

**She
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in
haste
to the**

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book two



Exurgens autem Maria in diebus illis
abiit in montana cum festinatione.

—LATIN, VULGATE OF ST. JEROME

Arising
in those days,
Mary went
in haste
to the mountain

LUKE 1:39

Publishers Note

In obedience to the decrees of Urban VIII of March 3, 1625 and June 16, 1631 and to other similar pontifical legislation, the publishers declare that what is written here does not attempt to anticipate in any way the decisions of the supreme ecclesiastical authority of the Roman Catholic Church on this matter.

What is printed here is mainly historical: the actual facts that occurred and the testimony of the witnesses who observed those facts. The opinions given by the author are not meant in anyway to presuppose the final judgment of the supreme ecclesiastical hierarchy, which at the time of this publication had made no definite stand either for or against the authenticity of the events here described.

The publishers express their devotion and loyalty to the Supreme Magisterium of the Church, and their submission and obedience to all its pronouncements in matters of faith and morals.

The things written in this trilogy, which are far beyond human comprehension and ability, have been entrusted to the powerful hands of St. Joseph, looking to his strong arm for protection against error.

RUBEN GARCIA DE PESQUERA S.F.M.

**SHE WENT
IN HASTE
TO THE
MOUNTAIN**

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY GERARD SUELL & OTTO MILLER

Acknowledgments

Publication of this book is due to the assistance of many people. All contributions cannot be remembered here, but all of them, even if only a cup of cold water, will be remembered in heaven.

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Gratitude is also expressed to the visionaries for the time they spent with us, and especially to Conchita, without whom help the book would never have been started.

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THE
EVENTS
OF
CARABANDAL

Book Two

The Photographs

The pictures placed at the start of each chapter were made from official newsfilm of the ecstasies taken by the Spanish government agency NO-DO.

As there were over 2,000 ecstasies and thousands of pictures taken, it was not possible to accurately correlate the pictures with the events described. Typical illustrations were used in what appeared to be appropriate places.

St. Joseph Publications needs additional photographs of the ecstasies for subsequent editions of this book. Anyone who can help the publishers by supplying these pictures would be doing a service for the apparitions.

We state here that we have not found any reason for ecclesiastical censure with regard to condemning either the doctrine or the spiritual recommendations that have been promulgated because of the events of Garabandal in so far as they are directed to faithful Christians. On the contrary, they contain exhortations to prayer and sacrifice, to Eucharistic worship, to devotion to Our Lady under traditional praiseworthy forms, and to the holy fear of God offended by our sins. They simply repeat ordinary Church doctrine in these matters. We recognize the good faith and the religious fervor of the persons who go up to San Sebastián de Garabandal, and who merit the greatest respect.

Santander, July 8, 1965

Eugenio,
Apostolic Bishop,
Administrator of Santander

Dedicated to

ST. JOSEPH

PATRON

OF THE

DYING



chapter

one

After Great Hopes Great Disillusions

In the far east of Asturias, at the edge of the territory of Santander in which San Sebastián de Garabandal lies, the high mountain of Penamellera looks down upon gorgeous countryside. The land here is divided into two sections, or *concejos* as they are called locally: Lower Penamellera at the junction of the Deva and Cares Rivers, and Upper Penamellera, upstream from the Cares River, where the main city is Alles.

Near Alles can be found Ruenes, with its terrain of prairies and woods covering the mountainsides. On this September of 1961, several travelers were spending a pleasant vacation there with their relatives from the city. The local people were talking often about the things that were said to be occurring in the little mountain village of San Sebastián de Garabandal . . . Who could resist the temptation to go up to the site of the frequently discussed events? Certainly not these travelers who took advantage of their return trip to Madrid; the detour of a few kilometers was no inconvenience.

Although they were not aware of it, the situation at the time indicated something would happen on their visit. It was the period of the year during which occurred the greatest concentration of Marian feastdays: September 8th, Our Lady of Covadonga, a holy day of obligation in Asturias; September 9th, a local feastday of the *Virgin del Monte* in her sanctuary in the district of Santa Maria; September 10th, a Sunday celebrating the octave or remembrance of the feastdays in the previous week; September 12th, the Holy Name of Mary; September 15th, the day dedicated to her Seven Sorrows . . . Truly a good time to come to the town that could be called the Virgin's village!

So then in those days under a bright sun, there came to Garabandal Adriano Peon, a Cuban originally from Asturias, Carmen Pilart, a seaman from Roncal, and Elena Cossío Nevares, whose family lived in Ruenes; the latter informed me:

«Nine years have passed; but everything from that day has remained in my memory as if it had been yesterday.»

A little while after they had stopped in front of Ceferino's home, at 1 o'clock in the afternoon, they saw his daughter Loli come out of the house **«marvelously transfigured.»** Conchita and Jacinta came from their own homes, transfigured in the same way. They joined together at the

beginning of the street leading toward the church, and they began the march . . .

«As they were going, we were able to hear one of them very clearly, No! No! How terrible! How terrible! This struck us very much, and the look of fear on the girl's face was such that it couldn't be forgotten; but none of us could understand what it meant.

A priest opened a way by pushing through those who followed the girls and stood in front of them with his arms extended . . . I don't know why he did this; perhaps he was seeking a sign. The girls, who couldn't see him — they held their heads tilted upwards so much and so fixed on the vision in the sky — went around him without pushing him, and continued onwards, leaving him in the middle.

Then we were in the church a long time, with a series of details that were really exciting . . . On going out, the girls began an ecstatic march. Ceferino then kept behind them to protect them.

On one street we were able to see them almost lying down on the ground, in an unusual position; their backs and feet were raised up from the ground which was only slightly touching the end of their vertebral columns. Their arms were extended in a gesture of prayer, and their eyes were looking upwards without blinking.⁽¹⁾ I don't know what the others felt; I was overwhelmed, trembling before this mystery that seemed to be touching me.»

Later came one of those superfast marches to the Pines . . . The spectators followed them as well as they could.

«You should have seen them underneath the trees! Standing with their faces completely turned upwards, their arms extended in a cross, and with their hands turned up . . . It was the most beautiful picture that I have seen of a soul in a complete attitude of prayer.

1. Elena Cossío adds a detail, perhaps a little realistic, but which serves nonetheless to demonstrate to what point the visionaries were outside themselves, completely absorbed in what they were seeing:

«Some flies, so annoying in the month of September, flew about their faces, and sometimes rested right in their eyes, without the slightest reflex of contraction or blinking that could be noticed in the girls.»



"They began—but backwards—the most difficult descent."

After a while, in the same position, they began — but backwards — the most difficult descent from the Pines . . . They launched themselves backwards, like backing down the stairs of a choir loft, or stepping back from a communion rail. The people slipped, stumbled, fell down; the girls were as if someone were holding them in his hands.⁽²⁾

In the village square they separated, and without going out of ecstasy, each one headed for her home. In front of her house, we saw Loli come out of the trance with the most charming smile.»

There were about 50 spectators on that day,

2. Father de la Riva says in his *Memorias*, speaking of the visionaries' descent from the Pines:

«Who can argue about this *abnormal* and perfectly real fact which is able to be tested and should be tested? If an opponent in good faith exists, I would propose for him to attempt 'the exercise' on the location, in the same way, under the same conditions, and especially in the dark night, in the snow, on the ice. And not only one time, but almost every day as at the time of the apparitions.»

among whom were the parents of the girl born without eyes previously mentioned in this book. We can imagine the comments . . . Some were thrilled, and everyone was stunned. The Cuban, a believer but not a practitioner, who had come with skepticism, kept repeating over and over, «*This is amazing. Only God could do this.*»

«I remember that among those in Garabandal on that day was a Spaniard living in Mexico, who was said to be very rich, a millionaire. He did not believe in anything, but in the face of what he had just seen, he couldn't get over his amazement:

— *This is truly astounding. I will give part of my fortune, or all of it, to whoever is able to do in front of me what I have seen in the girls . . . That way I would be able to remain at peace with the certainty I had before that there is nothing up above us.*»

This statement furnishes material for reflection and comment . . .



"He will see on October 18th."

Why do not those who say so certainly, even *officially*, that these affairs have a natural explanation, take advantage of the Mexican's offer?

Something Great Is On Its Way . . .

The marvels of Garabandal which were occurring daily,⁽³⁾ and which seemed to be acquiring a

3. The extraordinary phenomena were coming so regularly each day that in the history of Garabandal October 6th is listed as an exceptional day because on that day nothing happened. And October 8th also was exceptional, because only Jacinta, at midnight and in her home, had an apparition.

October 8th, Sunday, Loli stayed in bed because of a bad cold, and Conchita and Mari Cruz took advantage of a car to go down to Cossío. When they returned, the time for the rosary in the church had passed. The trip down to the neighboring village must not have been completely justified, since it seems that Conchita later went in search of Jacinta to request her, if she would see the Virgin, not to forget to ask pardon in her name for having missed the rosary.

This is a matter for reflection and meditation by anyone who would miss a holy service, especially Sunday Mass, for whatever pretext or without a pretext.

rhythm *in crescendo*, were holding an ever increasing number of people in suspense.

Besides, special things were happening . . .

On the 6th of September Fr. Valentín, by means of Conchita in the normal state, proposed several questions to Loli in ecstasy. Later Conchita passed mentally this double question to her companion:

— Father Valentín can only say, *I don't know, I don't know what this is . . .*

Response (learned later): A broad and ben-
evolent smile from the Blessed Virgin.

— Father Valentín also says, *What does the Virgin want with all this?*

Response: ***He will see on October 18th.***

What was going to happen on the approaching day of October 18th? The girls were talking of a secret that could not be revealed until that day . . . They spoke of a message that had to be made public on that date.

And yet the most interesting part was occurring between them and the mysterious persons in their apparitions. From time to time a statement escaped that stirred up the people's imagination and anticipation. For example, their rare illusions to a



“How beautiful is the miracle!”

future miracle that would convince everyone . . .

«How beautiful is the miracle!» — Conchita was heard to say in an ecstasy on September 3rd — **«How I would like you to perform it soon! Why haven't you done it already? Do it, even if it would be only for those who believe . . . For those who don't believe, it doesn't matter.»**⁽⁴⁾

Who would not figure that October 18th, so heralded in the mysterious designs of Garabandal, would be truly a spectacular day?

However, there were warnings from the girls that should have put some brake on this unwarranted expectation.

4. According to the notes of Father Valentín, on the night of September 3rd and 4th, Jacinta, Loli and Conchita had a spectacular ecstasy, very moving and very prolonged. Until 3 o'clock in the morning, the three girls were lying down in front of the door of the church, forming a group of singular devotion and beauty. It was then when Conchita was heard to say these words about the miracle.

In Book One we saw that Plácido Ruiloba's father-in-law made a summer visit to Garabandal.

«The day after» — testified Mr. Ruiloba — **«my father-in-law together with two of my children met Mari Loli. And being very excited by what he had seen on the previous day, he said goodbye to the girl like this, Until October 18th. That day I'll return, since I think there's going to be a miracle and many people will come.**

— **Please!** — replied Loli emphatically — **Please! Don't bother to come. No miracle is going to happen. At least we haven't predicted one. The only thing that we have said is that we are going to give a message, and you can find out about this in Santander, without the necessity of traveling. Listen well, I beg you. We never predicted a miracle.»**

In spite of remarks like this, the people continued in their hopes, confusing their own desires and ideas with what actually was going to happen.

Thus October was going to be the month of the great day. But October already had a certain grandeur. Its clear Marian significance, as the month of the rosary, ranked it with May, the month of flowers and the other month of Mary, and distinguished it religiously among the months of the year.

Because of this, during this era at Garabandal, with the debut of October, prayer seemed to be imbued with new fervor; and crowns and bouquets of spiritual roses,⁽⁵⁾ blossoming on the lips of children, were being offered to the Virgin more than ever. At the time all could say:

**The Queen is here!
For every Hail Mary
Our lips pronounce with love,
A smile is sent to heaven.**

With the first Saturday of the month, October 7th, came the liturgical feastday of the Most Holy Rosary, and there were thus Marian reasons why on that day there should be a great *vigil* in Garabandal.

The Church, in her official liturgical prayer on that feastday, honored the Virgin Mother with exceptional beauty:

**Who is this beautiful as a dove, like a rose
planted by the brooks of water?**

It is the mighty Virgin, like the tower of David, a thousand shields hang upon it, all the armor of valiant men.

**Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you,
blessed are you among women.**

**The Lord has blessed you by His power, because
by you He has brought our enemies to naught.**

**The daughters of Sion saw her adorned with the
flowers of roses, and declared her most blessed⁽⁶⁾**

Neither the girls nor the people in Garabandal could celebrate the feast of the *Blessed among Women* like this; but they celebrated it the best that they could according to their knowledge and understanding. And how well it came off! The rosary of that first Saturday of October 7th was certainly the most beautiful of the year. It had everything that there could be in a prayer to make

it perfect: vocal prayers (measured and rhythmical — we know how the children prayed in ecstasy!) and meditation on the mysteries . . . songs of prayer sung more from the heart than the lips. The rosary of the feastday lasted two and a quarter hours. But no one felt the length to be burdensome; and certainly not the girls who were enraptured in heavenly contemplation.

While all this poor but deeply felt homage of love and devotion rose up to her, the ancient and prophetic words of the *Creator of the Universe* had to resound with new force in her Heart:

**Let your dwelling be in Jacob,
And your inheritance in Israel,
And take root in my elect.⁽⁷⁾**

Had she not come to Garabandal for no other reason than to advance this program? A new Israel of God⁽⁸⁾ was awaiting her coming in order to gather around her and trust in her aid.

I do not know how that unique rosary of October 7th, 1961 ended; but I think that there must have been a devout priest there to lead in prayer all the people in Mary's village and present the rosary finally to God with the official prayer of the feastday.

Oh God, whose only begotten son, by His life, death and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life; grant, we beseech you, that meditating on these mysteries of the most holy rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise.

On October 7th, the new arrivals celebrated the Marian feastday by going with the village people to the evening rosary in the church. On leaving the church the girls went into ecstasy, and Doctor Ortiz was once again impressed by the phenomena in which **«they gave the impression of walking slowly, although whoever accompanied them had to go in a hurry, if not in a forced march, if he wanted to follow them.»**

Doctor Ortiz noted three details that attracted his attention:

5. *Rosary* come from the word *rosa* and means etymologically a *bouquet of roses*. The roses are the Hail Marys.

6. Antiphon from the first Vespers of the feastday.

7. Words from the book of Ecclesiasticus (24: 11) that the Church applies repeatedly to the Virgin.

8. St. Paul in his epistle to the Galatians contrasts the *Israel of God* with the Israel by race.



“a marvelous sculptural design with such an expression of happiness”

— The visionaries, in a sitting position, with their legs stretched out in front of them, their hands joined in front of their chests in an attitude of prayer, and with their heads tilted backwards, slid over the stony ground as if they were on top of a soft carpet. When the trance was finished, he was able to observe that the girls did not have the slightest sign of a scratch or cut.

— After a swift run, the girls in ecstasy fell on top of a pile of wood, which was near the house of the *indiano* forming «a marvelous sculptural design with such an expression of happiness on their faces that the most consummate artist would not have been able to copy it, even remotely.»

— A man from Madrid, who wished to follow the girls in those marches, lost the cane that he carried, and lamenting the impossibility of finding it in the darkness, went to sit down in front of Ceferino's door, complaining loudly of what had happened, since «*it was a borrowed cane, and furthermore, a souvenir of the war . . .*» Not much later the onlookers saw Conchita appear walking toward them in ecstasy. The girl came up the man who was complaining, handed him his cane without

looking at him, and continued onwards.

* * *

On October 11th the church celebrates the liturgical feast of *The Maternity of Mary*. (In the following year, Vatican II would commence on this feastday.) The Mother of God and our mother came to regale with her visit the children awaiting her in Garabandal . . .

Arriving on the scene with an air of importance and arrogance were three men who later were discovered to be reporters from the daily newspaper *La Gaceta del Norte*. One of them, short and stout, had a famous reputation in Spain; however, no one there recognized him, and no one was able to identify him as a priest, since he came as a layman in a short-sleeved shirt (the temperature was very warm) with an open collar, etc.. *By his external appearance*, one of the witnesses said later, *he would be thought to be anything but a priest*. This was Fr. José Luis Martín Descalzo.

Toward evening the members of the press came up to Conchita's house. They found her in the little kitchen waiting for an ecstasy, as she had already

received calls. Several people were with her, among whom was Dr. Ortiz' wife, who was seated at her side near the fireplace. The new arrivals stayed at the door, observing the girl closely . . . Conchita, who seemed to be listening to something, leaned toward Dr. Ortiz' wife and whispered in her ear:

— *Ask that man to sit down.* (In the kitchen only one very low stool was unoccupied.)

— *But which man? There are three . . .*

— *That one, the one in the middle.*

The woman began to blush, since everyone's glance was turned upon them while they were whispering like this. She raised her voice in the direction of Father Martín Descalzo:

— *The girl says that you should sit.*

— *Who? . . . Me?*

— *Yes, yes, Conchita intervened — you.*

— *But . . . me?*

— *Yes, you!*

With an attitude of astonishment and misgiving, almost opposition, the man went to occupy the empty stool. Why this distinction? Because of his being a priest? . . . Who there would know this?

The reporters, either because they were tired of waiting or for some other reason, went out on the street shortly afterwards. Dr. Ortiz was arriving at the time and while passing by heard one of them say, *I would like to stay to see this; but it is getting late, and I have to be in Bilbao at least by six in the morning.*

The reporters took the trouble to come inside and say good-bye. And then Conchita said very softly to the distraught Martín Descalzo, *Come, stay a little longer . . .* They hesitated and remained; and a little while later the ecstasy came. As on so many other occasions, the girl went out on the street in ecstasy and held out the crucifix to be kissed by the reporters from *The Gaceta* . . . It can be supposed that they have not forgotten.

After the trance, Fr. Valentín, Dr. and Mrs. Ortiz, and several other persons were discussing things in Aniceta's kitchen, when an agitated Fr. Martín Descalzo went up to Fr. Valentín.

— *I hear around here that the girls receive Communion from the hands of an angel . . .*

— *They say that at least* — replied Fr. Valentín calmly.

— *Well that cannot be! Because an angel can't consecrate.*

Fr. Valentín kept quiet, and then Dr. Ortiz butted in.

— *That reason isn't worth much, since Our Lord could permit an angel to take consecrated hosts from any tabernacle.*

The combative priest was taken back, but he recovered fast and asked Fr. Valentín:

— *Did you count the hosts in the tabernacle to see if they were missing?*

— *I was never concerned about counting them.*

— *Well you should do it.*

— *And why is it necessary* — again Dr. Ortiz came into it — *that the hosts be from the tabernacle of this church? They could have come even from China since for God there are no distances or difficulties.*

Fr. José Luis Martín Descalzo whirled around and left with his companions. It seems that he departed from Garabandal in a bad mood; we do not know if that was because he did not like the village or because his arguments had been torn down by the observations of a layman.

Awaiting the Great Day

In October, the influx of visitors slowed down. There were no longer summer vacationers in Santander, and the normal rhythm of work and business required everyone's presence back on the job . . . Furthermore, there was the great day looming in the future, and almost everyone was saving himself for it. Since without doubt it would be worth the trouble! Those who had seen *events* would encounter still more, many more on October 18th; and those, who still had not experienced the exhilaration of those things, could count on having them to the full on that heralded date.

Nevertheless, the phenomena continued daily.⁽⁹⁾

9. During those days in October, Dr. and Mrs. Ortiz saw many interesting scenes. For example:

• Conchita and Loli, in ecstasy at the door of the church, sang the Ave Maria in a beautiful duet.

• On one of the nights Conchita was surprised in ecstasy while she was still eating, sitting by the fireplace. She was marvelously transformed, holding a glass of milk in her hand

During one of our apparitions, Loli and I came down from the Pines with many people.

And we saw something like fire in the clouds.

It was seen by the people who were with us and also by those who were not.

When it was over, the Virgin appeared to us.

And we asked her what that thing was.

And she said that she came in it.

This was not the only *sign from the sky*.⁽¹⁰⁾ We have the date of another, more spectacular:

It was the feast of Our Lady of the Pillar⁽¹¹⁾ during another day of our apparitions, at which Loli and I were present.

While we were looking at the Virgin a star with a very long tail was seen

that no one was able to take away from her.

Someone came to ask Maximina González for lodging from the 14th to the 18th for a young woman from another country who had previously been in the village (*Muriel Catherine*). Dr. and Mrs. Ortiz, who were not acquainted with her, heard comments that she was Jewish, but that she wanted to be baptized, and were really surprised by the ingenuousness of the visionaries who commented, *Since she is so big, how can the godfather hold her in his arms during the Baptism?* After the baptism of adults was explained to them, Conchita exclaimed happily, *Great! That way Mari Cruz can be the godfather and I can be the godmother!*

10. Luke 21: 11, 25.

11. The feast of Our Lady of the Pillar is on October 12th. It is a great feastday in Spain and Latin America.

The religious celebration comes from devotion to Mary through an ancient statue in the great Marian basilica in Saragossa. The statue, because it stands on a column (reputedly part of the column on which Christ was scourged), has received the name of *del Pilar*. According to tradition, here on the banks of the Ebro River, the first temple was built to honor Mary on the Iberian peninsula, the *land of the Mother of God*.

The civil holiday, both in Spain and Latin-America, is based on the fact that on October 12th, 1492, the Spanish discoverers landed on the American continent. Also on October 12th, the Civil Guard celebrates the feastday of its patron.

