

Did you know . . .

Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Our Lady has many titles. On Monday, we celebrate one of them, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Patroness of the Carmelites.

Mt. Carmel is a well-known mountain ridge in Palestine known in ancient times for its wine and oil production. It is also known for its cover of flower blossoms, flowering shrubs and fragrant herbs. The beauty of the bride in Solomon's Song of Songs [7:5] is compared to the beauty of this area. Its Hebrew name, "karmel" means "garden land" and "a fruitful place."

The feast day of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, July 16, recalls the foundation of the Carmelite religious order in the 12th century. A monastery was built on Mt. Carmel and was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. There is a tradition...which may or may not be historical...that St. Simon Stock, an early prior general of the Carmelite religious order, had an apparition on July 16, 1251, at a [time](#) when the Carmelite Order was being oppressed by pagans.

In it, the Virgin [Mary](#) appeared to him holding a 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."*

The feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was instituted for the Carmelites in 1332 and Robert Cardinal Bellarmine in 1609 declared it the patronal feast of the Carmelite Order. From then on, the celebration of the feast began to spread, with various popes approving the celebration in southern Italy, Spain and her colonies, then Austria, Portugal and her colonies, and finally in the Papal States, before Pope Benedict XIII placed the feast on the universal calendar of the Latin Church in 1726.

Judy Pearson

