



Father Marichalar Speaks

After a long period of silence, the former pastor of Garabandal during the time of the apparitions, gives his first public testimony about the events.

Translation by Maria Frobreich

ON JUNE 15, 1976 in Garabandal, Spain, NEEDLES was privileged to be granted an interview with Father Valentin Marichalar, pastor of San Sebastian Church in Garabandal during the apparitions of 1961 to 1965. This is the first public interview given by Father as he was under strict censure for many years and unable to discuss the events with anyone. His willingness to answer questions shows a new openness on the part of the Bishop of Santander (under whose jurisdiction Garabandal lies) towards the events which took place in this Spanish village.

Being able to ask questions of Fr. Marichalar has great significance for Garabandalists since he is one of the most important witnesses to the Garabandal apparitions. Father was a knowledgeable observer, an impartial witness and an astute examiner who sought the truth and recorded the daily incidents. He formulated his judgment from his knowledge of theology, his observations of the happenings and his familiarity with the seers and the people of Garabandal.

Don Valentin Marichalar made several significant statements about his method of questioning the girls, his daily dispatches to his Bishop and about the commission assigned to the investigation and interrogation of the seers and witnesses. Although he was not interrogated by the Bishop or by the commission, he witnessed some of their investigations and feels strongly that it was a job the commission wished to finish as quickly as possible.

Father Valentin details the proofs Our Lady gave in answer to his request to confirm the authenticity of the apparitions. He also supplied further insight into the spirituality of the girls and the villagers, and mentions other incidences that happened during the apparitions that are not related in the Garabandal books. Although Father did not

witness the miracle of the Host, he relates the testimony of two other priests who did. Significant also, is his reason that the warning and miracle must happen to "finish, complete the affair" and "seal" Garabandal as were the other great Marian apparitions of Lourdes and Fatima.

The Seers and Villagers

Don Valentin's testimony establishes his long acquaintance with the people of the village and the girls themselves. He explains how through his observation and questioning he tried to detect any fraud or radical changes in the girls' spirituality and personalities. One of his answers clearly defends the fact that the first incident—the apparition of the angel—was not a hallucination brought on by a story about St. Michael.

Q. *Were you the rector of Cosio and Garabandal before the apparitions?*

A. Yes, in 1942 I was made rector of both parishes—*de las dos parroquias*. That was twenty years before the apparitions. As a priest I baptized all the girls and gave them their first communion. I married the parents of Lolita (Mari Loli Mazon). I had already been here fifteen years when all these events took place. The journey here (from Cosio) was very difficult.

Q. *Before the apparitions did you teach the children their religion?*

A. Yes, catechism. I would give it twice a week. One day, it was the month of June, I was talking about the Sacred Heart of Jesus and spoke about the twelve promises of the Sacred Heart. I omitted two or three, for I couldn't remember all of them and said, "... the rest next Sunday." Then to a

boy who was standing there I asked, "Have you got a guardian angel?" "I don't know what a guardian angel is," answered the boy. Then I explained. The following Sunday the angel appeared to the girls. So people say that it was because I talked about the guardian angel during catechism that the children said they saw an angel. But that is not the reason, for I spoke about the Sacred Heart of Jesus all the time. Of the guardian angel, I only said those words and of the Sacred Heart I had been speaking all morning. Had it been due to the catechism, the Sacred Heart would have appeared, because I had spoken very much of the Sacred Heart and very little of the guardian angel.

Q. *After the first apparition, what did the visionaries report to you?*

A. The girls told me they had heard something like a sound and a strong wind, but on that day it was not windy. They also saw a light. They didn't see anything else the first day. Things kept this way two or three days in a row and the third day they saw the angel very clearly. In the first apparition they didn't see the angel, they only saw a brightness, a light and wind. The angel didn't speak until the third day.

