



LUCIA REMAINS HUMBLE NUN DESPITE FATIMA FAME

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(N.C.W.C. News Service)

COIMBRA, Portugal--The only survivor of the trio of little girls who witnessed the apparitions of Our Lady nearly a half century ago lives obscurely in the quiet and shadows of a Carmelite cloister.

She is Lucia dos Santos, now Mother Mary of the Immaculate Heart.

With the approach of the 50th anniversary of the apparitions at Fatima next year, Archbishop Ernesto Sena de Oliveira of Coimbra, where Mother Mary now lives, gave a press interview in which he sought to clarify speculations centering on the nun.

Concerning reports that Mother Mary will visit the Fatima shrine next year, even incognito, and that she will be transferred to a Carmelite convent abroad, the archbishop said it would be against her wishes and "the wishes of the Church that Lucia should be the center of attention at a pilgrimage whose principal motive is sacrifice and prayer, particularly for peace."

He stressed that the transfer of nuns is always possible, but said he had no reason to believe a shift for Mother Mary was contemplated.

With reference to queries as to why she entered the Coimbra Carmel rather than one at Fatima, the archbishop said he supposed it was because the Coimbra convent had room. Carmelite rules allow only 21 nuns to each community.

The Archbishop said his first contact with Mother Mary was in 1949 when he presided at her solemn profession as a Carmelite. Since then, he said, "I have only given this Religious the moral and spiritual assistance which I have been asked for and which her special circumstances call for."

With regard to her life as a Carmelite, the archbishop said that she has always followed the ordinary rule. He said he has been informed that she is exceptionally proficient at domestic work and in directing workmen about the convent. She also is a good embroideress and photographer and takes pictures of the other nuns for their families.

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The archbishop recalled that some years ago an American motion picture company offered a large sum for the right to record her voice. This proposal was refused, he said, and any similar proposals in the future would also be refused.

He said it would be reprehensible "to obtain funds through the medium of a soul who is dedicated to silence."

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