Apparition of the Virgin Mary in Arcos de Valdevez

Portugal, 1220

The construction of the Shrine of Our Lady of Peneda (Nossa Senhora da Peneda), in Arcos de Valdevez, parish of Gouveia, was launched most likely toward the end of the 14th century, as indicated in the inscription present on one of the entrance staircases. It is thought that this place had previously been a little sanctuary in memory of the apparition of Our Lady, and was then substituted by the Shrine following the increased devotion to the Virgin.

An element of prominence for this place of reverence is the Staircase of the Virgins, earlier cited, is decorated with statues that represent Faith, Hope, Charity, and Glory, which dates back to 1854. Other important elements are: the tomb of the evangelists, the great field, a staircase almost 30 meters long, and 20 chapels portraying scenes from the life of Christ. The feast of Our Lady of Peneda is celebrated annually and last nine days, from the 31st of August to the 8th of September.

History narrates that on the 5th of August in 1220, Our Lady of Peneda appeared, in the form of a white dove, to a little girl who was guarding a herd of goats. The dove told her to ask the people of Gouveia to build a sanctuary in that spot. The young shepherdess told her parents what had happened to her, but they did not believe her. The next day, while she was again in the same place with her herd of goats, the Lady appeared to her once again, but this time with the human features of the image seen today. On this occasion, the Virgin asked the young girl to go to Rousos and to ask the people of the town to bring to her a woman by the name of Domingos Gregório, who was a paralytic for the past eighteen years. The woman healed as soon as she approached the image.