

Does The SCAPULAR ASSURE SALVATION?

by John M. Haffert

A columnist recently attacked the devotion of the Scapular with the claim that the apparition to St. Simon Stock was a legend, "an invention of later times."

FOUND IN OLD BOOK

Any present day attack on the Scapular ignores the validity of tradition and also violates paragraph 67 of *Lumen Gentium*. Moreover, it shows woeful ignorance of recent scholarship in this important field.

It is true that when the Catholic Encyclopedia was published *before the turn of the last century* many relics and traditions were questioned. The absence of 13th century documentation of the giving of the Scapular to St. Simon Stock and of the giving of the Rosary to St. Dominic suddenly seemed shocking after seven hundred years of blind devotion.

But subsequently, at least on the Scapular Vision, adequate historical evidence has been found including a book published within the lifetime of those who knew the contemporaries of St. Simon Stock. This book was the *VRIDARIUM* written by the Most Rev. John Grossi, Superior General of the Carmelite Order and a man renowned throughout Europe for scholarship and holiness. He could never have published something so incredible as the Scapular Vision and the promise of Salvation, so soon after it happened, unless it were historically accurate

and unless it had already been accepted by the Church.

AGAINST VATICAN II

The great document on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) was finally adopted by the Bishops of the World in an almost unanimous vote after they had deliberated about it for two years. Several years of preparation had preceded those years, during which Pope John had died. Pope Paul presided at the final votation and was the Pope to promulgate the historic document itself . . . knowing of course that it was the will of the Bishops of the world that as the Vicar of Christ it was up to him to indicate WHICH DEVOTIONS were now most to be stressed in fulfillment of the command of Paragraph 67.

SCAPULAR AND ROSARY

The decision of the Pope appeared in *Osservatore Romano* on April 2nd, 1965, only four months after the promulgation of the document. In a message to the International Marian Congress being held at that time in the Dominican Republic the Holy Father declared that "Among them" (the traditional devotions mentioned in Paragraph 67) the world at this particular moment of history should especially remember: "THE MARIAN ROSARY AND THE RELIGIOUS USE OF THE SCAPULAR OF MOUNT CARMEL."



Pope Paul VI declared:

"You will make known our will and our exhortations which we base upon the dogmatic constitution of the Ecumenical Council Vatican II, which is in complete conformity with our thought and indeed upon which our thought is based.

"That one ever hold in great esteem the practices and exercises of the devotion to the most blessed Virgin which have been recommended for centuries by the Magisterium of the Church'. (#67) And among them we judge well to recall especially the Marian Rosary and the religious use of the Scapular of Mount Carmel...a form of piety which is adapted by its simplicity to the spirit indeed of everyone, and is most largely widespread among the faithful for an increase of spiritual fruit.*

"In these times when we instruct the Christian people, it is necessary constantly and clearly to inculcate the realization that insofar as the Mother is honored, so the Son...for Whom all exists (cf. Col. 1, 15-16)...will be known, loved, glorified as He should be, and that His commandments will be observed (#66, Constitution De Ecclesia, cited above); it is also necess-

*(Pius XII, Ep. *Neminem profecto* later, 11 Feb. 1950; A.A.S. XLII, 390).

ary to advise the faithful that piety toward the Mother of God is not to be found in a sterile and passive sentimentalism nor in a certain vain credulity, but on the contrary that it proceeds by that true faith through which we are carried through a recognition of the eminence of the Mother of God, driven to a filial love toward our

Mother and to the imitation of her virtues." (ibid., #67).

AGAINST TRADITIONAL TEACHING AND BELIEF OF THE CHURCH

For anyone to say that the Scapular "COULD NOT IN ITSELF BE ANY ASSURANCE" that a person is saved

is COMPLETELY CONTRARY to the traditional teaching of the Church concerning this devotion. The Scapular promise of salvation, *accepted in the Church for seven hundred years*, is essential to the Scapular tradition, history, doctrine and devotion. The Theological explanation is given in the book SIGN OF HER HEART:

IN THEOLOGY

It is everything but a dogma of our Catholic Faith that anyone who practices true devotion to Mary perseveringly will infallibly be saved. Moreover, not only is true devotion to Mary, perseveringly practiced, a Sign of Predestination, remarks a certain theologian, but "even sinners can have true devotion to Her."³

