

Spanish swimmer dedicates Olympic medals to Virgin Mary



Spanish swimmer Mireia Belmonte offered her two silver medals from the London 2012 Olympic Games to Our Lady of Monserrat in Barcelona.

The 21-year-old – who won silver in the 800 meter free-style and the 200 meter butterfly – posed for a picture before the image of Our Lady of Monserrat and posted the photo on her Twitter account, which has grown from 7,000 followers to 56,000.

In an Aug. 4 press conference, Belmonte, the only Spanish swimmer to win two medals in London, said both were of “equal value” to her.

“One cost a little bit more effort than the other because it was a longer race,” she recalled. “But all of my rivals were very tough and before it starts you don’t know what is going to happen because everyone is very strong.”

Belmonte trains almost nine hours a day and said she plans to work hard to prepare for the world championships next year.

“I have never participated in such an important international competition here at home, and plus my family will be able to be there, since this time they couldn’t make it,” she added.

The swimmer was born in Badalona, Spain, in 1990. She began swimming at the age of four at the recommendation of doctors to help correct her sclerosis.

In 2007 she became the world champion in 400 meter free-style and the 400 meter medley, and she also won both races in the European Juniors Championship.

Belmonte told Europa Press she was not surprised by U.S. swimmer Katie Ledecky's gold medal victory in the 800-meter free-style, as American swimmers are more accustomed to competing before large crowds and under greater pressure.

Fifteen-year-old Ledecky also witnessed to her faith at the Olympics, saying she prays the Hail Mary before each race.

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