

MAXIMINA'S KEY



Maximina holds the key to this little story. Below, the door.

Very few, if any, of the houses in San Sebastian de Garabandal are in the same condition that they were 23 years ago when the apparitions first began. With the influx of visitors, the sale of property and the building of new homes, have come improved economic conditions so that now just about all the dwellings have been renovated in whole or at least in part. The house of Maximina, Conchita's aunt, is no exception but for one thing. The front door, now time and weather worn, is the same one that was there in 1961. Maximina, who now lives part of the year in Santander in a comfortable high-rise apartment with her two grown children, Mari Carmen and Pepe Luis, could certainly afford to replace the door but because of the following episode, she has chosen not to do so.

One day either in 1961 or 1962, Conchita went out to work in the

pasture lands higher up in the mountains. One hour later, Maximina left her house to join her, but as she closed the door behind her, the key stayed in the lock.

Several hours later, Maximina returned only to find that the key was gone. She searched high and low but to no avail.

For the next two days, Maximina was without the key until finally, on the third day she decided to present her problem to Conchita. It was a simple enough request to ask the Virgin the whereabouts of the missing key.

Shortly after that, Conchita had an apparition at night near Maximina's house. Bystanders could hear her speaking to the Virgin about the key but because the girls in ecstasy always spoke in low husky whispers, the people couldn't make out what she was saying. One person must have heard the visionary mention the pile of fire wood near the front door and went with a flashlight to take a look but found nothing. A few moments later Conchita, in ecstasy, walked up to the front of the house and with her head tilted sharply back and eyes facing upward, reached down into the pile of wood and pulled out the lost key. Then, after holding it up to the Virgin with the crucifix she had in the other hand, and still facing upward, she placed the key in one deft motion squarely into the lock in the door.

Maximina now had her key back right in the place where she had left it—and much more. "You notice that my door is very old," said Maximina recently, "but because of this I still have it." And the key also. As happened so often at Garabandal, Our Lady had turned simple, ordinary objects into very precious souvenirs. □



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