



SILENT HOMILIES

The Priest Who Lived in a Tree

St Simon Stock and the Gift of the Scapular



Silent Homilies

Little Treasures



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A small book of forgotten facts, short stories, and quiet hope.

Before You Begin

Why is a Carmelite saint remembered as the priest who lived in a tree?

Most saints are remembered for a church, a book, a city, or a great work. Simon Stock is remembered for something stranger. Later Carmelite tradition says that, as a young man in England, he lived for a time as a hermit in the hollow of a tree. The English word stock once meant a tree trunk. That is how the nickname is usually explained.

The picture is memorable. It is also later than Simon himself. The earliest written lives come long after the thirteenth century. Some details that people love to tell — the exact age, the wild apples, the precise date of a vision — belong to that later memory, not to documents from his own lifetime.

This booklet is about the man behind that memory. It is not another general book about the Brown Scapular. There is already a Little Treasure for that. Here the centre is Simon: the English Carmelite, the prior whose name the Order kept, the man later generations connected with Our Lady and a piece of brown cloth.

Catholic affection and historical honesty can live together. We can love a tradition without pretending we know more than we know.

Contents

1. Why Was He Called Stock?
2. What a Hermit Was Trying to Do
3. Before Simon Met Carmel
4. When Carmel Came to England
5. The Englishman Who Became Their Superior
6. Flos Carmeli
7. The Story of 16 July 1251
8. The Promise Everyone Remembers
9. How the Story Grew
10. Saturday and Purgatory
11. The Saint Who Came Home
12. What Simon Stock Still Gives Us

A Last Word

Chapter 1

Why Was He Called Stock?

His name was Simon. People later called him Stock.

In older English, stock meant a tree trunk or a large piece of timber. Later Carmelite writers explained the surname by saying that, before the Carmelites settled in England, Simon lived as a hermit in the hollow of a tree. One version even says that he was waiting there, in a kind of prophetic patience, until the brothers from Mount Carmel arrived.

That is the traditional answer to the title of this book. It is also the part of the story that historians treat most carefully.

The earliest surviving notices of Simon do not mention a tree. A Dominican writer, Gerard of Frachet, writing around 1259 or 1260, speaks of “Simon, prior of the Order,” and calls him a religious and truthful man. Two fourteenth-century Carmelite lists remember an English prior general of that name, known for holiness and miracles, who died on 16 May and was buried at Bordeaux. The hollow tree appears in the longer later lives, when the Order was already telling Simon’s story as a family memory.

Does that make the tree worthless? Not if we understand what it is doing. Medieval Christians often used a striking image to say something about a life. The tree says: this man began in hiddenness. Before anyone needed him as a superior, before anyone connected his name with a famous gift, the tradition wanted us to see a young Englishman who chose a poor, quiet place and tried to belong to God there.

We do not have to pretend that we possess a thirteenth-century diary from inside an oak. We can still receive what the Church has loved in the

picture. Hidden years are not wasted years. Many saints began where almost nobody was watching. Simon's nickname, whether or not it began with a real hollow trunk, has kept that beginning in front of the Church for centuries.

A Reflection

We live in a time that likes to be seen. Meals are photographed. Good news is announced. Even prayer can become something we mention so that other people know we are the sort of person who prays.

The traditional tree story asks a quieter question. Would I still do the hidden thing if nobody ever found out? Would I still keep a promise, make a visit, say a prayer, or tell the truth if there were no one to praise it?

Simon's later fame does not cancel that question. If anything, it makes it sharper. The Church remembered the hidden beginning even after it remembered the famous cloth.

A short prayer

Lord, teach me to seek You when nobody is watching. Keep me faithful in the parts of life that will never be noticed. Amen.

Chapter 2

What a Hermit Was Trying to Do

Later lives say that Simon began this hidden life young — some say around the age of twelve — and that he lived on herbs, roots, wild fruit and water. Those details belong to hagiography, the kind of writing that loves to show a saint's radical simplicity. They should be told as tradition, not as a shopping list from his kitchen.

The more useful question is why medieval Christians admired such a life at all.

A hermit was not a man who hated people. He was a man who believed that God could be sought with the whole of a life, and that comfort, noise and constant company can make that search harder. The desert fathers in Egypt had already lived this way for centuries. St Anthony left the town. St Benedict spent years in a cave at Subiaco before he ever founded a monastery. England had its own hermits and anchorites. A hollow tree, if the tradition is right, was simply one more poor cell.

