are certain that upon it will fall an abundance of divine blessings. For not with a light or passing matter are we here concerned but with the obtaining of eternal life itself which is the substance of that Promise of the Most Blessed Virgin which has been handed down to us. We are concerned, namely, with that which is of supreme importance

to all and with the manner of achieving it safely. For the Holy Scapular, which may be called the Habit or Garment of Mary, is a sign and a pledge of the protection of the Mother of God. But not for this reason, however, may they who wear the Scapular think that they can gain eternal salvation while remaining slothful and negligent of spirit, for the Apostle warns us: "In fear and trembling shall you work out your salvation." (Phil. 2:12)

Therefore all Carmelites, whether they live in the cloisters of the First and Second Orders or are members of the Third Order Regular or Secular, or of the Confraternities, belong to the same Family of our Most Blessed Mother and are attached to it by a special bond of love. May they all see in this keepsake of the Virgin Herself a mirror of humility and purity; may they read in the very simplicity of the Garment a concise lesson in modesty and simplicity; above all may they behold in this same Garment, which they wear day and night, the eloquently expressive symbol of their prayers for the divine assistance; finally may it be to them a Sign of their Consecration to the Most Sacred Heart of the Immaculate Virgin, which (consecration) in recent times We have so strongly recommended.

And certainly this most gentle Mother will not delay to open, as soon as possible, through Her intercession with God, the gates of Heaven for Her children who are expiating their faults in Purgatory—a trust based on that Promise known as the Sabbatine Privilege.

Now, therefore, as a pledge of the divine protection and help, and as an assurance of Our own special dilection, we most lovingly impart to you, beloved sons, and to the whole Carmelite Order, the Apostolic Benediction.

*Given at Rome on the Feast of the Apparition at Lourdes,  
February 11, 1950.*

## Preface

Holy Mary, Mother of God, Gate of Heaven, Mother of Mankind, pray for us; deign to enfold us within thy mantle; be for us a shield from sin and from the agony of sorrow which sin has wrought upon the world; grant unto us, O beloved Protectress, the blessing and joy of peace on earth and everlasting peace in Thy Son, Our Divine Redeemer, the Prince of Peace!



As history unfolds under the watchful eye of Divine Providence God sets signs in the sky “at sundry times and in divers manners.” This He does with the loving care which a Shepherd is wont to lavish on His sheep as He guards and guides the human race in its onward march to destiny. In olden ages the sign was a cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night. In later centuries it was the Cross brilliantly set against the sky, revealing to mankind the message of God’s love and His mercy. Then, in years close to our own day, He sent to us at Lourdes, La Salette and Fatima, His Own Blessed Mother!

And never was man’s need greater for guidance and help from merciful Mary, than it is in this decade of post-war sorrow and despair. Therefore must we daily pray that never again will man, in the lust and hate and sin of war, barter his birthright of peace for unjust power and greedy gain. United in mighty faith and love we must beg of Mary, intercession with her Divine Son, that He, Who from our confusion and disorder fashioned beauty and design, will once again come to the world’s salvation: enliven men with love, quicken them with truth, inspire them

with justice, instill within them mercy, that peace may come to dwell within their hearts and reign supreme on earth.

Like unto the gentle rains that fall from out the heavens unto earth there to nourish the seed of flower and of fruit, like unto the light and warmth of day that stream from sun to earth to nurture every creature on it, so God-given glories of grace flow to us through Mary, merciful Mother of Mankind, who alone can bring us to Christ as she brought Christ to us. And He, our King of Kings, will save us and the world, if we but go to Him through Blessed Mary. For she who knew His Heart better than all others; she will grant us intercession, if faithfully we prove our love of Him in prayers devout.

The saints, martyrs, confessors and virgins, the angelic choirs and all the hosts of heaven, blend triumphant hymns of praise with ours, when we acclaim Mary, Queen of Heaven and of Earth. Our prayers and theirs echo in heart-swelling melody through the archways of heaven, as we bow in loving veneration, praying for guidance, protection and peace before our Queen and Mother, enthroned at the right hand of Christ her Son. For in God alone dwell the power and the promise of peace. In man alone abide the wit and will to seek or reject it. Who but ourselves can choose the road we take? Who but God shall lead us? Who but God Himself and Mary can tell us the myriads of prayers flung in ceaseless chants and pleadings at the feet of our Mother in heaven, there to break in sprays of petitions like the waves of a mighty sea? Thence, through the flow of time, these, our prayers, surge back to us in a wealth of graces, representing God's love for Mary, and through her holy heart, for all mankind.

For the occasion of the Seventh Centenary of the institution of the Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Father Kilian Lynch has written this book which tells of the mission of Mary as Mother of Mankind, recounting her glories as Our Lady of Mt. Carmel,

explaining the mystic meaning of the Brown Scapular, the badge of identity of the children of Carmel and the sign of the pact between the Mother of God and God's devout children. Mary pledges to protect them. They pledge to profess her, as they wear the little brown mantle—Mary's mantle—with which she covers and protects her children.

