

Continued from page 1

Brown Scapular, The Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has said, "More recently, thanks to a deeper understanding of our tradition and the fruit of research and of the process of renewal in the whole Church, the approach to popular devotions and, therefore, to the scapular, has changed. The primary shift in teaching is to restore the connection between the scapular and the Carmelite



Patrick McMahon, O. Carm., Provincial Delegate to the Lay Carmelites

Order, presenting the scapular as a mark of affiliation to the Order and a share in the Order's claims to Marian patronage.

"People have forgotten in the last two centuries that Mary's patronal care is promised not simply to the individual who wears the scapular, but to the Order," McMahon explained. "The Order invites the faithful to share in its benefits and the sign of that sharing is the wearing of the scapular, the essential part of the Carmelite habit."

Scholarship has disproved the historicity of the Sabbatine Bull of John XXII granting the so-called Sabbatine Privilege. "Ironically, this is not a post-Vatican II thing," McMahon said. "The definitive research on the subject was done by a Carmelite historian, Ludovico Saggi in the fifties and sixties. The situation is becoming even more complicated,

however, as current research on the Scapular Vision itself does not support its historicity. Fifty years ago Bartolomeo Xiberta suggested that we needed to move away from a strictly historical approach and try to discover the kernel of faith contained in the story. Now Richard Copsey of the British Province has published a very fine article in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* that raises serious questions about the historicity of the vision. We must come to understand this sacramental in a way that is not dependent on a questionable historical event"

When asked about what theological meaning could be drawn out of the stories if they are not historically factual, Morello said, "What we are talking about here is the grace of final perseverance. We believe that the story expresses our confidence that Mary will seek that grace for all who remain faithful to the Carmelite vocation throughout their lives—not only the religious, but the laity who affiliate to the order through the scapular."

When asked about various visions, including the Fatima apparitions, that might seem to confirm the Sabbatine Privilege,

Morello said, "We know that private revelation can neither add to nor detract from the deposit of faith. The Sabbatine Privilege or the historicity of the vision is not part of the deposit of faith. Private revelation cannot change that."

McMahon added, "People are free to believe it if they wish, but we cannot say that the Church teaches it. And the Order clearly

does not want to teach it as part of the official catechesis. In the final analysis, we want to keep our focus on Christ who is our only mediator with God. Any teaching on the scapular has to confirm this central doctrine of our faith."

The booklet being prepared contains: 1) a letter from the Carmelite Provincials; 2) a catechetical section written by Morello and McMahon; 3) the Official OCD/O.Carm. joint statement on the Scapular issued by the general definitories of the two orders in Rome; 4) the Doctrinal Statement on the Brown Scapular published with the authority of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments; 5) the two rites for blessing scapulars and enrolling in the scapular confraternity; 6) the scriptural readings for the above rites.

The booklet was delayed in preparation by the meticulous correction of the *Censor Deputatus* of the Washington Archdiocese who made many helpful suggestions in its preparation. At the completion of his work, Cardinal Hickey, the then Archbishop of Washington, granted his imprimatur to the

work.

"The imprimatur was important," McMahon said. "People have to understand that this is the Church speaking, not just Sam Anthony and myself. I wouldn't believe Sam Anthony Morello, and I certainly wouldn't believe Pat McMahon. But this book contains the official teaching on the sacramental, one that is carefully conformed to Catholic doctrine."



A later witness is Martinien Pannetier, one-time prior of Bordeaux who perished

on the guillotine in 1794. Pannetier wrote two short works intended for the lay members of the Carmelite Third Order. They are filled with the usual legendary details, but, in chapter xii, Pannetier records some of the miracles worked at the tomb, one of which concerns a former prior. What is significant is that the prior, wishing to be cured, does not turn to the scapular but to the relics of Simon Stock.

In 1423, when relics of Simon Stock were given to the Carmelite convent at Ghent, an accompanying letter also makes no mention of the scapular vision.

The earliest accounts of the scapular vision are found in the 15th or late 14th century catalogue of Carmelite saints. The catalogue exists in four versions which

Simon Stock and the Scapular Vision

Simon Stock is an elusive 13th century Carmelite saint of whom little is known but about whom much has been written. The details of his life and even the fact of his existence have aroused considerable controversy over the centuries. Benedictine David Knowles summed it up. "St Simon Stock is without doubt the most elusive personality in a group of eminent Englishmen at the time, ... of whose life and character we know almost nothing."

The first recognizable account of the Simon Stock legend is found in a brief catalogue of Carmelite saints included in the *Viridarium*, composed sometime between 1413 and 1426, by the prior-general, Jean Grossi. In 1950, Bartolomeo

Xiberta, O. Carm., published a number of late 14th century sources. But the overall result of his efforts was, from an historical point of view, somewhat meagre and disappointing. Apart from an ambiguous 13th century reference, his earliest evidence for Simon Stock was, at best, more than 100 years after his supposed death.

The early references to Simon Stock in the catalogues of priors-general by Grossi makes no mention of the scapular vision.

References claim that Simon Stock died in Bordeaux and later elaborations of that legend add that, after his death, a shining light was seen around his tomb and many miracles took place. These embellishments bear all the marks of a typical medieval hagiography but there is historical evidence for a well-established popular cult at Bordeaux with a tradition of pilgrimages to Simon's tomb.

Continued on next page