

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL...

Thanks to a wonderful parishioner here at Saint Charles, Michael Mirando, I was able to attend the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Feast a couple of days ago at the parish in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Mike and his family have been involved with that particular feast for many years. It was a wonderful evening-complete with a visit to the church, bands playing, the dancing of the "Giglio" and of course some great Italian food like sausage and peppers and zeppoles which were delicious!

The actual Feast Day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is during the this month, on July 16th. There are many churches in the area including one here on Staten Island with that name. So we might wonder where that title comes from.

Actually, "Mount Carmel" is in the Holy Land-in Israel. In the Old Testament, we first read about Mount Carmel. On the mountain of Carmel the prophet Elijah fought a strong battle against the four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal and he killed them all. Later on, in the Twelfth Century, hermits withdrew to this same mountain and eventually founded the religious order that we know today as "The Carmelites." The men and women of this order are especially devoted to prayer and contemplation.

The monks on Mount Carmel built a special chapel dedicated to Our Lady. One of the early Carmelites, a priest by the name of Saint Simon Stock, received a vision of Our Lady and she gave to him what is known to us today as "The Brown Scapular." It is a sacramental that promises special blessings to those who wear it.

The Virgin Mary said to Saint Simon Stock: "Take this scapular... whoever dies clothed in it will not suffer eternal fire." It is a pledge to Our Lady that she will protect all her children who are clothed with it! Pope Pius XII once said: "Those who wear the scapular profess to belong to Our Lady." Many of us received the scapular on the day of our First Holy Communion. I wonder how many of us still wear it or at least have one around the house? The scapular is a sign of our devotion to Our Heavenly Mother.

When I attended the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Brooklyn, I went into the Church. Sure enough, there was the statue of Our Lady in the sanctuary holding the scapular. Several people were praying before that statue. Perhaps some of them had problems and special favors to ask. It's no secret that we Catholics have a particular devotion to Our Lady- much more so than our protestant brothers and sisters.

Think of how many liturgical celebrations there are in the Catholic Church in honor of Our Lady. While we accord special devotion to the saints, we give to Our Blessed Mother the highest form of honor and reverence. Although she is not God, she was the bearer of God to this world.

As we honor Our Lady of Mount Carmel during this month of July, it might help to pay a little more attention to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The name "Carmel" in Hebrew really means "a garden." A garden is usually a place of beauty and peace. When we pray to Mary, when we say our rosary and wear the scapular, our soul can truly become like a spectacular garden in which God takes great delight in.

Let's truly celebrate this feast and every other feast of Mary because she is "our life, our sweetness and our hope!"

*Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome*