

Mary's Perpetual Virginity Clearly Confirmed in Scripture & Jewish Tradition

[New Era World News and Global Intelligence:](#)

SAINT LUKE'S GOSPEL ACCOUNT of the encounter between the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary contains a remarkable dialogue that confirms the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity, a virginity that she insisted upon before assenting to Gabriel's request that she become the Mother of God. If Luke's account ([Luke 1: 26-35](#)) is read closely in conjunction with ancient Jewish laws pertaining to vows and along with Jewish marital customs, it contains all the information necessary to conclude that Mary had taken a vow of perpetual virginity and that Joseph had accepted her vow. According to the "Law of Vows" recorded in the Jewish Torah, [Book of Numbers](#),

A) *"If a woman vow any thing, and bind herself by an oath, **being in her father's house**, and but yet a girl in age: if her father knew the vow that she hath promised, and the oath wherewith she hath bound her soul, and held his peace, she shall be bound by the vow: Whatsoever she promised and swore, she shall fulfil in deed."*

B) *"If she have a husband, and shall vow any thing, and **the word once going out of her mouth shall bind her soul by an oath**: The day that her husband shall hear it, and not gainsay it, she shall be bound to the vow, and shall give whatsoever she promised. But if as soon as he heareth he gainsay it, and make her promises and the words wherewith she had bound her soul of no effect: the Lord will forgive her" ([Numbers 30: 3-6](#)).*

In addition, Jewish matrimonial laws-customs-traditions consisted of two marital phases necessary for the contracting and consummation of a valid marriage ([*kiddushin*](#) and [*nisu'in*](#)). According to the [Jewish Encyclopedia](#):

*“The term “betrothal” in Jewish law must **not** be understood in its modern sense; that is, the agreement of a man and a woman to marry, by which the parties are not, however, **definitely bound**, but which may be broken or dissolved without formal divorce.”*

In Jewish Law, once the proposal had been made and accepted, the relationship was binding; that is, marriage had already been entered into *albeit* not yet fully consummated. This was so strongly the case that Jewish law required a divorce to nullify the first stage (*kiddushin*) of a marital relationship. Thus, Joseph, who was “betrothed” or “espoused” to Mary, was forced to divorce or to “put her away”, even though they had not yet begun to live together (*nisu'in*):

*“Now the generation of Christ was in this wise. When as his mother Mary was **espoused** to Joseph, (but) **before they came together** (*kiddushin*), she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded **to put her away privately**” ([Matt 1:18](#)).*

The [Jewish Encyclopedia](#) explains betrothal this way:

*“When the agreement had been entered into, it was definite and binding upon both groom and bride, who were considered as man and wife in all legal and religious aspects, **except that of actual cohabitation.**”*

“The (Jewish) root אָרַשׁ (“to betroth”), from which the

Talmudic abstract ארוסין ("betrothal") is derived, must be taken in this sense; i.e., to contract an actual though incomplete marriage. In two of the passages in which it (betroth) occurs (in the scriptures) the betrothed woman is directly designated as "wife" ([II Sam. iii. 14](#), "my wife whom I have betrothed" ("erasti"), and [Deut. xxi. 24](#), where the betrothed is designated as "the wife of his neighbor"). In strict accordance with this sense **the rabbinical law declares that the betrothal is equivalent to an actual marriage and only to be dissolved by a formal divorce.**

Putting the "Law of Vows" recorded in Book of Numbers together with the laws/customs regulating Jewish marriage, and the Gospel account given by St. Luke, it is clear that *not* only was Mary a consecrated virgin, but that she had taken a vow of perpetual virginity. St. Luke was very careful to make this fact abundantly clear from his account of the *Angelic Visitation* in which he reveals that when the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, **she was already "betrothed" (married) to Joseph. What does that mean?** It means, consequently, that according to Jewish Law well known to Luke, and to Joseph and the Virgin Mary, as well as the Jewish audience first reading the Gospel account of Jesus' birth, it means that (according to Numbers Article (B) above) Joseph must have been aware of Mary's vow of virginity and consented to it, for **Luke tells us that Mary was a "virgin" at the time she was "betrothed" to Joseph!**

This scriptural fact helps to explain why Mary was confused at the angel's message. Luke tells us that Mary was "*troubled at his (Gabriel's) saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.*" How could she, a consecrated virgin, have a child? Thus, in this state of troubled confusion, she asks, ["How shall this be done,](#) (how can this be?) [because I know not man? "](#) How can a virgin have a child? How can this be, I know not man nor shall I know man even

though I am married to one.

A Note on Virginity and the Consecrated Life

Before proceeding, it is relevant to note that the Old Testament indicates the existence of virgins who served God within the Temple precincts of Jerusalem. In the Second Book of Maccabees the following is recorded:

*“And the women, girded with haircloth about their breasts, came together in the streets. And **the virgins also that were shut up**, came forth, some to Onias, and some to the walls, and others looked out of the windows. And all holding up their hands towards heaven, made supplication” ([2 Maccabees 3: 19-20](#)).*

In Catholic tradition virgins that are “shut up” are called cloistered such as the Carmelite nuns who do not have regular contact with the outside world but live a life of solitude, contemplative prayer and service. Thus, these “shut up” Temple Virgins seem to have constituted a special class of virgins who presumably lived and served in the Temple of YHWH in Jerusalem.

According to [Taylor Marshall](#)“

“There is further testimony of temple virgins in the traditions of the Jews. In the Mishnah, it is recorded that there were 82 consecrated virgins who wove the veil of the Temple” (Mishna Shekalim 8, 5-6)

More mystically, according to the Patristic Fathers as recorded by [Kereszty Roch](#), “Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology”,

“The patristic argument for the perpetual virginity of Mary

*is ... based on the understanding of virginity as a total consecration to God in pure faith and undivided love. They interpret Lk 1:34 as expressing the firm intention (or vow) of Mary to dedicate herself to God as a virgin; such a dedication must be total and irrevocable. **They also see in the womb of Mary the New Ark of God overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, the New Temple forever sanctified by God's presence. No man may enter that sanctuary since God has made it his own.***"

Wow!