Q. *During the apparitions, what measures did you take when you questioned the girls?*

A. I would take the girls, after the apparition one at a time to the sacristy. I would ask for details of how they had seen the Virgin, each one would describe the same. I tried to confuse them by saying, "Well, no! The other girl told me that she had seen the Child's feet with little shoes." I would do it to see if they would contradict each other, but I could never find contradictions in them; they would always describe the garments and everything the same. I would send a dispatch to the Bishop every day about all that took place. There are books, some folios of six books this high (Father raised his hand about twelve inches from the table) with the dispatches that I have sent. These are in the Bishop's office.

Q. *Do you have copies of these dispatches?*

A. Yes, I have.

Q. *During the apparitions did you ever see the girls cross, in mid-air, the small bridge which goes over the stream in front of the church?*

A. Yes, I saw them cross the bridge very rapidly—*muy rapido*—in the air no, that I didn't see. They were moving very rapidly! (ED. NOTE: The emphasis in this sentence is to make it understood that the movement of the girls was extraordinarily fast. There is no doubt about this due to the excitement in Fr. Valentin's voice when he says *muy rapido*. It may be that he could not see the girls' feet to notice any levitation due to the crowds surrounding them.)

Q. *Before the apparitions, as the pastor of Garabandal, had you noticed if the girls were better than the other girls of the village?*

A. Before, they were all the same, just as the other girls.

Q. *During the apparitions did you notice whether or not they made any spiritual progress?*

A. In the beginning, the first year, very much. Afterwards, when all the people came it changed a bit. Once the avalanche of people subsided they started to improve again.

Q. *When the girls turned eighteen or nineteen years old, were they more spiritual than the other girls of the village?*

A. There wasn't much difference, almost the same, because all the girls in the village were very good.

Signs of Proof

Father Valentin, like many of the witnesses to the Garabandal apparitions, requested Our Lady to give some sign of proof to confirm the authenticity of the apparitions. In many cases, as in Father's, it involved the kissing of the crucifix held by one of the seers. Father details two incidents he believes to be signs given by Our Lady.

Q. *Did you ever ask the Blessed Virgin to give you a sign as proof?*

A. Yes. The Virgin gave it to me herself one day at 1 A.M. I was quite tired and said to myself, "Well, let the Virgin clarify this for me. I can't go on any longer." I asked that if all this be true to have the children come to me, this very night, while I was asleep to wake me up and to give me the crucifix to kiss. After this I went to bed thinking, "Let us see how this is clarified." In the middle of the night, at 4 A.M., Mari Loli, in ecstasy, accompanied by the writer Sanchez Ventura and a small group of people, knocked at my bedroom door. When I opened it she turned her face to me, all smiles and, still in ecstasy, extended the crucifix she held for me to kiss. This was a very clear sign for me. Why did the girl go to that house, even to my bedroom, not knowing I was staying there? Clearly this was very difficult because when I returned from the town to which I was transferred, I had arrived three days before and Mari Loli did not know the family I was staying with nor the house I was in. She believed I was staying at my previous address. Then too, how did she know which room I was in since the hall had four doors all identical? I was in the third one, the one she knocked on. How did she know I was in there?

Q. *Have you had any other proof?*

A. Proof, yes. Once I was being sent from Garabandal to another town as sort of a punishment. I said to myself, "Well, now what is going to happen, I won't be here?" I was worried. On the day I was leaving, the girls stated that until such and such a date there will be no more apparitions, something like two months. I replied, "Well, if I can't come back here, I won't be able to see it, let's see what happens." Then I left. Later, I was sent back to Garabandal on the exact date that the girls announced the apparitions would reoccur.

The Commission

Don Valentin Marichalar is one of the most important witnesses to the Garabandal phenomenon. Yet he has never been questioned by the Bishop of Santander nor the commission set up to investigate the apparitions. Father was asked to make a statement about the "supernaturalness" of the events. In this interview he explains why he would not sign a statement declaring it 100 percent supernatural at the time. As for the commission, he feels the examiners were only anxious to finish with Garabandal, one way or the other.

Q. *Did you ever have doubts about the events?*

A. No doubt whatsoever. What I am not quite certain about is the supernaturalness of it, but doubts of the events, none whatsoever. About the supernaturalness, I cannot risk saying categorically that yes, it is supernatural. In other words, eighty percent yes, but to all I cannot bind myself as yet. As I wasn't always here I couldn't supervise everything. Therefore

I can't say with absolute certainty that it is supernatural, you understand? But doubts, none. I do not doubt.