Juan Alvarez Seco, the chief of the Civil Guard, stated:

«On October 12th, while apart from the others, I received the cross to kiss from the four girls, as if it were a congratulation from the Virgin for being the feast of our patron and for having come on that evening to Garabandal.»

beneath the Virgin's feet.

Several people saw this.

We asked the Virgin what it meant; but she didn't answer.

To be exact about the time, the phenomenon about which Conchita speaks seems to have occurred not on October 12th, the feastday of Our Lady of the Pillar, but on the beginning of October 13th. But what she writes is easily explainable; since in the determination of time, for the girls the day began on getting up in the morning and ended on going to bed at night; that is, the time during which they were awake.

The ecstasies that began on the evening of October 12th extended into the middle of the night. The people began leaving, and toward 2:30 in the morning almost no one remained in the little village plaza except a small group consisting of responsible men: Dr. Ortiz from Santander, Luis Adaro from Gijón, Rafael Sanz Moliner from Oviedo, and Rufino Alonso from Pola de Siero. They had met there, waiting for their wives who had gone to Mari Cruz' home to collect some religious articles that they had entrusted with the girl to give to the Virgin to kiss. Mari Cruz had an ecstasy during which she had gone up to the Pines. There she had prayed a Station to the Blessed Sacrament, and later stopped in the *calleja*, at the site of the first apparition, where she prayed another Station.

The people in the plaza soon saw two of the girls, Conchita and Loli, go under the balcony or terrace connected to the house of Loli's grandmother. They were in ecstasy there and let out a shout at the same time as they raised up their arms.

«*Instinctively*» — Dr. Ortiz said — «We looked upwards toward the sky, and we saw a star cross from the north to the south (*that is, in the direction toward the Pines*) with a great brilliance, leaving a trail that lasted several seconds . . . I know that Maximina Gonzalez and other women of the village saw the star too. On the contrary some young boys, who were at the entrance of Ceferino's house and who ran toward the girls on hearing the cry, didn't see anything because they were under the balcony like the girls. After the star had passed, we went where



“Fire in the clouds.”



“We saw the Virgin throw down a star.”

the girls were and accompanied them praying toward the church, at whose entrance the ecstasy stopped. Immediately we asked them:

— *Why did you scream?*

— Because we saw the Virgin throw down a star.

— *But you couldn't have seen the star, since you were under the balcony!*

— Well we certainly saw it. The Virgin did this.»

Father Valentín mentions this phenomena in his notes:

«We were in the plaza. Conchita and Loli shouted out loud with fear. Everyone was frightened. Some of the people looked at the girls; others looked at the sky. Those who did the latter said that they saw a brilliant star that crossed from one part of the sky to another, and that it could not in any way be mistaken for a shooting star or comet. After having screamed, the girls laughed and went on happily, as if dancing with joy.»

It is understandable that all these things, wrapped like this in a halo of mystery, and probably magnified by being transmitted from person to person, neces-

sarily had to leave the people very impressed.

With all these things happening, it would be easy to think: *Where will all this end? Surely all these things are an announcement of something great to come. What will we see on the day of the message?*

Anticipating the day, people started to come.

For example, two days after the feast of Our Lady of the Pillar, there appeared for the first time in Garabandal a German engineer who was residing in Spain at Madrid: Máximo Förschler Entenmann.⁽¹²⁾ Although Protestant, he was very closely

12. This man describes himself like this:

«From my infancy I have been a fervent believer, since I was well educated through Christian example by my parents who are now deceased; because of this, I loved our Savior Jesus Christ above everything. I am married to a Spanish Catholic.»

The anecdote that has already been described in Chapter V relates to this man:

«A woman insistently requested the visionary to ask the Virgin if her husband believed in God. After the ecstasy, she received the answer: *In God, he believes; in the Virgin, very little. . . But he will believe.*»

Here there are two miraculous things: (1) the intimate knowledge of a person whom the girl did not know; (2) a clear prophecy that came to pass.



"We came to San Sebastián de Garabandal."

tied to the Andreu family; because of this he came accompanied by Fr. Ramón María.

The journey was not easy. It was the 14th, the second Saturday of October, the octave of that special feastday of the rosary that had taken place in Garabandal. Let us listen to what he says:

«Some 20 kilometers before Cossío we had a tremendous smash-up with another car on a mountain pass.⁽¹³⁾ The accident could have had fatal consequences. Only later did I come to understand that it was without doubt the Most Holy Virgin who had saved us from certain death.

Because of what had happened we came to San Sebastián de Garabandal very late, after eleven at night. We had barely arrived when we had the good fortune to be able to witness two ecstasies. I admit that at the time they did not impress me in the least.

We retired to the house where we had lodging

13. Since they came from Palencia, this refers to the mountain pass of Puerto de Piedras Luengas, 1,213 meters above sea level, separating the provinces of Palencia and Santander. From here on a clear day, the superb panorama of the Picos de Europa and the Sierra de Peña Sagra can be viewed.

(all the houses of the village were open to Father Ramón María Andreu); and following this, at twelve o'clock, Father began to be very sick with nausea, cold sweats, and terrible pains in his left ankle, which seemed very swollen . . .

In the village were a doctor from Santander and a bone specialist from Burgos.⁽¹⁴⁾ I called them. After an examination they made a diagnosis: *besides the obvious swelling, there was probably a fracture of the ankle, at least a hairline crack.* They applied a thorough dressing and an icepack that was able to be found, *(from the indiano who had a refrigerator)* and with several others carried him in their arms to the bed; his pains were terrible.⁽¹⁵⁾

14. The house where Fr. Andreu and Mr. Förschler were staying belonged to a woman named Epifania, called Fania.

Dr. Celestino Ortiz Pérez was the doctor from Santander and Dr. Renedo was the one from Burgos.

15. So severe were his pains that he was not able to tolerate the slight weight of the sheet put over it to cover it.

The ice cubes were the only ice that could be found in the village and they came from the refrigerator of the indiano. In Santander, the word *indiano* refers to emigrants who return to Spain after making their fortune in America, the *India* of their ancestors. The emigration from Santander across the ocean was especially directed to Mexico and Cuba.

As an old friend of the father, I stayed in a second bed that they had set up in his room in order to take care of him at night.

After a long time — it had to be 3:30 in the morning — we began hearing a noise in the street, and people shouting that the owner of the house should open the door, since Jacinta was there in ecstasy, wanting to come in.



Jacinta

Shortly afterwards she appeared in the room, went toward Father and gave him the crucifix to kiss.⁽¹⁶⁾ Following this she said something to him that I couldn't hear . . . The girl was starting to make expressions and gestures of farewell to the vision when suddenly she stopped. She leaned backwards toward where I was and held out the crucifix for me to kiss — two times!»

16. Jacinta entered the room, raised the crucifix up in her hand, and said to the vision, *«Father is very sick! Cure him. He is delirious . . . Cure him.»*

At the exact moment that the priest kissed the crucifix that the girl held out to him, his pains disappeared completely. But he was very careful about saying this in front of the people that accompanied Jacinta—some had come from Seville, Cádiz, and Jerez—for fear that all this was due to the tremendous emotion of the moment; he said to himself, *«Here! Better not be foolish! Keep yourself quiet as a dead man.»*

A bad feature of intellectualism, which is so unfavorable to the attitude of the Gospel, *Unless you become like little children . . .* A man who thinks of himself as an intellectual has less fear of being taken for a sick man than of being taken for a foolish one.

It seems that took away Máximo's indifference.

«When the girl left, we naturally began to discuss all the details; and Father confessed to me that he had actually requested in his conscience that the girl, before leaving, would also give me the crucifix to kiss. I thought about this for the rest of the night.»

Father Ramón gives a more detailed and vivid description of this.

A short time after having kissed the crucifix that Conchita had offered him, he saw that she was beginning to make the sign of the cross and to hold out her cheeks for the invisible kisses: the unmistakable sign that the ecstasy was going to end. Then he rapidly formed in his conscience a petition to the Virgin: *that the girl would also give the crucifix to Máximo . . .* (Hours before, the good man had followed the visionaries in their trances without obtaining the least demonstration of attention from the; but rather the opposite, since several times they had given the crucifix to the onlookers while they had always passed him by.)

Father had hardly made the secret request when Jacinta stopped and exclaimed, *What?* She remained in an attitude of listening, and added, *Oh!* She began to lean further and further backwards, till she was able to reach with the crucifix to the lips of Mr. Förschler, who she could not see, since he was behind her back . . .

Seconds later, the girl returned to normal. It was time to go to sleep! Four o'clock Sunday morning, October 15th.

It was getting light on the morning of that day when several French people arrived, and behind them, one of the two doctors asking for the Father. It was about 8 o'clock. Father told the doctor that all his pains were gone, and that he was able to move his foot without difficulty. The doctor was surprised; but as a precaution, he counseled him not to step on the foot, and to wait for the coming of the ambulance that they had been able to summon from *Casa Valdecilla*⁽¹⁷⁾ in Santander. The injury had been serious and normally would take from fifteen to twenty days to get better.

17. The *Casa de Salud Valdecilla* was the biggest hospital in Santander.

We have the following information about this from Father Andreu.

The doctor found the Father sitting on the edge of the bed.

— *What are you doing Father?*

— As you see, I am trying to get up . . .

— *Don't do that! That's foolish. Let's see your ankle . . .*

The doctor got down on one knee to examine the ankle better. Then raising his head toward the Father, looking at him in a peculiar way, he said:

— *What a comedian you are! Come on, show me the bad ankle.*

The priest with apparent indifference showed him the other ankle, which was the *good* one. The doctor examined it very carefully . . . He compared it with the other . . . and ended up raising his head again toward the Father, while he said with an expression hard to describe,

What strange things happen in this village!

Continuing now with Mr. Förschler's description:

«When the doctors left, Father began to put his shoes on, since he felt no pain . . . He went to stand on his foot, and did it without difficulty. Then he decided to celebrate Mass in the village, declining to advise Father Valentín to come to the village, as we had agreed to do. He ordered the bells to be rung for the Mass, and we set off to search for a cane.

I accompanied him myself to the church. And when he was beginning the celebration — as I did not understand anything about the Mass — I found a place near the last pew and determined to carefully watch from there how he walked on his foot. During the entire ceremony he moved and knelt down, and got up without difficulty.

After the Mass, I told him my observations, and he made various movements and bendings of his foot in front of me without the least trouble; and finally confided to me what had happened. The thing that Jacinta had told him in ecstasy at 3:30 in the morning had been this: *Father, the Virgin told me that you were ill; but she told me to tell you that you are cured. At the same time the pains disappeared.*»



Jacinta told the priest he was cured.

This also gave Mr. Förschler something to think about; but the thing did not stop there.

On the following day a group of people from Asturias came to Garabandal. It was an ordinary day, Monday, October 16th. An ordinary day on the calendar, but very distinguished in our annals.

As night fell there was an ecstasy, a phenomenon that was never dull . . . not even for those who were seeing it every day. During it the accustomed time arrived for presenting the holy articles that the people wished to be kissed, and then the time for their return to their owners.

In the room where Loli's trance was taking place, a man finally forced himself in. It was the first time that he had been at Garabandal, and he carried in his arms a sick baby who was a heavy cross on his shoulders. The baby was crying. Loli, undoubtedly advised by the apparition, went toward it and — without looking — signed it with a perfect sign of the cross. Immediately the tears stopped and on the convulsing face of the little child an unexpected smile appeared. The father's



Loli holds up article to be kissed

sad expression softened with emotion, and he said simply, *I have never yet seen him smile!*

When the ecstasy ended, Mari Loli asked for *the sick baby who was carried in his father's arms*. She wanted to meet him, since she had not yet seen him, and at the same time she wanted to transmit the message with which she had been charged. She caressed the little baby and said to the father, dwelling slowly on the words, *The Virgin told me that you shouldn't worry*.

Jacinta — who at the time was in ecstasy in the street, searching for the man who had come — also repeated, *on the part of the Virgin* the same words of comfort concerning the little baby.⁽¹⁸⁾

I would have liked to present a follow-up on the outcome with this baby, but up to now I have not been able.

Watching the different facets of that *vigil* was a large group of spectators, among whom were the Asturians whom we mentioned. These were mainly young boys, but two men among them appeared to be their guides or leaders. One said to the boys, *Observe with close attention, and don't let yourself be influenced, because these things . . .*

At 10:30 at night they gathered in front of Cefirino's ancient house. Then Conchita came there in ecstasy, drew near, and began to hold out the crucifix to be kissed . . . The two men kept themselves away from her, in order to hid better, went up the outside stairway of a nearby house.⁽¹⁹⁾ However the girl — with her head in a position incredibly tilted backwards, without seeing either them or the stairway — climbed the stairs miraculously and held out the crucifix for them to kiss. The first man shook visibly, and turned his head; but the girl managed to make the sign of the cross

on him twice with the holy image. She insisted again that he kiss it and once again the man refused. A third time the girl made the sign of the cross over him with an extreme gentleness in her expression. Only then did the man relent and put his lips on the crucifix! Almost the same thing happened with his companion.

Conchita majestically descended the stairs and went toward the captain of the Civil Guard to give him the holy cross to kiss. Unexpectedly she turned and again walked toward these two men and held the crucifix in front of them. Once again they refused to kiss it! The onlookers were both indignant and scandalized. The girl suddenly came out of the trance, and everyone could see the most obstinate of the two trembling as if he were in pain. He went to hide in a corner where some of the young boys followed him.

— *Father X, what has happened?*

— *Let me alone, let me alone.*

Finally he confessed:

— *You have seen how I refused the crucifix that the girl offered me . . . Well, after finally kissing it, I mentally asked God for proof: "My Lord, if all this that is happening is truly supernatural, let the girl come to me another time and let her ecstasy stop immediately; thus I will be able to believe." You see what happened. Don't ask me anything more.*

Those two men who attracted attention by their attitude were priests; one of them appears to have been a pastor in Turón, the big mining center in Asturias.

Of course we can seek *signs* from God; but we do not have the right to demand them according to our pleasure. If He condescends, praise be to His name!

In this case there was still more. Conchita, once the ecstasy had ended, had no reason to stay in that spot during the late hours, so she took the street to her home. But she had hardly left the plaza when she went into ecstasy again . . . And once again the people gathered around her. Our *difficult* priest still desired more than what he had received, and requested in his mind: *If the girl comes to me because she knows supernaturally that I am a priest, let her prove it to me, and let her give me the crucifix to kiss again, and let her make the sign of the cross several times over me* (something that she had not done with anyone else).

18. According to Fr. Valentín's notes, it seems that the episode of the sick child occurred not on the 16th, but rather on the 17th; perhaps during the night between the 16th and the 17th:

«Loli, in ecstasy, went up to a sick child, made the sign of the cross over him several times and gave him the cross to kiss. It was a very moving scene, since the father of the child wept and cried aloud for his cure.»

19. This house was torn down a few years later. It had a staircase with half a dozen stone steps leading up from the street.

The girl's response to this new and most secret demand was marvelous, satisfying the minister of God who was acting so much like St. Thomas on that unforgettable night in Garabandal.

It is not unusual that God gives even more than what is asked from Him, and this happened to be the man whom no one knew. Seeing other persons offering the girls (at the time of farewell) cards and photographs for them to sign, he also presented one . . . And he could later read a dedication on it with a clear mention of his priestly state.

Suspense Begins to Mount

In Garabandal on October 17th, the night before, there was a thrill in the air. Forerunners of the countless masses of people expected began to arrive . . .

And through all the streets, down all the trails, in all the houses, in all the minds of the villagers and visitors alike, was the same question, *What will happen tomorrow?*⁽²⁰⁾

All through the day people were talking more than working. The tension of waiting in Garabandal was too great to be able to apply oneself normally to doing any work that could be avoided.

In some people the anticipation was coupled with joyful confidence; in others, with anxious apprehension. What if nothing happened? What would be the fate of Garabandal if the swarms of people who were coming went away completely disillusioned?

One of the most uneasy of those in the village at

20. Juan A. Seco reported:

«On the evening before October 18th—because of what could happen—I went up to Garabandal with 28 guards under my command. Conchita, in ecstasy, came near to me and presented the cross for me alone to kiss. This indicated to me a guarantee that everything would turn out well, in spite of the enormous number of people who were gathering and the torrential rain that was falling throughout the day . . .»

the time was the parish priest, the good Father Valentín Marichalar. This affair concerned him so much! And he did not have things in control . . . He could not doubt the heavenly reality of the unusual phenomena — he had received so many proofs in favor of them. But so many things could happen! The plans of God are unsearchable.

The parents of the visionaries also were uneasy. They did not doubt the sincerity of their daughters; but they were confronting things so beyond their ordinary experience that they did not know what to make of them.

Certainly the girls themselves, the ones most directly involved of all those in the village at the time, were the most calm. They could not doubt that it was the Virgin with whom they were conversing, and they could trust the Virgin . . .

Fr. Ramón María Andreu also shared the children's tranquility. Completely recuperated from the accident that he had a few days before, he was sure that he was going to be a fortunate witness of new marvels.

Years later he stated to the editor of the French version of Conchita's diary:

«I had arrived at St. Sebastián de Garabandal on October 17th. During the course of that day, and also during the following day, the 18th, I saw tremendous crowd swarm into the village.

I was very happy and relaxed; there was no reason for not being that way. During the months of August and September, and even during October, I had been a witness of many events in the mountain village. I had recollections filled with happy memories. Everything was for the best.»

During the hours of October 17th, it was especially the *fans*, or *quasi fans* of the apparitions who were arriving in the village; since they had friends or acquaintances there, they could count on not being forced to pass the night under the stars.

As the weather was stormy, the kitchens in Garabandal were filled that night with meetings and conversations, and the time passed amid anticipation and discussion . . .

There was a rosary in the church as usual; also as



“pouring rain throughout the province”

usual, there was an apparition. I think that the *vigil* that night had to be very long and animated.

Far from there, in innumerable places, there were also innumerable *vigils* of hope and expectation by those who were going to set out early on the following morning for the distant refuge that might give them health, or consolation, or faith, or security, or a solution to their problems. And they really had to have great hope to set out on the unpleasant journey.

During the night of October 17th and continuing into the morning of the 18th, it rained until it could rain no more. In the darkness and the silence, throughout the width and breadth of the Cantabrian countryside, could be heard the tremendous booming symphony of water falling and then flowing . . . monotonously, rapidly, without pause . . . The *Torrents of Heaven* seemed inexhaustible. Mountains and valleys resounded with the gushing of rivulets, streams and rivers. Raindrops could be heard pounding relentlessly upon the tree leaves. Uncountable puddles grew into lakes as the night watched. And those that slept or tried to sleep in the towns and cities were serenaded by the monotonous sound of falling rain and swirling water.

Before the light of dawn could filter through the

dense fog on October 18th, many vehicles of every type began to start up their motors. And departures continued into the long hours of the morning.

«On October 18th, 1961» — María Herrero tells us in her report — «I awoke to pouring rain throughout the province of Santander. We left at an early hour from the capital of the Montaña, and there on the mountain of Carmona⁽²¹⁾ we had to get into a caravan, a very long caravan of cars preceding us, which without doubt was going as we were towards San Sebastián de Garabandal.

It is three kilometers from Puente Nansa to Cossío; and I think at least one kilometer had its roadsides totally covered with empty buses and cars. We succeeded in arriving at Cossío and with difficulty were able to find a spot where we could park our car.

And then we had six terrible kilometers facing us. The rain, which was not stopping, had

21. Coming from Santander, the most direct way to Garabandal is through Cabezón de la Sal, Cabuérniga, Carmona, and Puente Nansa. Through the mountain at Carmona that María Herrero mentions, there is a narrow mountain pass that goes from a height of 622 meters down to the Nansa River.



The village. . . October 18, 1961

converted the road upwards into a quagmire.

Holding an umbrella in one hand and keeping the other hand free in case of a spill, we began the trip on foot. There were spots in which I succeeded in gaining a step, and later, due to the slippery ground, lost two.

I remember that trip up as a true way of Calvary . . . A good symbol of the sacrifice and penance that was going to be asked from us by the message. Our painful journey lasted more than three hours, even though we wanted to quicken it by taking a shortcut that turned out to be much harder than the road itself.»

What this witness experienced was also being experienced at the same time by thousands of persons of

every state and condition. Their hope and desire had to be very strong to uphold them. Not by an *affliction of hysteria*, nor to take part in a *game of children*, were they doing this.

Beyond all the discomfort of their ill-treated bodies, their hearts pulsated with the psalm:

*Toward you, holy place;
Toward you, land of salvation . . .
Pilgrims marching on . . .
Let us go on to you!*

Under the implacable rain, the village was being flooded with wandering pilgrims streaming in. What was the situation like?

«We arrived» — Doña María tells us — «toward

1:30 in the afternoon. The crowd was swarming everywhere . . . in hope of *the event*. I thought that everyone was waiting for — I don't know what — something truly extraordinary. I admit that I also was waiting for this, in spite of what Loli and Jacinta had advised me a few days previously: (*as they advised everyone who wished to hear them*) that they had no reason to expect a *miracle*, since the only thing that the Virgin had told them was that they had to make public a message, as they had so often foretold . . .

On seeing how everything was, I regretted not having gone to Mass before leaving Santander. Then someone said to me: *Go to the church. They have been celebrating Masses almost without interruption since early morning.* I ran — well I wanted to run — since there was such a crowd, I was only able to make my way to the church with difficulty. There was a Mass being celebrated at the time; it was the last one since the time permitted for it was ending.⁽²²⁾ I was surprised by the number of religious and priests who were there. Although it was not a day of obligation, I was glad not to miss Mass since it was a special day, celebrating the feast of St. Luke the Evangelist, who spoke the most to us about the Virgin.»

