

Liturgical Living: What is the Brown Scapular?



Have you ever seen someone wearing this brown “necklace” and wondered what it is? The scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, also known as the Brown Scapular, is a popular Roman Catholic devotion.

The sacramental is a miniature imitation of the actual Brown Scapular used by the Carmelites – the sleeveless outer garment falling from the shoulders, which is worn as a sign of their vocation and devotion (see the picture on the right).

The word “scapular” comes from the Latin word “scapula”, meaning “shoulder blade”. The devotional scapular that lay persons may wear consists of two small pieces of cloth, one worn on the chest, and the other on the back, which are connected by straps or strings passing over the shoulders.



The Catholic Church has approved eighteen different kinds of scapulars, but the best known is the woolen brown scapular, or the Scapular of Mount Carmel, that the Virgin Mary bestowed on Simon Stock.

Saint Simon Stock was a Carmelite priest. His lasting fame came from an apparition he had in Cambridge, England, on July 16, 1251, at a time when the Carmelite Order was being oppressed. The Virgin Mary appeared to him holding the brown scapular in one hand. Her words were: *“Receive, my beloved son, this scapular of thy Order; it is the special sign of my favor, which I have obtained for thee and for thy children of Mount Carmel. He who dies clothed with this habit shall be preserved from eternal fire. It is the badge of salvation, a shield in time of danger, and a pledge of special peace and protection.”*

On July 16, we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in remembrance of this event. You do not have to be a vowed Carmelite to receive the special promises and graces that Our Lady promised to Saint Simon Stock. The Church extended this wonderful privilege to all the laity who are willing to be invested in the Brown Scapular of the Carmelites and who perpetually wear it.

What are the rules for wearing the Brown Scapular?

There are elaborate rules governing the wearing of the scapular: although it may be worn by any Catholic, even an infant, the investiture must be done by a priest. How to enroll in the Confraternity, as well as the conditions of receiving the Sabbatine privilege, are located [here](#).

The scapular must be worn in the proper manner; if an individual neglects to wear it for a time, the benefits are forfeited.

What are the promises of the Brown Scapular?

The promises attached to the Brown Scapular are incredible! Our Lady said, "Whosoever dies wearing this Scapular, shall not suffer eternal fire." This implies that she will intercede to ensure that the wearer of the Scapular obtains the grace of final perseverance and dies in the state of grace. In addition to this, the Sabbatine Privilege consists of Our Lady's promise to release from Purgatory through her special intercession, on the first Saturday after their death, those who meet the following three requirements:

- Wear the Scapular.
- Observe Chastity according to your state in life.
- Pray daily the Little Office of Our Lady OR Observe the fasts of the church together with abstaining from meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays OR substitute the Rosary with permission of a confessor OR substitute some other good work with the permission of a confessor.

In addition to all of the above, Pope Benedict XV granted an indulgence of 500 days for devoutly kissing your scapular.

Here are some fun ways to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel:

- [This website](#) has several scapular crafts
- Try your hand at drawing the scapular using [this guided drawing lesson](#)
- Make [these no-bake candy scapulars](#) as a fun treat
- Serve "caramel" ice cream sundaes

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us!