Ezekiel, moreover, was given a vision of the future Temple in Jerusalem, a mystical temple containing an equally mystical "East Gate":

*"Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east; and **it was shut**. And he said to me, **"This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened and no one shall enter by it; for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut"** ([Ezekiel 44:1](#)).*

Several Fathers of the Church saw the East Gate as a mystical allusion to the Virgin Mary – She is the virginal East Gate through whom **only the Lord**, Himself, could enter. **This mystical gate was to "remain shut", that is, virginal**, never to open to any man. Significantly, in Mary's apparitions, esp. at Fatima, she is always seen ascending to the east, to her place, toward the East Gate. It is through Mary alone that our Lord entered the world. She is the Ark of the Covenant containing the Holy of Holies, the incarnate Son of God. It is through her, and her alone, that the Lord entered humanity and took on human flesh as the "blessed fruit of her womb".

Thus, St. Jerome was able to write that **Christ alone, as the firstborn could open the mystical doors of her virginal**

womb ([The “firstborn” were not given the title because there was a “second-born.” They were called “firstborn” at birth. Jesus being “firstborn” does not require that more siblings be born after him](#)):

Christ, as the firstborn, opened the virgin’s womb :

“Sanctify unto me every firstborn that openeth the womb among the children of Israel, as well of men as of beasts: for they are all mine” ([Exodus 13:2](#)).

The early heretics refused to acknowledge this mystery pertaining to the opening of the “mystical gate, which was prefigured by the *Eastern door of the Temple* ([Ezekiel 44:2](#)), which closed again when once the High Priest had gone through it” ([Against the Pelagians Book II](#)).

Thus, according to [Canon 604](#) of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, there are such servants of God known as consecrated virgins, virgins who imitate the Virgin Mary by living a type of consecrated life:

[Canon §1](#). *Similar to these forms of [consecrated life](#) is the order of virgins, who, committed to the holy plan of following Christ more closely, are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop according to the approved liturgical rite, **are betrothed mystically to Christ**, the Son of God, and are dedicated to the service of the Church.*

Return to Mary’s Perpetual Virginity

The above scriptural facts and historical points of sacred tradition pertaining to virginity, betrothal, and the consecrated life help to explain why Mary was confused at the Angel Gabriel’s message. Luke tells us that Mary was “troubled at his (Gabriel’s) saying, and thought with herself what

manner of salutation this should be." How could she, a consecrated virgin, have a child? Thus, In this state of troubled confusion, she asked, "How shall this be done, (how can this be?) because I know not man? " How can a virgin have a child? How can this be, I know not man nor shall I know man even though I am married to one.

Interestingly, Luke informs us that both Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, and the Virgin Mary were visited by the Archangel Gabriel, both were presented with a message involving the birth of a son (Son). Both responded with the same question, (How can this be?). Zacharias, however, was punished for asking this question while the Virgin Mary was blessed. How can this be?

The Virgin Mary trusted God and thus believed what Gabriel was conveying to her. Her question was simply one of how exactly this miracle was going to take place since she was a vowed perpetual virgin. Her question was *not* one of doubt or disbelief or incredulity. Her question was an innocent reflection on how God was going to accomplish this miracle as indicated by the fact that **once the Angel told her that her virginity was to remain inviolate, she assented to his request: "Be it done unto me..."**

Zacharias, on the other hand, was presented with a substantially much less difficult announcement. When the Angel Gabriel told him he would have a son, his only apparent impediment was a *physical one*: old age; whereas Mary suffered from a moral and spiritual impediment involving a solemn vow to God, a vow so solemn that even her husband consented to it, as indicated by her perplexity. Mary, graced by God, reverently tested Gabriel. Zacharias, however did not trust God; he had trouble believing that a son could be born to him and Elizabeth in their old age; he had so much trouble believing that he dared to ridicule an angel by implying that the good tidings that Gabriel was announcing were somehow untrue (something that even the Archangel Michael would *not* do

when contesting with Satan over the body of Moses):

*“When Michael the archangel, disputing with the devil, contended about the body of Moses, he durst **not** bring against him the judgment of railing speech, but (simply) said: The Lord rebuke thee” ([1 Jude 9](#)).*

Consequently, Zacharias was punished for his disbelief, for his incredulity before a princely messenger of God, a messenger certainly deserving of more respect than Satan to whom even Michael showed respect for his fallen but angelic dignity.

“And behold, thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time” ([Luke 1:20](#)).

Because Mary was a consecrated virgin, she was honestly confused; her confusion over the matter led her to question the Angel Gabriel, led her to reverently protest his request that she become the Mother of the Messiah, especially if that meant that she had to violate or relinquish her vow of virginity to God. Thus, the Virgin Mary found herself in a quandary, a confusing situation that required her to test or “try” the spirit addressing her:

“Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God” ([1 John 4:1](#))

Was Gabriel from God or a diabolical messenger? Would God ask her to break her solemn vow, would God reject her virginity? Was this a ploy to get her to engage in sexual intercourse with St. Joseph? These are the type of implicit questions she reverently places before Gabriel and it is *not* until the angel clarified exactly what he meant by his message that she knew he is from God. It is not until this point that she, the

handmaid of the Lord, was willing to consent. **Her confusion and reverent protest make it clear that Her vow of virginity was still operative and that Joseph had assented to it as well.**

More importantly, her question (how can this be?) would be meaningless if she had *not* taken a vow of virginity and shared it with Joseph. Clearly, she and Joseph were “betrothed” (in the first stage of marriage) and would soon be living together. Her question clearly indicates that she and Joseph had agreed to live in virginity; otherwise she would NOT have had a need to ask such a question. **The question makes no sense unless Mary was a virgin and planned to remain one. If she and Joseph were to consummate their marriage by a unitive and procreative marital act, she would not have had to ask the question.** She would *not* have been confused. Mary knew what Her virginity entailed; she knew how babies are made.