Waiting for Heaven

The upcoming report of the way it was will illustrate better than any general description what the *climate* was in the village during those hours of anticipation on that memorable day. The description is from the same witness.

«On arriving in the village next to Ceferino's house, I put down my umbrella, and raising my eyes, I saw Loli behind a window on the upstairs floor. She was watching everything with that look of hers, so transparent, so pure. She did not seem to be much surprised by the crowds that were continuing to come. (I'm sure that she had never before seen such a crowd assembled together.) She must have been sitting; later I

learned that she was suffering from an inflammation of her knee. I couldn't speak with her, since at the time I didn't have sufficient friendship with the girls, and even less with their parents, who were not inclined to conversations and confidences . . . and especially on that day when they had to defend her from the assault of countless inquisitive people.

A little later I met Elena García Conde from Oviedo who said to me, *I am impressed. I spoke earlier with Loli and she suddenly exclaimed, "OH! IF THEY KNEW WHO WAS HERE AMONG THEM TODAY!" She said this in an exceptional manner! Please ask her whom she is talking about.*

I intended to approach Loli; but there was no way. Her father, who has always been a good protection, was an even better one on that day.



**"OH! IF THEY KNEW WHO WAS
HERE AMONG THEM TODAY!"**

22. It is to be remembered that in those days it was not permitted to celebrate evening Masses in Spain as it is today. At noon the time permitted by the rubrics for the celebration of Mass ended.

Fortunately I was able to locate Father Valentín; he was going from one place to the next quite agitated and nervous; he seemed to be sunk in a sea of confusion. On one of his passes

by I went up to him, and after the greetings he said, *Heavens! I don't know what's going to happen here . . . I am really afraid of all these people. And they aren't going to like the message!*

— Oh! Then you know the message?

— Yes, since yesterday afternoon . . . Conchita told it to me.

— And what does it say? What does it say?

— You must wait. They have to read it this evening. But I don't know . . . To me it appears . . . I don't know . . . It seems infantile, as from a little child. I am very worried, because of the people, who will expect . . . I don't know what.

I used the occasion to question him about Loli. To whom could the girl be referring with those puzzling words?

He was surprised for a moment; he kept silent for a few seconds, as if thinking, and then said to me, *I don't know, but it could be ST. JOSEPH,*⁽²³⁾ *since today is Wednesday . . .*

Then I was the surprised one since I didn't know why I had thought that the mysterious personage whom Loli was speaking about could well have been either Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, the very well-known and venerated Capuchin with the stigmata,⁽²⁴⁾ or John XXIII, who was still alive and at the peak of his popularity. They could have been supernaturally present at Garabandal by the gift of bilocation.⁽²⁵⁾ What relief that would have given for what was about to happen there!»

23. Among the days of the week, Thursday is the day given to the Eucharist; Saturday is dedicated to the Virgin; Wednesday is considered a day especially consecrated to St. Joseph. October 18th in 1961 actually fell on Wednesday.

24. This famous man of God died on September 23rd, 1968, after having for 50 years borne visibly the stigmata of Christ impressed on his body.

His spiritual influence on souls has been enormous. The process for his beatification and canonization has been undertaken. Today no one doubts his extraordinary sanctity; but during his lifetime he experienced an almost incredible misunderstanding and persecution from many people, even from those whom it would have been least expected. No less than four unfavorable declarations against him came out at various times from the Holy Office — the highest ecclesiastical authority.

25. The astounding miracle of one person being in two different places at the same time.

Doña María's reflections on the reason for Loli's words are no surprise: the atmosphere was such as to bring out the most extraordinary suppositions.

Learning that St. Joseph was there did not cause enough sentiment,⁽²⁶⁾ it seems to me, and there was less enthusiasm than if it had been voiced that Padre Pio or John XXIII were present. Nevertheless, thinking about it closely today, I believe that the special presence of the Glorious Patriarch on that day in Garabandal had to give it a new dimension of grandeur.

This would lead one to believe that what was occurring there had a significance truly ecumenical. It was the entire church that was involved. At the time nothing could have been more normal than the presence of the one who has been declared by the supreme hierarchy as the first Patron or Protector of the Universal Church.⁽²⁷⁾

During those October days, in the church at Garabandal — just as in all the other religious edifices throughout Spain — after the daily rosary there resounded the beseeching words of a prayer:

To you, Blessed St. Joseph, we seek aid in our tribulation, and having implored the help of your most holy spouse, we confidently seek also your intercession.

Turn your eyes compassionately on the inheritance that Jesus Christ has acquired with his blood.

Remove from us every stain of error and corruption.

Our most Powerful Protector, assist us with your aid from heaven in this struggle against the powers of darkness.

And as in former times you protected the Child Jesus from imminent danger to his life, so now defend the Holy Church of God from the snares of our enemies and from every adversity.

26. The reason for this was not that St. Joseph is of lesser importance, since he has always occupied the number one place in the ranks of the saints; but rather that everything that was expected on that day had to be *sensational*. And more than a new *apparition*, in a place so accustomed to *apparitions*, the unexpected presence of living people who were much talked about at the time would have surely caused a sensation.

27. This declaration or proclamation was made by the Pope of the Immaculate Conception, Pius IX, on the solemn feastday of December 8th, 1870.

Who could say that this prayer, commanded many years ago during the pontificate of the foresighted Leo XIII, has not reached its full significance in the time of Garabandal? The hour comes, overriding two epochs of the Church: the period of the monolithic, secure Council of Trent of the Counter-reformation; and at least for the moment, the insecure, agitated and confused period that has followed Vatican II.⁽²⁸⁾ This hour of Garabandal could well be a preview of salvation against the gravest dangers that surround us . . . And at the time, the presence there of **OUR MOST POWERFUL PROTECTOR IN THIS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE POWERS OF DARKNESS** would have a most definite reason and significance.



«The weather continued to worsen, and the people sheltered themselves as well as they could in the houses and under the porch roofs. It should be recognized that the residents of the village tolerated the people as well as they could. And they had to exercise no small amount of charity and patience, since the crowds invaded everything, walked on the cultivated fields, and trampled on many plants. In spite of the considerable loss that all this entailed, I didn't hear anyone complain, nor were incidents aroused. We can learn from this.

Heaven seemed to rage against us. A horrible cold began to join with the constant hard rain that culminated in a hailstorm, and then converted into slush toward 5 or 6 in the afternoon. Although I found refuge in a house where they gave me food, I wasn't able to put out of my mind the turbulent atmosphere of the streets

28. Let me make this clear. I do not wish to speak derogatorily of Vatican II, nor can I speak that way. What was sought was a true *updating* of the Church and the conciliary documents tend in that direction for anyone who correctly understands them and tries to live them.

But it would be blind or naïve not to recognize how the life of the Catholic Church has been affected by the situations that have been brought about under the pretext of implementing Vatican II. Has not Paul VI himself spoken to us about self-destruction?

Because we have the faith, we are sure that the Church will overcome all crises; but it is undeniable that in our time the Church is in the middle of a tremendous whirlwind.

At the time that the events that we are narrating were happening in Garabandal, final preparations for the Second Vatican Council were taking place; and just one year later, on October 11th, 1962, its inauguration was solemnly celebrated.

and trails in which various languages could be heard, although naturally predominantly Spanish. (I believe that only among the religious was there a majority of foreigners.)

The comportment of the public wasn't uniform. There were many women who acted badly: they drank, they were dissipated, without a spirit of prayer . . . and some even were laughing at what could happen, giving it no importance or attributing it to the devil. The men generally showed more respect; and also the youth, who were there in great numbers.

The spectacle was certainly unusual; and it was easy to see that those who had come with good faith were happy, enthusiastic, with the greatest hopes; they prayed and they didn't care much about the inclemencies of the weather. And probably many of them hadn't even eaten . . .

Squads of mounted police guards were stationed in front of each of the visionaries' homes, preventing the entrance of the countless inquisitive people who sought at all costs to know, speak to, and kiss the girls, the real protagonists of this international convention. The only house which I was able to enter was that of Jacinta, whose mother Maria recognized me, and was helpful with a courtesy that I will never be able to forget.»

H Hour

Before the middle of the afternoon many began to take positions to assure themselves an advantageous place for the probable scene of the *event*. But there was a difference of opinion as to the location: some said that it would be at the Pines; others, that it would be in the calleja; and finally others, (they appeared to be the best informed) that it would be at the church.

Conchita, in speaking in her diary of the apparition of July 4th — the third apparition of the Virgin Mary — writes:

**The Virgin was smiling as usual.
The first thing that she said to us**



"You can tell the people on the 18th of October."

was: *Do you know what the writing that the Angel is carrying beneath him means?*

And we exclaimed together: *No, we don't know!*

And she said, *It tells a message that I am going to tell you so that you can tell the people on the 18th of October.*

And she told it to us.

And it is the following . . .

Later she explained what the message meant and how we had to say it.

She indicated to us that we had to say it at the door of the church . . .

And that on October 18 we should tell it to Fr. Valentín, so that he could say it at the Pines at 10:30 at night.

The Virgin told us to do it this way; but the Commission . . .

We are accustomed to repeat frequently the proverb *Man proposes but God disposes*. On that key

day at Garabandal this was reversed. Heaven proposed and earth disposed . . . And thus the thing came about. When we attempt to revise God's designs, the results are never brilliant.

We do not know which members of the Commission were there — the weather was too inclement for all of them to come, though it was their duty — but surely one who was not missing was Father Francisco Odriozola, the man who had been acting as the *motivating force* of the group. Considering that they did not believe, it is not surprising that the Commission members felt a great distaste for these things and a desire to end them as soon as possible.

The night came down and they did not know what might happen to the great multitude, in total darkness, over such roads, and under the worst weather conditions. **Why do you fear, men of little faith?** the Lord could have said to them, too. Perhaps a prudence too human did not leave room in them for the matter of confidence in God and complete acceptance of what He has planned — something that is always decisive in the works of the spirit. Though they did not comprehend these things, why could

they not have adhered exactly to what could some way be coming from above, and accept that mysterious challenge with all its conditions, behind which there could well be *the sign* that was sought?

The Commission said:

***as there were many people,
and it was raining much,
and there was nowhere to shelter
the people,
it would be better to say the
message at 8:30 or 9:00.***

It got dark quickly, not only because in the middle of October the days are noticeably short, but also because the sky was completely overcast. As it became dark, restlessness, if not actual impatience, began increasing in the tremendous multitude. What was going to happen there? Was there going to be something, or were they wasting their time? Few knew of the definite instructions from *above* that the girls had received months previously; on the other hand, almost all were aware that the affairs of Garabandal were accustomed to happen in the dark . . . The waiting was going to become for many hard to tolerate; not all had the best spirit.

At 8 o'clock, Father Valentín was no longer able to resist further pressure from the Commission, and went in search of the girls so as to perform the matter — not according to the instructions that the girls had received — but according to the directions given by the Commission. What should have occurred at the door of the church was forbidden (such was the way to better emphasize that the *official ecclesiastic element* had nothing to see in this) and everyone went rapidly to the Pines.⁽²⁹⁾

The rumor spread immediately throughout the crowds: *To the Pines! To the Pines!* And the masses began to move toward them — many were already there — under a terrible downpour.

«We marched» — María Herrero tells us — «stumbling in the dark, swimming in a sort of flood of mud, stones and branches that was streaming down from the Pines. We fell, we rolled down sometimes, we climbed up on all fours, holding with our hands onto the big rocks on the ground or onto the bushes on the banks. Many were on the verge of giving up . . . And in spite of so many falls and stumbles, I know of

no one who broke a bone or hurt himself in the least. Doesn't that seem astounding?»

Meanwhile Father Valentín got together with the girls. It seems that at least Conchita offered him some resistance, since she was not conformed to doing things in this manner, but he obliged her to leave her home to go read the message.

Let us hear the witness again:

«I have to admit that I finished the ascent in a rather bad mood. Between the fear that the unruly crowd caused me, the annoyance that they gave me along the way, questioning and questioning without ceasing, and the irritation of not finding a place there that I liked, I was appreciably upset. Finally I got situated behind the Pines, some 70 meters from them on the slope to the right; the crowd prevented me from getting closer. Everything was not badly seen, since there were many flashlights.

Later the fragile silhouettes of the four girls⁽³⁰⁾

29. This brings to mind a passage from Scripture (1 Samuel 13:7-14). The prophet Samuel has given King Saul instructions from God that were very precise as to the right time for himself and his city. Before engaging in combat with the Philistines, well-known for their superiority in war, he was to wait in Gilgal for seven days until Samuel himself came to offer a holocaust to appease the Lord. But Saul did not wait till the seven days were up; on seeing that Samuel was not coming, and that his army was being demoralized, and that the Philistines could attack at any moment, he sought what was necessary for the sacrifice and offered up the holocaust himself.

Just as he was completing the offering of the holocaust, Samuel arrived, and Saul went forth to meet him and saluted him. And Samuel said to him: What have you done?

The justifications of Saul were futile; the prophet spoke: *You have done foolishly, and have not kept the commandments of the Lord your God, which He commanded you. And if you had done this, the Lord would now have established your kingdom over Israel forever; but now your kingdom will not endure.* And because he did not faithfully follow the ordinances of God, the reprobation of Saul began.

30. Thus, as is lost in a sea of humanity, under a dark sky, unsupported before the magnitude of the events, the girls were truly a picture of weakness. What strength could those girls have who in normal circumstances would impress no one?

But the foolish things of the world had God chosen,
that He may confound the wise.
And the weak things of the world has God chosen,
that He may confound the strong.
And the base things of the world,
and the things that are contemptible,
has God chosen, and things that are not,
that He might bring to naught, things that are;
that no flesh should glory in his sight.
(Cor. 1: 27-29)



The four girls revealed the message on October 13th.

suddenly appeared in the distance with the throng that surrounded them, protected by several pairs of guards on horseback.

While I was up on the hill, the icy rain that had drenched and almost blinded us stopped falling; the black, low-lying clouds began to be swept away by the wind, and the moon appeared. The pale light then illuminated the Pines and the group of guards, girls, priests, etc. that was below my point of observation. I have to admit that this had an immediate effect on me . . . »

Many then believed that the hoped-for miracle was going to be produced . . . But there was nothing! There was only what had been foretold, something that was not very exciting.

The girls gave Father Valentín the little paper on which the message was written,⁽³¹⁾ since according to the Virgin's instructions, he was to be the one who **should say it at the Pines at ten thirty at night.**

But Father Valentín **read it to himself, and after he read it, he gave it to us to read; and we four read it together . . .**

This was not exactly what they had been told to do. The pastor, Father Valentín Marichalar, who was embarrassed by the *childishness* of the message,

31. This was signed by the four girls. Under her name, each one put her age: «*Conchita González, 12 years. María Dolores Mazón, 12 years. Jacinta González, 12 years. Mari Cruz González, 11 years.*».



“I distinguished clearly the childlike voice of Conchita reading the message.”

did not have the courage to make the proclamation that was asked of him. Was it perhaps out of human respect? Did he have a fear of being ridiculous? I do not think that his actions on that night did him any honor. But who can judge?

The reading by the four girls was not exactly a good proclamation; the words of the message came out from their lips hurriedly, not pronounced correctly and with a schoolgirl cadence . . . Nevertheless, from that moment on, those who were really looking for a word from heaven as an exhortation or warning knew where to find it.

«I distinguished clearly» — said María Her-

rero — «the childlike voice of Conchita reading the message . . . Afterwards, because the girls were not heard well, two men repeated the reading in a loud voice.»

● ● ●

And thus what had to be known at the time was adequately proclaimed. Into the night at Garabandal — into the night of the world — flowed out words which, though they were very simple, were very much to the point. If because of their simplicity and lack of sensationalism, many would not pay attention to them, others who sought to be *sons of the light* would find in them material to nourish the highest meditation:

**It is necessary to
make many sacrifices,
to do much penance,**

**It is necessary to visit the
Blessed Sacrament;**

But first we must be very good.

**And if we do not do this
a punishment will come upon us.**

**Already the cup is filling up;
and if we do not change,
a very great punishment
will come upon us.**



A Call to Salvation

It was not possible for the mass of expectant people hearing these words on that stormy night in Garabandal to understand immediately the full scope of that very short and childlike message . . . And so almost everyone was disappointed.

«After hearing the message that the people passed from group to group (and one can imagine the changes and losses that such a transmission was going to introduce!), I was extremely disillusioned» — María Herrero admitted — «What was this worth? It appeared so puerile! Nevertheless I knew the girls well enough to know that they were not making it up and were not lying . . . I was confused and irritated.»

No wonder. The same would probably have happened to me. But now I feel myself obligated to proclaim that, by means of those four young girls —seen in all their littleness and insignificance — that same One speaks to mankind Who from the beginning had come speaking words that **do not pass away although heaven and earth pass away.** (Mark 13:31)

God does not communicate with man ordinarily

by saying *sensational* things but rather by saying what is necessary for salvation.

He accommodates himself to the condition and character of the instrument that He chooses. Just as in former times He spoke to us in the rough and raw language of the hagiographers and prophets, He can very well speak to us now in the childlike language of four unlearned and poorly educated girls.⁽³²⁾

32. The word *hagiographers* is used in theological terminology to designate those who wrote the various books of Sacred Scripture under the inspiration of God. Also the more general term *prophets* is applied to them in the biblical sense to indicate persons who speak to men in the name of God.

For a proper understanding of what is being said in this text, it should be made clear that the Word of God that comes to us by means of the hagiographers or prophets of the bible is not being ranked with the words that come through the girls at Garabandal. The *Word of God* can be present in the one case as in the other; but there is a great difference as to the guarantee of the origin and the obligation of accepting it. Above all, there should be complete respect for official and public revelation; but those who show an open disrespect for all private revelation do not show the greatest respect for the *Word of God*, since it is the *same God* who speaks both through Sacred Scripture and through private revelation.

If the presentation of the message appears childlike, that is not important; the only thing that matters is the content. And this has to be meditated upon to be understood. The true *Word of God* is not ordinarily clear initially . . . but it does reveal itself ultimately to the person who ponders over it again and again in mediation.

With meekness receive the engrafted word, that is able to save your souls.

But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

For if a man be only a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man looking at his face in a mirror.

For he saw himself and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was. (James 1:21-24)

We know that the reaction of many of the people in Garabandal on that night was an angry disappointment . . . so much trouble . . . such a long wait . . . Only to hear that?

Nevertheless *that* was a new proclamation of what has been *from the beginning*. Something we need to hear, although we do not like hearing it. Men like things that are exhilarating, not things that are essential . . . And what entertains will always be better accepted among men, in the beginning at least, than what obligates . . .

The overwhelming simplicity of the Garabandal message places it on the same plane as the other *messages of salvation*.

The Jewish crowds were waiting for Jesus of Nazareth to show himself as **a prophet mighty in work and word**. (Luke 24: 19) Yet when He started His public life He came forth with no more than this: **The time is accomplished and the kingdom of God is at hand. Do penance, and believe the gospel**. (Mark 1: 15) Could anything be simpler? Yet that was the seed that would renew the world.

The expectations of the people who had witnessed the multiplication of bread must have been even greater than those of the pilgrims who had gone up to Garabandal. They had there the all powerful King who could be the solution to all their problems! Jesus escaped from them, and in the synagogue at Capernaum on the following day spoke out: **You seek me not because you have seen miracles, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Labor not for food that perishes, but for that which endures for life everlasting,**

which the Son of Man will give you. (John 6: 26-27) This offered nothing sensational or encouraging, but caused a disillusion and disenchantment that ultimately changed into hostility and hate, resulting in complete alienation from the Man Whom they had previously admired and followed with great zeal. **After this many of His disciples withdrew; and walked no more with Him.** (John 6: 67)

People expected a lot from Simon Peter too, who showed himself as the head of Christ's followers. Throngs of Jews had gathered in front of the Cenacle, attracted by the marvels of Pentecost and converted by the words of the fisherman from Bethsaida. **What shall we do, men and brethren? But Peter said to them: Do penance and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.** (Act. 2: 37-38) This also was not a very stirring response.

And we, who are so easily given to confuse the important with what is elaborate and complicated, are also easily upset by the supreme simplicity of God.

Such simplicity comes one way or another to oblige us to something that costs: the labor of submission and searching; because behind that simplicity there is much to discover and much to receive.

Rereading carefully now, line by line, the contents of that proclamation of October 18th, 1961:



It is necessary to make many sacrifices, to do much penance.

Six simple words in the original Spanish, come at the time of the *new* spirituality (which actually is a very old lack of spirituality) that now had eroded the Church and has already succeeded in reigning in wide sections.⁽³³⁾ These words place us once again before the incomprehensible *mystery of the cross*. **For the word of the cross, to those that perish, is foolishness,; but to those that are saved, that is to us, it is the power of God.** (Cor: 1: 18)

Opposing the present *development of one's own personality*⁽³⁴⁾ is placed the former **Deny oneself** for Christ! And against the current planned destruction of every inconvenient moral obligation, comes forth the statement: **Take up your cross each day.** (Luke 9: 23)

All the real or pretended rights of the human being and all the privileges of his liberty cannot abolish these eternal words: **Enter in at the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who go in through it. How narrow is the gate and straight the way that leads to life. And few there are who find it!** (Matt. 7: 13-14)



It is necessary to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

33. I do not say that such *religious fads* have obtained dominion over the Church, but they have obtained dominion over many in the Church. This can be observed by the way many clergy and non-clergy alike talk today. And it can be easily detected in the atmosphere that pervades the seminaries.

