

"La Bruna"

(The oldest image of Our Ldy of Mount Carmel)

"La Bruna" (The Brown One"), an icon of the Eleousa (Eastern) style shows Mary with a star with one long tail on her right shoulder reflecting her purity. Our Lady is wearing a red tunic and a blue mantle and veil which Jesus clings to. Though it doesn't show up in this reproduction, Jesus and Mary are surrounded by large halos, hers with twelve rosettes representing the twelve tribes and twelve apostles, and His with the Cross. This icon is a 12th century Carmelite icon, the original of which is in the Basilica of Madonna della Carmine Maggiore in Naples, Italy.



According to the most ancient Carmelite Chronicles, the Order has its origins with the disciples of the prophets Elias and Eliseus who lived in caves on Mount Carmel. They honored the Queen of Heaven as the Virgin who was to give birth to the Savior. When the reality replaced the symbol, the pious ascetics of Carmel were converted to the Christian Faith.

Amid the many persecutions raised against the Order of Mount Carmel, newly arrived in Europe, Saint Simon Stock, General of the Order, turned with filial confidence to the Blessed Mother of God. As he knelt in prayer on July 16, 1251, in the White Friar's convent at Cambridge, She appeared before him and presented him with the well-known Brown Scapular, a long sleeveless garment destined for the Order of Carmel which reached from the shoulders to the knees. It was given as an assurance, for those who died wearing it, of Her heavenly protection from eternal death. An extraordinary promise indeed, but one requiring a life of prayer and sacrifice as well.

Devotion to the blessed habit spread quickly throughout the Christian world. Pope after Pope enriched it with indulgences, and innumerable miracles put their seal upon its efficacy. The first of them was worked at Winchester on a man dying in despair, who, when the scapular was laid on him by Saint Simon Stock, at once asked for the Sacraments.

At Lourdes in 1858, the Virgin chose to make Her last apparition on July 16th, feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the day the Church commemorates her apparition to Saint Simon Stock. And at Fatima on October 13, 1917, it is as Our Lady of Mount Carmel that Mary appeared when She said farewell to the three children. Throughout the ages, the Queen of Carmel has always kept a faithful watch over the destinies of Her cherished children on earth.