Mary, however, had taken a vow of virginity and in so doing had entered into a spiritual and nuptial relationship with God; she had given her virginity to Him. He in return accepted her vow and they (Mary and YHWH) were thus united in a sacral bond as when a “*consecrated virgin*” gives her virginity to God and thereby enters into a nuptial relationship often attested to by the putting on a wedding ring to indicate consecration and virginal-espousal.



Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades placing wedding ring on Consecrated Virgin at Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne, Indiana

Thus, because of her virginity, Mary was not only confused by the angel's request, she also uttered a mild form of protest: "How can this be" or "I do not think I can do this" since I have given my virginity to God and He has accepted? Aware that God does not change His mind and aware of the perpetual nature of her virginal vow, she was naturally confused. Would an angel of God ask her to relinquish her vow, a solemn nuptial vow of virginity by which she was related to Him in an especial nuptial manner? So she asked, "How can this be?" Has God changed His mind? or perhaps to Gabriel: Are you truly from God or somewhere else?

When Gabriel elucidated his message, it became clear that instead of being asked to violate her vow, Mary was being invited to consummate it, to offer her virginity to Him, to open the mystical East Gate through whom *only He* could

spiritually enter by overshadowing her with His glory. When it was clear that God, not Joseph, was to be the operative spiritual cause of her mystical conception, she consented.

This is worth repeating: It was NOT until the Archangel Gabriel assured her that she could keep her vow, assured her that God had *not* changed His mind, and that she could remain a virgin, it was *not* until this surety was given, that the Virgin Mary gave her *fiat*, gave her consent. Presumably, if Gabriel had revealed to her that the child to be born would be St. Joseph's, she would *not* have given her consent, would *not* have replied "yes" but rather, "no": "***non fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum***".

The Archangel Gabriel, however, revealed to her the miraculous nature of the Messiah's birth. He was to be formed in her virginal womb by a divine act of God, the God to whom she had consecrated her virginity. Once this was clear in her mind, and *not* a moment before, she immediately gave her consent:

"Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum": "Let it be done unto me according to thy word."

Thus, God's request through Gabriel provided Mary with the opportunity to fulfill her vow, to say yes to the Lord as she was consecrated to do as His handmaid. But before consenting, she asked the Angel Gabriel to clarify his message. Once he assured her that her vow of virginity was to remain inviolate, that she was to give virgin birth while married to Joseph, only then did she consent. **Her consent was conditional upon the ability to remain a virgin**, a condition that Joseph was aware of and had consented to according to the Torah, according to Jewish marriage customs, and to the Gospel of St. Luke who derived his data directly from the Virgin Mary herself.

Remembering 9-11: What is the True US Strategy in Afghanistan?

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

AFGHANISTAN FELL UNDER Soviet control from 1978 until 1989 when the Communists withdrew. From 1978 onward the Soviet Union backed a secular Socialist government known as the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA). In 1979 the DRA requested the Soviet Union to send forces into the country to assist them against indigenous forces headed by warlords known as the mujahideen. For ten years thereafter the Soviets engaged in war against these Islamic jihadists. During this time, radical Sunni Islamists from other countries, including Al Qaeda and its leader, leader Osama Ben Laden (Saudi Arabia), came to the assistance of the Mujahideen in which effort they were aided by the United States.

Following the importation of Osama Ben Laden, economic and military assistance as well as radical Islamic forces from around the globe began to funnel into Afghanistan with significant support coming from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Although the Soviets continued to support the DRA after their withdrawal in 1989, much of Afghanistan fell to the US backed Mujahideen who overthrew the DRA's last president, Mohammad Najibullah in 1992. **Thereafter, the Mujahideen fought among themselves and eventually morphed into what is now known as the Taliban**, the force that sheltered Al Qaeda and the radical Sunni Muslims that planned terrorist attacks from their safe abode inside Afghanistan, including what many believe to be the planned attack against the United States known as 9-11.

Triggered by the 9-11 attacks of 2001, the United States has been militarily involved in Afghanistan against the Taliban for seventeen years, the longest war in American History. Yet according to Senator John McCain, not only is victory elusive, the US is losing the war:

"We have no strategy. And we are losing. When you're not winning, you're losing. And the ANA, the Afghan National Army, is taking unacceptable losses" ([CBS News July 2017](#)).

At its peak (2010-2011) the United States deployed approximately 100,000 troops in Afghanistan. Then President Obama made the decision to begin withdraw. Although the Afghan mission was formally halted in December of 2014, eight thousand plus US troops remain stationed there to assist a NATO coalition (approximately five thousand troops) to train indigenous security personnel collectively referred to as the *"Afghan National Defense and Security Forces"*, which are currently engaged in joint-offensive military operations to combat terrorism throughout the country.

For decades multiple terrorist organizations, headed by the Taliban (see Note below), have disrupted political, social, and economic activity in the region. As noted above, prior to US involvement post 9-11, Soviet Communist troops dealt unsuccessfully with the Afghan mujahideen who, backed by the United States, forced the Soviets to retire (1989) from the exhausting confrontation ironically leaving the battle to the Americans who likewise later withdrew (2014), thereby handing the conflict to NATO and the American backed secular Afghan government and its *"Afghan National Defense and Security Forces"*. This government has also proved unable to handle the proliferating problem, a problem that now includes additional Islamic State (ISIL-Daesh) terrorists, who, together with the Taliban, control roughly a third of Afghanistan, at least as much as they previously controlled prior to the military engagement of the United States and its allies in November of 2001.

