

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL—NEW STATUE

The Story of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Hermits lived on Mount Carmel near the Fountain of Elijah in northern Israel in the 12th century. They had a chapel dedicated to Our Lady. By the 13th century they became known as “Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.” They soon celebrated a special Mass and Office in honour of Mary. In 1726, it became a celebration of the universal Church under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. For centuries the Carmelites have seen themselves as specially related to Mary; their great saints and theologians have promoted devotion to her and often championed the mystery of her Immaculate Conception.

Saint Teresa of Avila called Carmel “the Order of the Virgin”. Saint John of the Cross credited Mary with saving him from drowning as a child, leading him to Carmel, and helping him escape from prison. Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus believed that Mary cured her from illness; on her First Communion day, Thérèse dedicated her life to Mary; during the last days of her life she frequently spoke of Mary.

There is a tradition—which may not be historical—that Mary appeared to Saint Simon Stock, a leader of the Carmelites, and gave him a scapular, telling him to promote devotion to it. The scapular is a modified version of Mary’s own garment (the garment of our new statute). It symbolizes her special protection and calls the wearers to consecrate themselves to her in a special way. The scapular reminds us of the Gospel call to prayer and penance—a call that Mary models in a splendid way.

Reflection

The Carmelites were known from early on as “*Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel*.” The title suggests that they saw Mary not only as “mother”, but also as “sister”. The word sister is a reminder that Mary is very close to us. She is a daughter of God and therefore can help us be authentic daughters and sons of God. She also can help us grow in appreciation of being sisters and brothers to one another. She leads us to a new realization that all human beings belong to the family of God. When such a conviction grows, there is hope that the human race can find its way to peace.

Devotees to the Blessed Mother of Mount Carmel might raise petitions to her through this prayer:

O most beautiful flower of Mt. Carmel, fruitful vine, splendour of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. O Star of the Sea, help me and show me you are my Mother. O Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to aid me in this necessity (make request). There are none that can withstand your power. O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you. Sweet Mother I place this cause in your hands. Amen.