It is the precious privilege of the Carmelites, and the members of their Confraternities to have an especial spiritual kinship with Mary, and I pray that all Mary's children in this Holy Year of 1950, will promise more deeply to love her and follow in her footsteps and the footsteps of Jesus Christ, Mary's Divine Son and Our Redeemer. To Christ through Mary, His Mother, we must daily pray for peace, for we, who know Mary's might and her mercy, know we need not fear for the future, if with faithful, trustful hearts we implore her powerful intercession.

Neither flood, nor fire, nor famine, neither death, nor war, nor slavery, can perish the peoples of the earth, if in faith and love they will unite in prayer to Christ, Our Saviour through Mary His Virgin Mother.

Therefore in daily passioned prayer that fervently bespeaks our everlasting faith in God, united let us lift our souls, beseeching Him through Mary, Mother of Mankind, to grant us peace!

What is a mother? Who shall answer this?  
A mother is a font and spring of life,  
A mother is a forest in whose heart  
Lies hid a secret ancient as the hills,  
For men to claim and take its wealth away ;  
And like the forest shall her wealth renew  
And give, and give again, that men may live.  
A mother is a forest in whose trees  
The breath of God makes melodies all day,

While in the night she shelters in her breast  
The weak, the timid, the oppressed of earth.  
A mother is a song begun in spring  
Deep'ning in summer and in autumn filled  
With life's rich meaning and exalted truth.  
A mother is a song flung from God's lips  
When all the world was mirthful at its dawn,  
And echoes still His love across time's vale.  
A mother is God's image here re-cast  
And fairer now in Mary than in Eve—  
The second casting has a flawless grace,  
The second flowering a whiter rose.  
We turn to Mary in her motherhood,  
And ask of her that which her love concedes,  
A mother's ceaseless care for one and all,  
That men may find Christ's hand before too late,  
May touch with Thomas His faith-giving wounds,  
May know with Magdalen conversion's joy,  
And come at last into that holy place,  
The kingdom built by a Father's love,  
And sealed with the dear blood of His own Son,  
And graced by Mary for her children's rest  
When, in good time, this night shall be no more.  
And kneeling humbly before her we pray  
O Mary, Mother of Mankind,  
Our intercessor be unto thy Son,  
Lift us to Him, bring down God's peace to us.

✠ Francis Cardinal Spellman

*Archbishop of New York, New York*

12 May, 1950

## THE ORIGIN OF THE BROWN SCAPULAR

The brown scapular has become so much a part of Catholic life and practice that it would be difficult to find a Catholic who has not at least heard of it. There are many, however, who know little or nothing of its origin. They are enrolled in it at their First Communion or during the time of a mission or retreat, and their curiosity never prompts them to inquire further. Since the brown scapular is the Carmelite habit in miniature form, its history is the same as that of the Order of Carmel which was founded in Palestine before the coming of Christ. The religious life of Carmel goes back to the time of Elias and claims him as its founder. Elias was a man of God in whose sight he always walked. In solitude and prayer he found that inner strength which brought him to his feet like a pillar of fire and made his word burn like a torch. In preparation for the great mission awaiting him, God commanded him to leave Galaad to dwell alone by the torrent of Carith where he was fed by the ravens and grew to become one of the outstanding spiritual figures of the Old Law. For the Lord, before whose face he always stood, had work for Elias to do.

During the days of Elias, Achab, the king of Israel, *“did evil in the sight of God above all that were before him... and he went and served Baal and adored him.”*<sup>1</sup> He and his wife, who was even worse than himself, led their people away from the worship of the true God; Elias was the one chosen by heaven to lead them back.

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<sup>1</sup> 3 Kings 16:30

Since punishment from above was the only thing that would bring king and people to their senses, the prophet closed the heavens and proclaimed that “there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my mouth.”<sup>2</sup>

The result was that after a drought of three years and six months the scourge of famine fell upon Samaria, and Achab was worried. When he accused Elias of troubling Israel, the prophet replied: *“I have not troubled Israel but thou and thy father’s house who have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed Baalim. Nevertheless send now, and gather unto me all Israel unto Mount Carmel and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”*<sup>3</sup>

The King did as he was commanded and all the children of Israel assembled to witness the ignominious defeat of the false prophets. The Thesbite made a sacrifice the test between himself and his opponents: *“Let two bullocks be given us, and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces and lay it upon wood but put no fire under it. I will dress the other bullock and lay it on wood and put no fire under it. Call ye on the names of your gods, and I will call on the name of my Lord; and the God that shall answer by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered: a very good proposal.”*<sup>4</sup>

The false prophets *“called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon... and when it was noon, Elias jested at them, saying: cry with a louder voice for he is a god and perhaps he is talking, or is in an inn, or on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened. So they cried with a loud voice, and cut themselves after*

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<sup>2</sup> 3 Kings 17:1

<sup>3</sup> 3 Kings 18:18,19

<sup>4</sup> 3 Kings 18:23,24

*their manner with knives and lancets till they were all covered with blood.”<sup>5</sup>*

Not even the shouting of the false prophets could awaken Baal and no fire came from heaven to consume the sacrifice. The people now turned to Elias, whose prayer opened the heavens and brought down enough fire to consume not only the bullocks but even the stones.