President Trump Addresses the Taliban

During a recent August, 2017 presidential address to the nation, President Trump reminded viewers that a previous early withdraw from Iraq cost America the war in that country. The lack of US troops permitted the uncontested, or poorly contested, ascendancy of the Islamic State, which has increased its zone of terror from western Iraq to Syria and to the east as well. Consequently, the president announced his firm resolve to beef up America's involvement to end the conflict in Afghanistan by means of devastating force to be inflicted by American troops:

"We will fight to win. From now on, victory will have a clear definition: Attacking our enemies, obliterating ISIS, crushing al Qaeda, preventing the Taliban from taking over Afghanistan, and stopping mass terror attacks against America before they emerge" ([CNN](#)).

Although the Pentagon had previously (June, 2017) announced a deployment of up to 3,900 new troops to Afghanistan, that announcement cannot be taken as authoritative since the president announced in his August address that the numbers would remain unspecified to maintain the element of surprise necessary to conduct a successful campaign:

"America's enemies must never know our plans or believe they can wait us out" ([PBS News](#)).

Will the President be Able to Institute a New Foreign Policy?

During his National Address (as well as during his presidential campaign), President Trump insisted that under his leadership the United States is embarking on a *new* foreign policy path: The US, he said, will no longer be involved in wars for the sake of nation building, but rather for peace and stability. Echoing the president, Secretary of State Tillerson

specified that the United States would advance “peace talks” with the Taliban and allied terrorists without “preconditions.” In other words, negotiations, so it seems, should be open to input from all concerned parties without any foreign agenda to be imposed.

Unfortunately, the president’s policy involves overt threats to neighboring Pakistan, a nation that has harbored Taliban insurgents seeking asylum by crossing the mountainous Afghan border into its equally mountainous regions, which have historically served as an incubator for terrorists threatening Afghanistan. Rather than leaving this adroit diplomatic maneuver to the Chinese (deeply desirous for peace in the region) who have recently courted economic-political favor with the Pakistani government *via* the New Silk Road Initiative (an economic boon for Pakistan), the president’s American bravado got the best of him thereby forcing him into a foreign policy *faux pas*, which will need correcting. If not corrected, relationships with Pakistan will continue to deteriorate driving them into further Chinese and Russian alliance.

Mr. Trump would do well to adhere to his campaign plan to cooperate with Russia and China to end terrorism rather than trying to do it solo or with NATO but without Russia and China or by flying in the face of Sino-Russo objections. Unfortunately, it behooves Neocon warhawks and their liberal allies in the United States to continue painting Russia as the bad guy when, in fact, a cooperative venture would do much to stabilize the war-torn region and advance global peace.

The world is groping for peace and the United States (*apparently* contrary to the wishes of its elected president) continues to make maneuvers that promise more and greater conflict. Recently (July 13, 2017), Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the President of Germany, visited German troops stationed in Afghanistan to whom he communicated Germany’s continued resolve to maintain its military presence in Afghanistan

alongside the United States and other NATO allies; Steinmeier however, is looking for peace. Like President Trump as well as Russian and Chinese diplomats (and political leaders throughout Eastern Europe and elsewhere), Steinmeier seems to think that future peace entails the respect of national sovereignty and the curtailment of globalism, nation building or any form of neo-colonialism.”

In Steinmeier’s words to the troops, “I came to” Afghanistan to “speak with President Ghani about the steps that are needed and can be taken toward a serious and credible peace process in Afghanistan. My message to him today was”:

“The future of this country is not primarily in the hands of Germany, NATO or international donors. It is first and foremost in the hands of the Government of Afghanistan, and it hinges on the government’s efforts to unite this divided country. None of this will be possible without the acceptance of a central government in Kabul, without a political settlement with the various ethnic and religious groups, including the Taliban. That is part of the reality which we, but above all political leaders in Afghanistan, have to recognise. Your presence here cannot take the place of a political settlement. Your presence can only create both time and space for a political settlement, one that Afghans themselves must both desire and work out. Nothing more – but also nothing less” ([Der Bundespräsident](#))

The German approach is inclusive, yet it leaves future decision making to the AFGHANS THEMSELVES, NOT TO SOME FOREIGN GLOBAL POWER OR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION. This is the preferred position of President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin as well as that of Xi Jinping, President of China. Unfortunately, Neocon Warhawks such as John McCain et al on the extreme right along with their army of liberal counterparts on the extreme left are committed to preserving an antedated *status quo* which views the United States as the world’s policeman and as God’s viceroy on earth entrusted with

a “Manifest Destiny” to spread outdated eighteenth century liberal economic, political and anti-Christian cultural ideas around the globe.

They hope thereby to make the world safe for liberal democracy via the global deployment of increasingly confused American troops who are beginning to wonder who the “good guy” really is and what exactly they are fighting for. CNN, President Trump’s favorite “[Fake News](#)” outlet, has gone as far as asserting that Russia is supplying weapons to the Taliban, its sworn enemy in Afghanistan. The Russian response: “prove it” – “there is no evidence”. According to [Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#):

“We paid attention to the lampoon of the American CNN television channel about alleged supplies of weapons to the Afghan Taliban by Russia.”

“It is hardly possible to seriously perceive video materials in which old small arms are demonstrated, the origin of which is impossible to establish. The weapons are not stamped by the manufacturer and serial numbers are defaced. In addition, the weapons shown are typical. As is known, such samples were produced not only in Russia, but also in other countries, including Eastern Europe, from where in the early 2000s, Americans massively imported them to [Afghanistan](#).”

“Recently, the Taliban attacked the base of the Afghan National Security Forces in Helmand province, using American armored vehicles “Humvee”. What conclusion can be drawn based on this information using the logic of CNN?”

“As we have repeatedly stated, the accusations of a number of Western and some echoing Afghan mass media regarding alleged support from the Russian Federation by the militants of the

Taliban movement are unfounded. To date, neither the Afghan authorities nor the command of the [US](#) and [NATO](#) contingents in the IRA have provided evidence that would confirm these speculations.

