



St. Simon Stock

Born: c. 1165 possibly Aylesford England

Died: 16 May 1265 Bordeaux, France

Venerated: in Roman Catholic Church

Major shrine: Aylesford, England

Feast: May 16

Patronage: Bordeaux, France

Although little is known about Simon Stock's early life, legend has it that the name Stock, meaning "tree trunk," derives from the fact that, beginning at age twelve, he lived as a hermit in a hollow tree trunk of an oak tree. It is also believed that, as a young man, he went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land where he joined a group of Carmelites with whom he later returned to Europe. Simon Stock founded many Carmelite Communities, especially in University towns such as Cambridge, Oxford, Paris, and Bologna, and he helped to change the Carmelites from a hermit Order to one of mendicant friars. In 1254 he was elected Superior-General of his Order at London. Simon Stock's lasting fame came from an apparition he had in Cambridge, England, on July 16, 1251, at a time when the Carmelite Order was being oppressed. In it the Virgin Mary appeared to him holding the brown scapular in one hand. Her words were: "Receive, my beloved son, this scapular of thy Order; it is the special sign of my favor, which I have obtained for thee and for thy children of Mount Carmel. He who dies clothed with this habit shall be preserved from eternal fire. It is the badge of salvation, a shield in time of danger, and a pledge of special peace and protection." The scapular (from the Latin, *scapula*, meaning "shoulder blade") consists of two pieces of cloth, one worn on the chest, and the other on the back, which were connected by straps or strings passing over the shoulders.

In certain Orders, monks and nuns wear scapulars that reach from the shoulders almost to the ground as outer garments. Lay persons usually wear scapulars underneath

their clothing; these consist of two pieces of material only a few inches square. There are elaborate rules governing the wearing of the scapular: although it may be worn by any Catholic, even an infant, the investiture must be done by a priest. And the scapular must be worn in the proper manner; if an individual neglects to wear it for a time, the benefits are forfeited. The Catholic Church has approved eighteen different kinds of scapulars of which the best known is the woolen brown scapular, or the Scapular of Mount Carmel, that the Virgin Mary bestowed on Simon Stock. His feast day is May 16th.