Having convinced the people that the Lord is God, Elias ascended Mount Carmel to pray for rain for the parched land of Israel, and *“behold a little cloud arose out of the sea like a man’s foot... and behold the heavens grew dark with clouds and wind and there fell a great rain.”<sup>6</sup>*

It is with these historical facts recorded in Holy Scripture that we connect the Order of Carmel. We do not claim that Elias was its founder in the sense that he gave it a rule and an organization of some kind. What he gave it was its spirit which is something of far greater importance. The Thesbite, with his incomparable personality, has attracted many to himself and has been the inspiration of all the manifestations of religious life on and in Carmel before and after the coming of Christ. He has been the guiding light of Carmel down through all the ages of its history, for its hermits have modelled their lives upon his spirit of solitude and prayer. The Elian way of life was followed by the “sons of the prophets” of the Old Law, and from early Christian times the holy Mount was inhabited by a group of men who lived “near the fountain of Elias” to imbibe the spirit of the great prophet.

When the Crusaders from the West found their way to Mount Carmel, they were attracted by the eremitical life of these men; and once some of them decided to remain, they were incorporated

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<sup>5</sup> 3 Kings 18:27,28

<sup>6</sup> 3 Kings 18:44,45

into and, by the force of circumstances, became a part of that historical reality of religious life which stems from Elias. As time went on and the Western ideas of organization asserted themselves among the Latin hermits, the inhabitants of the Mount were formed into an organic body of which Elias was the soul and the spirit. This organization of Carmel took place about the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century near “the fountain of Elias.” The absence of historical documents makes it impossible for us to determine more accurately the date on which this new body was given a written rule of life. We know for certain, however, that it was before 1210 for this is the year in which Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, gave Brocard and the monks living under his obedience a new rule to follow. This new rule of St. Albert was nothing more than the written formula of a life which had been lived on Carmel for centuries.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Benedict XIII decreed that the statue of Elias, the founder of the Carmelite Order, be given first place among the founders of the religious orders in the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. Those who would accuse the Pope of an anachronism or of a lack of a critical sense of history are unaware of the facts that moved His Holiness to confirm in this way the Elian origin of the Order of Carmel.

The victory of Elias over the false prophets was bound to arouse the anger of Jezebel, Achab’s wife. She determined to get rid of the man who troubled Israel: “*Such and such things may the gods do to me and add still more, if by this hour tomorrow I make not thy life as the life of one of them.*”<sup>7</sup> The prophet found safety in the desert where, hungry, tired and dejected, he threw himself down and asked God to take away his soul. But the God, who before had commanded the ravens to feed him, now sent an angel with

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<sup>7</sup> 3 Kings 19:2

a mysterious bread in the strength of which he walked forty days and as many nights to the mount of God, Horeb; it was while in prayer on Horeb that he had a vision of God.

The coming of the Lord always struck terror into the hearts of the chosen people. It was the boast of Jacob that he saw God and lived after it. His coming to Elias was preceded by a great and mighty wind that overthrew the mountains and broke the rocks to pieces; but “the Lord is not in the wind.” After the wind there came an earthquake; but “the Lord is not in the earthquake.” And after the earthquake there came a fire; but “the Lord is not in the fire.” And after the fire there came a sound of gentle stillness from which the voice of God came to him. There is something of the New Covenant about this vision of Mount Horeb. The sound of gentle stillness reminds one of that Holy Night when all was still and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The small voice recalls the Infant Jesus in His Mother’s arms. The gentle stillness from which the small voice came was Our Lady, the gentle, silent Virgin Mother who replaced the storm and the thunder through which God spoke under the Old Law.

As Elias prayed in solitude by the torrent of Carith and in the caves of Carmel and Horeb, God must have given him a vision of the things that were to come. Like the other prophets of Israel he must have known that a Virgin would conceive and bring forth a Son who would save His people from their sins. An old and highly-respected tradition of the Order holds that he saw Our Lady in the little cloud shaped like a man’s foot which arose out of the sea to carry rain to the parched land of Israel: “*The glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.*”<sup>8</sup>

Another prophet beheld her coming up from the desert flowing with delights, for in the fullness of time she would ascend from

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<sup>8</sup> Exo. 16:10

the world thence to carry the living water of divine grace to the arid souls of mankind.

The association of Our Lady with the cloud is not without scriptural warrant. The glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud and from the time of the Exodus the chosen people never tired of turning towards heaven to ask God to open the heavens and rain down the Just One. The constant prayer of those who looked forward to the redemption of Israel was: *“Drop down dew, ye heavens, and let the clouds rain the Just One; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour.”*<sup>9</sup> The great prophet, therefore, who walked always in the sight of God and later merited to appear with the Son of God on Thabor, could have known the mystery of the Incarnation and could have seen the Virgin Mother in the cloud that came to Carmel in answer to his prayer.