Thus, regardless of how liberal media outlets are portraying Russian resistance to US troop deployment in Afghanistan, **the truth is that Russia is delighted by America's presence in Afghanistan**, which has long been a training ground for terrorists such as Daesh, ISIL et al that threaten Russia and are therefore considered terrorists groups by the Russian government. In short, the United States, if it is doing what it is reported to be doing, is fighting against Russia's enemies in Afghanistan and thereby assisting Putin to secure his own borders.

However, since the debacle in Syria, Russian diplomats have little trust for American initiatives. While in Syria, war-hawks like Senator McCain portrayed the conflict as a war against terrorists when in fact it became public knowledge that the Americans were stealthily aiding and abetting the terrorists in service of the liberal ideological and economic interests of ruling profiteers contrary to the Russians who were engaged in a real battle with the real terrorists.

Because Russia supports America's war on terrorism *close to its borders* in Afghanistan, it is a natural ally in the fight.

The Russians however, due to their growing mistrust of America's intentions, are proceeding cautiously, interpreting American intervention with a grain of salt. Therefore, Alexander Grushko, the Russian envoy to NATO recently stated that his country fears that Afghanistan is becoming a hornet's nest for terrorists of all sorts, implying that he is unsure of America's intentions: Will American involvement curtail or exacerbate the challenge of terrorism to global peace and Russian security? Grushko indicated to reporters gathered in Brussels that Moscow hopes NATO will provide full information as to just "how the Alliance is planning to conduct future operations in Afghanistan."

["There is a serious threat of Afghanistan turning into a safe](#)

[haven for terrorists](#) as, unfortunately, the hold of the Islamic State [referring to Daesh, a terrorist group banned in Russia] is not weakening.”

Grushko’s concern is confirmed by reports that America’s efforts against terrorists in Afghanistan are starting to sound a bit like reports that previously came out of Syria.

According to the [New York Times](#) and the [BBC](#), a US airstrike on a compound in Helmand province, Afghanistan, resulted in deaths to *friendly Afghan forces* (**forces opposed to and fighting against terrorists throughout Afghanistan**):

“During a US-supported (Afghan security) operation, aerial fires resulted in the deaths of the friendly Afghan forces who were gathered in a compound.”

This widely reported fact engenders several provocative questions to be followed in upcoming weeks: Will future reports change under President Trump? Will the US assist Russian brokered efforts to bring world peace and thus be a peace-maker itself? or will President Trump succumb to tiresome Neocon voices in favor of ongoing conflict in the name of liberal ideology, personal interests, and veiled chicanery leading to ever more conflict and profitable war?

NOTE:

Both the Taliban and Al Qaeda are radical Sunni Muslims committed to Jihad and theocratic government; both are opposed to the influence of Western culture and the secular governments put in place by Western leaders.

From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban enforced strict Sharia law over most of Afghanistan prior to the US invasion in 2001. The United States assisted the Taliban with Stinger missiles and an array of military supplies in the 1980s, when these terrorists were combatting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

During their 1996 to 2001 rule, the Taliban Mujahideen interfered with UN humanitarian shipments to famished men, women, and children, massacred Afghan civilians, scorched fertile land and destroyed thousands of homes. The Taliban was opposed by the Northern Alliance spearheaded by Russia, Iran, Turkey and India and then later used by the United States to defeat the Taliban and install its own

compliant government, a puppet state amenable to secular liberal interests.

The Taliban consists of militants drawn primarily from Afghanistan itself. It is an indigenous nationalistic movement in favor of an Islamic government and opposed to the Western backed secular state in Afghanistan.

The Taliban is therefore a legitimate stake-holder having a legitimate claim to some share in a future Afghani government.

Al-Qaeda, on the other hand, consists primarily of educated Arabs, a few Afghans and a healthy contingent of Egyptians. Al-Qaeda was formed by an Arab, Osama Bin Laden, to spread global Jihad against liberal forces supported by the United States in favor of its ally, Israel. The Taliban invited Ben Laden to Afghanistan where they sheltered him as he planned terrorist attacks.

The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

THE BROWN SCAPULAR HAS BEEN CALLED “The Livery of Our Lady”, “Grace Garment” and the “Sign of Mary”. The scapular is a sign of the Queen Mother’s maternal care for the souls of all her children, all those who wear it with filial and [true devotion](#). In their love of and obedience to the Virgin Mary, they imitate Jesus, who fully aware of His Divine mission and fully cognizant of His Divine relationship with His Eternal Father, nonetheless, submitted himself to the Virgin Mary ([Luke 2:51](#)). Saint Luke informs his readers that “subject” to Her and to St Joseph,

“Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and

man" ([Luke 2: 51-52](#)).

As the mother of Jesus, and of His Church, the Queen Mother assists her children to advance in wisdom and favor before God (and before men) until they become one with Him as members of His "Mystical Body".

Although every member of the mystical *Body of Christ* has Mary for his or her mother, the Brown Scapular of Mt. Carmel is a *singular* Sign of Mary's highly favored Carmelite family, her "favoured" children, the children of a family that has produced more saints than any other spirituality in the history of Christendom. This seems to be one of the reasons why **the Virgin Mary choose to appear at Fatima as Our Lady of Mt. Carmel** and to offer the Brown Scapular of Carmel to all her children. The spirituality of Mt. Carmel was the spirituality of Sister Lucia, of the Holy Father John Paul II, of Doctors of the Church such as Saints John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila as well as Terese of Lisieux and of so many outstanding models of perfection that inspire souls to avail themselves of this proven way to holiness and Christian perfection. Those who heard Jesus speak in the synagogues of Nazareth were spellbound and unaware of where He had gained His knowledge and wisdom prompting them to ask:

"Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary... Whence therefore hath he all these things"
([Matt13:53-56](#))?