34. There is a cult of one's person that goes along perfectly and even is part of the tradition of True Christianity. But there is also a cult of self-love, which is basically pagan and which is opposed to the evangelical counsels. The latter has permeated the heart and actions, the mentality and speech of many Christians.

As within the Catholic Church — through non-catholic and anti-catholic influence — a grave crisis of doctrine and practice fomented in regard to the Eucharistic reality, God gives us a solution with a short simple phrase from His mother's message. She calls our attention to something that is truly essential in all Christian living: a very personal — not only community — contact with the Savior.

The words of Jesus: **I am with you all days until the end of time** (Matt. 28: 20) carry more than the subtle and symbolic meanings that theologians of *intellectualism*, but not of *common sense* attribute to them.⁽³⁵⁾

Christians live with more than just the memory and the words of the one who died for us many years ago. He is still truly living and *present in our midst* at every moment, aiding us in the face of demands so often superhuman against our faith. It is necessary to visit the Blessed Sacrament very often!



But first we must be very good.

How well this is known.

How well it is forgotten!

Nothing could be older; nothing newer. In the face of the present coronation of all human values (even to the point of holding up dissipation as virtue), the burying of the doctrine of original sin, and teaching programs hostile to God, there comes this very plain **'We must be very good.'**

35. I cannot speak badly of all theologians; among other reasons, because of the words of St. Francis of Assisi, *You should honor and reverence all theologians and those who administer to you the most holy and divine words, since they administer life and spirit to you.* But there are theologians and theologians. If today all are administering spirit and life, it is hard to see it. I am afraid that neither the Church nor the faithful have any reason to thank some of these theologians.

In this period of darkness, these enlightening words remind us that we were not born good, but are called to become that way by daily effort. If we do not fight against the appetites of our flesh, we will be drawn fatally toward ruin. The flesh lusts against the spirit; and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another . . . Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh . . . If you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.

(Gal. 5: 16-17; Rom. 8: 13)

It is true that God has loved us from the beginning. And it is true that God continues to love us, even as we are, in spite of what we are. But it is also true that He loves us with the expectation and the requirement that we stop being what we are to become what He wants us to be. And He wants us to become images and likenesses of His Son made man. (Rom. 8: 29) We alone among all the creatures of the universe have a destiny of *change*. We are creatures called to become different from what we are, that is, to progress into new beings.

Looking on life with a Christian mentality, this obligation of basic change from within is the grand task of the human being.

And so this requirement for *change* (of mind, spirit, style of living and acting) has always been the first chapter in every faithful proclamation of the message of salvation.

This was the way Christ began;⁽³⁶⁾ this was the way the apostles started out; and this was the way that St. Paul, standing in the Areopagus at Athens, called out his great announcement of salvation to the world of the gentiles.⁽³⁷⁾

36. In his first preaching came forth the repeated demand to *do penance* and to believe . . . as has been indicated.

Many have lessened this *do penance*, confusing it with *doing penances*. This is not the same. Considering the original Greek terms of the Evangelists, we should recognize that *to do penance* is a complete process of renovation and change of soul from the inside. This process goes through three stages:

1. Breaking away from past sins and giving them up by means of repentance.
2. Expiation of past sins through the practice or acceptance of painful and difficult things.
3. Replacing the regretted past with a new and better life.

37. And God, having closed His Eyes at the time of ignorance, now declares unto men, that all should everywhere do penance.

Because He has appointed a day wherein He will judge the world with justice, by the Man Whom He has appointed; giving faith to all, by raising Him up from the dead.

(Acts 17: 30-31)

The obligation we have to become better, to become **very good** as the girls said at Garabandal, should motivate all our actions.



**And if we do not do this,
a punishment will come upon us.**

God will wait a long time, but not forever. Now He respects our position of freedom; but let no one dream that it will end without punishment! In the end, the *reckoning* . . . And to each one what he deserves. Infinite mercy gives eternal happiness; infinite justice . . . eternal pain.

But God does not have to wait until the end of time to punish. His justice has inflicted punishments on the world in the past, and there will be more punishments in the future. It is stated to us in this message, *gravely and definitely*, that the world is heading toward one.



**Already the cup is filling up;
and if we do not change . . .**

The mysterious cup symbolizes the *patience* of God looking down on the disobedience of His creatures. When the last drop of our sins fills the vessel, the workings of justice will be set in motion. Garabandal points to the time of destiny mentioned in the last book of the Bible, the book that tells of the consummation of the world:

And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, dressed in pure and white linen, with golden cinctures fastened around their waists.

And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden cups filled with the wrath of God Who lives forever and ever . . .

The seventh angel poured out his cup into the air, and a voice shouted from the sanctuary, "The end has come."

Then there were bolts of lightening and peals of thunder and a great earthquake, such as never has been seen since men were upon the earth.

(Apocalypse 15: 6-7; 16: 17-18)

The girls spoke about the cup, hardly understanding what it meant. During the explanations of the message that the Virgin gave them as the summer went by, she showed them a great cup into which drops of dark fluid, resembling blood, were spilling. When the Virgin spoke of the cup and the chastisement that was drawing near, her expression darkened and she noticeably lowered her voice.

Thus on that night of October 18th, Garabandal began to reveal itself in its great scope as a prophetic warning. We are now proceeding toward a time of extremely grave decisions on the part of God.

As the consequences will be terrible for many, He mercifully warns us so that we might find a way of avoiding these consequences. And there is only one way, the way that Christ proclaimed in the Gospel: **If you do not do penance, you will all perish likewise.** (Luke 13: 1-5)

From now on, a gigantic counterplay of mercy and justice on a divine scale will forever hover on the faraway horizon, predicted by the astounding story of Garabandal.

The attentive silence that had accompanied the reading of the message was broken almost as soon as the paper containing it was put away. A murmur rippled through the crowd as the message was transmitted to those who had not heard it well, and then . . . On seeing that everything indicated that *that was all*, a gale of disappointment more frigid than the storm swept over the crowd, and somber darkness deluged many hearts. What they had so much hoped for had not happened. And this message alone was not worth all this trouble.⁽³⁸⁾ Garabandal was a failure. It was finished. How stupid we had been to come up to this place!

Certainly only the publication of the message had been announced for that October 18th, and the imagination of spectacular prodigies was strictly the people's idea. But what might have happened if everyone had abided exactly by the instructions of the Apparition? What might have happened without the *most prudent* urgings of the Commission that forced Fr. Valentín and the girls to proceed in a way not in accordance with the directions received? It is not for men to impose their standards on God.

No one plays games with the Almighty.

Oh, you men who ridicule humble compliance and docility, and think yourselves to be more intelligent than the Virgin! How you burden yourselves with ideas that you consider *prudent*!

The descent from the Pines, made under the lash of the rain and tempest wind, accompanied with bitter disillusion, was even harsher than the ascent. What María Herrero describes must have been felt by all the three thousand present:

«Confused and in a foul mood, I went down that hill of mud, stones and ruts without seeing anything, helping as I could any person in difficulty, under a rain that came back relentlessly.»

One of those who most felt the effects of the *test* on that night was Father Ramón María Andreu. He had been favored more than others, and so he was also tested more.

For a long time he made his way from one spot to

Darkness Descends Upon Many Minds

38. «All those who came that day expected to see a great miracle, like the miracle of the sun at Fatima. It was not that way, but a general message, that today has much importance. At least, I so understand it and believe it.» (Juan Alvarez Seco)

the next — through the water that gushed down the hill in torrents everywhere — amid the crowd going up and down; he was drifting like a shipwreck:⁽³⁹⁾

«Suddenly, violently, an intense bitterness swept over me. It was a mixture of painful impressions and depressing feelings. It seemed that everything had come apart. As if everything had collapsed on me. I had just gone into a moral desert. The past swarmed over me . . . All that remained clear and definite was the death of my poor brother Father Luis a little more than two months before.

Afterwards, with what had happened at the Pines, my state of mental agony got worse. I believe that never during my whole life have I known such desolation . . . I felt a violent desire to go away. Far away! To America! And I said to myself, *What are you doing here? These girls are nothing more than poor sick children. And all this is a pathetic comedy of backward villagers.*

I stopped for a few minutes. Looking up, I searched the heavens. I would have cried out for the production of the great miracle that the girls had certainly never predicted for that October 18th. Nothing was happening . . . And my disillusion was complete.

I changed locations, and again I remained stationary for a length of time and I cannot recall. I was as if unconscious; I was only aware of the continual footsteps of the crowd about me, who passed around me on one side or the other; the flashlights came and went in the darkness . . . Suddenly someone flashed a beam of light in my face. A friend⁽⁴⁰⁾ who was coming down had just recognized me and wanted to give me his impression right away, *This is marvelous . . . It's astounding . . .*

I let him speak, answering in my mind, *You'll*

39. It seems that the *test* had already begun before the reading of the message, when the multitude was gathering around the Pines:

«Midway in that painful ascent, I felt myself truly lost. In the night, in the middle of that mountain covered with shadows, a tremendous pain came into my soul, an unsupportable feeling of solitude and a conviction of the ridiculousness that all this represented.» (Fr. Ramón)

40. This was one of the Fontanedas, the family from Aguilar de Campoo with whom Fr. Ramón had come so many times.

understand later! His enthusiasm hurt me; it almost made me angry.

We went down to the village together. I think that I had stayed on the side of the hill at least an hour, seeing flashlights going up and down like a nightmare.

I sheltered myself for a while in a house so as not to get wet. But I felt so discouraged that everything was bothering me. Because of this I went outside and directed my steps to the house where they were waiting for me. I had a need for familiar faces in order not to feel so desolate . . . A little after that Loli's sister Amaliuca, somewhat younger than she, arrived.



Amaliuca on left with sisters
Loli in center and Sari on right

Signaling to me and two other persons,⁽⁴¹⁾ she said, *Loli says that you should come. You . . . you . . . and you . . .*

I had no desire or intention to go. Finally I decided, thinking, *Well, to visit the sick is still*

41. These men were Mr. Fontaneda and Mr. Fontibre, friends of Fr. Ramón, from Aguilar de Campoo.

a work of mercy. I assure you that though I went, it was with the idea of saying a final goodbye to her and this whole thing.

We came to Ceferino's house and we went upstairs. There were about a dozen people there. Loli, in the midst of them, appeared happy — I would say almost joyful. I looked for a place and began thinking about the inconsistency of that young girl and the naïvety of those surrounding her . . .

Then she came toward me and said smiling, *Sit down.*

She pointed to some kind of hamper. Like a robot I obeyed and she came over to sit beside me. I believe that I will never in my life forget the confidential conversation that followed . . .

— *There is one among you who doesn't believe . . . Do you know who he is?*

— Yes, I know. Do you know too?

— *Certainly. The Virgin told me.*

— When?

— *A little while ago, when we were coming down from the Pines.*

— Well, tell us who it is.

— *No, I don't dare. If it were one of the other two . . .*

— It is I all right. I don't believe in anything.

An understanding smile shone in Loli's child-like eyes:

— *The Virgin told us, "Father doubts everything, and suffers much. Call him and tell him not to doubt anymore — that it is really I, the Virgin, who is appearing here. And in order for him to believe better, tell him: When you went up, you went up in joy; when you came down, you came down in sorrow."*

I was astounded, staring at the girl.

She added, *She spoke much about you to Conchita.*

I got up. I saw in a confused way that the time for farewells had not yet come . . . I took the arms of my two friends who looked at me without comprehending and asked me, *Hey, what's this she said? What's going on?*

I pushed them toward the door, saying, *Let's go right now to Conchita's house!*

In spite of the lateness of the hour, Aniceta welcomed us.

— Can I be with Conchita?

— *She is already in bed; but you can go up if you want.*

I went up with my two friends. Conchita was in bed with her cousin Luciuca, a year younger than she. As soon as she saw me, without waiting for me to speak, she said with a smile:

— *Are you happy? Or are you still sad?*

— I hardly know. Loli told me that the Virgin talked at length to you about me.

— *At least for a quarter of an hour.*

— And what did she say?

— *I don't know what I can say.*

— Then I will be the same as I was before.



Conchita knew the priest's secret thoughts.

Conchita smiled. Well, there is something I can say. When you went up, you went up with joy; when you came down, you came down in sorrow . . . She told me everything that you were

thinking . . . And the locations where you were thinking those things. And that you were thinking, "Now I'm going to America." And at another location you were thinking, "I don't want to know more about so-and-so or about so-and-so." And you were suffering much. She told me to say this to you and to advise you that all this has happened so that in the future, remembering all this, you won't doubt again.

As anyone might surmise, I was speechless.

On the following day, on a detailed photograph of the Pines and its surroundings, Conchita pointed out with her finger all the places where I had been and what I had been thinking there! I can assure you that she was not mistaken in anything.»⁽⁴²⁾



"They began to look toward the Pines—since the Vision was coming from there."

Not everyone was given grace like Fr. Ramón to throw off so quickly the darkness of disillusion. While he was in the village having those ineffable experiences, the tremendous multitude was descending in hellish conditions down the difficult trails from Garabandal.

«When things ended at the Pines, my friends insisted on returning immediately and in a hurry to Santander, without staying longer in the village» — María Herrero tells us — «And so I

missed something that would have been marvelous to see.

As the girls came down from the Pines with the Civil Guard protecting them from the crowds, they suddenly went into ecstasy on arriving at the Cuadro. Turning around, they began to look toward the Pines — since the Vision was coming from there — and going backwards, they went down to the village. I believe it all ended in front of the church doors. I was told that it was a real marvel.»

Conchita recorded the episode:

**After reading it, (the message) we went down toward the village.
And at the calleja, in the place that is**

called the Cuadro, the Virgin appeared to us.

And the Virgin said to me, Now Fr. Ramón María Andreu is having doubts.

And I was very surprised.

And she told me where he had begun to doubt, and what he had thought, and everything.

Returning now to the report of María Herrero:

«I came down with the crowd, and like many others was part displeased and part stunned. I didn't hear, as on going up, the groups reciting the rosary or singing hymns.

When coming down from the village, I began to feel more afraid. An avalanche of people was coming down in a rush, full speed, sliding in the mud and pushing. So that nothing would be missing, a tempest was unleashed like I've never seen. Thunder roared, rumbling through the valleys; and lightening flashed without ceasing,

42. Fr. Ramón has told about his personal experiences on October 18th at different times with the inclusion of different details. Here is what he told the editor of the French edition of Conchita's diary as recorded on tape:

«After that»—he said several years later, during a conference at Palma de Mallorca—«I remained for several days with a terrible impression, like a sleepwalker . . . At the time when I felt myself the most alone in all my life, I was in fact totally known, even to my most hidden thoughts; all of my thoughts had been very easily known to the girls by means of the mysterious person that they claimed to see.»



“In the place that is called the Cuadro, the Virgin appeared to us.”



"No one believes us anymore."

blinding us with light. How many times I invoked St. Michael!

As I was slipping and losing my balance, and feared that the people were going to trample on me, I sat down on the ground at the side of the road, overwhelmed with terror. Two men, whose faces I wasn't able to recognize in the dark, each took one of my arms, and so I was able to get to Cossío. I don't know who they were; but with all my heart I say, *May God repay them!* I had to make the last kilometer barefoot over that quagmire of loose stones; I had torn my shoes and had to throw them away. Nevertheless, believe it a miracle or not, I didn't suffer the least injury to my feet; they remained as unharmed as if I'd been walking on top of a carpet.

When I found myself finally in my quarters at Santander at a very late hour of the night, I wept inconsolably. It seemed that Garabandal was finished forever.

I couldn't doubt the truth of the apparitions that I had witnessed; I'd have let myself die to defend them. What then happened on that disheartening October 18th? Had we let the Virgin down, and would she never return? Very

probably! The thought tortured me, and thus that night was for me a real *dark night*, perhaps the only one with regard to Garabandal.»

The general thinking and fear that October 18th would be *the death of Garabandal* came to such a point that two days later, on October 20th Jacinta was heard to say in ecstasy, «*No one believes us anymore, do you know? . . . So you can perform a very great miracle in order that many will believe again.*» The response of the Virgin was to smile and say, «*They will believe.*»⁽⁴³⁾

* * *

Dr. Ortiz expressed in a few words his experiences on that 18th of October in Garabandal:

«In spite of the climate that existed — so conducive to suggestion, since the majority of the people, under illusions, were hoping for a great miracle — I could not discover a single case of such suggestion. This is a very important fact, if one takes into account that some of my colleagues, together with members of the

43. On a lesser scale, during the apparitions of Lourdes, a similar disbelief occurred when the spectators saw Bernadette Soubirous, in one of her trances, begin to eat grass and to wash in the mud. Almost all thought that she was disturbed.

Commission, were maintaining that this dealt with the *phenomena of group suggestion*.

Many of those who had gone up to the village, when a miracle did not take place — as they had imagined it would, although it had never been foretold by the girls — left completely discouraged and even in bad moods. A woman of the village, Angelita, Maximina's sister-in-law, heard a visitor shouting with indignation:

— *The girls to the butcher! And their parents with them!*

— *Here, here* — answered the woman — *You are the one that should be burned! What telegram was sent for you to come here!*»

* * *

María Herrero, whose report we have used so much to give a description of that unforgettable day, ended her account like this:

«I cannot tell anything further with accuracy; but I am sure that the 18th of October was full of interesting episodes that are more or less unexplainable. But no one can doubt one thing: that the angels of the Lord watched over each one of us so that, as a psalm says, our feet would not be dashed against the stones of

44. The *Warning* is one of the great prophetic predictions of Garabandal, one of the sealed books of this extraordinary history. We will speak about it when it comes time; now we are still recounting 1961, the first year of the events.

the roads . . . I believe everyone returned safely to his home. I at least have not known of any accident. And that seems to me to be a very great miracle.

Everything about that day has remained deeply imprinted in my memory, giving the picture of a day of disillusion and of penance, a rather pale picture of what the day of the *Warning*⁽⁴⁴⁾ could be, since everything in the atmosphere seemed there to test us. It really was a day of purification. Never has anything struck me with such fear of the Lord as what happened on that day.»

* * * * *

It is certain that October 18th, 1961, so long awaited, then coming with a sign so different from what was expected, is one of the stellar moments in the great mystery of Garabandal. A key date! A day that goes back to Mount Sinai. (Exodus 19: 16)

On it came the first public warning from heaven through Garabandal.

With this began a purification in the ranks of the *followers*, the first pruning of numerous easy enthusiasts.

October 18th, 1961 as it was in Garabandal calls to mind the writing of an ancient prophet of Israel:

**Sound the trumpet in Sion,
Sound an alarm on My holy mountain.
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
Because the day of the Lord is coming,
Because it is nigh at hand . . .
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of whirlwinds and blackness . . .** (Joel 2: 1-2)



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Garabandal's First Winter

From my schooldays a passage from a play still remains etched in my mind:

*In winter God disposes
that mysteries be fulfilled,
and seeds take root,
and grow strong under the ground,
to develop in such a way
as to bring forth fruit later on.*

It appears that God also had His *winter* plans for Garabandal . . . Under the frigid inclemency of the wintry season, He aimed to give silent root to the many things that He had sown. In this way, through a period of *tests* and week after week of lethargy, He protected and favored the slow germination that would bring forth the most luscious fruits. The appearance of the meadows in winter is bleak; but that is the time when mysteries are accomplished in the womb of mother earth.

With October 18th, 1961 began the first *winter* in the history of the great events of Garabandal, a winter which goes beyond the simple meteorological extent.

The icy wind of disillusion from October 18th had cut down and scattered many enthusiasts and well-wishers of Garabandal. And now the publication of a new «*Nota*» from the bishop of Santander arrived with telling effect.

From Warning to Discredit

The chief Apostolic Administrator of the diocese, Bishop Doroteo Fernández, with a precipitation that we are not able to explain and which history will judge, immediately made the feeling of the Commission his own, and spread it to the four winds through a «*Nota Oficial*» published in the *Boletín del Obispado* in November:

Most beloved sons:

It has been some time since you were told what our attitude must be in the face of the

public rumors that attribute to the Most Holy Virgin certain marvelous events, especially revelations, apparitions, oral locutions, and other more or less extraordinary signs.

We⁽¹⁾ would like to see in all of you the highest discretion and prudence with which the Church judges the supernaturalness of such phenomena. Powerful is the Lord, Who gives us revelation when it pleases Him to manifest Himself, and speaks to us when it is in accordance with His goodness. But it would be a great lack of wisdom in us to accept every wind of human opinion as coming from the Lord. When God wishes to speak, He does it in terms that are clear and unequivocal. When He wishes to tell us something, His words do not allow tergiversation (evasion) or obscurity. And it is the Church founded by Jesus Christ — not by public opinion, and much less by any particular person — that is competent to judge definitively on such allegedly supernatural events. Let no one arrogate and attribute to himself functions and powers which God has not entrusted to him, for such a one would be a usurper and an intruder.

In what concerns the events that have been happening at San Sebastián de Garabandal, a town in our diocese, you should be told that in the fulfillment of our pastoral duty and to avoid the unfounded and bold interpretations of those who venture to give a definitive judgment where the Church does not believe it still prudent to do so; also to guide souls, we have to come to declare the following:

1. It is clear that the above-mentioned apparitions, visions, locutions and revelations up to now cannot be presented or held to have a serious foundation for truth and authenticity.

2. Priests should absolutely abstain from whatever would contribute to create confusion among the Christian people. Thus they should cautiously avoid, as far as it depends on them, the organization of visits or pilgrimages to the place referred to.

1. The use of the word *we* in place of *I* is what could be called an authoritarian plural or a royal plural. Up until recently it was the standard form used, almost obligatory, in documents from the ecclesiastical hierarchies. I point this out, since readers may wonder at the use of the expression.



"Do not allow yourselves to be seduced."