“The sons of the prophets” who continued the Elian way of life lived in the blessed hope of the Incarnation. They, too, prayed that a Virgin might bring forth and that the world might find its redemption in her arms. After the glory of the Only-Begotten Son of God appeared through her, she became the Mother and the ornament of Carmel and its hermits approached their God through her. The earliest historical records we possess reveal her as holding a central place in Carmelite life and history. It is she who brings to Carmel the dew and the rain that make it a garden of delights. Without her it would be a barren waste without fruit or flower. All the “good things” of Carmel are hers and it is she who must lead us up the Mount to enjoy them. Carmel itself became a figure of Our Lady and the texts that extol its beauty, sweetness and fertility were applied to her. Some went so far as to say that the Order was divinely founded to praise Our Lady and that this is the only reason for its existence. So great was its

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<sup>9</sup> Isa. 45:8

devotion to her that it was called *the Order of Our Lady* and its members were known as *the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel*.

It is interesting to note the origin of the Marian title of the Order. According to a tradition which we find recorded in documents of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, there was a chapel built on Carmel in honor of the Mother of God soon after the Ascension. The absence of historical documents makes it impossible to substantiate this claim, but we know for certain that there was a chapel dedicated to Our Lady on Carmel about the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was built “near the fountain of Elias” in order to portray the Elian and Marian aspects of Carmelite life. The “Brothers of the Blessed Virgin” assembled here every day to sing her praises and as time went on and they became known for their devotion to Mary, their order was called *the Order of Our Lady* and they themselves her brothers. It seems, too, that near the Carmelite Monastery there was another inhabited by Greek monks and in order to distinguish between the two, people outside the Order called the Carmelites *the Brothers of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary*.

Needless to say, it was their special devotion to their Queen that earned this title for them for, just as her chapel was the center of their monastery, so was she the soul and spirit of their daily lives.

This Marian title was known and recognized even by Rome itself for from 1247 on, the Popes of Rome addressed the Carmelites as Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel. In 1282 the General of the Order, Peter Millaud, wrote to Edward I of England asking him to protect the Order and promising him that the Brothers of Our Lady would pray for him to the Glorious Virgin for whose glory the Order was especially founded. It was no less an authority than Pope Clement V who, in a Bull issued

to the Order, declared that it was “divinely founded in honor of the Glorious and Blessed Virgin Mary.”

From time immemorial the Carmelites made their Act of Profession to God and the Blessed Virgin of Mt. Carmel, and by the solemn dedication of their lives to her they promised to live for her greater honor and glory. They proclaimed her the Queen of their lives and considered it an honor to serve her. Mary was not indifferent to Carmel’s love for her. However, she responded to it in a way her Brothers would never have thought of. The inspired word assures us that the ways of God are not the ways of men. One might say the same about Our Lady’s ways. We are so blind that we do not know the things that are for our good; we are always slow to see her hand, particularly in the crosses that come our way. The migration of the Carmelites from the East to the West is a fine example of how Our Lady brings good out of evil and turns what looks like a defeat into a victory.

The Saracen invasion of the Holy Land made Carmel an unsafe place for the monks to continue their praise of Mary, and although they loved its hallowed memories they realized it was better for them to leave. They accepted the invitation of the Crusaders to accompany them home and travelled West to Sicily, Naples, England and France. As Carmel’s heights receded from their view they were certain of only one thing—the love and protection of her whose praises they had sung for so long. They knew that she would not desert them but would become their star of hope in lands far distant from Carmel. Although they found many loyal friends in the West they also encountered much opposition, so much that, about the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it seemed as if the Order would pass away into the limbo of lost organizations.

The General, St. Simon Stock, was a true Carmelite. From his early years he had had a special devotion to Our Lady. As he saw the waves of opposition mounting higher and higher, he

went to her as the star of the sea and implored her to come to the assistance of the Order which glorified in her name. With all the fervor and devotion of a son he prayed to her in the well-known words of the Flos Carmeli:

O Flower of Carmel,  
Blossoming Vine,  
Splendor of Heaven,  
Mother Divine,  
None like to Thee,  
Mother of meekness,  
Peerless and Far,  
The children of Carmel,  
Save from despair,  
Thou, Star of the Sea

In answer to this prayer she appeared to him and, giving him the scapular, said: "THIS SHALL BE A SIGN TO YOU AND TO ALL CARMELITES; WHOEVER DIES WEARING THIS SHALL NOT SUFFER ETERNAL FIRE."

The scapular was given July 16, 1251, but one must consider it in the light of hundreds of years of Carmelite devotion to Our Lady. As we have already noted, the Carmelite habit was known to all as a mark of special devotion to Mary. When she appeared to St. Simon Stock all she did was to make a habit that was already hers the sign of her special love and a garment of salvation for all who wear it.

The scapular vision confirmed the Order in its devotion to Our Lady and strengthened its faith in her all-powerful protection. It gave Carmelites the world over that conviction of special adoption, that feeling that Our Lady had taken them under the mantle of her special protection to become more a mother than a queen to them as they struggled to join her in heaven.