The point was not to collect hardships as trophies. The point was freedom. If I need less, I am less owned by what I need. If I can be quiet, I may hear something besides my own plans. If I accept a hard bed and a simple meal, I am practising a kind of trust: God will be enough for today.

Most readers of this book will not be called to live in a wood. That is not a failure. Families, jobs and parishes are also places where God is sought. What the hermit tradition still asks is smaller and more awkward. How quickly do I treat a little inconvenience as an emergency? A late meal. A cold room. A delayed train. A telephone that has run

down. Some discomfort is only discomfort. It does not always need to be solved at once.

The later writers who put wild apples into Simon's story were trying to say that he had already learned to travel light. Whether or not the menu is historically certain, the instinct is Catholic. Poverty of spirit is not an antique hobby. It is one of the ways a person becomes free enough to belong to God.

A Reflection

A late meal can feel like a crisis. So can a cold house, a cancelled appointment, or a day that refuses to go to plan.

None of those things is nothing. Some of them really do need attention. The hermit tradition is not asking us to enjoy misery. It is asking whether we have any practice at all in needing less than we think.

If every small discomfort has to be fixed immediately, I may never discover how much of my restlessness is simply the habit of being in charge.

A short prayer

Father, teach me to need You more than I need comfort, and to meet ordinary inconvenience without panic. Amen.

Chapter 3

Before Simon Met Carmel

The Carmelites did not begin in Kent. They began on a mountain.

Mount Carmel stands on the coast of what is now Israel, looking towards the sea. In the Old Testament it is Elijah's mountain, the place where the prophet confronted the prophets of Baal and where a small cloud rose from the sea as a sign of rain. Later Christian hermits settled in those caves. They wanted to live in the spirit of Elijah: prayer, silence, and a life offered to God under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They came to be called the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.

Around 1206–1214 St Albert, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, gave them a short rule. It is one of the briefest rules in the Church. It asks for a cell, silence at certain hours, work, prayer, a common oratory, and a prior. It does not look like a modern constitution. It looks like a way for hermits to remain hermits without becoming a crowd of private projects.

In the 1230s and 1240s the Holy Land became dangerous for Latin Christians. The brothers left the mountain. Some went to Cyprus and Sicily. Some went to France. Some came to England. By 1242 there was a Carmelite house at Aylesford on the river Medway in Kent, and another at Hulne in Northumberland. In Europe people began to call them the White Friars, because of the white cloak they wore over a brown habit.

This change was not a holiday. Hermits from a mountain were being asked to become mendicant friars in towns and university cities, alongside Franciscans and Dominicans who were already well known. Bishops were not always sure what to do with them. Other orders were

not always pleased to see another family of poor preachers. The brothers had left their original landscape. They had not yet found a settled place in Europe.

That is the world Simon entered. Later tradition says he joined the newly arrived Carmelites in England after years of solitary life. We cannot reconstruct the conversation. What we can say is that an Englishman of that generation met a family that had come a very long way, carrying a mountain in its name and a Mother in its title.

A Reflection

It is easy to want a faith that never asks us to belong to difficult people.

My prayer. My favourite saint. My way of doing things. Other Catholics can feel like an interruption.

Simon did not remain a private hermit. The tradition says he entered a family that was foreign, poor, and still finding its feet. That is often how the Church actually arrives in a life: not as a perfect group we would have chosen, but as the people who were given.

A short prayer

*Our Lady of Mount Carmel, lead me into the Church as it actually is,
and help me to love the people I did not choose. Amen.*

Chapter 4

When Carmel Came to England

Aylesford matters in this story because it is a real place.

In 1242 the Carmelites were given land there beside the Medway. Five years later, in 1247, they held at Aylesford the first general chapter of the Order outside the Holy Land. That meeting is one of the most important dates in Carmelite history. The brothers asked Pope Innocent IV to adapt St Albert's rule so that they could live as friars in Europe: preaching, studying, begging, and serving in towns, not only praying in cells on a mountain. The Pope's approval followed. A letter of protection and confirmation is dated from Perugia in January 1252.

The chapter of 1247 is often linked with Simon. Older popular lives say he was elected Prior General there, as sixth general of the Order, already an old man. Careful historians are more cautious. Contemporary fragments mention a Brother Godfrey, or Geoffrey, as prior general around 1249. Simon may have been elected a little later, perhaps at a chapter in London around 1254. The lists of generals from that century are incomplete. What the later catalogues agree on is simpler: an Englishman named Simon was prior general, was remembered as holy, and died at Bordeaux.

