

Votive Mass of Our Lady of Mount Carmel  
Carmel of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph  
Fairfield, PA  
19 November 2018

Prov 8, 17-21. 34-35  
Jn 19, 25-27

### Sermon

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

It is a source of deepest joy for me to offer the Holy Mass for you, dear Sisters, on the joyous occasion of the Veiling of a newly professed nun, Sister Jeanne-Marie of the Cross, your beloved Sister in the Carmel of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Recalling the extraordinary nature of the consecration of a woman as a bride of Christ in the Carmel, we are filled with wonder and gratitude before the mystery of God's grace at work within the soul of our Sister in Christ. We are in wonder and gratitude, too, at Sister's faithful and generous response to God's grace for love of Him and His children, especially in most difficult times in the world and in the Church. By her cooperation with God's grace, she has embraced in an extraordinary way the contemplation of her Divine Spouse and the corollary expression her spousal love through prayer and penance. She has responded to the Lord's invitation in the Book of Proverbs to find Him "in the morning early watch" and, in finding Him, to receive all the riches of His love.<sup>1</sup> In the veiling of Sister Jeanne-Marie, we see the beauty of a heart, one with the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, resting securely in the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus Who purifies us of our sins and strengthens us to love God and neighbor as He does, without measure and "to the end."<sup>2</sup> The veil is the eloquent sign of Sister's total espousal of Christ.

I thank Mother Stella-Marie of Jesus, Prioress, for the invitation to offer the Pontifical Mass at the conclusion of which Sister Jeanne-Marie of the Cross, having already made her solemn profession, will be veiled. I thank God for each of you, her faithful daughters, and ask Him to shower upon you the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit for your life consecrated totally to Him in Christ, your Spouse, His only-begotten Son Who became man for our eternal salvation.

I thank, in a most particular way, His Excellency Bishop Ronald Gainer, Bishop of Harrisburg, for the warm welcome to the Diocese. The presence of His Excellency Bishop

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<sup>1</sup> Prv 8, 17. Cf. Prv 8, 20-21. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Jn 13, 1.

William J. Waltersheid, Auxiliary Bishop of Pittsburgh, is a manifestation of the deeply paternal esteem and affection of the Church for the Carmel.

Mount Carmel, the “enclosed garden” in which God dwells with us, is the place in which the Prophet Elijah prayed to God for the deliverance of His people. Because of the sins of the people, epitomized in the grievously idolatrous behavior of King Ahab, God had visited a three-year draught upon the land. Through the prayer of the Prophet Elijah, God sent relief to His people. The sign of God’s relief was humble, a very small cloud, but it carried within it the saving power of His all-merciful love, a torrent of rain, which ended the draught.<sup>3</sup>

The small cloud, in fact, prefigures the vocation and mission of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. In her littleness, by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, she conceived and gave birth to Christ from Whose glorious pierced Heart there never ceases to flow in abundance the life-giving waters of the Holy Spirit for the salvation of all men, for the salvation of the world. God had prepared the Virgin Mary for her mission from the moment of her conception, preserving her from all stain of original sin, that is, granting to her the grace of the salvation, which would be won for man by the Divine Son to be conceived in her womb.

Saint Paul reflects upon the mystery of the Incarnation, which shines forth in the vocation and mission of Mary, with these words:

When the appointed time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law and to enable us to be adopted sons.<sup>4</sup>

It is through Mary’s divine maternity that God the Father has adopted us as his true sons and daughters in His only-begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit under Mary’s Immaculate Heart. Our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, given totally into the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, ever open to receive us, become, in turn, a fountain of life-giving water for our neighbor.<sup>5</sup>

Before His death on the Cross, our Lord Jesus Christ declared Mary, His Mother, to be the Mother of the Church represented by the Apostle John who stood faithfully with her at the foot of the Cross.<sup>6</sup> From that moment, the Blessed Virgin Mary who gave herself totally to the saving mission of her Divine Son, has never ceased to fulfill her vocation and mission of Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church, His Mystical Body. At the moment when the

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Kgs 18, 44-45.

<sup>4</sup> Gal 4, 4-5.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jn 7, 38.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Jn 19, 26-27.

Roman soldier pierced the Heart of Jesus, her Immaculate Heart was mystically pierced.