From the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the scapular became a sign of Marian devotion in the Church. When people living in the world came to know the heavenly promise given to those who wear it, they sought, through membership in the Confraternity and later in the Third Order Secular, to become “Carmelites.” They saw in the scapular the answer to the prayer of St. Ephraem: “O Mary, take us under Thy mantle.”

In a comparatively short time the wearing of the scapular spread to the whole Church and the “Little Habit” became the unmistakable mark of the good Catholic. The little cloud of Carmel covered the whole earth to carry its fertilizing dew to souls that felt the need of a heavenly Mother’s special protection. Our Lady’s special love embraced more and more in the folds of her mantle. Popes, kings, princes, nobles and humble folk alike lived and died in the hope of the promise made to St. Simon Stock.

Dom Gueranger, in his own inimitable way, describes this extension of Mary’s privilege when he writes: “O Mary, who from that hour (that Elias beheld the foot-shaped cloud over Carmel) didst preside over the watches of God’s army, without ever failing for a single day; now that the Lord has truly come through thee, it is no longer the land of Judea alone, but the whole earth that thou coverest with a cloud, shedding down blessings in abundance. Thine ancient clients—the sons of the prophets—experienced this when, the land of promise becoming unfaithful, they were forced to transplant their customs and traditions to other climes; they found that even into our far West the cloud of Carmel had poured its fertilizing dew, and that nowhere would its protection be wanting to them. . . . Since their tents have been pitched round the hills where the new Sion is built upon Peter, the cloud has shed all round showers of blessings more precious than ever, driving back into the abyss the flames of Hell.”

In 1951 we shall celebrate the seventh centenary of the scapular vision. It will be a year of prayer and thanksgiving for the graces and blessings that have come to the faithful from Our Lady of the scapular. The scapular vision which preceded the scapular devotion has not escaped the attention of the critics. This is not the place for a lengthy exposition of the historical evidence that has been accumulated in support of it. Suffice it to be the conclusion reached by Fr. B. F. Xiberta, O.Carm., who is the greatest living authority on scapular history. After years of critical research he concludes: "Having studied the documentary evidence one sees how the arguments against the historicity of the vision of St. Simon Stock collapse one after the other. . . . I dare to affirm that the vision of St. Simon which preceded the scapular devotion has the support of more historical documents than one would expect to find."

No one can deny the importance of historical texts, but no array of them, however imposing it may be, is as conclusive as the living faith of the faithful over a period of seven centuries. A long line of popes, many of whom were devout wearers of the scapular, has sanctioned and encouraged popular belief in it. As Fr. Clarke, S.J., says: "The positive evidence in favor of the apparition establishes its authenticity by proof so irrefragable, that nothing but ignorance or a determined bias could fail to be convinced by them. . . . And what the teaching Church accepts and approves, what Catholic instinct, unflinching touchstone of truth in things spiritual, pronounces to be in accordance with the ways of God's providence, and what an ever increasing experience confirms and ratifies, cannot be rejected without the greatest peril."

It would be natural to expect that after the assurance of help given by Our Lady, the Marian life of the Order would grow deeper and more intense. Such was indeed the case, for in the century

following the vision, John Baconthorp, who was the greatest Carmelite theologian of the century, took it upon himself to prove that Mary is the perfect model of Carmelite perfection and that the rule is the mirror of her life here on earth. This was the conclusion he came to in his *Tract on the Rule*. In a second work he went even further, maintaining that the Order was instituted for the veneration of Our Lady. Historians might question the arguments he put forward in his *Tract on the Institution of the Carmelite Order for the Veneration of the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God*, but the one thing that interests us most is that he bears irrefutable witness to the Marian character of the Order and, by quoting the earliest records we have, he shows that from time immemorial, Our Lady has been all things to the Carmelites.

In the Litany we call her Mirror of Justice. Down through the centuries she has been the mirror of all the Order owes God. Since she is the splendor of the holiness of God, we can see His Face in her and find the whole example of His life here below in the lovely setting of a tender mother-love. Her Son's words from the Cross, "Behold Thy Mother," have been Carmel's first rule. The Mother of light and truth has never ceased to guide the footsteps of her brothers as they looked up to the holy mount and saluted her as queen and ornament of Carmel.

During the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century an interesting controversy arose concerning the right of the Order to its Marian title. Some held that the Carmelites had no right to call themselves the Brothers of Our Lady or of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1374 a jury, which was set up by the University of Cambridge, decided in favor of the Carmelites, and no less a personage than the Duke of Lancaster wrote to the Pope asking for an indulgence for those who would use the Marian title when addressing the Carmelites. On April 26, 1379, Urban VI granted the request of the Duke by giving an indulgence of three years

and three quarantines to all the faithful who would call the Order and the Carmelites the Brothers of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. In 1577 Gregory XIII confirmed this indulgence. By means of what is known as the Chester miracle Our Lady saw fit to give her approval to the decision of the University. It was believed that those who refused to admit that the Order is Our Lady's own Order met an untimely death. So widespread was this belief that processions were held to repair any injury that might be done to the Mother of God. It was during one of these processions that the miracle occurred. As the Carmelites were passing before a miraculous image of Our Lady she pointed to them and said: "Behold my brethren, the chosen ones."

