

St. Simon Stock.

St. Simon Stock, one of the most illustrious saints recorded in the annals of the Carmelite Order, was born in England, in the year 1165, of parents belonging to the nobility, and distinguished by a good Christian life. The pious parents raised our Saint in the fear of God, and implanted in his young heart the germ of a tender devotion towards our Blessed Lady. Wonderful were the graces which God conferred upon him even as a child. So great was the fire of charity burning in his pure heart, that being but a boy of 12 years of age, he left father and mother, brother and sister, and renouncing the pleasures and pomps of the world, withdrew into a solitude, in order to be able to devote his whole being more fully to the service of God and of His Blessed Mother. For 20 years he inhabited the trunk of a hollow oak tree, whence his surname Stock. There he led a most austere and penitent life, uniting fervent prayer to the mortification of his senses and the subduing of the flesh with its unruly appetites. His food was of the poorest quality, consisting of roots, herbs and wild apples, to which he added sometimes a little bread. Water was the only drink he used to quench his thirst. What a reproach are the lives of the lukewarmness of Christians at the present age, many of whom indulge in all sorts of luxurious viands and costly drinks to gratify his animal appetite of eating and drinking, and are afraid of the least act of mortification and self-denial in this respect.

St. Simon lived 100 years in spite of his abstemiousness and rigorous mode of living. By far greater, alas, is the number of those who shorten their lives by not observing moderation in eating and drinking.

St. Simon, after having served God for 20 years in solitude and silence, received one day a revelation from the Blessed Virgin as to his future vocation. The Blessed Virgin revealed to him that certain men dear to her and greatly devoted to her service were to come from Palestine to England and that he should

join them. The prediction proved to be true. For shortly after two Religious from Mount Carmel arrived with the English fleet that had been sent to Palestine to break the rising power of the sons of Mohamet, and deliver the Christians from their cruel sway.

Shortly after the arrival of the two Religious, he left his solitude and begged to be admitted into their community. The request of the holy man was readily granted by the friars, who gladly received him into their community. In the monastery our saint led a most holy and exemplary life, so that all his brethren looked upon him as the model of a perfect religious. He adhered strictly to the rule of the order as laid down by Albert, the holy patriarch of Jerusalem. The fame of his great learning and sanctity spread far and wide, not only among his own brethren, but also among the people of the Island, to whom he frequently preached the word of God and who considered him as one sent by God to resuscitate in the souls of men the life of faith and grace. In the year 1215 St Brocard, prior of Mount Carmel and General of the Order, appointed our Saint Vicar-General over all the western provinces. At that time the Order was much persecuted, for the devil, the sworn enemy of all good, will not allow any one to enter his domain unmolested. Seeing that the exemplary life of the White Friars as they were sometimes called, their preaching, their devotedness to our Bl. Lady were the cause of much good among the people and on the other hand the cause of his losing many immortal souls, he, through the instrumentality of men, raised a violent storm of persecutions and calumnies against the new Order. St. Simon, however, standing firm and unshaken in the midst of the tribulations, defended the Order against all the hostile weapons hurled by the enemy. Twice he repaired to Rome and obtained a confirmation of the rule given by St. Albert. Thus the enemy was confounded and the Order gradually spread itself all over Europe. Some years later St. Simon went to Palestine to