

# Understanding the practice of wearing the brown scapular



**Question:** It is my understanding that the brown scapular carries with it a promise that those who wear it will not go to hell. I certainly believe in the benefits of sacramentals. However, is it required that we must believe this concerning the scapular?

– **Tim Donovan**, Prospect Park, Pennsylvania

**Answer:** No, you are not required to believe this for two reasons. First, it is private revelation, and the Church does not require faith in or adherence to the practices associated with any private revelation, even when the Church may commend a certain practice that comes from a saint or apparition that is known and widely believed to be authentic.

Second, you are not required to believe this because the way you have heard the promises associated with the wearing of the brown scapular involves a simplistic understanding of the practice. Any promises associated with the wearing of the brown scapular presuppose that one is living a sacramental life and is in a state of grace. The mere wearing of a piece of cloth cannot save. As I am sure you would agree, that would be superstitious and a violation of the First Commandment.

It is what the wearing of the brown scapular represents and helps inculcate that can help to save by ensuring that, on the day we die, we are living in a state of grace. In effect, wearing the scapular reflects a consecration of one's self to our Blessed Lady, who leads us more perfectly to Christ and who says, "Do whatever he tells you." Aside from simply wearing the scapular, there are other requirements to obtain the scapular's promises, including observing chastity

according to one's state in life and reciting the Divine Office daily, or alternately, the daily recitation of the Rosary and the observance of the ordinary fasts of the liturgical year, along with abstaining from meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

At its heart, the brown scapular invites us to live a life that reflects what Carmelite spirituality teaches: a deep union with Our Lord through the prayers and intercession of Our Lady. To the degree that we do this, the scapular has a saving meaning. But the mere wearing of it without the life it reflects is of no avail.

## Glory Be

**Question:** I was wondering why the Glory Be in the breviary is different from the more common version. The breviary version confuses a lot of people.

– **David Griener** via email

**Answer:** The breviary (also known as the Liturgy of the Hours) was revised by Rome in 1970. Strangely, the English translation of the conclusion of the Glory Be was different from the one most commonly known: "Is now, and ever shall be, world without end" became, "Is now and will be forever." Exactly why this was done is not clear. And it does confuse people.

To be fair, the Latin of the Glory Be's final phrase is difficult to translate well into smooth English. The Latin ending is, *sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum*. A literal rendering is "as it was in the beginning, and is now, and always, and unto ages of ages." "Unto the ages of ages" is a way of saying, "for a very long time," or more simply, "forever." So even the traditional "world without end" is not exactly what the Latin says, but it is close enough and familiar.

Work is underway to re-translate the English Liturgy of the Hours. It is expected that the Glory Be will be put back to the older form, since that will help avoid the many stumbles with two versions of the Glory Be known by the faithful.

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