That is enough to keep Aylesford in the story. Whether or not the election happened in that chapter house, Simon belongs to the English beginning of Carmel. The White Friars were no longer only a rumour from the East. They had a house on an English river, a chapter that changed their way of life, and soon houses in university cities — Cambridge, Oxford, Paris, Bologna — where young men might be drawn to study and to pray.

Aylesford would not remain a peaceful home. At the Reformation the priory was suppressed, in 1538. The stones were used for other lives. The Carmelites came back in 1949. The river is the same. The community is the same family, after a long absence. Pilgrims now walk ground that has been both lost and returned.

If you ever go there, you are not visiting a legend. You are visiting one of the first places where Carmel learned to live in England.

A Reflection

Communities look different from the inside.

From outside, a parish, a family or a religious house can seem settled and obvious. From inside there are often arguments about money, identity, work and the next generation. The first Carmelites in England were not walking into a finished story. They were trying to remain themselves in a country that did not yet know what a White Friar was.

When a parish feels small, or a family feels unfinished, that is not proof that God has left. It may only mean that we are in the part of the story that later people will tidy up.

A short prayer

Lord, when the community I belong to feels unfinished, keep me from leaving too quickly, and keep me from pretending that everything is already clear. Amen.

Chapter 5

The Englishman Who Became Their Superior

A prior general in the thirteenth century did not sit in an office with a secretary.

He travelled. He visited houses. He dealt with bishops who were unsure of the new order. He tried to keep brothers faithful to a rule that had just been adapted. He founded, or encouraged the founding of, houses in places where the Order might take root. The roads were long. The work was ordinary and heavy.

Later writers like to say that Simon was already old when this responsibility arrived. They like the picture of a man formed in silence who is suddenly asked to carry other people's troubles. We should be careful not to invent his tiredness. What we can say is that the years in the middle of the thirteenth century were a crisis of identity for Carmel. The brothers had to become recognisable in Europe without forgetting the mountain they had left. Someone had to hold that tension.

Innocent IV's support mattered. So did the decision to plant houses near universities. An order that only hid in woods would slowly disappear. An order that only copied the Dominicans would forget why it had ever been called Carmel. Leadership in that moment was not glamour. It was the unromantic work of helping a family survive.

Simon's later fame can hide this. People remember a vision and a piece of cloth. They remember a tree. They are less interested in chapters, permissions, and the slow founding of houses. Yet that is most of what a superior's life is made of. If Simon was the man the later catalogues say he was, he spent years doing work that does not photograph well.

The Church has often given large tasks to people who were not looking for a career. Sometimes the useful years are not the years we would have chosen. Sometimes they come when we already feel we have done our hidden part.

A Reflection

Modern life is often unkind about age. Usefulness is treated as something that belongs to the young. Older people can begin to believe the same story about themselves.

We do not know Simon's exact age when he became prior general. We do know that the Church has never thought holiness had a retirement date. A person can still be needed after the season that looked like the main season.

The sharper question is not only about other people's age. Have I quietly decided that my own useful years are finished?

A short prayer

Lord, when the work in front of me feels late, or too large, or not the work I expected, give me the grace to say yes to the task that is actually here. Amen.

Chapter 6

Flos Carmeli

Carmelite tradition places a prayer on Simon's lips: the Flos Carmeli, the Flower of Carmel.

The opening is short enough to learn on a walk.

Flower of Carmel, blossoming vine, splendour of heaven, Virgin and child-bearer, unique. Gentle Mother, who knew not man, to the Carmelites be favourable, Star of the Sea.

Later verses continue in the same key: Root of Jesse, intercessor, strong woman. The hymn asks Mary to look at her children and to help them.

Is Simon certainly the author? Honest answer: we do not have a signed thirteenth-century manuscript that settles the question. The hymn appears in later Carmelite liturgy and is firmly attached to his memory. By the fifteenth century the tradition was already treating it as his prayer in the time of the Order's trouble. That is how families keep a prayer. They remember who they believe first used it when they were afraid.

Star of the Sea is an old title. Sailors used it because a star is how you find your way when the coast has disappeared. The Carmelites had left their coast. They were in a new country, under a new form of life, not always welcome. The prayer does not ask Mary for a strategy document. It asks her to be favourable to her own.

That is worth noticing. When a parish, a family or a person is in trouble, the first instinct is often to manage the trouble. Meetings. Messages. Plans. Those things have their place. The Flos Carmeli

tradition says that Simon's first movement, in the story the Order told about him, was to ask a Mother to look at her children.