Although His countrymen were unaware of the origin of His wisdom and unaware that they had answered their own question, the Saints of Christendom were, and are, fully aware that Jesus received his virtue, learning, and wisdom from his parents, St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Thus, when Sister Lucia (one of the three shepherd-children who communed with Our Lady at Fatima) was asked why Our Lady held out the Scapular following the October 13, 1917 Miracle of the Sun,

she replied, because **“Our Lady wants all of Her children to wear it.” The scapular is a sign of her maternal help and protection**, a “grace garment” emblematic of Her regal and motherly authority and of Her ordained ability to assist their growth in virtue, wisdom and love necessary to overcome the world, the weakness of their flesh, their passions and the pride of life, which diminish their strength and by degrees render them increasingly prone to the cunning of superior angelic beings.

Origin of the Scapular

As recorded in the Old Testament, 850 years before the birth of Christ, the Prophet Elijah challenged the Satanic priests of Baal (pagan priests supported by King Ahab – the seventh King of Israel – who led the nation into the spiritual sin of apostasy) to a spiritual contest pitting the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob against the pagan god Baal. Three years earlier, Elijah had entered Jerusalem to confront Ahab warning him to return to the God of Israel or the nation would be chastised. Ahab brazenly dismissed the prophet. Since that day, the day that Elijah was expelled by Ahab from the royal palace, no rain was released over the Holy Land nor was a cloud seen. Three years later Israel found itself in the throes of severe famine. It was then that Elijah rebuked Ahab and summoned him to Mt. Carmel along with the apostate priests and false-prophets of Baal:

“And when Ahab had seen Elijah, he said: Art thou he that troublest Israel? And Elijah said: I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father’s house, who have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and have followed Baalim. Nevertheless send now, and gather unto me all Israel, unto Mt.Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, who eat at Jezabel’s table ([1 Kings 18: 17-19](#)).

Elijah pleaded with the crowd to return to God:

“How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him! but if Baal, follow him!”

But no one spoke a word in favor of the God of Israel thereby prompting the prophet to propose a contest. Both he and the apostate prophets would build altars, place a holocaust on them and pray to their God/god to send down a consuming fire. The God/god who sent down the unquenchable fire would be acknowledged as the true God of Israel. The druid apostates prayed and slashed themselves for hours to no avail. Most Christians know this story, how the prophet **Elijah prayed and God immediately sent down fire** from heaven to consume his sacrifice followed by the slaying of the prophets of Baal. These memorable events, however, are *not* the main focus of the scriptural account. Like an “after party”, the main focus is actually what happened afterward, the “after event”.

What happened Afterward?

Immediately afterward, King Ahab went off to dine and refresh himself while Elijah proceeded to the top of Mt. Carmel where he crouched down to the earth and put his head between his knees to pray. Elijah then summoned his servant to go and look out over the sea and come back and tell him what he observed. Six times the servant went forth and came back with the same reply:

“I see nothing”

Neither King Ahab, Elijah’s servant, nor anyone among the gathered multitude knew that the prophet was about to “behold a prophetic vision of the spiritual Salvation of all mankind through an Immaculate Virgin” ([John Haffert – Co-Founder World Apostolate of Fatima](#))

Elijah sent his servant a **seventh time** (seven indicating the fullness of time). The servant then observed a *mysterious cloud rising out of the sea in the shape of a human foot* ([1 Kings 18:43-44](#)).

Years later, Elijah conveyed to the prophets of Mt. Carmel that **this mysterious foot foreshadowed the coming of an Immaculate Virgin who would rise out of the sea of humanity to bring grace and consolation to the world: the foot of the “Woman” that would crush the head of Satan** (as Elijah had just crushed his false-prophets, the prophets of Baal) **as prophesied in [Gen 3:15](#)**.

This mysterious “Woman” is revealed by St. John to be the the Virgin Mary ([Rev 11:19 – 12:1-6](#)) the “Great Sign” the new and mystical **Ark of the Covenant, the Holy Tabernacle in which God dwells**; She is also the prophetic and eschatological “Woman” who, along with her “seed” ([Rev 12:17](#)), will crush the head of Satan as foretold in Genesis. As such, she is symbolized by both foot and cloud.

*“Then the **cloud** covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting, because the **cloud** settled down upon it and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle** (as He filled the Virgin Mary with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, [Rev 11:19-12:1](#), and overshadowed Her with His glory at the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel – [Luke 1:35](#)). Whenever the cloud rose from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on their journey. But if the **cloud** did not lift, they would not go forward; only when it lifted did they go forward. **The cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day**, and fire in the cloud at night, in the sight of the whole house of Israel in all the stages of their journey” ([Exodus 40: 34-38](#)), as the Virgin Mary accompanied Jesus at every stage of His journey, birth to death – She was there.*

As soon as Elijah was told of the mysterious cloud in the shape of a foot he rose from prayer; then the heavens grew dark with moisture laden clouds and cascading winds. As the clouds passed over the land for the first time in three years water fell, like divine grace, to renew God's people.

*"Go up, and look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said: There is nothing. And again he said to him: Return seven times. And **at the seventh time, behold, a little cloud arose out of the sea like a man's foot...** behold the heavens grew dark, with clouds, and wind, and there fell a great rain. ([Kings I, 18:43-44](#))."*

Some two thousand, one hundred and ten years later (1260) King Saint Louis of France found himself leading a Crusade to the Holy Land; while there, he was told of holy-men descended from the long line of Elijah who lived on Mt. Carmel. The king ascended Carmel and found on its heights a remnant of monks living among its caves and hollows. Appropriately, they called themselves the "Hermits of St. Mary of Mt. Carmel". Due to the Muslim onslaught, these hermits were being forced to emigrate to Europe.

Before doing so, they told King Louis that they were descended from the prophet Elijah. They told him that they were called hermits of Saint Mary because of the foot shaped cloud Elijah had seen coming out of the sea. This foot, they said, was a prophetic foreshadowing of the "Woman" foretold by God, an Immaculate Virgin, who was to conceive the savior and crush the pride of Satan beneath the humble heel of Her seed.