TRUE DEVOTION

True devotion to Mary consists in only three things: homage, confidence, and love. Anyone who comes to death with the surety that he has faithfully praised, trusted and loved Mary, can be also sure that he will not be eternally lost. Such is the doctrine of the Church because, says Saint Alphonsus, one who is thus a true devotee of Mary is protected at death by Her over whom Satan has never had empire and who vanquishes and crushes him by Her mere presence.⁴ Quoting and explaining Saint Bernard, Saint Alphonsus says further: "If we follow Mary we shall never err from the paths of Salvation. Imploring Her thou wilt not despair (St. Bernard). Each time that we invoke Her aid, we shall be inspired with perfect confidence. If She supports thee thou canst not fail; if She protects thee thou hast nothing to fear, for thou canst not be lost: with Her for thy guide, thou wilt not be weary: for thy salvation will be worked with ease."

CHURCH DOCTOR

Now, when we take the Scapular, says Saint Alphonsus, we render homage to the Mother of God: "Just as men take pride in having others wear their livery, so the most holy Mary is pleased when Her servants wear Her Scapular as a mark that they have dedicated themselves to Her service and are members of the Family of the

Mother of God."⁵ Moreover, we show that we believe in Her power to save us and in Her promises; that is confidence. Finally, in making ourselves in a special way Her children, thus rendering to Her the homage of membership in Her family and confiding in Her power and affection, we show that we love Her, that we desire to have Her for a Mother.

Containing the three elements of a true Marian devotion, the wearing of the Scapular is by its very nature a Sign of Salvation.

VERY REMARKABLE

It might seem, as a consequence, that our Heavenly Mother has not really done anything very remarkable in making the Scapular Promise. However, what is more remarkable than a true devotion to Her that is by its nature perpetual? What is more wonderful than an absolute assurance at death that we have always loved the Blessed Virgin, always had confidence in Her and always rendered homage at Her shrine of devotion? And yet, such an assurance is the Scapular. Indeed, there is no sweeter nor more complete assurance at the death of "everyman" than the presence upon him of this Sign of true devotion to Heaven's Queen.

"I would reproach myself were I to weaken your confidence in those other practices of devotion to Mary which are approved by the Church. They are all salutary and cannot fail to touch Her maternal heart. But if She graciously accords Her favor to those who avail themselves of those devotions, how much more propitious will She not be to all who clothe themselves in Her holy livery?"⁷

Now, let us notice a unique and glorious character of this childlike, simple devotion: that it is wordless. The wearing of the Scapular gives rise to a mystical union between the soul and Mary where not a word is spoken.

"I am the City of Refuge," says Saint John Damascene in Mary's name, "for all who fly to Me." And Saint Alphonsus comments: "It is sufficient to have recourse to Her, for whoever has the good fortune to enter this city need not speak to be saved. Assemble yourselves and let us enter the fenced city and let us be silent there (Jeremias VIII, 14), to speak in the words of Jeremias...It will suffice to enter this city and be silent because Mary will speak and ask all that we require."

SILENT DEVOTION

By way of parenthesis, let us remark that Saint Alphonsus says: "It will suffice to keep silent"; he wishes to indicate that it is profitable to do more than fly under Mary's mantle, viz., not only to show our confidence, homage and love by just being there, but to practice that fourth and perfecting element of Marian devotion: imitation. By rendering homage to Mary we give Her our minds; by confidence we give our wills; by love we give our hearts. Such is true but not perfect devotion. To be perfect we must sell all and follow Mary; we must give Her our whole selves by imitation."⁹

MARY'S "PRESENCE"

When we say that Mary is continually present to Her Scapular wearers by what is called "moral union," we simply mean that She is united to them by intention. When I think of someone whom I love while he thinks of me, he and I are united by common

intention. If I wear the Scapular, Mary is continually thinking of me and loving me as Her special child and I, in turn, am thinking of Her and loving Her as my dearest Mother. I may not be actually thinking of Her, at the moment, but the Scapular proclaims that I think of Her and love Her at least by intention.

An understanding of the nature of a virtual intention is all-important to an understanding of the continual moral union with Mary that results from the Scapular Devotion. It is the virtual intention, of which the Scapular we wear gives testimony, that renders a perpetual moral union possible.