(ED. NOTE: The declaration of supernaturalness of such events does not lie in the hands of the local pastor, but in the hands of the local ordinary—the Bishop of Santander. Therefore, Father would not say he was 100 percent certain because if he did so, it might be interpreted that he was speaking for the Bishop.)

Q. *Were you ever interrogated by the Bishop at the time of the apparitions, or by the commission?*

A. I was never interrogated by the Bishop. He did ask once for a statement of whether it was supernatural or from the devil. As I have said, he wanted me to sign a statement and I said I couldn't sign anything yet, whether it was one thing or the other. I said I didn't know as yet. On another



Fr. Marichalar (arrow) was one of the primary witnesses to the apparitions.

occasion the commission tried to give me a vacation. They suggested, "So that the people know we are not getting rid of you, make a request by letter and we will grant you the vacation." I answered, "Look, if you send me I will go, but I am not asking." It seemed as though they wanted to deceive me, I don't know. I had very much respect for the Bishop but when I would say "no" it was as though a force would tell me "say no," and I would say "No!" Do you understand?

Q. *Did you find any deficiency in the way the commission handled matters?*

A. Yes. Nothing was handled right. A psychiatrist from Madrid came once to examine the girls. He arrived at 10 P.M. and the girls were already in bed. He said to me, "Look, I was forced to come here." I questioned, "You want to see the girls although they are in bed?" Well, I think he saw one, but then he wrote down in his report that he had seen all of them, and this was a lie. I do not remember his name. He is a professor in psychiatry.

Q. *Conchita states that during the inquiries she was never asked to take an oath on the Bible, did you know about this?*

A. That is what she told me, no oath at all, but they tried in every way to trick her. They tried for hours to make her say what she wouldn't say and although the girl was very smart the Bishop and those surrounding her were smarter than she. There were times when they succeeded in making her deny things. By means of deceit they would force her to say things she was not thinking of saying.

Q. *Did you ever take an oath?*

A. Never. We should understand that the commission was doing all that was possible to end these things, by licit or illicit means. In any manner, they wanted to come to a close with the apparitions and to terminate with these things because they didn't believe them.

Q. *Why was the Bishop's commission so much against the apparitions and why did they want to suppress them?*

A. For the same old reason, work needed to be done and they wanted to avoid work.

Q. *Didn't they have a sensitivity for souls or the Blessed Virgin's wishes?*

A. No. Even then the message of the Virgin was being fulfilled. It was a sort of way of accomplishing the prophecy according to which many bishops and priests go on the way of perdition.

The Miracle of the Host, the Message, Warning and Miracle

We feel questions on the Miracle of the Host should necessarily be asked of everyone so as to get further penetration into the incident and build up solid arguments for its authenticity. Father did not witness the miracle but reports the testimony of two other reliable observers. Other necessary questions are those on the message of Our Lady, the warning and the miracle. Father's answers to these questions are very thought-provoking.

Q. *Did you see the Miracle of the Host?*

A. No, I didn't see it. That night, because it was somewhat late and I was tired, I went to bed. But eight priests were present, one was a Jesuit and another was a priest from the diocese. I said to them, "Watch well to see what happens." Shortly after I went to bed they called on me to report, "It has happened" and they had witnessed it. The miracle transpired just as the girl had said it would on that day. It occurred at a quarter to one in the morning, but as the clock was one hour ahead, officially by the sun it was the same day that she had predicted.

Q. *How did the news of the Miracle of the Host affect you?*

A. I was very much impressed, very much so.

Q. *What part of the message impressed you the most?*

A. The most important part for me is that the girls, at that time, used to have a concept of every priest as though he were a saint. And for the girls to say, in the message I heard, "That the Church is on the wrong road, that priests, oh! and bishops, oh! and also cardinals," for me that was decisive, because with all the respect the girls had for priests it was impossible that they would make this up. In other words, they believed a priest could not sin freely.

