

YOUR BROWN SCAPULAR

BY

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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.*”¹ He and his wife,

¹ 3 Kings 16:30

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.

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.”²

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.”*³

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*

² 3 Kings 17:1

³ 3 Kings 18:18,19

fire, let him be God. And all the people answered: a very good proposal.”⁴

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 their manner with knives and lancets till they were all covered with blood.”⁵

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.*”⁶

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

⁴ 3 Kings 18:23,24

⁵ 3 Kings 18:27,28

⁶ 3 Kings 18:44,45

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 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 12th 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.*"⁷ 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 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

⁷ 3 Kings 19:2

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."*⁸

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

⁸ Exo. 16:10

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.”*⁹ 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 devotion to her that it was

⁹ Isa. 45:8

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 12th 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 13th 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

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