3. *Priests should instruct the faithful with wisdom and charity concerning the true feeling of the Church in these matters. They should make them understand that our faith does not require such aids of supposed revelations and miracles to maintain it.*

We believe that God has revealed Himself to us and that the Church teaches us: in this category belong the clear and authentic miracles of Jesus Christ. He gives them to us as a proof of His doctrine, to which there is nothing more to add. If He — by Himself, or by means of His Most Holy Mother — wishes to speak to us, we should be attentive in listening to His words and saying like Samuel: "Speak Lord, your servant hears."

4. *Priests likewise should instruct the faithful that the best disposition for hearing the voice of God is a perfect, complete and humble submission to the teachings of the Church; and that no one can hear with fruit the voice of God in heaven if he rejects with pride the doctrine of Mother Church, who welcomes us and sanctifies us on this earth.*

5. *As for you beloved faithful, do not allow yourselves to be seduced by any wind of doctrine. Hear with submission and trust the teachings of your priests, placed at your side to be teachers of the truth in the Church.*

I know that you have been impatiently waiting, and that confusion has burdened many minds in the face of the events that have recently occurred. I would wish to bring to your conscience the peace and tranquility that is the basic foundation of a calm and rational judgment. Let no one take away the precious gift of peace that rests in God and "do not be alarmed, either by the spirit, or by words, or by writing," as St. Paul said to the Thessalonians.

Having these our sentiments, most dearly beloved sons, let us hope that the Virgin, whom we hail under the title of Sedes Sapientiae — Seat of Wisdom — will enlighten us to know everything that is useful for the glory of her Son and our salvation.

**Doroteo,
Apostolic Administrator**

The *timeliness* of this «Nota» could be disputed; but I think that no one would deny two excellent qualities in it: the pastoral zeal that inspired it and the general tone of discretion that it shows.

With all this everyone can see too — without sufficient cause in my judgment — it increases the negative attitude against the events of Garabandal. It advances from «*Nothing obliges us to affirm the supernaturalness of the events*» in the first «Nota» to stating in the second «Nota» that «*The apparitions, visions, locutions, and revelations up to now cannot be presented or held to have a serious foundation for truth and authenticity.*»

And the Apostolic Administrator had not personally seen or observed anything. He has based his opinion completely on the Commission, which also had not seen or observed the matter sufficiently.

Furthermore, it had not taken the precaution of proceeding with a legitimate investigation, questioning in an adequate manner the girls and the main witnesses: the girls' families, the village priest, and the honest people who closely followed the affair.⁽²⁾

It seems proper to have official regulations of a disciplinary character to avoid possible abuses or excesses. But why was there such a hurry to pronounce, even though provisionally, upon the character of events that were still going on and still had not been adequately studied? We can remember that at Lourdes and also at Fatima, the local diocesan chanceries waited until the end of the events —and until an authentic canonical process was concluded — before speaking out officially on the

2. What I am stating in this paragraph has already been shown in the preceding chapters.



“Nothing obliges us to affirm the supernaturalness of the events.”

character of what had occurred.⁽³⁾

In the case of Garabandal there has always been an extreme rush on the part of the officials to speak out about what was going on . . . *That* was rather obscure . . . *That* was not convincing . . . *That* gave reasons for serious distrust . . . All *that* could be explained naturally . . . *That*, super-naturally, was nothing . . .

Well, let us return to the second and last «Nota» of Bishop Doroteo Fernández.⁽⁴⁾ I have previously recognized the two values that it seems to hold: good pastoral zeal and a general tone of prudence; but I ought equally to point out some things that take away its value:

- The ambiguous use of the term *Church*, leading many people to mistake the chancery for the Church, as if the Church were confined to the chancery . . . as if all faithful Catholics were not also the Church, the same Church as the chancery, although with a different function.

- The usage of a similar ambiguity in appropriating to the chancery the exclusive right to a *definitive judgment*, thus excluding all individual judgments . . . as if in the Church of God those who are not of the chancery were not entitled to make a judgment on matters of opinion; that is to say, on matters upon which the ultimate authority has not pronounced an absolute decision.

- The bishop speaks of usurpation and intrusion . . . but to deny the legitimate rights of other persons, and to attempt to take away the rights that legitimately belong to them, is also usurpation and intrusion.

- There is also in the «Nota» a third discrepancy: placing in front of the faithful certain truths so that they would easily be led to believe that the diocesan chancery was *the Church*, and because of that to accept what the chancery said with «*perfect, complete and humble submission*.» This type of submission is due only to teachings that explicitly and unquestionably come from the

Higher Magisterium. At the diocesan level, the charisma of infallibility does not apply; at the low level of a bishop, the final word in questions and teachings of the faith cannot be made. As a consequence, in front of the episcopal dictates — the dictates of one single bishop — we can be called upon for practical obedience and respect, but in no way are we required to give «*perfect, complete, and humble submission*» in our way of thinking . . .

- The «Nota» also says that the priests are placed at the side of the faithful as «*teachers of truth in the Church*». That is a very important part of their high mission; but it can be observed that they do not always fulfill it . . . We should accept them as such teachers when they give us the teaching and doctrine *of the Church*; but we do not owe them the same submission and trust when, concerning other matters, they give us their own *personal opinions*.

- Finally, it is impossible to accept this solemn double statement: «*When God wishes to speak, He does it in clear and unequivocal terms; when He wishes to tell us something, His words do not allow tergiversation or obscurity.*»⁽⁵⁾

It is hard to understand how a bishop, and moreover one who was an expert in Scripture as Bishop Fernández was, could sign his name to this. If anything appears clear in the Bible, it is that God is not accustomed to speaking like this . . . His words end in being clear and unmistakable to those well disposed souls who search wholeheartedly and apply themselves to meditation on His word, even

5. God does not ordinarily speak in the way that Bishop Fernández mentions in his «Nota» in order to permit us to walk always on the difficult but meritorious path of faith. How difficult faith is!

With regard to this, very frequently things are at the same time:

1. Sufficiently clear so that souls who are basically good end up seeing them.
2. Sufficiently obscure so that those who always find reasons for not believing — souls with bad dispositions — may not see.

For judgment I came into this world;
That those who are blind, may see;
And those who see, may become blind. John 9:39)

3. In Lourdes, the ecclesiastical verdict came after four years of waiting (1858-1862); in Fatima, after thirteen (1917-1930).

4. Months later, Bishop Doroteo Fernández was reassigned from Santander — where, according to what had been said, he hoped to remain as the titular and residential bishop — to Badajoz, where he was the Apostolic Administrator until 1971.

The same miracles of Our Lord, that Bishop Doroteo points to in his «Nota» as the prototype of *clear and authentic* supernatural actions, do not have a result so *clear* for everyone . . . This can be seen in those trying today to *demyth* the Gospel, finding in it the stone that crushes them to powder as Scripture states.

though it is obscure and difficult. But the sayings of God begin almost always in the form of an insinuation or mysterious call that upsets, and even serves to cause the badly disposed to stumble, and because of this is the cause of the fall, and of the resurrection of many. (Luke 2:34)

The words of God to men are ordinarily a process of progressive communication that only becomes sufficiently clear in the end, and this only to souls with good will. It is like the coming of light at dawn; some hazy beginnings and dim rays that do not allow the distance to be viewed or shapes and profiles to be made out, going on to become the full splendor that shows us everything around us in detail.

— «*When God wishes to speak, He does it in clear and unequivocal terms.*»

Yes, like the ancient prophets in the Old Testament. Read any one of them, and you will see how clearly and unequivocally they are understood from the first reading . . . Yes, as in many other passages of the last prophecy of the New Testament, the Apocalypse, where whole chapters are still waiting a substantial clarification.

Jesus Himself, the Word from the Father, communicated certain things with immediate and crystal clearness; but in many others . . . How did He answer Nicodemus? (John 3: 1-14) Or the woman of Sicar? (John 4: 4-14) Or those hearing His parables of the kingdom of heaven? (Matthew 13: 10-15) Or those who were listening to Him in the synagogue at Cappharnum on the day following the multiplication of bread? (John 6: 60-66) Or how did He answer those who surrounded Him at the end of His life, with the vehement demand: **How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are really the Messiah that we are waiting for, tell us one time plainly.** (John 10: 24)⁽⁶⁾

6. Anyone want another example? Here is one described in Matthew 11: 2-15 and in Luke 7: 18. John the Baptist called two of his disciples and sent them to Jesus with this question, **Are you he who is to come or do we look for another?**

The question was stated in clear and unmistakable terms to put Jesus in the position of affirming Himself openly as the Messiah or the Christ. But how did Jesus answer?

He put before those sent a series of prodigies saying to them: **Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the gospel is preached to the poor. And fortunate is the one who is not scandalized in me.**

This was no *clear* and unmistakable answer, but a very

— «*When He wishes to tell us something, His words do not allow tergiversation or obscureness.*»

Yes, because of this, in the Church there have never appeared heretics and teachers of error, who always try to base their doctrines on texts of the Word of God . . .

What the bishop says in his second note should be compared with what St. Peter wrote centuries ago in his second epistle (3: 15-16):

Think of Our Lord's patience as your chance to be saved. Our brother Paul, who is so dear to us, told you this when he wrote to you with the wisdom that is his special gift. He always writes like this when he deals with this sort of subject, and this makes some points in his letter hard to understand; these are the points that unlearned and unbalanced people distort, in the same way as they distort the rest of scripture — to their own perdition.

It seems then that the Bishop of Santander errs notably when he writes, or puts his signature beneath the statement that «*When God wishes to speak, He does it in clear and unmistakable terms; when He wishes to tell us something, His words do not allow tergiversation or obscureness.*»

If the bishop and his commission members wish to use this double statement as a doctrinal basis to arrive at the disqualification of the events of Garabandal, since all the things there are not very clear, it would have to be said that the disqualifiers do not shine like brilliant stars.

Its mysterious and obscure beginning can be a good sign in favor of Garabandal, as it would make us see Garabandal in the pattern that God is accustomed to use when He unveils Himself to men. Only at the end of a certain process will what He wishes to tell us become sufficiently clear; and then not to everyone, but only to those who do not obstruct His many mercies; who do not **prefer the darkness to the light.** (John 3: 19)

mysterious one. It was sufficiently clear so that certain souls would understand it, and sufficiently obscure so that those without a good disposition toward the light would be confused.

How significant is the final sentence, **Fortunate is the one who is not scandalized in me.** Or according to a more literal translation from the Greek, **Fortunate is the one whom I do not cause to stumble.** Evidently, in the works and in the sayings of Jesus, the badly disposed are able to find a cause or basis for turning away and being repelled.



"The girls were walking in ecstasy."

Confusing Affairs

Not all those who are in favor of Garabandal journey without hurdles on the road to its destiny.

We have already seen what happened to Fr. Ramón when he returned to the village after the unexpected death of his brother, and what further happened to him during the somber hours of October 18th. María Herrero de Gallardo experienced the same on that day. And it was seen what Fr. Lucio Rodrigo of the University of Comillas experienced . . . But they were not the only ones. Here is a report from Plácido Ruiloba, the businessman from Santander:

«I had been struck by the first message of October 18th that spoke so seriously of the necessity of sacrifices and penance, since the cup was filling up and there would come upon us a great chastisement.

On thinking about this message — completely orthodox — my conscience was pricked, since I understood that we actually had a great need to be better . . . And I didn't lack the good will to attain this. Nevertheless, I was always attacked by doubts, and when I went up to Garabandal — a thing that I did frequently — I went in search of a possible negative aspect; not exactly because I had something against it, but in order to clear up the matter, with the purpose of evaluating the truth better.

Well then, on one of those days in the fall of 1961 — I don't remember the exact date — I came to the village greatly concerned about everything that was happening there . . . This was due to some negative thing that I had seen, and which I can't accurately recall now; I only know that it was tormenting me . . .

I came to the village at night — the days had shortened considerably — and on my arrival the girls were walking in ecstasy. I stayed purposely at a distant place, a place that was not accustomed to be the path of the girls' usual ecstatic marches. And constantly tortured by doubts, I began to say mentally, *Most Holy Virgin, the number of people who are coming*

to see this can be seen! And to think that, if it were a lie! . . . How much harm it could do! Our Lady, so that I can see that all that is happening is from you, while being far away as I am, I request that one of the girls come from where she is to give me the crucifix to kiss.

From the place where I had positioned myself behind the fountain, I could observe — without being noticed — many of the things that were happening. And so I noticed that the girls' ecstasies had ended, with the exception of Conchita who continued in ecstasy, whom I could see going toward her home, near the location of my hiding place. I saw perfectly how she went into it . . . And at the time I felt a tremendous disappointment in seeing that my prayer hadn't been heard, and that as a consequence my doubts had a basis.⁽⁷⁾

I was pondering over this bitterly, when suddenly I saw that the people who had entered the house were beginning to come out rapidly and behind them was the girl still in ecstasy. That surprised me, but I was having an intuition of what could be the reason. Conchita actually came right toward me, as always holding her head incredibly tilted backwards, which completely



7. Psychologically the actions and attitude of Mr. Ruiloba are easily understandable; but we ought to be aware, that not having received the sign that he desired, he could not conclude against the truth of what was happening there. We are certainly free to ask for *signs* from God . . . But He has no obligation to respond to our petitions, regardless of how reasonable they appear to us. If He does respond, He is to be thanked; if He does not, we should put our trust in Him without being upset.

In one way or another, by one means or another, we will not lack what is necessary to know what we should accept.

In Garabandal there was seen to a tremendous extent that attitude of mind that Jesus mentioned in His public life: *Unless you continually see signs and prodigies, you do not believe.* (John 4: 48)



"She gave me the crucifix to kiss."

prevented her from seeing what was in front and around her. She came to the place where I was hidden; she stopped in front of me, and she gave me the crucifix to kiss three times!

The response was so clear that all my doubts disappeared . . . at least for a while.»

Mr. Ruiloba does well in adding that final remark, since it seems that doubts and questions continued to plague him for the slightest reason, although he had come to be more than most others a witness of the countless astonishing things at Garabandal.

«On another day — I remember that it was a foul night with torrential rain — Jacinta fell suddenly into ecstasy, and I volunteered to accompany her alone. I thought that I would have an occasion that way to make new and useful tests. A woman from the village had lent me a big umbrella. I opened it over Jacinta's head, and the two of us continued alone through the muddy streets . . . The arm with which I supported the umbrella was wrapped around the girl's shoulders, leaning lightly on them. I seemed to have her completely at my mercy, and thus she presented me with the best opportunity to make new tests about the reality of those trances, concerning which the most diverse doubts were assailing me.

I set out with the intention of leading her; I was *not going to permit her to lead me*. This seemed rather easy, since the girl couldn't see where she was walking because of the position of her head, the dark night, and the umbrella that I held low in order to block her view. On repeated occasions, using the arm that I had put around her shoulders, I attempted to lead her in this or that direction . . . It was all useless; without any violence it was she who irresistibly led me. It was obvious that, with her gaze upwards, in spite of the night, the rain and the umbrella, she continually saw something that I wasn't able to reach or prevent, something wondrous that held her and led her . . .

The ecstasy lasted a long time. The streets were hard to travel, and there came a time when I was extremely exhausted and could barely hold

up the umbrella. Then I closed it, although it continued to rain. But I didn't have the courage to leave the girl by herself . . . Shortly after closing the umbrella, I felt myself completely drenched, and water even oozed out of my shoes. On passing under a little light bulb — they had the smallest ones in the village streets — it appeared to my observation that the girl was completely dry. Amazed, I passed my hand three times over her shoulders and hair. True enough she was completely dry under the rainstorm, so that I dried my hand passing it through her hair, although the hand was very cold and wet.

I could swear the truth of this in front of the Holy Evangelists. And no one can suggest that I suffered a hallucination at the time . . . because I am much more susceptible to doubt than to delusions, of which I don't remember having had a single one during my life.»

This same man, so hard to satisfy with regard to believing unreservedly, was then able to witness another marvel. The weather continued bad — *«the village was all mud»* — and he went on the trail of an ecstasy that Jacinta, Loli and Conchita were having together. Conchita was marching between the other two and suddenly the crucifix, which she was carrying in her hands over her chest, fell . . . Nevertheless, the march of the three girls continued for some 25 or 30 meters farther on; then Conchita was heard to say, *«Oh! What should I pick up? Will you tell me where it is?»* Without changing their attitude, the three girls backed up to the point where the little crucifix had dropped.

«Conchita, while continuing to look upward, began to stoop down with her arm extended downwards. She stopped this movement when her hand was about a half meter from the ground . . . And all those who were there were able to see, overwhelmed with excitement, how the crucifix came out of the mud and rose up to the hand of the girl. She grasped it, and lifted it again to the level of her chest, holding it there devoutly in her two hands. Afterward they began their march, again.

As soon as the ecstasy had ended, I looked closely at Conchita's hands; and I was able to verify that neither in her hands nor on the crucifix could be found the slightest trace of mud.

I am willing to testify to this anywhere; and I think there are others willing to testify besides myself since there were several other people there who saw it as I did. I remember specifically a woman from Los Corrales in Buelna (Santander) named Daniela Cuenca.»

Speaking about all these things many years later with a friend from Santander, Mr. Ruiloba said this:

«Many were the signs that the Virgin gave me to dissipate my doubts; nevertheless, as you know well, and as Conchita predicted to me, I came afterwards to doubt more than ever, even to the point of not going up anymore to the village.»⁽⁸⁾

At times we are more demanding than the Apostle St. Thomas himself, and we want to be continually *touching* the miraculous action of God in order to believe in it.

And the words of God, in spite of all their clearness — at times at least, if not always — have confusing matters so that we do not lack meritorious tests.

One of the obscure matters or *negative* signs that contributed to the skeptical or *opposed* attitude against Garabandal were the feigned ecstasies.

8. This alludes to a period of doubts and general confusion, even denials — all the visionaries included — with regard to the events of Garabandal . . .

Conchita foretold it:

At the beginning of everything the Virgin told the four of us, Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz and myself,

— that we were going to contradict one another,

— that our parents would not get along with one another,

— and even that we would deny that we had seen the Virgin and the Angel . . .

It surprised us very much, obviously, that she said these things to us.

We have these words from Father Ramón Andreu, recorded on tape:

«Even at the beginning they — Loli and Jacinta — told me one day, *Listen Father, what does this mean that the Virgin told us, that there would come a time in which we would doubt that we had seen her and the Child . . .*

And furthermore that we would contradict one another, and that we would deny, that is, that we would say that we hadn't seen either the Virgin or the Child?»



“At the beginning of everything the Virgin told the four of us . . . that we would deny.”



"You faked an ecstasy."

Let us listen to Father José Ramón García de la Riva:

«I remember that during the early times in 1961, I was there one day in a state of consternation since, to my way of seeing it, Jacinta and Loli had pretended to be in ecstasy — at some time at least — in the trances during the day . . .

I became aware of this since there was a youth with a good sense of humor in our group who made everyone laugh, *including the visionaries*. Furthermore, if he told the girls to turn to the left, and I would say the opposite, the girls would always listen to my advice. My companion was amazed. He couldn't have been aware of how I was hurt by what I was observing. He finally asked me, *How did you know that?* I said to myself, *If you'd pay more attention, you'd understand.*

After the ecstasy, the two visionaries and I were at Mari Cruz' house. She was sitting on her bed with a cold. Then when they expected it the least, I told them point blank:

Today you faked an ecstasy.

Loli became red as a beet and hid her face in her hands, her elbows leaning on her knees. All she could say was, *Oh! What a thing!*

Jacinta started crying and said to me, *I'm going to tell my mother that you don't believe that we are seeing the Virgin.*

— *It isn't that*, I said to them. *Yes, I believe that you see the Virgin; but right now you have pretended to be in ecstasy . . . Because of your age, that doesn't have too much importance, since you aren't aware of the harm that you can cause. But suppose that some day a theologian or an important doctor would come here to study the events. And if he would see you — as I have just seen you — pretending an ecstasy, and if he couldn't come later, what impression would he take away? And what report would he make?*

Mari Cruz' mother also scolded them for their conduct.

Three months later I was with Loli. It was then possible to verify that the girls had sometimes feigned ecstasies. I said to the girl, *Now then, have you been faking or not?*

Laughing, she answered, *Do you know what Conchita said that day when you left Mari Cruz' house? "What a rascal! How he caught us!"*

Conchita speaks of these faked ecstasies in her diary. She writes: **We did not fake all of them**, which allows it to be supposed that some of them were faked.⁹ She confidentially recounted to me one of the false ecstasies for which *God punished her*, according to what she told me, for on coming down from the Pines, she had such a terrible fall that she thought she *was going to die of pain*. *I supported the suffering as well as I could*, she added. *And I thought that no one noticed it. Then the Virgin came for real. And then I was truly in ecstasy.*

She told me then that they only pretended when there were trusted people and residents of the village present. And also, that they had only done it when they knew for certain that the Virgin was going to come later, like a half hour

9. Our friend Fr. de la Riva is mistaken here. Conchita's actual text does not say this, although it seems to say it, but something very different. It will be shown later on.



"We never faked the entire ecstasy."

before the apparition. And that the Virgin was accustomed to punish them by coming later than that time. And that she always reproached them.»

The text from Conchita's diary is this:

At times the three of us wanted to be together. *(she, Jacinta and Loli)*

As our parents didn't allow us to be out of the house at night, sometimes when we went outside after the rosary — having already had two calls — we looked upwards as if we were seeing the Virgin.

And so we went together down the street with our parents and the people.

And later, the Virgin came and we were together.