As the leading Carmelite philosopher and theologian of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Baconthorpe had a profound influence on those who followed him. In a short work of this kind it is impossible to quote all the Carmelite writers who wrote on Our Lady and developed the ideas outlined by their predecessors. The history of the Marian devotion of the Order reminds one of a magnificent scroll being unfolded down through the centuries with each century revealing something new and more beautiful than what went before it. Even though space does not permit us to reproduce this work of art, place must be found for the part of it that comes from the pen of Arnold Bostius who was an early advocate of total consecration to Mary.

Arnold Bostius was a humanist of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. He exchanged letters with Erasmus and was the friend of the outstanding writers of his century. His work, *On the Patronate and the Patronage of Mary*, is a classic in its own field. It came from one who lived and loved the traditions of his Order and who was convinced that he owed everything to its queen and mother. In the prologue he makes his profession of absolute dependence upon Our Lady: "I

confess from my heart that I owe all that I am and all that I am worth to Mary. She has heaped so many good things upon me in the past that I feel it my duty to worship even her footsteps. I was born on a Saturday in the parish of Santa Maria. I was baptized in the same church and in its school I learned how to live a Christian life and to read. ... But the greatest grace of all was that from a tender age she received me, unworthy though I am, into her bosom and led me into the land of Carmel that I might dwell in her sanctuary all the days of my life. She clothed me with a mantle as white as snow, nursed me, increased my strength and adorned me with her glorious title. From my cradle-days she was my most loving mother, my dearest patroness.”

This sense of complete dependence upon Mary is the key to the whole doctrine of Bostius. “Mary,” he continues, “is the mother of all good, of every grace. ... She has received the keys of two treasures which have been lost sight of since early times. They were given to her in dowry that she might consent more willingly to her nuptials with God the Father and say: ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord.’ They are the keys of mercy for the penitent and of grace for the one who wishes to advance in virtue.” In a dialogue between Christ and His Mother he puts the following words into her mouth: “I am full of grace and there is no one able to snatch a soul from my hands.”

Our Lady’s mediation is universal: “Alone among all creatures she distributes her bounty to whom she wishes, as she wishes and in the measure she wishes” because “the prayer of Mary, Most Venerable, is founded in justice; the Son can refuse nothing to His Mother.”

The Carmelite has a special claim on her mediation for, as he says: “She will take diligently to heart the interests of her brother.” Reflecting on the many proofs of love she has given her “Brothers,” he concludes: “You cannot be rejected when so many evidences

of love speak in your favor. . . . Invoke her assiduously, draw near with confidence to the throne of grace; address her often for she is worthy of all praise and desires to bring you help even more than you wish to receive it.”

Since we owe her everything and she has showered graces and blessings upon us, we should return love for love: “Strive, therefore,” he says, “to show that you are her worthy brothers. Never forget the strong, unchanging sentiments of goodness and affection that fill her heart and be mindful with what an embrace of love you should return her love.” Speaking for himself he says: “I want to return her love for without her I cannot live.” One of the duties we owe her for all her love and mercy is to be unceasingly conscious of her: “Her loving memory should accompany you day and night, in all you do, in your work, in your conversation, in the midst of your joys and sorrows, in your rest. She should hold first place in your memory.”

The thought of her will bring us to salute her in terms such as these: “Open Thy Heart to me, Thou Font of Clemency, my Sister, my Friend, my Dove, my Immaculate One, Thou Love of my heart. Yes, Thou, O Virgin Mary, art my heart and my soul.”

Another duty we owe her according to Bostius is to offer all to God through her: “Do not delay to place whatever you wish to offer to God in her hands for she interests herself with the greatest diligence in the affairs of her beloved brothers. Show her your wounds, the ulcers of your soul and she will come to your aid by showing your Judge, who is her Son and her bosom. She will ask for you in the name of her own merits with such insistence that Jesus will show his side and his wounds to the Father and you will not be rejected when so many proofs of love will speak in your favor.” If we go to Our Lady with that confidence which so many evidences of her love should inspire, we shall run in the way of perfection: “Every day,” he assures

us, “you will become greater, more interior in your spiritual lives, stronger, more enlightened, purer, in a word, better, for she teaches the ways of God.”

Those who know the history of the Marian devotion of the Church must recognize that Bostius is one of the great Marian writers of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, he was no originator, for he simply gave more concrete expression to a love for Mary which he found in the tradition of the Order. His work claimed to be nothing more than an exhortation to his brethren in Carmel to respond to the special love which Our Lady has for her Order and for those who wear her habit.

To this great lover of Our Lady whose whole being was immersed in the traditional love of the Order for its Queen, the scapular was rich in meaning. It is a garment of love which surrounds us with the love and affection of Mary, our Mother, the symbol of all the gifts her special love bestows upon us. “How happy,” he says, “are they who embrace with such sweetness the gifts which Mary gives in return for love! When they see this habit and know that they have been provided for by her with such a rich inheritance, they will remember with joy the predilection with which this most loving benefactress surrounds them.”