THEY ALSO SAID THAT THE PROPHET ELIJAH HAD COMMANDED HIS FOLLOWERS TO PRAY FOR THE COMING OF THIS VIRGIN SAYING THAT ["THE CLOUD WAS A DIVINE MALEDICTION AGAINST THE DEVIL"](#):

"I shall place enmities between thee and the Woman, thy seed and Her seed . . . thou shalt lie in wait for Her heel and She shall crush thy head . . . ,([Gen 3:15](#))"

A short fifty years later (after the visit of King Louis), The Virgin Mary appeared to **Saint Peter Thomas** (a French Carmelite and General to the Papal Court of Pope Clement VI at Avignon) and told him that **the Order of Mt. Carmel would endure to the end of the world.** [She told Saint Peter that "Elijah \(the order's founder\), obtained it \(the promise\) a long time ago from my Son."](#) Three Hundred years following this exchange between St. Louis and the Hermits of Mt. Carmel, Jesus Himself revealed to Saint Teresa of Avila, that this same order of hermits should be known as ["The Order of the Virgin"](#).

Six years before King Louis transported the hermits to France, a group of crusaders had already taken others to England. While in England, an unusual holy man by the name of **Simon Stock joined them at the request of the Virgin Mary who had made their landing in England known to him.** Like another Elijah, Simon departed from the world and dwelt alone in the English forest living in the hollow of a tree trunk. The Virgin Mary personally appeared to him and told him that her sons from Carmel were coming to England and that he should join them. A short six years later (1245) Simon was made General of the entire order. The *Order of the Virgin*, however, was despised by its English hosts for their austere and foreign spirituality. Throughout England the secular clergy rose against these begging ill-clad mendicants. Several times, under Simon's leadership, it appeared as if the *Order of Our Lady* would dissolve. The young general, abandoned, perplexed, and infirm, retired in seeming defeat to consider how the Queen Mother would preserve Her order.

In the words of the [Little Flower](#), St Terese of Lisieux, referring to Saint Simon Stock:

"It was an illness in which Satan assuredly had a hand . . . He little knew, however, that the Queen of Heaven was keeping a faithful and affectionate watch from above...and was making ready to still the tempest just as the frail and delicate stem was on the point of breaking."

Exciting himself to deep prayer, Simon cried out from the depth of his soul and then recited the “*Flos Carmeli*” or “*Flower of Carmel*”, which after the *Hail Mary* is often called “the most beautiful of all Marian prayers”:

*“Flower of Carmel, Vine blossom laden, Splendor of Heaven,
Childbearing maiden,
None equals thee!
O Mother benign, Who no man didst know, On all Carmel’s
children
Thy favors bestow, Star of the Sea!”*

As he raised his head from this prayer, the room was bathed in bright light. Three in his midst stood the Blessed Virgin surrounded by a cohort of angels. She descended toward him holding in her hands a brown scapular. Extending it forth she spoke the following words:

“RECEIVE, MY BELOVED SON, THIS HABIT OF THY ORDER: THIS SHALL BE TO THEE AND TO ALL CARMELITES A PRIVILEGE, THAT WHOSOEVER DIES CLOTHED IN THIS SHALL NEVER SUFFER ETERNAL FIRE.”

This extraordinary privilege was later extended to all the faithful who accept the Virgin as their Spiritual Mother and don Her livery, the Brown Scapular of Mt. Carmel. In the words of [Pope Pius IX](#):

*“This most extraordinary gift of the Scapular from the Mother of God to Saint Simon Stock brings its great usefulness not only to the Carmelite Family of Mary **but also to all the rest of the faithful** who wish, affiliated to that Family, to follow Mary with a very special devotion.”*

All who are enrolled in the Brown Scapular belong to the Carmelite Family as members of the Scapular Confraternity.

Many popes have underscored the veracity of this maternal

pledge. They have ratified this privilege of eternal salvation, salvation that comes through the eternal merits of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ assisted by His heavenly Mother, the Woman clothed with the Sun. She has promised all of Her children, those who die clothed in Her Brown Scapular, those who have perseveringly and devoutly served Her Son, She has promised to assist them all with the grace of *final perseverance* in holiness and the grace of *final penitence by which they are saved from eternal fire*. Some of the popes who have ratified this maternal promise include: Pope Alexander V, Pope Nicholas V, Pope Sixtus IV, Pope Clement VII, Pope Paul III, Pope St. Pius V, Pope Clement VIII, Pope Leo XI, Pope Paul V, Pope Urban VIII, Pope Alexander VII, Pope Benedict XIV, Pope Pius VI, Pope St. Pius X, Pope Benedict XV, Pope Pius XI and [Pope Saint John Paul II](#) who died clothed in his scapular.



Pope John Paul II clothed in Brown Scapular

This scapular promise caused [Pope Benedict XV](#) to proclaim:

*“Let all of you have a common language and a common armor: the language, the sentences of the gospel; the armor, the Scapular of Mary which all ought to wear and which **enjoys the singular privilege of protection even after death.**”*

The Sabbatine Privilege

Catholic theologians and authorities like **Saint Robert Bellarmine** and **Pope Benedict XIV** explained the concept that anyone dying clothed in the scapular would not suffer the fires of hell to mean that our Blessed Mother will assist them at the hour of death with the graces necessary for **final contrition** or **final perseverance in the state of grace**. The **"Sabbatine Privilege"** is a further privilege: That those who die clothed in the Brown Scapular will be released from purgatory the first Saturday following their death.