You do not need to settle the authorship debate in order to pray the words. They are the Church's now. They belong to anyone who can admit that the way home is not always obvious.

A Reflection

When something goes wrong, many of us reach first for control.

We draft the message. We replay the argument. We look for someone to blame or a plan that will make the anxiety stop. Prayer can become the item we will get to when the practical work is finished.

The Carmelite memory of Simon reverses the order. Before the Order had solved its European problem, the tradition says he asked Mary to look at her children. That is not an excuse for laziness. It is a question about sequence. At what point, in a family or parish difficulty, do I actually pray?

A short prayer

Flower of Carmel, Star of the Sea, look on us when we have lost the coast, and lead us to your Son. Amen.

Chapter 7

The Story of 16 July 1251

This is the scene most people know, and the scene that needs the most care.

Carmelite tradition says that on 16 July 1251, at Cambridge, while Simon was at prayer, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him. She held the brown scapular of the Order — the working part of the habit that hangs over the shoulders — and gave it with a promise. The wording later writers loved to repeat is some version of this: this shall be a privilege for you and for all Carmelites; whoever dies clothed in this shall not suffer eternal fire.

The earliest surviving written accounts of that vision appear in the fourteenth century, in Carmelite catalogues of saints. John Grossi, writing around 1430, told the story more fully. A letter once produced as if it came from Simon's secretary, Peter Swanington, and giving the date and a first miracle, is now generally regarded as a later fabrication. The great Carmelite writers of the early fourteenth century do not mention the scapular vision in the works that survive.

None of that is said here in order to sneer. Medieval memory often wrote down a treasure after the family had already been living from it. Other religious orders of the same centuries also told stories of Mary giving them a habit or a sign of protection. The Church has not required Catholics to treat every later detail as a courtroom fact. She has continued to honour Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the Brown Scapular, and Simon's place in that devotion.

What, then, can a careful Catholic say? That Simon was an English Carmelite prior remembered for holiness. That the Order, in a difficult

century, understood itself as Mary's family. That later Carmel connected that family identity with a vision in which Mary handed Simon the least glamorous strip of the habit and attached a promise to it. That 16 July became the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. That the devotion spread far beyond the friars.

We do not need an eyewitness transcript in order to receive the meaning the Church has actually given us. Mary clothes her children. She points them to her Son. A habit is not a costume. It is a sign of belonging.

A Reflection

Some Catholics think that admitting uncertainty weakens faith. Others treat any old story as naïve.

Neither habit is very adult.

We can love a tradition and still care whether a particular detail is historically certain. We can wear a scapular, pray the Flos Carmeli, and keep 16 July, without pretending we sat in the Cambridge oratory with a notebook. Faith is not made stronger by adding facts we do not have. It is not made weaker by telling the truth about the sources.

A short prayer

Holy Mary, keep me honest about what we know and what we have received, and keep me close to your Son either way. Amen.

Chapter 8

The Promise Everyone Remembers

“Whoever dies clothed in this shall not suffer eternal fire.”

Those are serious words. They have comforted millions of Catholics. They have also been misunderstood.

The Church has never taught that a strip of brown cloth can smuggle an unrepentant soul into heaven against its will. A sacramental is not a sacrament. The scapular does not replace Baptism, Confession, the Eucharist, or a converted heart. A person can wear holy things and remain far from God. Clothing is not the same as belonging.

What, then, has Catholic tradition understood by the promise?

To die clothed in the scapular, in the sense the devotion intends, is to die still wanting to belong to Christ in the family of Carmel and under Mary’s care. The old theologians spoke of final perseverance: the grace of not letting go at the end. A mother does not save a child by ignoring the child’s freedom. She saves by not abandoning the child who still wants her. Mary’s promise, received in the Church’s way, is confidence in her intercession for those who have lived as her children, not a mechanical guarantee for anyone who happens to have wool on the skin at the last moment.

Does accidentally dying without the physical cloth mean damnation? The Church has never taught that. Illness, poverty, a lost scapular, a hospital gown — none of these cancel a life of faith. Does wearing the cloth while deliberately rejecting God guarantee salvation? No. That would make Mary an accomplice to a lie.

The promise is large because belonging is large. It is not large because the Church has invented a loophole. If you wear the scapular, wear it as a child of Mary who intends to live like one. If you have worn it superstitiously, you do not need an order to take it off. You need to learn what it means, and then to wear it as what it is.

A Reflection

Human beings like guarantees. We buy insurance. We keep receipts. We want to know exactly what happens if we fulfil certain conditions.