On the other hand, it should remind her brothers “that they should meditate continually upon the holy life of Mary, their model; that they should engrave her image on the shield of their faith beside that of her Son and put all their faith in the omnipotent protection of this sublime sovereign who is always ready to help them.”

The scapular, therefore, is the visible sign of our total consecration to Our Lady and of the all-embracing love we should have for her. The sight of the scapular should be enough to remind us that she is the mirror of all we should be in the sight of God. Bostius

would have us meditate upon our model until it takes complete possession of us and works within us that revelation of itself which would make our lives living images of Our Lady. Mary inspired two of the greatest saints and mystics of the Church. The Garden of Carmel, that has been watched over so solicitously by its queen and watered so copiously with the living water of divine grace, was bound to bring forth fruit in due season. Two of the most precious fruits of Carmel are St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, both of whom loved Our Lady with all the tender affection Carmel has always had for her.

In her *Life* Teresa tells us how, when she was just a child, she lost her mother and asked Mary to be her mother. Our Lady heard her prayer for she always came to Teresa's assistance when needed. From the day she entered Carmel, she never forgot that she wore the habit of Our Lady and that she belonged to her Order. The convents she founded were "little dovecotes of the Virgin, Our Lady" where her nuns were glad to serve "our Mother, Our Lady, our Protectress." She worked for the restoration of the "Rule of Our Lady and Empress." In a vision she saw Our Lady on her right and St. Joseph on her left clothing her with a garment of excessive whiteness and splendor, and she began her "Foundations" by invoking the help of Our Lord and "His glorious Mother whose Habit I wear, though unworthy of it."

When John of the Cross was about four or five years old, he fell into a pond near which he was playing with other boys. A beautiful Lady appeared to him but she was so beautiful that he refused to put his dirty hands into hers. His rescue was the beginning of a long series of special graces. He received so many favors from Our Lady that he could not see her image without being filled with love for her. When he entered Carmel he pledged himself to serve her to the end and took her as his model. For the great mystic, she is the model of the soul that

has reached that union of transformation in which, according to him, the essence of our Carmelite life consists. Like St. Teresa, he loved the habit because it was Our Lady's and he lived in the hope that it would bring him her special protection, particularly at the hour of death. "The Mother of God and of Carmel," he says, "hastens to Purgatory with grace on Saturday and delivers those souls who have worn her scapular. Blessed be such a Lady who wills that on Saturday I depart from this life."

Carmel's devotion to Our Lady reached its full flower in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, particularly among the Carmelite writers of the Reform of Tournai. In 1669 Michael of St. Augustine, who is the leader of the group, wrote a work entitled *On the Mariform and Marian life in Mary and through Mary*. This treatise develops the ideas of Baconthorpe and Bostius and should be classified as one of the gems of Marian literature. It is the rich flowering of Carmel's traditional devotion to Mary. As the title of his work suggests, Michael of St. Augustine insists that we should live Our Lady to the point of transforming our lives into hers. Wax may be given any shape or form; we should look upon ourselves as something to be transformed and given a Mariform. The Holy Ghost warns us that, before we can enter heaven, we must be transformed into Christ and be conformed to His image. Our transformation into Christ may be accomplished through Mary who is the Mirror of His Justice. By living her we live Him. She is the way He came to us and consequently it is through her that we should go to Him.

In its quest for perfection the soul seeks the Face of God always. We sometimes forget, however, that the easiest place to find and see the Face of God is in the arms of His Mother. This is something the Carmelite must not forget for he should go to God by seeking his mother's face as well as that of his Father.

The Eternal Word held closely in the arms of His Holy Mother is a visible expression of their intimate union in the order of

grace. They were one in the eternal plan of God; they were one in the relationship of Mother and Son; they were one in the sacrifice that regenerated mankind on Calvary; and they are one in the distribution of the merits of the Cross. No words of ours could express the intimacy of the union between Christ and His Mother in the order of grace. Blessed indeed was she because He was the fruit of her womb, but far more blessed was she because her life was the spiritual conception of her own Son. Her soul, her mind and heart, her spirit became His in a process of transformation that should be mirrored in our lives. It is from Christ through Mary that divine life comes. According to St. Bernard, Mary's soul alone remained in Christ's body after His soul had left it, and in the piercing of His side Mary took up in herself, through the blood and water flowing therefrom, all the power of His redeeming death that she might give birth to a new life for mankind. After He proclaimed her our Mother, the body she gave Him returned lifeless to her arms to make her the depository of the life we found in the death of the Cross. If there ever was one who could say in all truth "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me," it was Mary whose soul was full of divine life and whose spirit rejoiced only in God, her Saviour. The liturgy sends us to her to find life: "In me is the hope of life and of virtue." And again: "The one who finds me shall find life and draw salvation from the Lord."