**We always ended up seeing the Virgin.
We never faked the entire ecstasy.**

From the preceding, this is clear:

● That there are *obscure matters* about Garabandal which are more than just subjective opinions and pertain to the actual facts themselves.

● That the last matter that we have mentioned is mainly or almost exclusively the fault of the girls, who at various times treated with levity some-

thing that merited tremendous respect. Because of this, they are deserving of rebuke. But we should take this into account: that they did not suspect the importance of what they were doing, having come to such familiarity with the mystery that they easily were able to fall into the mistaken belief that it was *theirs*, that they could almost play with it. Here was fulfilled the dictum, *familiarity breeds contempt*.⁽¹⁰⁾

What is very clear is that these rare and isolated *black spots* cannot be balanced against the fantastic display of proofs and testimonies in favor of the supernatural authenticity of the events at Garabandal *as a whole*.

Although this does not have a definite relation with the preceding, I am putting here what Conchita wrote in her diary following this:

When we were together, when one of us lost her shoe, the Virgin would say to the other: *Put her shoe on.*

And one of us would put the shoe on the other.

And when we were alone, if we lost our shoe, we went the whole apparition without it.

And at the end, the Virgin would tell us where the shoe was outside of us.⁽¹¹⁾

10. It appears that an *obscure matter* resulted for some because the girls sought to avoid the questions with which they were often assailed by the inquisitive. Besides the annoyance of such questioning and the outright imprudence of so many, the attitude of the girls could have been brought on by what St. Therese of the Child Jesus wrote in her autobiography, as a result of having confided to some people — there was no other solution — the marvelous intervention of the Virgin to cure her of the unusual disease that she suffered when ten years old:

"As I had sensed, my happiness was going to vanish, changing to sorrow. The remembrance of the ineffable grace that I had received was for me a true interior pain for four years . . . In the waiting room at Carmel they questioned me about the grace that I received, asking me if the Virgin was carrying the Infant Jesus, if she was very resplendent, if . . . These questions troubled me and made me suffer. I was only able to say this, *The Most Holy Virgin appeared very beautiful and she smiled at me*. Only her face impressed me. Seeing that the sisters were imagining almost anything, anguish came upon me in thinking that I had lied . . . Only in heaven will I be able to say what I suffered."

(History of a Soul, end of Chapter III)

11. There are many testimonies from the spectators that confirm what Conchita said here. Those watching the ecstasies could not intervene in what was occurring in the *other world* of the trances.



In our apparitions, we asked the Virgin to perform a miracle.



And she didn't say anything to us; she smiled.



And we told her:
Perform it so that the people will believe, since no one believes.

And she smiled.

Charming details, which indicate that a real mother was speaking with her children.

Letters in the Wintertime

In spite of the current disappointment flowing out from October 18th, people continued to go up to Garabandal. The flame had not smoldered out in everyone's heart, and the steady flow of remarkable phenomena was continuing.

We have presented some, but we can speak of many more. For example, an ecstasy occurred slightly after October 15th during which the girls descended a stairway backwards and almost upside down . . . and made their way on their knees through puddles of water that covered the streets without getting the least bit wet, as many eye-witnesses could observe.

A memorable date was November 4th, and still more so, the 18th of the same month.⁽¹²⁾

On November 4th the ecstasies began at eight o'clock in the morning. This was primarily because the Virgin had ordered the girls to get up every day early in the morning to say a rosary at dawn in the *calleja*. No one could understand better than Our Lady what was entailed in getting up so early during the winter season for those four normal young girls, prone to sleeping in like all young children. But she asked it for the express purpose of aiding poor sinners this way.⁽¹³⁾ (The serious minded souls who cannot accept the Virgin's *games* with the girls should not object to this.)

On November 18th, one month after the unforgettable day of the message (a certain predilection is noted for this date of the 18th), there was announced, *officially* as some might say, a *winter intermission* in the events of Garabandal. The Virgin said farewell to the girls; not because they would not see her again, but rather because they would not see her with the same frequency as before. And to each one she indicated the date of

the next meeting to aid them to better support the hard course of the winter season.

I assume that tears were running down the cheeks of the little visionaries during the farewell kisses on that day. They had happily enjoyed the long months of paradise and suddenly winter was upon them! Now all that remained for them, just as for the others, was living in the obscurity of faith. Spread in front of them was the hard program of the message, sacrifices, prayers, their daily crosses . . .

*In winter God disposes
that mysteries be fulfilled,
so that seeds take root,
and grow strong under the ground,
to develop in such a way
as to bring forth fruit later on.*

12. The month begins with two days which, liturgically and religiously, are very special. November 1st is the feast-day of All Saints; November 2nd is the commemoration of all the Faithful Departed, known as All Souls Day.

The village of Garabandal, which traditionally had given special attention to prayer for the souls of the departed, experienced that double feastday vividly. There was united the liturgy of the church with the activities of the visionaries who went so often in ecstasy into the houses to pray for the deceased in each one, and also frequently went to the cemetery to there recommend to the Lord all those who had their remains in that simple burial place.

In the middle of the night between those two feastdays Dr. and Mrs. Ortiz were informed that Jacinta was in ecstasy in her home. Immediately they went there:

«The girl, after presenting some holycards to the Vision to kiss, made a sign of the cross most reverently with the crucifix, and went out on the street. She went first to Loli's house, and presented the crucifix to be kissed by her and also by two or three other persons; from there she went to the church and in front of the doors began a rosary which she continued later through the muddy streets of the village . . . It was truly a moving rosary. At that time, in that silence, illuminated only by some flashlights and lights from the houses!

After the rosary, the girl recited the Credo and later sang the *Salve Regina* and various songs to the Virgin, some of these to invite the people to pray the holy rosary.»

Toward 1:30 in the morning, when Dr. and Mrs. Ortiz said goodbye to begin their voyage back to Santander, Loli was in her house waiting for an ecstasy. As a continuation of Jacinta's *vigil* she prayed a Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and various other prayers for the poor souls in purgatory.

13. At Garabandal there were abundant proofs that the Virgin did not come for the congenial *discovery* of our latest teachers and *educators of the faith* who say, "Children should not be bothered, nor should any pressure be put upon them; they will receive when they feel like it, and concern themselves with God when it comes spontaneously from within!"

Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva, the pastor of Barro, has some letters in his possession that the girls sent him during this period. I have the original letters in my hands. This is the earliest written by Conchita:

«November 25th, 1961.

Dear Father José Ramón :

Right now I'm going to school, and my mother tells me that I should write what is happening. I'll tell you that we have a new priest, and in appearance he seems very good, and he gives us catechism lessons every day. He plays with us a lot. all the girls say that he was sent by the bishop. We aren't able to give you any news about Fr. Valentín, since they say that he is on vacation. On some days he is in Cossío; but he (*the new priest*) goes on some days to say Mass there too. And so we do not know how he (*Fr. Valentín*) is.»

Obviously they did not know, nor could they know, how Fr. Valentín was! Officially Fr. Valentín was on vacation. But the vacation had been imposed upon him by the diocesan chancery since the good father was sentenced to undergo a type of *forced vacation*. This was one of the decisions that came from the Commission back during the summer,⁽¹⁴⁾ for they accused him of being the instigator of the events.

The new priest would be expected to have been indoctrinated by the Commission . . . He was Fr. Amador Fernández González. In their letters, the girls spoke well of him. And I have no reason for speaking otherwise. Fr. Julio Porro Cardeñoso, in his *The Great Prodigy of Garabandal*, writes: *I think that he was a competent priest, if I am not badly informed*. But later on he brings out statements made by this priest which, to be exact, have to be classified as gross stupidity.

Continuing now with Conchita's letter:

«There were two priests here from Palencia who seemed very good. They were not together. One day one came; and another day, another. My mother asked one of them why they were

coming since it was said to be prohibited. He told her that the bishop of Palencia⁽¹⁵⁾ believed and didn't prohibit them from coming. The priest that we had (*Fr. Amador*) said that he didn't like them to come; but they said Mass here. One of them left rosaries for me — for when I would have the apparitions — and he was thinking of returning to get them; you know what I mean.

With regard to the apparitions, it has been eight days since I have had them. She told me that I'll see her on the feast of the Immaculate Conception.⁽¹⁶⁾ And if she doesn't come on that day, I won't see her again until the 27th of January. And Mari Cruz won't see her again until January 16th, and Jacinta until December 16th. I don't know about María Dolores, since she said that she doesn't see her — and she has seen her again.

I'm waiting for the feastday of the Immaculate Conception, which the Virgin told me about. She didn't say it was definite; she told me that I would see her on my feastday . . . And so perhaps I'll be with her. And if she doesn't come on that day, I'm not expecting her until the 27th (*of January*), if she doesn't tell me otherwise.»

Two days later, on December 27th, Jacinta also began to scribble⁽¹⁷⁾ a letter to Father José Ramón. After referring to something that he had written her about Sister Lucy of Fatima, she wrote:

«Now she appears to me less and less. On the 16th of this month (*November*) I had an apparition, and she told me to pray the rosary every morning at the Cuadro . . . that until the 16th of December, I wouldn't see her again. Conchita, María Dolores and Mari Cruz expect her in January. So every day we pray rosaries to see if the Virgin will perform a miracle for the world to believe. Now we have a very good priest. The bishop sent him to us. He gives us catechism.»

15. This was Bishop José Souto Vizoso, who retired in 1970 due to his age.

16. December 8th. In Spain this is a day of obligation of the first rank, one of those most ostensibly celebrated in honor of the Virgin. It was also the personal feastday of the countless Conchas and Conchitas in the country, the abbreviated names for María de la Concepción and the names given to honor the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

17. This word accurately describes the letter's penmanship.

14. They had to wait until October 18th to see if anything would happen; after the *disaster* on that day there was nothing to prevent them from submitting Fr. Valentín to a *curative* treatment.



“Every day we pray rosaries to see if the Virgin will perform a miracle for the world.”

It can be seen that the new priest was big news in the town. The people must have been really pleased, since besides what he personally was worth and could do, they had him there definitely among themselves as a resident in the village — not like Fr. Valentín who belong primarily to the people of Cossío since he had his residence there. This did not prevent the people of San Sebastián de Garabandal from appreciating Fr. Valentín. Mari Cruz mentions him in a letter in November: **«He went because they blamed him. They said that he prepared us. The bad people said this because Father Valentín is very good. And he believes.»**

Mari Cruz wrote again on November 30th to the pastor from Barro:

«Respected and Dear Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

Concerning the questions that you've asked me, some of them are difficult to answer, since it's hard to make a judgment on them. But with the protection of the Most Holy Virgin and

guided by her, I follow what she indicates to me. I go to pray the rosary every day at six in the morning at the calleja; Jacinta accompanies me. Conchita goes out at seven, and Loli at 8:30, but in the church.⁽¹⁸⁾

From the 19th⁽¹⁹⁾ of November our trances have stopped. We are expecting to have them again: Jacinta, on the 16th of December; Conchita, on her feastday, but not for certain,

18. Perhaps the difference in time schedule was influenced by the personal situation of each girl. Loli, for example, went to bed later than the others because of the little commercial enterprise and tavern that her parents had in her home.

In the letter on November 21st, Conchita states to a daughter of Eloísa de la Roza Velarde, the sister-in-law of Dr. Ortiz:

«I tell you too that last Saturday I finished seeing the Virgin until the feastday of the Immaculate Conception or until January 27th. This hurts me! Anyhow, time will pass. We go to pray the rosary every day at 6 and at 7 in the morning where she appeared to us the first time.»

19. I do not know whether Mari Cruz is confused on the date, and put down 19 instead of 18, or whether she wishes to say that they were from the 19th inclusive without an apparition.



Mari Cruz

without doubt. Conchita will see her on January 27th; Loli, on January 13th; and I, on January 16th, God permitting. Besides this, we lead our lives like the other girls: at the classroom, playing, and making our prayers every day . . .»

There is also a letter from Loli written during this period, to the same recipient, dated December 3rd:

«A few words to answer your letter. I would say that it is about time. But pardon me, since time passed without my realizing it. Besides, I'm sad because I'm not seeing the Virgin.⁽²⁰⁾ As you know, the Virgin doesn't deceive. I expect to see her again in January. I don't know if in the meantime she will visit me some day again. I don't know. I'm rather bad; perhaps she takes that into account.⁽²¹⁾ I don't think so, since I act like this without realizing it. I have nothing to say about the photographs that you sent me, since I have not shown them to the Virgin.»

Although Loli had not been promised that she would see the Virgin again until January, she hoped that She would visit her before then.

And the Virgin returned. Mrs. María Josefa Lueje, from the little Asturian town of Colunga, says in a letter:

«I went to Garabandal for the second time on December 18th of 1961. I went with some friends, the family of Manolo Lantero from Gijón. There were about 14 persons and we took up three cars. From Cossío we went up by foot, since the weather was fierce and the road impassable.

Shortly after coming to the village, we gathered

20. The girl's spontaneous statement, in a confidential letter, can be placed side by side with some of the statements made — later approved *episcopally* — that this was *a game of children*, that is to say, something staged by the girls to get away from their boring life, or to accomplish some goal.

Could there be any stronger proof that the girls did not invent this *game*?

Fr. Valentín wrote down on October 10th, 1961:

«Loli told me with the greatest sorrow on her face that at least until the day after next she would not have an apparition. We noticed that she was sad since the last apparition; but in answer to my question at the time, she said that nothing had happened.»

21. This shows again that apparitions cannot suddenly transform weak human creatures into angels . . . The apparitions had placed the girls on the road to continual moral improvement, and that was no minor matter.



"Loli leaped up from where she was sitting and fell on her knees."

together in a plastic case everything that we had brought to be kissed by the Virgin: rosaries, medals, crucifixes . . . As soon as we saw Loli, we gave them to her. But she wasn't sure that she was going to have an apparition. This left us somewhat dejected, but we had to resign ourselves. And we prepared to spend the night without sleeping, as we ordinarily did. On seeing that there weren't many of us, Ceferino took pity on us and invited us into his kitchen so we would-

n't suffer so much from the cold.

Early in the morning, about 4 a.m., Loli leaped up from where she was sitting and fell on her knees upon the floor, making a loud thud. But that was nothing compared to the change in her face . . . For the young girl's face — plump and what might be called a peasant face — transformed and refined itself into an indescribable form, almost appearing to be an angel.





"Loli made the sign of the Cross with her crucifix."

She went out later through the village, accompanied by her father and all of us. She went up to a house where they told us there was an old man near death, unconscious for several days. When Loli made the sign of the Cross with her crucifix on him, the man recovered consciousness and recognized his sons. (So they told us). We saw her go down the steep uneven stairway without rails, with her head completely turned backwards, and we couldn't explain why she didn't fall and hurt herself . . . Then she led us to the courtyard of the church where we recited a rosary, as I think I have never recited one in my life.

When we returned to the house we met Jacinta and her father going to pray the rosary at the Cuadro as they early every morning. It was something to see those lightly dressed young girls with their knees on the snow in the freezing temperature during the middle of the night . . . In Garabandal at the time, there was real devotion and real penance was done.

I can never forget all these things: they did me much good; they brought me closer to God.»

* * *

On January 13th, the feastday of St. Lucy, virgin and martyr, Mari Cruz and Conchita wrote again to Father de la Riva. Mari Cruz mentioned certain personal matters, and afterwards interjected this brief remark:

«On the feastday of the Immaculate Conception, Conchita alone saw the Virgin. As I have told you, I won't see her until January 16th. I would like to see her always, always, but when she doesn't concede this gift to me, it is because I don't merit it. And so I resign myself to her holy will.»

Conchita naturally mentions her *grace* of December 8th:

«On the feastday of the Immaculate Conception the Virgin came to congratulate me, as she had told me that she was going to come. And when she came, she came smiling very much. She laughed very much.⁽²²⁾ The first thing that she said to me was, *Happy Feastday*. And so the



“I don't merit it.”

day passed very well . . . But I won't see her again until January 27th.

She came in the evening. They said that it lasted a long time, but it seemed very quick to me. Afterwards she said that I should go eat. And after I ate, she came back another time . . . And they said:⁽²³⁾

- that I went to the place where we had the first apparition,
- and that I went backwards to my home,
- and that afterwards I went out and prayed the rosary through the streets,
- and that I visited all the sick.

22. The girl expressed according to her abilities the joyful attitude of the feast — full of light and serenity — that she saw in the Mother of Heaven. But no one should imagine that her way of laughing was frivolous or loud as occurs so often with humans.

23. The girl wrote all these things down one after the other. They have been separated into lines here to simplify understanding the many things that happened in that trance, the last one for Conchita in 1961.



—and that I gave them the crucifix to kiss.

You know that I am unaware of this, that it's what they tell me. And so I know that I will not see her again until the 27th . . . »

What a beautiful evening the people of Garabandal had on the feastday of the Immaculate Conception! It was for everyone, the healthy and the sick alike. And again graces from Our Lady spread through the houses and streets.

Only one celestial visit remained for 1961, the year that had known so many marvels. It occurred on December 16th — the evening before the official prayer of the Church starts the splendid “*Oh*” antiphons⁽²⁴⁾ that are the immediate preparation for the feast of the Coming of the Lord.

And now it was Jacinta's turn to be the privileged one. I could not obtain much information about the grace given her. All that could be found in a letter from Mari Cruz dated December 16th was a terse reference:

«Today Jacinta saw the Virgin.»

There is also some information in a letter that Maximina González wrote to Doctor Ortiz, dated December 26th:

«While you were away, Jacinta had an apparition. It was very sad; it lasted a short time, but all the time tears were streaming . . .

They are still going out for the rosary: Mari Cruz and Jacinta at six in the morning, and Conchita and María Dolores at 8 o'clock. Dawn is breaking when we come to pray. So see if we aren't making sacrifices! For me, getting up in the morning is the greatest.»

A Year of "Epiphany"⁽²⁵⁾

From the girl's letters we can imagine how the first winter of the *mystery* passed at Garabandal. At least, how it passed for the girls.

Each new day was inaugurated with sacrifice and prayer: breaking away from the comfort and pleasant warmth of their beds to go out into the

darkness and cold, searching for early morning contact with heaven. The *calleja* — that had so often known the waiting and the footsteps of the crowds — now welcomed in intimate silence and freezing cold those girls, shivering at times, who were quietly coming to give to God through Mary the first moments of their daily life. Sometimes there were two or three more persons, but no other company or protection than their Guardian Angels.

The passage of cold fronts over the savage mountain terrain had covered the nearby peaks with the white snows of December. Frequently the snow also blanketed the area of the Cuadro with a strange brilliance in the vanishing darkness. And the murmur of prayer seemed to shiver in the air.

On those icy mornings, silence reigned; only an occasional distant sound could be heard. During the rainy mornings the pattering of raindrops sounded monotonously, mixing with the whirring wind . . .

— *Hail Mary . . . The Lord is with you . . . Blessed are you . . .*

— *Holy Mary, Mother of God and our mother, pray for us sinners . . .*

Sinners! SINNERS! How much should be done for them! Imploring the mercy of God. Doing penance for those who would not even think about penance.

ALREADY THE CUP IS FILLING UP

In a letter on January 11th, Mari Cruz wrote to Fr. José Ramón:

«Yes, I go every day at six in the morning to the Cuadro; the Virgin told me to pray the rosary every day at this time, up until January 16th, when I'll see her again. You know that the Virgin wants us to be very good, and to visit the Blessed Sacrament.»

24. These are called the *Oh* antiphons since they start with this exclamation. Seven in number, they express in biblical language the ardent hope of humanity while waiting for the Savior. Formerly they were chanted one each day at the end of Vespers during the last week of Advent, from December 17th to December 23rd.

25. *Epiphany* comes from the Greek and signifies manifestation or unveiling. The word is used to indicate the arrival and revelation of something distant and hidden.



“The Virgin wants us to be very good,
and to visit the Blessed Sacrament.”

The day — beginning painfully and piously like this — had to continue for God, through daily work,⁽²⁶⁾ through docile obedience, through the faithful fulfillment of duties. And so they responded to the Virgin's desires and instructions. And to prevent possible discouragement, they had the hope of seeing her again and the remembrance of those heavenly hours in which they had seen her.

26. In ending her letter of December 11th, Mari Cruz wrote:

«Now we don't go to gather firewood, since we have to go to school, and the vacation has ended. Well, we brought a lot of wood, but it will soon be burned up.»

This shows that if the schoolwork had an intermission during the Christmas vacation, another harsher work came to occupy her time: The work of going to the mountains to gather wood for the fireplace.

And so these children of the Virgin — in days that for so many other children are strictly vacations and parties — had to spend their time in the difficult task that I had personally think Mary had in her days in Nazareth.

The remembrance had to be wonderful, especially at certain times. Even when those years were over, and with a great darkness of doubts upon her,⁽²⁷⁾ Conchita could answer like this, with her typical moderation, to a series of questions that had been made to her in writing:

— The first time that we saw the Virgin, she appeared to us suddenly. She came with two angels and the Child Jesus, and there was an Eye above everything, with great light.

— She always appeared suddenly, only sometimes she brought the Child and other times she didn't.

— Her posture, was it always the same? Or different? What was it usually?

— Her usual posture was with her arms open and extended, looking at us; but she also moved her arms. She looked toward the village, and at times she smiled more than others.

— What was the background of the vision?

— Brilliant light.



“Sometimes she brought the Child.”

27. This characteristic phenomenon of Garabandal will be discussed later.



“soft and merciful”

— *What were her eyes like? Did she blink during the conversation?*

— **Her eyes were dark, very soft and merciful!**

Rather large. It seemed as if she didn't look at the face, nor at the body, but at the soul! I don't remember if she blinked; but she did look from one side to the other.