That instinct can enter religion. Then a scapular, a novena, or a list of promises starts to feel like a contract: if I do this, God must do that.

Christian trust is not a warranty. The question hidden under the famous words is simpler. Do I want Mary herself, and the life she leads me into, or do I mainly want certainty about what I will receive?

A short prayer

*Mother, I do not want a charm. I want to live and die as your child.
Keep me in that belonging. Amen.*

Chapter 9

How the Story Grew

The gift did not stay in a prior's cell.

Lay people began to wear a smaller form of the same cloth: two small pieces of brown wool joined by cords, hanging over the chest and the back. That is the scapular most Catholics know. Enrollment in the confraternity, or formal investiture, became the ordinary way of being received into the devotion. Popes encouraged it. Whole families wore the sign under ordinary clothes.

Later centuries added miracle stories. Some are early enough to belong to the spread of the devotion. Some are late and colourful. A book about Simon does not need a catalogue of them. What matters is the direction of the growth. A monastic shoulder-garment became a hidden sign for people who would never take the full Carmelite habit. Workers, parents, children, soldiers, popes. The cloth was usually unseen. That was part of the point.

There is a temptation, once a devotion becomes popular, to make the founder carry every later development. Simon is not responsible for every leaflet printed in the nineteenth century. He is not responsible for every exaggerated Saturday timetable attached to his name. He is the English Carmelite around whom the family later gathered its Marian confidence.

Other scapulars appeared as well — green, red, black, blue, the Fivefold Scapular. Catholics sometimes collected them as if holiness were a matter of layering cloth. The Church has never taught that. One sign, worn and lived, is more than a drawer of unused signs.

If you wear the brown cloth under a shirt that no one praises, you are already in this chapter. The first wearers who mattered most were not standing on a stage. They were people who wanted a Mother close to the skin, and who were prepared to live as if that meant something.

A Reflection

Not all Catholic life needs to be visible.

We photograph pilgrimages. We announce resolutions. We can even treat a devotion as something that should be noticed so that other people know we are serious.

The small scapular is usually hidden. That is a better picture of much of the Christian life than we like to admit. How much of my faith would remain if nobody ever praised it? How much of it already depends on being seen?

A short prayer

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, stay with the hidden wearers, and make me one of them. Amen.

Chapter 10

Saturday and Purgatory

A second promise is often attached to the scapular: that Mary will help her children after death, especially on a Saturday, the day the Church has long given her.

The traditional story connects this with a bull said to have been issued by Pope John XXII in the fourteenth century, after a vision of his own. Historians have long questioned the authenticity of that document. In 1613 the Holy See, without settling every historical argument, allowed Carmelites to preach that the Blessed Virgin would give special help after death, particularly on Saturdays, to those who had worn the scapular, lived chastity according to their state of life, and recited the Little Office of Our Lady — or later permitted substitutions, such as the Rosary.

That is not the same sentence as: wear this, keep these conditions, and you will leave Purgatory on the first Saturday after you die.

The Church permits a filial confidence. She does not issue a timetable. Purgatory is not a waiting room with a published schedule. Mary's care for the dead is real because her care for the living is real. She does not drop her children at the grave. She continues to ask, to help, and to refuse to treat the dead as finished.

Why Saturday? Because Saturday has long been Mary's day in Catholic custom. The instinct is maternal, not mechanical. A mother does not need a contract in order to keep caring.

For the full practical history of the Brown Scapular — wool and medal, enrollment, replacements, the conditions people mix together —

there is another booklet in this series. This chapter only needs one distinction, because it belongs to Simon's later memory. Special help is not a vending machine. Pious belief is not improved by making it more exact than the Church has been.

A Reflection

Uncertainty about what happens after death frightens people. That is why timetables are so attractive.

Mary's care does not become less real because the Church refuses to give us a date. If I only trust her when I know the schedule, I am not trusting her. I am trusting my own need to be in control of the last things.

The dead are not a problem to be solved. They are people still held by God, and still within the prayers of the Church.

A short prayer

Mary, Mother of the living and the dead, teach me to trust your care without needing a timetable. Amen.

Chapter 11

The Saint Who Came Home

Simon died on 16 May. The year usually given is 1265. The place was Bordeaux, where he was visiting Carmelite houses in Gascony. He was buried there. For a long time that seemed to be the end of the English part of the story.