THE INTENTION

To understand the force of the virtual intention, let us take the example (though the reality would be most undesirable) of a priest who puts on the vestments in order to baptize a child and, as he is about to leave the vestry, receives such very distressing news that he enters the baptistry to perform the ceremony totally distracted, even to the point of not adverting to the fact that he is administering the Sacrament. Is the child validly baptized? Yes, because although the priest had not at the moment an actual intention, nevertheless he did nothing to exclude the actual intention which he had when putting on the vestments. Thus he may be said to have had, throughout the ceremony, a virtual intention. In vesting himself he made the actual intention of administering Baptism, and the very vestments he

CONCLUSION

We do not want to mention the newspaper or the columnist to whom we are replying in this article although we are disappointed that a reputable national Catholic newspaper would run such a column. In the long run it is certain at least to cost them readers as the outraged letters we have received would indicate.

In the face of any such attack against our traditional devotions, in flagrant violation of the decrees of Vatican II and in particular of Paragraph 67 of *Lumen Gentium* (see last issue of SOUL), may our "apostles" be more zealous in the promotion of

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wore during the ceremony showed that the Baptism was willed by him. So, too, the Scapular shows that we will to be united to Mary even when we do not advert to its presence. Consequently, Mary is always present to Scapular wearers in a special way: protecting, guiding, adorning, lavishing a Mother's love.

BOND OF UNION

Hence the Scapular is a bond of union between Mary and the soul. The one who wears the Scapular enjoys Mary's presence by Her contract and his. The Scapular is but the symbol of that contract. And since Satan can do nothing against Mary, the Immaculate Conception, he can do nothing against us when She protects us. That is why one who practices true devotion to Her, and more particularly one who wears the Scapular, cannot be lost.

As a sort of consequence of all this, do we not see that Mary's Scapular alliance—contracted by a Promise on the one hand, and an acceptance on the other—has the power of drawing all mankind to union under Mary's mantle? Two things united to a third are united to each other. In entering the Scapular Confraternity we enter into union not only with Mary but with everyone similarly united to Her. Thus, here on earth, a tremendous Marian force is latent in the Scapular Confraternity wherein millions and millions of souls are each, to some degree at least, united to the Blessed Virgin.

these devotions than EVER before! Certainly more than ever we need the assurance of the hands of Our Mother reaching out to us, touching us, sustaining us in the current crisis of faith. And in effect, the Scapular and the Rosary are the actual hands of Our Mother reaching to us and touching us at every moment. With Blessed Claude de la Colombiere we cry in this age of blackness and doubt:

It is indeed true that we cannot sound the depths of the Scapular Promise. We see it constituting a true Marian devotion. We see it spreading Mary's Mantle over the earth, under which we can enter and be allied in a special way to the invincible Queen of Heaven. We see it creating a great spiritual force among millions of souls, in a Confraternity of Mary which it will suffice to enter and be silent, "for Mary will speak and ask all that we require."

"The faithful so unanimously agree that devotion to the Mother of God is a mark of predestination that, independently of the reasons upon which this opinion is based, I think a concordance so general should cause it to be regarded as a truth of our holy religion... And because all the forms of our love for the Blessed Virgin, all its various modes of expression cannot be equally agreeable to Her and therefore do not assist us in the same degree to Heaven, I aver without a moment's hesitation that the Scapular is the most favored of all."¹¹
B.I. Claude De La Colombiere, S.J.

"We must not look on the Scapular as a talisman operating by some magic virtue of its own, but rather as a manifestation of devotion which derives all its benevolence from the Blessed Virgin and is the HOMAGE of respectful AFFECTION, of FILIAL CONFIDENCE, and CONTINUAL snpplication."¹²
A.J. Vermeersch, S.J.

"I wanted to know if Mary really and truly interested Herself in me. And in the Scapular She has given me the most tangible assurance; I have only to open my eyes: She has attached Her protection to this Scapular: 'Whosoever dies clothed in this shall not suffer eternal fire!'"¹⁷

Blessed Claude

Footnotes:

³ R.P. Petitalot: *The Virgin Mother* according to Theology (London, 1889), pp. 409-429.

⁴ S. Alphonsus Liguori: *Glorie di Maria* (Rome, 1932), t I, pg. 317, 349.

⁵ *Ibidem*, t. II, pg. 374.

⁷ Serm. pour la Fete, Oeuvres (Lyons, 1702), t. III.

⁹ R.P. Tanquerey: *The Spiritual Life* (Phila., 1930), pg. 86. N.B.: Reader will profit by starting at pg. 80 and reading through to pg. 95, in this connection.