

About the Brown Scapular

Question: **What is the Brown Scapular?**

Answer: The Brown Scapular is a sacramental. It is of the Habit of Carmel. In miniature form, it consists of two small pieces of brown material connected by string and worn over the shoulders. The Carmelite Order to which the Scapular belongs originated on Mt. Carmel in the Holy Land near the cave of Elias the prophet, who was the inspiration of the early members of Carmel.

Question: **What is the History of the Brown Scapular?**

Answer: St. Simon Stock, General of the Carmelite Order was the man God chose to accomplish great work in the Carmelite Order. About 1251, when difficulties seemed insurmountable, Simon had recourse to Mary, whom he loved. Tradition assures us that she appeared to him and made the Scapular of the Carmelite Habit a sign of Her love and a pledge of Her motherly protection, saying:

"This shall be to you and all Carmelites a privilege that anyone who dies clothed in this shall not suffer eternal fire; and if wearing it they die, they shall be saved."

Catholic theologians and authorities like Vermeersch, St. Robert Bellarmine, Beringer, Benedict XV, etc., explain the promise to mean anyone dying in Mary's family: (the Carmelite Order or Scapular Confraternity) will receive from her, at the hour of death, either the grace of perseverance in the state of grace or the grace of final contrition. Saints and Pontiffs have often warned us of the folly of abusing Mary's promise. At the same time that Pope Pius XI joyfully professed: "I learned to love the Scapular Virgin in the arms of my mother," he also warned the faithful that ... "although it is very true that the Blessed Virgin loves all who love Her, nevertheless those who wish to have the Blessed Mother as a helper at the hour of death, must, in life, merit such a signal favor by abstaining from sin and laboring in Her honor." It is unthinkable that anyone who deliberately sins, counting on Mary's Scapular Promise to save him, will die clothed in the Scapular. To lead a willfully sinful life trusting in Scapular Promise is to commit a sin of presumption.

Later, when Our Lady appeared at Fatima for the last time on October 13, 1917, she came as Our Lady of the Rosary. After she had told the children who she was and what she wanted, repeating her conditions for world peace, there occurred the great Miracle of the Sun. While this was taking place, the children were privileged to witness several remarkable visions from Heaven. As our Lady had promised the month before, St. Joseph had come with the Holy Family and he had blessed the world. Then Our Lady appeared as Our Lady of Sorrows, accompanied by her Divine Son, who also blessed the world. Finally, they saw the Blessed Virgin Mary dressed in the brown robe of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, crowned as Queen of Heaven and earth, holding a Brown Scapular in her hand, with her Infant Son upon her knee. On August 15th, 1950, Sr. Lucia, the last living visionary of Fatima, stated: "The Rosary and the Scapular are inseparable."

Question: **What is the Sabbatine Privilege and how does it relate to the Scapular?**

Answer: The "Sabbatine" (Saturday) Privilege is the second of two privileges (the first mentioned above) based on **an inauthentic bull** said to have been issued on March 3, 1322 by Pope John XXII.

In this Bull, the pope declares that the Mother of God appeared to him and recommended to him those in the Carmelite Order as well as requesting him to ratify certain allowances for their order. While the Bull of John XXII was ratified by some popes later in the sixteenth century, the Bull itself, neither in its wording nor its general contents, were declared authentic and genuine.

If you are interested in the history of this bull and the Sabbatine Privilege, you should go to the New Advent web site at: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen> and search on "Sabbatine Privilege".

Question: What blessings come with wearing the Brown Scapular?

Answer: At a time when both the origin and nature of the Sabbatine Privilege were under serious question, Pope Paul V who was Pope from 1605-1621 in an official statement said:

“It is permitted to preach that the Blessed Virgin will aid the souls of the Brothers and Sisters of the Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel after their death by her continual intercession, by her suffrages and merits and by her special protection, especially on the day of Saturday, which is the day especially dedicated by the Church to the same Blessed Virgin Mary.”

Question: What are the conditions for trusting in such a favor?

Answer: The conditions for these blessings are:

1. Dying in a state of grace
2. Wearing the Brown Scapular faithfully
3. Chastity according one's state in life
4. If they cannot recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, they are to observe the Church's fast and abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays unless Christmas falls on those days.

Question: What is the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary?

Answer: When the Sabbatine Privilege was first given, the Rosary was not as commonly practiced a devotion as it is today. The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a small “office” of prayers and readings honoring Our Lady. It is read every day, taking about 45 minutes to complete. As the Rosary became more widely used, it became common for permission to be granted by the Carmelites for the substitution of the Rosary for the Little Office.

Question: May I substitute the Scapular Medal for the cloth Scapular?

Answer: Pope Pius X originally granted the use of the Scapular Medal as a concession to Missionaries in Africa, who found the cloth Scapular did not hold up in the climate, in addition to other reasons, but as he later stated when he found the medal becoming widespread: “I never intended that Medal be used in Europe and America. I wear the cloth Scapular of Carmel. Let us never take it off.” His official decree granting the use of the Medal states, “... the Holy Father desires that the Scapular be worn in its accustomed form.” If there are good and serious reasons, e.g. extreme allergies to materials, it is true the Medal can be worn. It is better to have a person wearing the Scapular Medal than no Scapular at all.

Question: Do I simply begin wearing the Scapular? Or must I be invested in first?

Answer: To obtain the fullest possible benefits from the Brown Scapular devotion, one must be validly invested, sometimes called “enrolled”, in the Brown Scapular. A Catholic can be invested in the Brown Scapular by either a diocesan or religious order priest, using a Scapular blessed by the priest. After proper enrollment in the Scapular, a person need not have subsequent scapulars blessed. Once enrolled, you are enrolled until death. A “Scapular Ritual for Priests” is available. If your local priest cannot find one, they can contact a local Carmelite Order through their dioceses for the proper enrollment ritual.

Question: Must I wear the Scapular around my neck?

Answer: Yes, the Scapular is a habit – Our Lady's habit. The Scapular must be worn over the shoulders in such a manner that one part hangs in front of the body and the other in the back. Worn in any other way, it carries no indulgence or promise. It is not necessary to wear the Scapular next to the skin. It may be worn over one's clothes. Furthermore, the Scapular may be enclosed in some sort of case: metal, plastic, etc. – provided the case does not prevent the Scapular material from being attached to a braid or chain.

Question: May a non-Catholic wear the Brown Scapular?

Answer: YES! Moreover, in doing, a non-Catholic will receive many graces and blessings with this special sign of devotion to the Mother of God. Baptized Catholics are the only ones who can be officially enrolled in the Confraternity and share in the special Scapular privileges. **Nevertheless**, Non-Catholics are warmly encouraged to avail themselves of this **special way** of honoring Jesus' Mother.