The Sabbatine Privilege does *not* permit violations of the moral law as if a wearer could sin and *be free from the guilt* of punishment. According to **Pope Pius XI**

"Those who wish to have the Blessed Mother as a helper at the hour of death, must in life merit such a signal favor by abstaining from sin and laboring in Her Honor"

The Promise Extends into Purgatory

Ever since the Virgin Mary appeared to Saint Simon Stock (July 16, 1251), multitudes have found it difficult to believe that for so fractional a devotion as belonging to Her Scapular Confraternity, a person could be blessed with salvation. So the Mother of God returned to make a Promise even more astounding! In the year after Saint Peter Thomas was informed by Her that "the Order of Carmel is destined to exist until the end of the world", the Queen of Heaven conferred a favor so astounding that **Pope Benedict XV** (1914-1922) pronounced the following:

*"Let all of you have a common language and a common armor: the language, the sentences of the gospel; the armor, the Scapular of Mary which all ought to wear and which **enjoys the singular privilege of protection even after death.**"*

In 1613 the Holy Office under Pope Paul V issued a decree on the Sabbatine Privilege:

*“The Carmelite Fathers may preach that the Christian people can piously believe in the aid of the souls of the brethren and confratres of the Sodality of the Most Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel. Through her continuous intercessions, pious suffrages, merits, and special protection the Most Blessed Virgin, **especially on Saturday**, the day dedicated to her by the Church, **will help after their death the brethren and members of the Sodality who die in charity**. In life they must have (1) worn the habit, (2) observed chastity according to their state, and (3) have recited the Little Office. If they do not know how to recite it, they are to (3a) observe the fasts of the Church and to **abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays**, except for the feast of Christmas.”*

In 1890 Pope Leo XIII began the process of **granting the faculty to confessors to commute the condition of abstinence into other good works** for the gaining of the Sabbatine Privilege. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia,

“The faculty to sanction this change was granted to all confessors by Leo XIII in the Decree of the Congregation of Indulgences of 11 (14) June, 1901).”

Thus, according to Pope Leo XIII, in order to gain the privilege one must:

1. **Be enrolled in the Brown Scapular Confraternity (This is a simple ceremony which can be performed by any priest).**
2. **Wear the Scapular**
3. **Observe chastity** according to one's state in life and
4. **Recite daily the Little Office** of Our Lady, or if one does not know how to recite it, abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

However, since Pope Leo XIII, the **commutation of the fourth condition** has become a common practice. According to a statement made by the Carmelite Fathers at the National Scapular Center, **every priest now has the right to invest the faithful in the Brown Scapular and to substitute the rosary in lieu of the [Little Office](#)**. Now, other spiritual exercises may be assigned by a confessor and substituted for the fourth requirement; most pray the rosary instead.

Regarding the Sabbatine Privilege

Saint Bernardine said that the Blessed Virgin always liberates Her special devotees from the torments of purgatory and **Saint Denis the Carthusian** and **Saint Peter Damian** wrote that on the feasts of the Assumption, Christmas and Easter: “Our Lady descends into purgatory and takes many souls from it.”

Saint John of the Cross rejoiced to die on Saturday because of this “Sabbatine” Privilege”. He died in 1591 saying:

“The Mother of God and of Carmel hastens to purgatory with grace, on Saturday, and delivers those souls who have worn Her Scapular. Blessed be such a Lady who wills that, on this day of Saturday, I shall depart from this life!”

Pope Pius XI said of the Sabbatine Privilege:

“Everyone should strive for it.”

The Sabbatine Privilege was granted by a pope and many popes have ratified it:

John XXII
Alexander V
Nicholas V
Sixtus, IV
Clement VII

Paul III
Saint Pius V
Clement VIII
Leo XI
Paul V
Urban VIII
Alexander VII
Benedict XIV
Pius VI
Pius X
Benedict XV
Pius X

Of the popes who have sanctioned the Privilege, note these words of St. Pius V (*Superna dispositione* . . . Feb. 8, 1565):

"With apostolic authority and by tenor of the present, we approve each of the privileges. (of the Carmelite Order) and also the Sabbatine."

However, simple as it may seem, "Our Lady revealed to the **Ven. Dominic of Jesus and Mary that:**

"Although many wear my Scapular, only a few fulfill the conditions for the Sabbatine Privilege."

Similarly, at her death the saintly Carmelite, **Frances of the Blessed Sacrament**, exclaimed:

"There are only a few who receive the Privilege because only a few fulfill the conditions"

Presumably the reason few people earn the especial privilege has to do with the observance of chastity according to a person's state of life. That is, a married man must remain loyal to his wife and spurn all others; unmarried couples are to abstain from intercourse and foreplay until marriage;

consecrated virgins are to remain virgins and priests and religious celibate. However, according to Our Lady of Fatima, **“more people go to hell for sins of the flesh than for any other reason.”** Likewise, more than one holy man or woman has quipped, **“if there were no no sixth commandment we would all be in heaven.”**

It is the practice of chastity that is detrimental to many.

It takes moral strength known as *natural fortitude* aided by many acts of self-denial to strengthen the will so that it may be assisted by the theological gift of fortitude to withstand temptations of the flesh. Fortitude is a virtue that must be attained by years of discipline and spiritual exercise so that a person might produce the resplendent fruit of chastity, one of the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit, fruits that are evidence of the Divine Life operating in the human soul.

Thus, Pope Pius XII emphasized the value of Scapular devotion:

*“There is no one who is not aware how greatly a love for the Blessed Virgin Mother of God contributes to the enlivening of the Catholic faith and to the raising of the moral standard. These effects are especially secured by means of those devotions which more than others are seen to **enlighten the mind** with celestial doctrine and to **excite souls to the practice of the Christian life**. In the first rank of the most favored of these devotions, that of the holy Carmelite Scapular must be placed—a devotion that has produced so many and such salutary fruits.*

Pope Leo XIII articulated the same theological verity regarding devotion to the “Most Blessed Virgin of Mt. Carmel **whence flow the richest and most wholesome fruits for the soul.**”

Consequently, the Church grants a Plenary Indulgence on the day a person is enrolled in the Scapular. To gain the indulgence, a person must go to confession and receive Holy

Communion within eight days and pray for the intention of the Holy Father.

The Final Word

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia:

“The Sabbatine privilege thus consists essentially in the early liberation from [purgatory](#), through the special [intercession](#) and petition of [Mary](#), which she graciously exercises in favour of her [devoted](#) servants preferentially – as we may assume – on the day [consecrated](#) to her, Saturday.