

Is the Scapular Promise Real?

by Sebastian R Fama

Much has been said about the promise associated with the Brown Scapular. The promise on the scapular reads: "Whosoever dies wearing this scapular shall not suffer eternal fire." And so, the critics cry: "Blasphemy! No one will go to heaven just because they wore a piece of cloth around their neck." And they would be correct. And any practicing Catholic would know that. But that is not what the scapular promise means to say. The actual scapular measures 1.5 by 1.25 inches. You cannot put a lot of text on an object that small. So, whatever you do put on there can be nothing more than a reminder.

Speaking in this way is not at all unusual. For instance; what if while discussing military history, someone was to say: "Anyone who has worn the uniform should be entitled to veterans' benefits?" Do you suppose that would include an actor who wore one in a movie? Of course not. Reasonable people would take this to mean, anyone who enlisted in the military and performed the service associated with it. And so it is with the brown scapular. The people referred to in the scapular promise are those who were properly enrolled. Furthermore, enrolled members agree to practice the Carmelite spirituality associated with it. And that would consist of the following:

1. Wearing the Brown Scapular continuously.
2. Observe chastity according to one's state of life.
3. Promise to say certain prayers, or observe a particular fast, or engage in a prescribed form of spiritual reading.

In other words, the people who will be saved are those who are truly committed to seeking God and His will in their lives. The scapular is merely an aid. It is a reminder that our walk with God should be genuine. There is no magic involved.

To quote the Legion of Mary: "When we use it as a prayer, Our Lady draws us to the Sacred Heart of her Divine Son." Long story short; the scapular is a visible sign of a personal commitment to God. If there is no commitment, there is no benefit. Simply wearing one will not get you to heaven any more than wearing a T-shirt from your favorite gym will get you a gold medal at the Olympics.