The Virgin Mary is the Mother of Divine Grace who brings our Lord and Savior to us, and, at the same time, draws us to Him with the maternal counsel which she gave to the wine stewards at the Wedding Feast of Cana: “Do whatever He tells you.”<sup>7</sup> For our part, we unite our hearts to her maternal heart, placing our hearts, one with her Immaculate Heart, into the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Sister Jeanne-Marie of the Cross, by her profession of the evangelical counsels in the Order of Mount Carmel, shares in the vocation and mission of the Virgin Mother of God. In her littleness, at the invitation of her Lord, she has given to Him her all. She is like the “small cloud” which becomes an ever abundant sign of God’s grace at work in the world through the mediation of the Mother of His only-begotten Son, the Mother of Divine Grace. She has become a bride of Christ, Who brings Christ to us and, at the same time, brings us to Christ. The veil which she will receive at the conclusion of the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the sign of her new spiritual maternity in the Church, a powerful share in the Divine Maternity.

We recognize the vocation and mission of the Carmelite nun and unite ourselves to the mission by wearing one part of the Carmelite habit: the scapular. In fact, one of the most wonderful manifestations of the spiritual maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by which our hearts dwell with hers in the Heart of Jesus, was her giving of the Scapular, on July 16th of 1251, to Saint Simon Stock, member of the Carmelite Order. Saint Simon Stock, at a time when the continued existence of the Order of Carmelites was seriously threatened, had been praying for God’s blessing through the intercession of the Mother of God. He had been asking Our Lady to grant a special favor to the world through the Order. Our Blessed Mother responded with the gift of the Scapular and these words accompanying the gift: “Whosoever shall die wearing this habit shall not suffer eternal fire.”<sup>8</sup>

By means of the Scapular, the Virgin Mary leads us to do what it signifies, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and, with Him, to carry upon our shoulders the Cross which alone is our salvation. Through the Scapular, through the putting-on of Christ in the lives of the faithful invested with it, countless miracles have been worked down the centuries since 1251. Many saints have worn the Scapular and attributed to it God’s protection during times of great suffering and trial.

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<sup>7</sup> Jn 2, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Monk of Saint Joseph Abbey, *The Scapular of Mount Carmel* (Flavigny-sur-Ozerain: Traditions Monastiques, 2003), p. 23.

Fittingly, the Scapular is an integral part of the habit of all members of the Carmelite Order. With the other parts of the habit, it expresses the total consecration to Christ and His Mystical Body by the daily carrying of the cross. At the same time, it is a living reminder – to all of the faithful who wear the Scapular – of their call, in the words of Saint Paul, to fill out in their bodies the sufferings of Christ for the salvation of the world.<sup>9</sup> The wearing of the scapular reminds us who have been invested with it that the investiture is not a matter of a momentary act of devotion but of a way of life which is ever more Christ-like, especially in times of temptation and trial.

The humble sign of the Scapular signifies the small cloud by which the grace of eternal salvation comes to us in unending abundance. It reminds us of the Blessed Virgin Mary's maternal love, of her unceasing intercession for us, so that we may be saved from eternal damnation and, with her, may enjoy eternal life. Regarding the importance of the Scapular, the Venerable Pope Pius XII wrote:

It is not a matter of little importance, but rather, it is a question of attaining eternal life by virtue of that promise of the Blessed Virgin, handed down by sacred tradition. It is truly a matter of the utmost importance and of the means to bring it about in total security. As a garment of the Holy Virgin, the Scapular is a sign and pledge of the protection of the Mother of God.<sup>10</sup>

As we put on the Scapular each morning, as we begin each day by putting on Christ, let us, with Saint Simon Stock, pray for God's help through the intercession of the Flower of Carmel, the enclosed garden of God's dwelling with us, the Virgin Mother who brings to us the Savior, her Divine Son, and brings us to Him. May our wearing of the Scapular express the union of our hearts with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Flower of Carmel, all placed securely in the eternal haven of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

On the joyous occasion of the veiling of the newly and solemnly consecrated Sister Jeanne-Marie of the Cross, let us lift up our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to the Heart of Jesus now opened for us in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Giving our hearts totally into the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, under the maternal protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, we will be purified and strengthened to live the vocation to which God has called us and to carry out the mission which He has entrusted into our hands. May the Flower of Carmel draw us always to her all-beautiful and all-brilliant Blossom, our Lord Jesus Christ Who alone is our

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Col 1, 24-26.

<sup>10</sup> Pope Pius XII, Apostolic Letter *Neminem profecto*, 11 February 1950. English translation: Monk of Saint Joseph Abbey, *The Scapular of Mount Carmel* (Flavigny-sur-Ozerain: Traditions Monastiques, 2003), p. 23.

life and our salvation.

*Heart of Jesus, Sacred Temple of God, have mercy on us.*

*Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us.*

*Saint Joseph, Foster-Father of Jesus and True Spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us.*

*Saint Simon Stock, pray for us.*

*Saint Teresa of Avila, pray for us.*

*Saint John of the Cross, pray for us.*

*Saint John Mary Vianney, pray for us.*

*Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face, pray for us.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE