

If We Do Not Change...

Garabandal, in its simplest terms, is the story of a faithful and forgiving God reaching out to His bewildered and suffering children to help them, not to punish them. The conditional chastisement of Garabandal must never be allowed to overshadow the main reason for God's intervention at that Spanish mountain village. That reason is love. This love reaches its peak in forgiveness, the love which Christ revealed on the cross.

A Call to Repentance

Garabandal is a call to repentance by a merciful and forgiving God. Refusal to listen to that call and accept God's forgiveness will force God's justice into action through the chastisement. But in the chastisement of Garabandal, as in all of God's punishments, justice and love embrace. The chastisement will be used only with extreme reluctance and when the cup of iniquity is flowing over on all sides. If eventually God is forced to send the chastisement, it will be transfused with love and used to convert, as well as to satisfy, the demands of justice.

That Garabandal is essentially a manifestation of God's love, His merciful and healing love, can be seen through a very special happening—the promise made by Our Lady at the last apparition, November 13, 1965, that her son, Jesus, would perform prodigies through the objects which she kissed. She had told Conchita earlier that these kissed religious objects "have great importance." They are important because the favors granted through their use with faith (basically they are sacramentals, like scapulars, Lourdes water, etc.) are manifestations of God's love. These favors draw us to the God of love Who bestows them upon us. In this regard, it is interesting to note that during the November 13 apparition, Our Lady said to Conchita: "I have not come for your sake alone. I have come for all my children, so that I may draw them closer to our Hearts"

(her heart and that of her son, Jesus). This last sentence sums up Garabandal.

The chastisement was briefly mentioned by Conchita in the *Diary*. She describes it as something "very, very great, in keeping with what we deserve." But she also advises us that "if the world changes," it can be "averted."

These two short statements give us all the essential information we need concerning this important event. It is basically conditional. It can be avoided, if we change our hearts and come back to God, if "we are good." It is the Old Testament all over again. It is Fatima all over again. It is God in His loving mercy admonishing us to come back to Him and advising us that if we do not He will visit His wrath upon us. Our future is in our own hands. This is the important thing to remember. We can avoid the chastisement if we become a holy people.

In a note given to Francisco Sanchez-Ventura, author of *The Apparitions of Garabandal*, Conchita elaborates on what she said in the *Diary*, emphasizing the terrifying nature of the chastisement.

The chastisement is conditional and depends on whether or not mankind heeds the messages of the Blessed Virgin and the miracle. If it should take place, I know what it will consist of because the Blessed Virgin told me about it, but I am not permitted to say what it is. Moreover, I have seen the chastisement. I can assure you that if it comes, it is worse than being enveloped in fire, worse than having fire above and beneath you. I do not know how much time will elapse between the miracle and the chastisement.

On September 14, 1965, in answer to a question, Conchita stressed again the terrifying nature of the chastisement: "If we do not change, the chastisement will be terrible, in keeping with what we deserve (that is, our

sinfulness) . . . When I saw it I was terrified, even though I was seeing the Blessed Virgin (at the same time)."

The blood-curdling screams of the girls during their vision of the chastisement on two successive nights in 1962 was the dramatic means that God used to let us know what is in store for us if we do not heed Mary and become a holy people.

A Loving Warning

But, we must insist again, all of this is essentially a loving warning, not a threat or ultimatum. God's purpose is not to terrorize us into submission. Fear is good and leads to conversion. Terror paralyzes and saps our spiritual energy. Terror destroys our peace of mind and heart, which are essential to prayer and union with God. Fear leads to conversion. Terror leads to despair.

The devil would like nothing better than to see us overemphasize the chastisement. This would distract us from the positive and constructive parts of the Garabandal message; namely, prayer and sacrifice, the rosary and the scapular, frequent reception of Holy Communion and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. If we stress and live the positive elements of the message, we shall have nothing to fear from the chastisement.

In a report describing the final apparition of Garabandal (November 13, 1965), Conchita made this statement concerning the purpose of the chastisement: "Prior to this, the Blessed Virgin had told me that Jesus is not going to send the chastisement to discourage us, but to help us and to remind us for not heeding Him." □

If we do the things that are good and follow the commandments of God, then the chastisement will not come. All that the Virgin wants is that we love Jesus very much."

JACINTA MOYNIHAN, MARCH 27, 1979

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