He was never canonised in the modern formal way. His cult grew locally. Bordeaux kept his feast from 1435. Ireland and England followed in 1458. The whole Carmelite Order received the feast in 1564, with the approval of the Holy See. His day is still 16 May. He is remembered as a saint because the Church has prayed to him as one, not because a single bull settled every date in his life.

The body remained in France. Relics were given from Bordeaux across the centuries. After the French Revolution what remained was kept with care in the cathedral. In 1949 the Carmelites bought Aylesford back. In 1951, for the seventh centenary of the traditional vision, a relic of Simon's skull was brought from Bordeaux to the restored house on the Medway. Cardinal Adeodato Piazza presided. Thousands came. The relic now rests in the Relic Chapel, in a setting made by the Polish artist Adam Kossowski.

There is a quiet historical mercy in the delay. Had the relic been at Aylesford in 1538, it would almost certainly have been lost. Because Simon died on the road in France, something of him survived to come home when the friars came home.

A relic is not a charm. It is a reminder that this man had a body. He prayed with it, travelled with it, grew old with it, and died with it. Christianity does not treat the body as packaging to be thrown away.

That is why Catholics honour bones. Not because we think a skull can save us, but because we think the person who prayed is not a ghost in a story.

A Reflection

Modern culture is often embarrassed by bodies, especially dead ones. We speak as if the real person were only the mind, or the memory, or the online presence.

The Church has always been more material than that. A relic looks unfashionable because it insists that the person who knelt, walked and suffered was this flesh, not an idea.

If I find relics strange, the strangeness may be telling me how little I expect the body to matter to God.

A short prayer

St Simon Stock, you died on the road. Walk the last miles with us, and teach us to honour the body with which we must also pray. Amen.

Chapter 12

What Simon Stock Still Gives Us

If this book has done its work, you will not remember Simon only as a curiosity — the priest in the tree.

You will remember an Englishman whose early years the later Church pictured as hidden. A hermit who entered a family from a mountain. A superior in a difficult generation. A man of prayer to whom the Order attached the Flos Carmeli. The figure around whom Carmel gathered its story of 16 July. A saint whose bones came home to Aylesford when the friars came home.

The scapular belongs inside that story. It is not the whole of it.

Simon cannot pray instead of us. He cannot repent instead of us. He cannot wear a sign instead of us. What he still gives is simpler. He points towards Carmel, towards Mary, and Mary points towards Christ. The tree, the mountain, the cloth and the relic are all small things. They are useful only if they lead to a life.

If you already wear the Brown Scapular, wear it as belonging, not as a spare key to heaven. If you do not, you are not being ordered to buy one before you close the book. You are being asked to notice the kind of Catholic life Simon's memory recommends: hidden faithfulness, a real community, prayer when the Order is in trouble, honesty about history, and confidence in Mary that does not turn her into a machine.

That is enough for one small book about one English saint.

A Reflection

It is possible to finish a book about a saint and remain unchanged.

We can enjoy the tree, correct other people about 1251, visit Aylesford one day, and still not pray. Knowledge is not the same as practice. Simon's story is not an exam. It is an invitation to a way of belonging that remains hidden for most of the week.

The last question is not whether I can explain him. It is whether anything in my ordinary life has become more truthful because I met him.

A short prayer

St Simon Stock, obtain for us a faith we actually live, and a heart that knows how to belong to Mary without using her. Amen.

A Last Word

Simon is difficult to reconstruct completely. The documents from his own century are few. The tree, the apples, the exact year of an election, the signed text of a hymn, the courtroom detail of a July morning in Cambridge — much of that arrives later, as family memory.

That does not make him unreal. An English Carmelite prior called Simon died at Bordeaux on 16 May and was remembered as holy. The Order kept his name. The Church approved his feast. Aylesford received a relic of him when the White Friars returned. Millions of Catholics have worn a small brown sign that later generations connected with his prayer.

We do not need to pretend certainty about every detail in order to receive what the story actually gives. Simon's memory points away from Simon. Towards Carmel. Towards Mary. And Mary points towards Christ.

That is why a man who may once have lived in a tree is still worth knowing.

*St Simon Stock, pray for us.
Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us.*



Silent Homilies

Little Treasures

A word of thanks

If this little book has helped you, a small gift on the Silent Homilies website would be received with real gratitude. It is never asked as a condition of reading — only as a kindness, if you wish and if you can.

Printing tip

This booklet is designed in A5 format. For best results print double-sided on A5 paper (or print two pages per A4 sheet and cut). Recommended paper: 80–100 gsm for a pleasant reading feel.

Written to be read in one or two sittings.