Q. *In your opinion, how is it that the cardinals, bishops and priests, according to the message, are on their way to perdition?*

A. It is very clear, for they are doing all the contrary things. They are almost denying the Eucharist, the virginity of the Virgin and the holiness of the Pope. They are denying all this.

Q. *Do you think the prophecy of the cardinals, bishops and priests being on the road to perdition has been fulfilled?*

A. Yes, yes, it has been fulfilled to the letter. It was impossible for the girls to know about it, because at that time not even I knew such conditions existed.

Q. *Have the events of Garabandal helped you to be a better priest?*

A. Certainly!

Q. *Are you anxious for the warning and miracle?*

A. I wish for them certainly, because these things must have a seal, that is, the Virgin will not leave things up in the air. She must give something to seal it with. She must finish, complete the affair.

Various Other Incidents

From this interview NEEDLES learned about other incidents that took place during the apparitions not recorded in any book. Also, since Father Valentin knew Father Luis Andreu and spoke to him before he died, Father was able to give us further discernment into his personality.

Q. *Do you know of any interesting event that took place during the time of the apparitions and is not related in any of the books on Garabandal?*

A. Yes. There are many small details, but I do not know if they are in the books or not. For example, during one apparition the children presented to the Blessed Virgin a crucifix made of mother of pearl. The girls were heard saying "Oh! it's a crucifix of Burgos." And in fact it was. It was a precise representation of a crucifix made of mother of pearl that is venerated in Burgos. How could the girls know? Even I didn't know such a crucifix existed. Another day, when Conchita was in ecstasy I heard her say, "Oh! so there are two priests here, yes, Don Valentin and another one." I looked in back of me, but I couldn't see any priest. When the apparition ended, a man dressed as a layman knocked at my door to tell me he was a priest. The girl had said there were two priests. How could she know the other one as he was dressed as a layman?

Once a Dominican priest came dressed as a layman and he was walking about the village. He entered Conchita's house where she was in ecstasy. He had a missionary's crucifix on him. He pulled it over his head to offer it to Conchita for the Virgin to kiss. In ecstasy Conchita asked him, "How is it that you come dressed as such, since you look so much better dressed in white?"

Another time a priest came in a chartered bus from Oviedo. He came because the people wanted him to come. He came jokingly and was amused. Then one of the girls started to offer the crucifix for everyone to kiss. He later told me he thought to himself, "If all this is supernatural, let the girl return to her normal state when she reaches me." When she came to him she returned to her natural state. He withdrew aside and began to weep. Then the people came to him and started to kid him, "Weren't you in a joking mood? Why are you crying?" He answered, "Please let me be, I am very serious." There are thousands of cases such as these.

Q. *It is said that you knew Father Luis Andreu, the priest who saw in preview, the great miracle to come. Can you tell us what he said to you on the day he saw the great miracle and then died?*

A. Yes. Father Luis came many times. He would never say a word. He would come, observe the events, take notes and leave. He never said anything until the last day. On the last day (August 8, 1961) I had to go on a journey to say farewell to a niece of mine who was a nun. When Fr. Luis arrived in Cosio I told him, "Here is the key to San Sebastian

where you can say Mass. I won't be there and in the evening you can stay there." He returned to Cosio at midnight. At the plaza in Cosio he told me, "This has been for me a day of doubtless proof—*una prueba ciertisima*." Then he left to go to Renosa and died along the way. These were his last words to me. It was a very surprising thing because he never spoke a word before.

At the conclusion of the interview we asked Father:

Q. *Is there anything you would like to say to the promoters of the message of Garabandal?*

A. The message should be spread throughout the world. Of course what is more important, is to fulfill it. We gain nothing by sending the message to the world, if no one fulfills it.

NEEDLES expresses sincere thanks to Don Valentin Marichalar for the privilege of the interview. By discussing Father's role in the Garabandal events, NEEDLES has gained hitherto unpublished insights into this great Marian apparition. Father consented to answer further questions for our staff and readers at a future date. He is most desirous to add his knowledge to the store of information about Garabandal as this timely apparition moves toward fulfillment. ●

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