— *Did she weep sometimes? Or was she only sad?*

— I never saw her weep, or completely sad.

— *What was her expression?*

— Her expression is difficult to describe. It makes one love her more and think more about her. Looking at her face made us totally happy; and her looking at us, even more so. When she spoke to us, she looked at us, and her expression changed during her conversation.

— *What did you feel when she looked at you?*

— Many things!

— *What was her voice like? A real voice corresponding to the movements of her lips? Or only a voice heard interiorly without sounds?*

— Her voice is very sweet and melodious. It was heard through the ears, although her words penetrated into the heart; it was as if she put her voice inside us. And as she spoke, she moved her lips with the sounds like other people. She spoke with a very clear voice!

— *Did she laugh sometimes or did she limit*

28. St. Theresa of the Child Jesus mentions a similar thing in her autobiography in reference to the *miracle* by which she was cured of an extremely unusual illness at 10 years of age:

"Suddenly the statue of the Virgin became alive! The Virgin Mary became beautiful, so beautiful that I would never be able to find words to describe this divine beauty. Her face shone with a gentleness, a goodness, an ineffable tenderness; but what penetrated deep into my soul was her smile."

(History of a Soul)

29. Extract from *Garabandal 1967* by A.M. de Santiago. (Edition Circulo-Saragossa)

Conchita added these lines to her answers:

«July 18, 1966 — Forgive the poor writing, but I don't have much time . . . Today there is a fiesta going on in the village.»

What Conchita says corresponds admirably with what the liturgy for the feast of the Immaculate Conception proclaims:

**You are all beautiful, Mary.
And there is no stain of sin in you.
Your robe is white as snow.
And your face is luminous as the sun.
You are the glory of Jerusalem.
You are the joy of Israel.
You are the honor of our people.**

herself to smiling?

— Yes, sometimes she laughed in addition to the smile that was habitual with her. Her laugh could be heard like her words; but the laugh was more than the speech. I don't know how to explain her laugh! I could never explain it.⁽²⁸⁾

— *Did she kiss you frequently? Did you ask her to kiss you, or did she do it on her own?*

— She kissed us almost every day, and it came from her. They were kisses of farewell on both cheeks. Sometimes I asked her to permit me to kiss her, and at other times I kissed her without asking.

— *Did she sometimes carry a rosary or some other noticeable article on her?*

— I saw nothing except the scapular.

— *What did you feel during the ecstasies?*

— A very great peace and happiness!

— *If after a call you would have said, "Today I don't wish to see the Virgin," what do you think would have happened?*

— Oh! I never thought of doing that! Nor would I have thought of doing it for any reason.

— *What did you feel after a vision?*

— When I finished seeing the Virgin, it was as if I had left heaven . . . with a great desire to love Jesus and Mary, and to speak about them to people, which is the only thing that can give us joy: hearing and speaking about the Virgin.⁽²⁹⁾



The year 1961 was to be marked as a great Year of Grace.

During it, from secluded San Sebastián de Garabandal, God presented to his Church — and through the Church, to the world — a resplendent MARIAN EPIPHANY.

Words cannot adequately express our gratitude. But let us address the one who came to make this new VISITATION:



Holy Mary
Heed the wretched; aid the weak,
Comfort the weeping; pray for your people.
Protect the clergy; intercede for your children.
And give your assistance to all who turn toward You.



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Recollections

In October of 1966, Conchita, at the time a young girl of seventeen, enrolled as a boarder in a school operated by the religious of the Concepcionistas Misioneras de la Enseñanza at 11 Miranda Street, Burgos.

The people who were looking out for her welfare thought that this would provide her with both an *isolated retreat* and an *education*.

As a retreat it would serve to isolate and shelter her from the indiscreet attention and curiosity that surrounded her in the village; and it would serve also to educate her since she was behind in her schooling and spiritual instruction.

While here Conchita was under the care of a young religious: the directress of the college. Her name was plain: María Nieves García, but her personality was not. She did not know much about Garabandal, except for the episocopal «Notas» that said *No*. Nevertheless, she set out to help the new student whom she sensed to be out of the ordinary.

To be helpful, she put herself completely at Conchita's service, disposed to receive and hear her anytime. Conchita responded well to that attitude and soon an excellent spiritual relationship grew between them, with many periods of prayer, confidential words, and animated conversations.

The writings that the sister preserves from those times begin like this:

Feeling herself strange to everything, Conchita came to the college in such a bad state that she had to struggle very hard. And furthermore she constantly had to hide her identity. She needed a friend in whom she could confide everything that she was holding inside, to whom she would be able to unburden her worries and speak of "everything that had happened" naturally and simply. Because of this, I told her that she could come to see me in my free hours whenever she wanted to. I left this completely to her preference; I never called for her myself. . .

From the statements of the *former child visionary*, I am only going to mention here the ones that refer to the *apparitions*, which even then seemed to be far away — and not only because of the passage of time. From time to time her memory would flash back to the events, inspiring her to speak out.⁽¹⁾ It should not be forgotten that all the conversation recorded in Burgos was occurring when the girl was

beginning a period of great darkness, that is in the full phase of doubts and denials. Because of this, Sister María Nieves never openly broached the subject of what had happened during those exceptional days at Garabandal.

October 19, 1966

Finally they brought Conchita to me. My impression was excellent: simple and candid, with an unusual and penetrating look; I was pleased.

Her mother talked to me alone, and informed me of certain things . . . She was worried about her daughter's vanity and lack of piety. She urged me not to let anyone see her except six people.

Two days later, on the 21st, confidential conversations began.

October 23

I was with Conchita for some time. Her conversation was confidential, simple, frank. We discussed several matters. I told her about her excessive spending; she recognized it and accepted it well.

Because of something that Conchita had discussed during the course of the interview, Sister said to her:

— *How could you have said that you put the host on your tongue, if it were not true?*⁽²⁾

— *When I said it, it was because at that time it appeared to me that way. If not, how could I have said it?*

Seconds later:

— *I love the Virgin as if she were my mother. One can talk with her about everything . . . I remember that one day she told us: Be very clean; I took care to be that way too, when I was living on the earth.*

The sister showed photos of a picture painted by an American who wanted her opinion:

— *I don't like it.*

1. Though not all the facts mentioned here occurred in 1961, what is stated can help to understand better what happened during that year.

2. This refers to the *little miracle (milagruco)* on the night of July 18th, 1962, which will be discussed in future chapters.

— *Why not?*

— The expression is very different from the one she had. She wasn't wearing a crown, only stars. her hands — not so stretched out. The hair was parted in the center and not so wavy. The head wasn't bowed down; she moved it, but she didn't hold it like that. When she carried the child, she didn't hold His robe, although He wore it without a clasp . . .

Everything — the Sister noted — *was said with the greatest simplicity and spontaneity, without stopping to reflect.*

October 25

A long interview. At one time Conchita stated:

— What should I do so as not to have empty hands? I examine myself and I see that I don't do bad; but . . .



"empty hands"

— *It is not only not doing bad, but also practicing good.*

— That is just what the Virgin said to me!

October 26

I heard — said the Sister — *that the Virgin called you prior to our falling into ecstasy. What were those calls?*

— The first was a sudden feeling of mild joy. The second was a stronger joy. The third made us go outside, overwhelmed with joy.

What it was like to live in those times when we were seeing the Virgin so often! Although we had to remain without sleeping, it didn't matter to us. We were so happy!

— *Did the people from the village harass you?*

— Yes, but it didn't matter to us. We were so happy that we didn't suffer.

October 29

Also a long interview. Conchita spoke at length about the times when the Virgin was appearing to them . . .

Certainly — the Sister stated — *the Virgin prefers to appear to children. Since they don't have human respect, they'll transmit her messages better.*

— I think that I would have done the same even if I had been an adult. One day when I had finished speaking to her, the Virgin told me to turn toward a couple who were behind me and tell them, *You aren't living right.* I did this, although it embarrassed me. I know that they were moved, since they began to cry and went to confession on that same day. She told me many things like that . . .

What do you think the Angel was like? An adult? No, he was about 9 years old, with a blue tunic and rose-colored wings. We didn't see his hands, except when he gave us Communion.

Many times the Virgin didn't look directly at us, but farther away at the people who were behind us. Sometimes she changed her expression; but she didn't stop smiling. I asked her, *Whom are you looking at?* She said to me, **I AM LOOKING AT MY CHILDREN.**



“without sleeping”



“like a friend—just as if she were living with us”

We talked to her about everything, even about our cows . . . She laughed very much. We also played together. How happy we were then! We didn't suffer a thing, although some of the people bothered us.

She seemed to be about seventeen. Because of this, I was pleased when a retreat master said that we would see the Virgin about this age.

I like to hear the Virgin talked about. I've heard only a few priests speak about her. One of them told me one day, *If these things about Garabandal aren't true, I won't put faith in anything.* Do you think that's good? it troubled me.

Sister wrote down that Conchita was preoccupied with the expression of that imprudent priest, and recalled it frequently.

— How nice it was to be with the Virgin! She was really like a friend; just as if she were living with us. And she called us by our nick-

names like the people did. She didn't say *María Concepción*, but *Conchita*; not *María Dolores*, but *Loli*.

Now we get weary in our periods of prayer; but then we didn't feel weary, or sleepy, or anything. We saw her so many times!

October 30

— I learned many things in my village since the people confided their problems to me. Some of them were tremendous. The ones that made the biggest impression on me were those of priests; these troubled me!

A confessor told me to ask the Lord for the desire of suffering, and also to accept pain with joy. I couldn't speak to the Lord like that, since it doesn't come from me. I'm afraid of suffering!



"We saw her so many times!"



“FAITHFULNESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE”

— *I understand; but we ought to trust in Him, and know that we ought to serve for something in His Hands. God wishes to take us as little instruments, perhaps as "tapers for lighting the large candles."*

— *That's true. We are instruments; people shouldn't notice us. In the village they shoved us, they pulled on our clothes . . . They sought after us. And although so many went up to the Pines, not all of them approached the tabernacle.*

November 1

Feast of All Saints. To make use of extra free time, Conchita and the Sister spoke for a long time, taking as a topic the life of the blessed in heaven and what they should do to get there.

— *One day in an apparition with the Virgin, we were wearing hairshirts, although very loose. In order that she would notice that we were wearing them, we felt them from time to time. She said to us, **Yes, I know that you are wearing them; but that is not exactly what I ask***

from you, or what pleases me the most, but rather
FAITHFULNESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE.

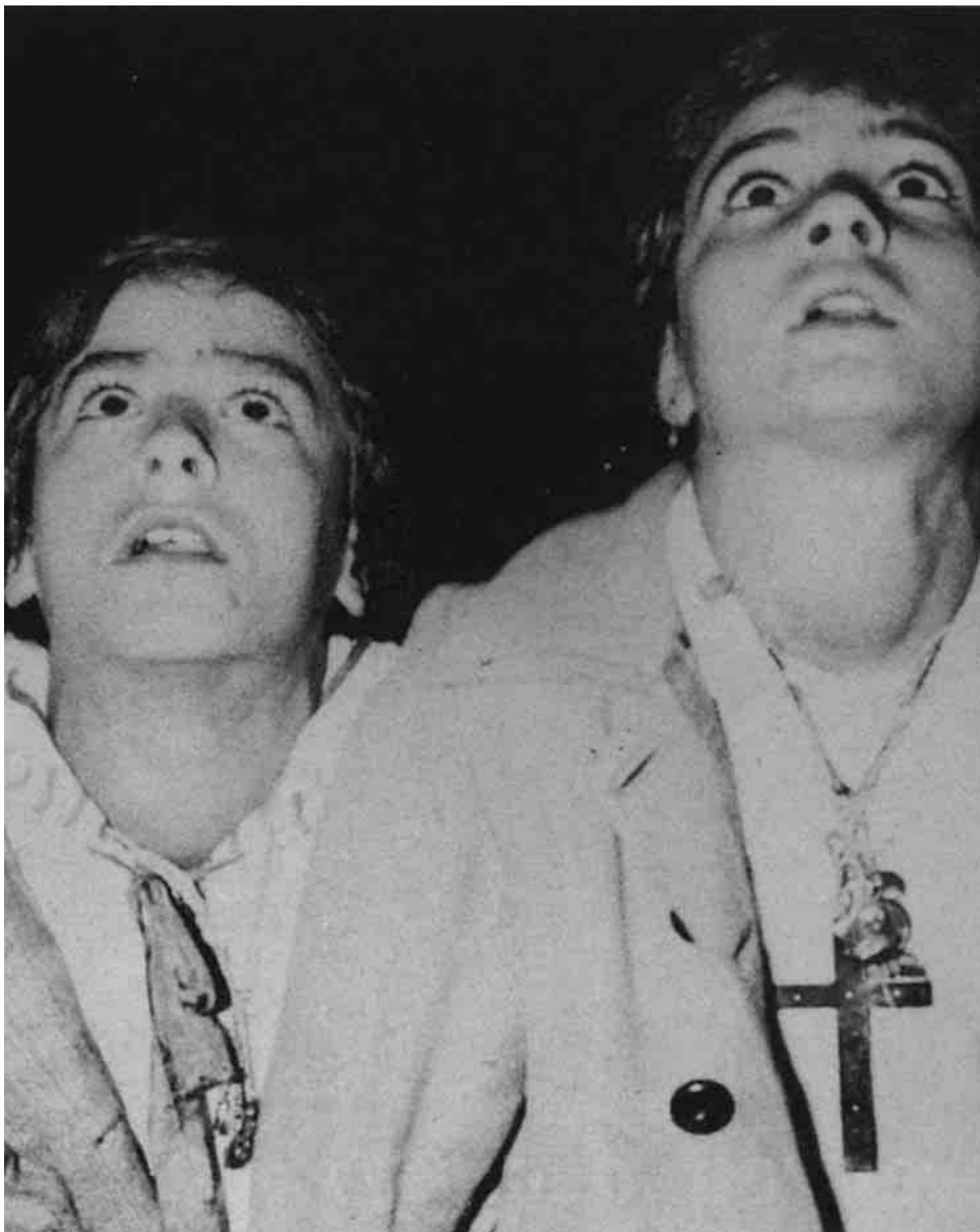
Once she also said, *If you see an angel and a priest together, you should first show respect to the priest.*

I asked the Virgin, *Will the end of the world be during the time of these future happenings?* She answered me, *No, the end of the times.*

The *Warning* will be a purification, a preparation for the *Miracle*, and everyone will see it. It will make people aware of the evil that they do with their sins.

After Paul VI, there will be only two more popes; and after that, the *end of the times*.⁽³⁾ I told the date of the *Miracle* to Cardinal Ottaviani and the Pope's confessor. The Pope gave me the impression of being an oppressed person, as if restrained by the cardinals and the hierarchy.

3. The *Warning*, the *Miracle*, the *Chastisement*, the *End of Times* will come out in detail in the upcoming chapters.



“The Warning will be a purification, a preparation for the Miracle.”

The *Miracle* will show the great love of God.

November 3

— After his death Fr. Luis Andreu taught me to pray the Hail Mary in Greek.



We heard his voice during an ecstasy; but we didn't see him.

Also he told me a message for his brother, and a French song, which I don't remember anymore, although Fr. Ramón knows it by heart.

He told us how they had buried him . . .

His voice was the same as when he was alive.

November 6

The sister spoke to Conchita about detachment, about the need for her to restrain herself in the satisfaction of her desires . . .

— I was surrounded with so many ridiculous tastes and received so many gifts that I became accustomed to waste things . . . But I understand what I ought to do and know that you are telling me this for my own good.

Today a newspaper in Burgos came out with the events of Garabandal; but they didn't tell where I am.

— Are you happy when you see that they publicize it?

— Before, very much. Now, as if it weren't my affair, as if it were something completely separated from me.

The people pray that the *Miracle* will take place. Don't you see that this is foolish? It will take place whether they pray or not. I only request that the message be fulfilled. Many pray for the *Miracle* in order that others, who have not believed, will be put down. This doesn't seem good to me. I think that my other is anxious for the *Miracle* to come in order to be free from doubts and worry . . . It's wonderful to love God and to have faith, without seeing anything. I would like to do it that way, but . . .

— God is patient; He gives us light by steps. The Virgin taught you slowly, but never showed herself displeased, isn't that right?

— No, never! We never saw her that way, even when she was speaking to us about the *Chastisement*. We have seen the *Chastisement*, did you know that? But whether or not it will take place, that depends. When we told her our faults, she was silent.

When saying good-bye, she kissed us, and it was like this . . . We didn't feel any physical contact and at the same time we weren't able to advance further, since there was something there that prevented us from doing it.

We wanted to touch, and our hand didn't touch anything on arriving at her, nor was it able to continue further. We held the Child Jesus in our arms, and we felt no weight, nor did we feel any physical contact; but He was there.

The Virgin told us one day that she put perfume on the sides of her sandals while she was living on earth . . .

The Virgin never wept, although the people cried with us when they saw us weep. On seeing the Virgin, tears escaped from us many times; but it was from emotion.



“The Miracle will show the great love of God.”



“Helping others has done me much good.”

At the time of the prediction of the *Chastisement*, the whole village confessed.

November 8

— Helping others has done me much good. When I visited the hospitals, I noticed that I benefited. Then I remembered the things that attracted me at other times — like amusements, fine clothes — and I saw that they weren't worth the trouble.

— *Suffering leads to God.*

— Yes; but also joy. Joys have helped me many times. I think of heaven — how good to be there! The first thing that I'm going to do is embrace the Virgin and the THREE⁽⁴⁾ very hard.

God does exceptional things, isn't that so? And the

4. This surely refers to the three persons of the Blessed Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

people don't respond well.

I recall many times what happened in my village. We saw many cases of hysteria. They touched my body, thinking that they would be cured . . . And there were even those who didn't go there because they believed that I read consciences. That made me laugh. How was I going to read consciences? The things that I said to certain people at the time were told to me by the Virgin.

The Sister showed a picture of a holy card that attempted to show the Virgin as she appeared at Garabandal:

— Heavens! What this does to me! exclaimed Conchita.

We laughed — noted the Sister — and she described again how she saw the Virgin, with such exactness that she said nothing different from what she had repeated so many times. She spoke at times of



“Heaven—how good to be there!”



"She told me that I wouldn't see her there again."

everything as if her 'denials' had not existed. This is really marvelous, and at the same time there is a tremendous mystery here, indescribable.

November 9

The Sister tried to lift up her spirits, telling her that when the darkness passed she would enter into the fullness of God . . .

— What a joy if it were like that! But could I possibly experience more joy than I have experienced in the past? The apparitions of the Virgin filled me with happiness. But the locutions of Jesus are much better. I don't understand . . . It is something superior . . . I pray that He accomplishes His will in me.

The Virgin taught us to pray the litany and the mysteries of the rosary that we didn't know. She only prayed the Gloria; if she began with the other prayers, it was in order to instruct us.

The last time that I saw her was on November 13th of the past year at the Pines. She told me that I wouldn't see her there again . . . (*She understandably made a long pause of silence and sentiment.*)

Some time ago while in my village, the Virgin pointed out a Redemptorist father, a close friend of Mercedes Salisachs, for me to confess to him. This priest advised me not to dress so well, that he didn't like to see me so well-dressed. I didn't feel inclined to tell him my affairs; it didn't come out of me. I told this to the Virgin, and she was silent; she left me without a response. One day I made up my mind and told this priest what had happened. This made him very happy; but I was never able to communicate anything to him; it was impossible for me.

November 12

Conchita seemed to need a day of rest, especially spiritually, to restore peace in her mind, agitated by a thousand confusions and doubts. The Sister understood, and responded to this need. At an early hour the two went out walking down the road leading toward the famous Monastery of Miraflores, taking lunch and a couple harmonicas. On the way Conchita spoke of memories that she held inside and needed to share . . . For example:

— You know Father Collin? Now he is trying to pass for the Pope.⁽⁵⁾ He was in my village. He wanted to speak with me; but my mother would not allow it. The people finally threw him out of the village.

Well, when I was in Rome, they showed me a picture from a newspaper in which I was shown at Father Collin's side. And it mentioned there that he had been with me . . . And many other lies. I deny this, since I have never been with him. They make up many things like this.

One day a woman came to my village, and insistently asked me to inscribe a card for her. I wrote nothing more than, *Ask that god bless our only Pope, His Holiness Paul VI.* I don't know why that occurred to me. A little later a priest I knew well came running up and said to me, *What have you written for that woman? She is a mason, a supporter of Father Collin.*

The way was delightful — writes the sister — *it*

5. This man lives in France and has his cortege and small group of followers. He calls himself Clement XV.



"The Virgin taught us to pray."

was a little cold, but bearable. We stopped for a while on top of a little hill overlooking the city and I taught her to play the harmonica. She learned almost the complete *Noche de Paz* and the *Ave Maria* of Lourdes. Then going on in silence, we prayed a rosary under the sky. After this we entered the monastery, and sitting down there, we talked about a painting . . . At six at night people came to pick us up in a car. The afternoon had passed devoutly and swiftly, in a wonderful peace.

At night we returned, and the two of us got together in the chapel while everyone was resting. She was in the chapel there at the beginning of November 13th on which she was going to have the first anniversary of the last apparition of the Virgin.

We began by meditating on the rosary. The chapel was dark; only the statue of the Virgin was lit up. The silence was complete and the presence of God was felt. during each mystery we paused, and I expressed thoughts that came forth spontaneously. I've never prayed in my life with more fervor! We were on our knees in the same pew . . .