To live, therefore, a Mariform life is to live with her in Christ and, through Christ, in God. As Michael of St. Augustine says: "Since it is imperative for us to live a deiform life, that is, a life conformed to the divine will and pleasure, it becomes us to live a Mariform life, that is, one according to the will and pleasure of Mary, the Mother of God. Therefore those who profess to be her dearest children should always watch, with a discerning eye, to see that what they do or omit is according to the will of God and that of His most amiable mother, striving in everything

they do or omit, to be conscious of God and of His most holy Mother to the end that they may execute promptly and joyfully whatever pleases and avoid solicitously whatever they know would displease them.”

He goes on to give us the fundamental reason why we should be always mindful of Our Lady and why we should live a Mariform life in her. His argument is a logical deduction from the well-known doctrine of the Church concerning Our Lady’s function in the mystical body of Christ. Since the life of grace is born in our souls of Christ and His Mother, he concludes: “It follows that not only does the grace or the spirit of God work and cause divine life in such souls but that the grace and the spirit of Mary also works and causes a Marian life in us.” In other words, since Mary is the mother of the life of grace there is something of her about it. The mother lives in her child for she has shared her life with it. Mary shares her divine life with us, and therefore grace should be the principle of both a deiform and of a Mariform life.

“May the soul of Mary be in all of us that we may magnify the Lord; may the spirit of Mary be in all of us that we may rejoice in God, our Saviour.” Quoting these words of St. Ambrose, Michael of St. Augustine continues: “And I add: may the spirit of Mary be in us all that we may live by it, that abiding in us it may work in us and make us capable of living by it.” Since all hope of life and of virtue is in her, “no one, no matter to what state or condition he belongs, can obtain any grace or have any hope of divine life or of Christian virtue unless through Mary, Mother most amiable, who dispenses and distributes it. With this in mind the devout soul gradually accustoms itself to live a life that is at the same time divine and Marian, since its source is the spirit of God and that of Mary ... In this sense one may say that ... the spirit of Jesus and Mary which abides in me is the spirit that works in me.”

There is no opposition between the spirit of God and that of His Mother for, as he says, “the spirit of Jesus and Mary which works all things in the soul is one. . . . Mary has her kingdom and her throne in the soul near the throne of her Son, Jesus . . . They grow and flourish in equal proportion. Then may it be said of the soul that ‘the queen stood to the right’, for the indivisible kingdoms of Jesus and Mary, His Mother, flourish there and Jesus and Mary are one in the ruling of them.”

If the divine life of our souls is born of Jesus and Mary, and if the spirit by which we live that life is the spirit of them both, it follows that we should direct all the aspirations and affections of our soul to God and His Mother, “preserving and fostering in ourselves a tender, filial and child-like attitude towards and a loving longing for Mary, our most amiable and most beloved mother, so that our love may flow sweetly and reflow from her to God and from God to her.”

This tender, filial, child-like love that is born of her spirit soon transforms this cold, hard nature of ours and we become like our Mother. “When,” he says, “this tender, filial, child-like affection of soul for our amiable mother is the fruit of the spirit of God or of divine love, it becomes spontaneous and, for the time being, even nature itself seems to change and to clothe itself with that innocence, tenderness, and littleness of a child towards a most lovable and a most dear mother.”

Commenting on the text “the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us,” Michael of St. Augustine explains how, for the truly Marian soul, the love of God embraces also His Mother. It is through the flow and reflow of this charity that we live in God and her: “It is one and the same spirit that causes this love for God and Mary as when He wishes, saturating and making the soul a tender spouse in the

arms of its beloved and sometimes making it like an innocent child in the presence of its most sweet mother.”

To follow this great Marian thinker further would be to leave the ordinary path to union with God for the higher ways of mysticism, but from what we have seen one can conclude that the Marian devotion he outlined came from a soul saturated with the love of Our Lady. He is the representative of a school of Carmelite writers all of whom cultivated the same traditional love of their Order for Our Lady.

Union with God through Our Lady as explained by Michael of St. Augustine is a rare phenomenon in the spiritual life. He found it in some of the saints of his own Order, as for example, in St. Peter Thomas, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, and others. He was a staunch defender of the scapular against the attacks of the Jansenists and by practicing what he preached to others he earned for himself the title of Venerable.

From this very brief summary of the Marian devotion of the Order from its origin down to its golden age in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, one can easily see that the habit or the scapular speaks most eloquently of Our Lady and that it is the mark of a devotion to her that has grown deeper and more beautiful with the fullness of time. Time, which determines the meaning of many things, has made it the sign of a complete dependence upon and of a total consecration to the Mother and the Queen of Carmel. On the other hand, Our Lady, who is never outdone in generosity, has regarded the humble, persevering homage of her Order by making the scapular the mark of her special love for those who wear it. Holy Mother the Church has enriched it further by making it her greatest sacramental. How true, therefore, are the words of Blessed Claude de la Colombière: “Because all the forms of our love for the Blessed Virgin, all its various modes of expression cannot be equally pleasing to her and therefore

do not assist us in the same degree to heaven, I say without a moment's hesitation that the scapular is the most favored of all!"

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