After reposing a while in silence, seated in the first pew, we began our litany of petitions. With quiet around us, we spoke our requests for one person or another in a hushed voice. The moment was tense, with an extraordinary peace; we seemed to be a single person praying simply and with immense confidence. She began the petition, and I completed it, or vice versa. She prayed for a whole multitude of people and intentions, her glance fixed on the statue of the Virgin . . . Conchita began to say in a whisper:

— My mother and my brother suffer. Chon⁽⁶⁾ has told me this and I see it from the letters that I receive . . . I don't know why it is that on returning from the monastery, I am finding such sorrow . . . This morning I didn't have the desire either to pray or think during Mass. My head was bowed low; I don't know if I accomplished anything. If this dryness would leave me, that would make me very happy. Do you think that thinking this is opposed to the will of God?

— No, Christ also said, "Take this chalice from me." You still have doubts, don't you?



"a dream that has gone away"

— Just as before. That is, the same as before August 15th.⁽⁷⁾ I see all the apparitions as if they had been a dream that has gone away.

— Can you deny them completely?

— No. No, that I could not! I would feel remorse. When I deny, I feel inside — deep down — something that doesn't leave me at peace.

In a long series of petitions, there were these two:

María Nieves: *We petition you, Lord, for the Pope.*

Conchita: *And for all those who surround him.*

María Nieves: *We petition you, Lord, for priests.*

Conchita: *So that they may be holy, and may not stop wearing the cloth out of presumption. I do not like to see a priest as a layman. Not at all.*

The unplanned vigil ended near the altar — as Sister María Nieves wrote — like two children in front of the Mother of Heaven and God the Father. Something that I couldn't forget, for the simplicity, the peace, the interior joy. It was one o'clock when we retired, and it had seemed a very short time to us. On getting up from the floor, Conchita said to me:

— I would like to stay all night.

6. Ascensión de Luis, the young Jewish girl mentioned in a previous chapter, who converted to Catholicism.

7. On August 15th, 1966, a type of darkness concerning the apparitions fell on Conchita's mind.



The Virgin requested prayers for priests.



"Who loves the Mother, also loves the Son."

In 1962, when they were talking about the threat of war, I mentioned it to the Virgin. *Will there be a war?*

She only answered me, *God does not want war for His children.*

That says a lot, doesn't it?

In order to inspire Conchita to be strong in the face of difficulties, the sister talked to her about Christ. This obviously pleased Conchita; however, she ended up saying this:

— I think more of the Virgin. It is . . . as if I have more feeling for her. The Lord is very serious. And when He speaks to me, He seems concerned for everyone. The Virgin, as if more for me . . . Anyway, in summing things up: who loves the Mother, also loves the Son. Isn't that so?

November 25

— I remember that my village made me suffer. I felt as if imprisoned in it. I acted by the command of others who constantly advised me, *Go to Mass . . . Pray the rosary . . . Do this . . . Give up that . . .* At times I thought I would be happy to be in a hermitage away from everyone, and to work there alone for God, and see what I was capable of doing without their forever telling me.

— — —

On the one hand I have no desire for the feast of the Immaculate Conception to come because it will hurt me that this day arrives and I won't have anything. (All these years since 1961, I have had an apparition or locution on it.) And on the other hand, I fear that something will be given to me — since later anxieties will come over me as to whether it was or was not.

— — —

November 15

— In my village, they told me several times to kiss my mother when I had displeased her. I couldn't do this and it irritated me. I don't like to kiss. When they embraced me, I held out my cheek, but I didn't kiss; I really only kissed Loli.

November 16

— Sometimes they judged me bad without reason. I remember that one day the guards told me something bad that had been said about me. I let out a laugh, because I didn't understand. They became angry at my laughter. Later I mentioned it in my home, and everyone was upset. They even came to threaten the guards for having said such things to a child.

November 17

Conchita had heard that there was danger of war because of the situation in Gibraltar . . . She was worried, thinking of her brother Miguel, and she spoke to the Sister as soon as she saw her:

— How afraid I am of war! Will it happen?

Do you know something? You gave me one of the envelopes that they made for all the girls on the 21st, the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin. It was sealed, and I received it with a great desire to know what the Virgin wanted from me. Do you know what mine contained? What she had told us so many times: *Fidelity in everyday life!*



Conchita holds up the crucifix for her mother to kiss.

November 29

— I would like to have my brothers priests. I have known many . . . I remember a young priest of the Heart of Mary, to whom I wanted to give the crucifix to kiss, drew back, and weeping said, *I am not worthy, I am not worthy* . . . When I had finished seeing the Virgin, I went up to him and, apart from everyone, communicated to him what she had told me. *He wants to take off the habit and leave the congregation.* On hearing this, he began to cry again. I've never seen him since.

December 2

The first Thursday of the month — a priestly Thursday. During the interview, the Sister read to Conchita some edifying letters from priests.

— Before the Virgin told me about it, I thought that all priests were good. It had never occurred to me that they could commit mortal sins too.

I have known many . . . Some appeared holy to me in the beginning; later I saw things that I didn't like. I learned later how people can be deceived. At first I was very friendly to all, but on noticing that my trust was badly interpreted, I changed.

- - -

Sometimes I wonder if there's anyone among the persons that I know who really loves me. Many compliments, many endearing phrases, but they want me for themselves. I saw that even the priests got angry with each other in order to have a bigger part or involvement with me . . . I'm ashamed that they praise me, and I'm pleased that they tell me what I do wrong.

December 3

The Sister read and explained the parable of the Good Shepherd. On this occasion, Conchita was confiding the memories of her life from early youth, *with peace and joy* . . . She ended this way:

— Everything that happened I see now as if in a dream — the apparitions, the people . . . I'm sorry that many doubt the apparitions because of my denials. It occurs to me that, although I denied, I would still like to say, *Have hope! Don't be discouraged.* I think that the three other girls feel the same.



“a girl with many faults”

When I think about the Virgin, I picture her as something I dreamed. How nice it would be if now she would come here in this parlor with the two of us! What a joy! It isn't necessary to be perfect to see her. I have been a girl with many faults. On the day on which the Angel appeared to us, I had just fought with Jacinta. And I see that today I still don't like to pray. She comes to make us good . . .

If you could see how human the Virgin is! Sometimes she comically repeated our badly spoken expressions, and she did this in order that we might have confidence. But we had it from the first moment.

Now I have doubts about many things; but what I don't feel the least doubt about are the *calls*. I remember them perfectly, and moreover, as if I were feeling them right now.

December 6

— We have not always been treated well. Sometimes they said outrageous things about us, and they insulted us. How many times I had to listen to outright lies about us!



"How human the Virgin is!"



"The Bishop said I should write it."

— *When they acted this way, did it bother you?*

— No, I remained quite calm. Actually I was not hurt; and it was this way with the four of us. I don't know the cause. That they say nasty things to me doesn't matter to me; it humiliates you much more when they flatter you.

I don't feel rancor or hate toward anyone. When the priests of the Commission or those in charge of us attacked us, and the others became angry because of this, I did not. I thought that they had to act like this; and I loved them. I love very much the people who seem good, pious; and also I love those who are sick, and those who live their vocation or, having a vocation, are not able to attain it. Perhaps, after the Miracle, I also will be able to become a nun. What a pleasure that would be!⁽⁸⁾

January 27, 1967

Because of certain rumors, the Sister asked Conchita about her diary:

— *Did you write the diary about the apparitions on your own or did they tell you to do it?*

— A priest told me that the Bishop said I should write it.

— *You never speak of your conversations with the Virgin.*

— What for? We said such stupidities . . . Nevertheless, she never reprimanded us for it; she listened. One day we asked her something serious: What we should do to practice penance. She answered us, *Always do what your conscience tells you*. She didn't say anything else. I seem to remember also that once she told Loli to obey her mother.

January 31

Certain persons had brought water from somewhere or other, and also some relics for Conchita. When the Sister in doing her job was giving them to her, saying that a visionary had brought them, Conchita told her . . .

— It seems that you don't believe anything about this. I don't have much faith in seers either, without denying that some are true.

— *For me not to believe much in these things is logical, but for you that . . .*

— That is something very different! I don't know how to explain it; but it's not the same.

— *They said that this visionary sent a message to your mother, saying harsh things, and that you threw it away. Why? . . .*

— She said that my mother was acting very bad toward me . . . The Virgin didn't say that!

— *She is more kind, is that right?*

— Oh yes! She would never say that.

March 2

— Whenever we prayed the Gloria, the Virgin bowed her head.

8. Conchita spent the Christmas holiday in the village with her family.



"Always do what your conscience tells you."

— *Did she rest standing on top of the Pines?*

— We didn't see the Pines or anything else. We only saw her.

April 10

Many things had occurred during the previous weeks, for example, the «Nota» of Bishop Puchol, dated March 17th. This had greatly affected the Sister; and to a lesser degree, Conchita, who was able to notice the effect of the «Nota» in the village, where she spent her Holy Week vacation.⁽⁹⁾

That April 10th an issue of *La Gaceta Ilustrada* had fallen into her hands, publishing a pitiless article by the reporter Julio Poo San Román of Santander, speaking out against the events and visionaries of Garabandal.

— *How did this article affect you?*

— It's very bad. There are many lies in it. For example, it says that I didn't want the Bishop to inform the people about my denials, and the truth is that I myself asked them to make it known so that I would be more at peace with myself that way. What makes me suffer is that the people now look on us in a bad way . . .

I have only one desire: That the date of the Miracle come — not for the Miracle itself, but in order to see once and for all if it is true or not. If it has been the Virgin, the Miracle will take place, because what she says is always fulfilled. As for myself, regardless of whether the Miracle takes place or doesn't take place, it will always be bad for me.

— *Why is that?*

— If the thing is true — for having acted badly, denying and not being generous. And if it isn't true . . . well for everything!

If what happened to us, being good little girls, hasn't been supernatural, and God has permitted it to happen with the consequences that can result, then I couldn't believe that God

9. This «Nota» given to all news media by the Bishop of Santander, Vicente Puchol, intended to obliterate as false everything about Garabandal.



“not being generous”

is good. And my mother and brothers could never believe it.

The Sister advanced some explanations in order to clear up a problem and Conchita replied:

— I don't know the first two cases that you mentioned, since we didn't begin with a lie, and I can assure you that we made no agreement among ourselves.

— *And what followed?*

— It was the same as at the beginning. It isn't true that we rehearsed this! How could they think and say that?

— *Then I see clearly that these things did not come from you girls.*

— I don't know how they came. I see everything darkly. What is clear to me is that we didn't plan them.



"The Miracle will take place."



“It was not a game of ours.”

April 19

— *What the Virgin told you about pride and humility . . . did you receive that together with the message?*

— No. She said it on another occasion: *What God loves most is humility; what most displeases Him is pride.*

— *Would you like to see the Virgin again?*

— It's all the same to me. I hope to see her in heaven.

— *Why do you talk that way?*

— It would be painful for me now because of my denials . . .

April 21

They discussed the article in *La Gaceta Ilustrada*:

— It was not — Conchita remarked — a game of ours, nor did we do it to deceive. Nor did the pastor talk to us about guardian angels on that day. He almost never gave us catechism. Nor did we get together in order to make up the message . . . Nor did I prepare any dough to make the host for the Communion . . .

It's true that we did many stupid things too, that Cardinal Ottaviani read to me in Rome ⁽¹⁰⁾ from a report by the bishop of Santander. For example, the thing about the powders, the statue of the Virgin that we were going to hide, and some other things . . .

April 30

To inspire her, the Sister talked to Conchita about how much Our Lord and the Virgin loved her.

10. When she was called there in December, 1966.



"What God loves most is humility. What most displeases Him is pride."



"The Virgin is very much with us; she isn't distant."

— Yes. But They love everyone. When we were talking to the Virgin about things that were too personal, she didn't answer us; she was concerned about others.

May 4

Conchita had decided to celebrate this month of the Virgin better than ever. On this day she met with the Sister and told her:

— If the Virgin would present herself to me now, how many things I would ask her! At the time, we only said stupid things to her, things without importance. I think that we did it to make her stay longer so that she wouldn't leave us, for at times she remained silent and didn't look at us.

— Do you think about the mysteries when you pray the rosary?

— No. I give my attention to what I'm saying in prayer.

When I hear the Virgin talked about, whatever is said good or bad, I think is said to me, since I consider her something mine.

The Virgin is very much with us; she isn't distant . . .

One day she gave me a statement to tell a certain priest; I gave it to him and he wept very much.

(Here the Sister added that the husband of one of

her former students had recounted how Conchita had spoken personally to him in Garabandal about something very hidden in his conscience, and that this had made him resolve to change his way of life.)

May 8

By a telephone call from Francisco Sánchez-Ventura the Sister had received news that the Bishop of Santander had just been killed in a tragic accident; the Sister told it to Conchita, who was overcome and later broke out in tears.

— I am so sorry about what has happened! He was very good and very young. The poor man! He did everything with good intentions. Isn't that true? This warns us that we must be prepared. So many things can happen to us in this life! . . . *Now the Bishop knows everything.*

June 11

The apparitions were discussed. Sister asked:

— *Why did you fall on the ground?*

— We were not aware of that; we were with the Virgin! And we followed the conversation or communication with her, without knowing if we were running or not, if we were on our knees or lying on the ground.

The Sister makes a note here: *A few days previously Father Laffineur had come and asked me how Conchita looked to me. I answered: "Simple, natural, candid, intelligent. So normal and well-balanced that I could certify that in my profession as a teacher I haven't known another like her." I also told him that I didn't find a very strong will in her.*

June 14

— The Virgin didn't tell me that she didn't want me to leave the village and be in school.

June 17

— *Our greatest treasure is within. The external appearance doesn't matter much; it should be made agreeable, but without affectation.*



"without knowing if we were running or not."



"We announced the first message."

— I understand, and I see that you are right. We told the Virgin that we wanted to be beautiful like her . . . But she smiled and was silent. If she had conceded it to us to have her face! How the people would have looked at us! She is so beautiful!

— *At times you did strange things in front of her.*

— Yes, we walked sitting down for example. In the beginning I was very surprised in seeing this in the others; afterwards I became accustomed to it. I saw them descend a steep stairway this way.

I recall once having a knee injury. The doctor ordered rest, but I didn't take care of the knee. And it didn't hurt after that. Without taking a treatment, I had a complete cure.

They said that on another occasion I had left blood on a stone; but later I didn't notice anything on my knees, except a little scratch.

— *In some of those things, did you add something of your own invention?*

— Yes.

— *Doesn't it seem to you that some of your little deceits, on top of seeing your present doubts, could contribute in some way to cloud the truth?*

— It is very possible that could be. Don't think that I haven't thought about it.

* * *

Conchita passed the summer in her village, with the exception of the last half of August when she was back again at school. In October she returned to Burgos to begin the 1967-1968 school year.

October 18

— *Have you noticed what day it is today? We should do something more in prayer. Shall we stay in prayer this night? . . . What happened on this day in 1961?*

— We announced the first message. We had already seen it beneath the Angel; but we didn't understand what it meant. The Virgin explained it to us . . .



"She is so beautiful!"

And in what happened to us during those years I see the work of the devil too.

I remember, for example, the voice that we heard in the great darkness that I have already mentioned.

And that other day on which Loli and Jacinta intended to jump down from the choir loft of the church.

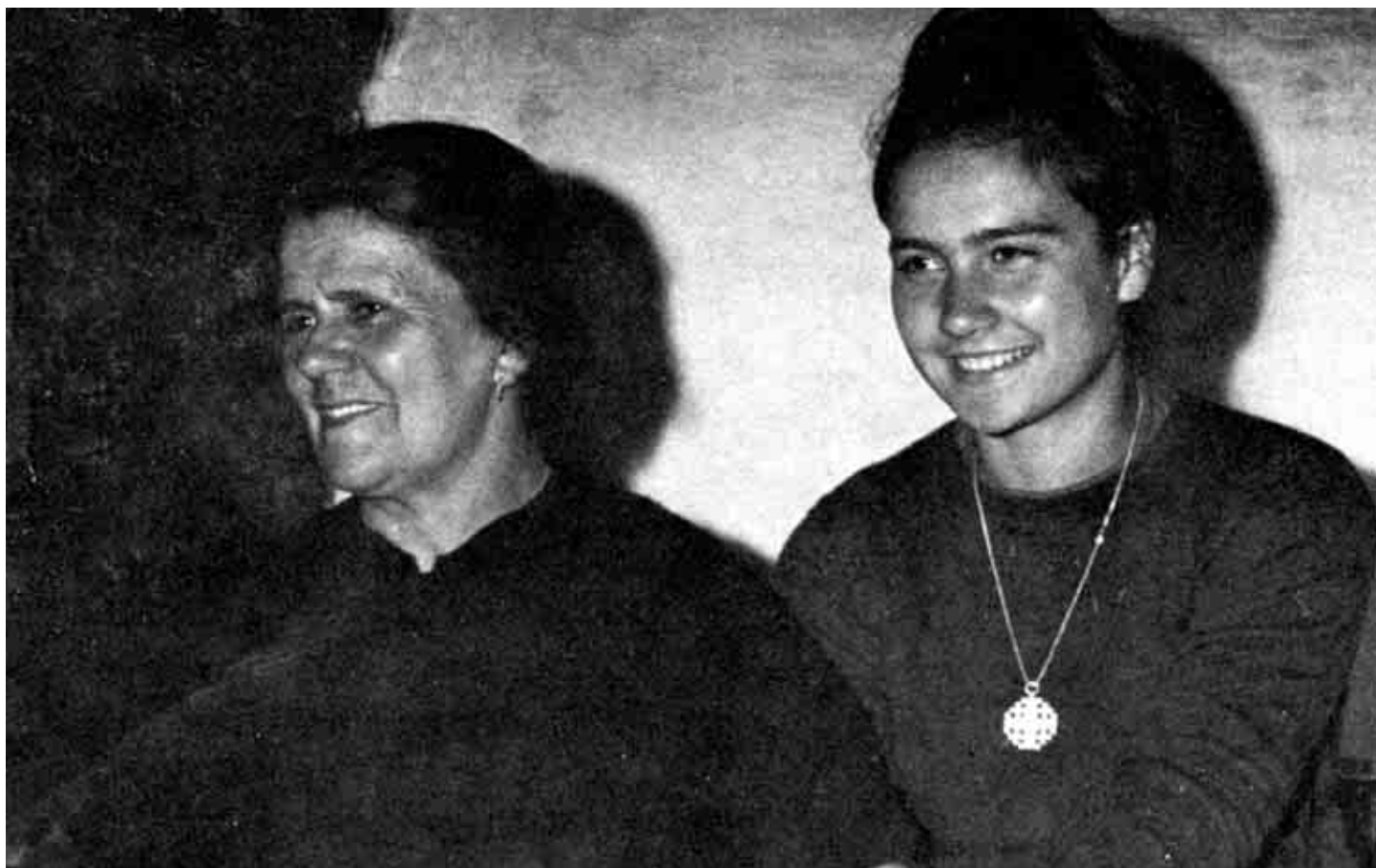
At the time I wasn't seeing the Virgin, and I was near the main altar.

I remember that they came down, and touching my face, asked me,

—"Are *you* Conchita?"

On that day, it certainly seems to have been the devil.





Aniceta and her daughter

On December 22nd, Aniceta came to Burgos to pick up her daughter. She had not come to take her back only for the Christmas vacation; she was taking her back permanently. There had been strong exterior influences and pressures that caused this.

On one of the last visits Conchita told the Sister:

— From time to time I see more clearly that what happened to the four of us girls was true, but we wasted it . . . Our denials are our own doing. Sometimes, although very briefly, I see this very clearly.

And the Sister closed the long chapter of her remembrances of the extraordinary closeness to the *child* of the Montaña with these lines:

I give thanks to the Most Holy Virgin for everything. Whether she has appeared or not at Garabandal, I have been moved in everything by their love, and certainly all this has brought me to love her more and to feel closer to her.

May this be the final result for everyone, while we continue to revolve between the light and the shadows of . . .

THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GARABANDAL





PART TWO

Through Mary to Jesus

1962



chapter

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Lord Where Dwellest Thou?

In the first chapter of St. John's gospel, there is an interesting episode.

Again the next day John stood with two of his disciples. And seeing Jesus walking, he said: "Behold the Lamb of God." And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turning and seeing them following Him, said to them: "What are you seeking?" They said to Him: "Lord, where dwellest Thou?" He said to them: "Come and see." They came and saw where He dwelled, and they stayed with Him.
(John 1:35-39)

As John the Baptist did in his time, Mary also, during her time at Garabandal, was attracting the attention of her disciples to direct it later to . . . to Whom?

During the events of Garabandal, a resplendent *Marian Epiphany* manifested itself. But soon it became clear that this in itself was not the whole reason for Mary's coming; there was a higher purpose to come forth later.

The minds of the pupils tutored in the school of Mary, Jesus' first disciple, naturally were lead to an understanding and meeting with her Son. Garabandal can only be comprehended by realizing the significance of the axiom:

To Jesus through Mary

From this, the title of Part Two of this work.

Above all, to Jesus as He is present for us here and now in the Blessed Sacrament.

* * *

It is highly significant that the girls, as the first apparition ended, ran to shelter themselves against the walls of the church, and later prayed within it a *Station* to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Following this, there was hardly an ecstasy that was not related to the ineffable presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist.⁽¹⁾

And along the same line, the first public message on the night of October 18th brought this out in a simple but very important statement:

It is necessary to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

But the Eucharist is not only the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. It is also the Bread of Life, and its *primary reason* is to be the nourishment and nutriment of souls.

I am the Living Bread, coming down from heaven. Whoever eats of this Bread, will live forever. And the Bread that I give is My Flesh, laid down for the life of the world. (John 6:51)

From the start Garabandal began turning the attention of the visionaries and the spectators toward Holy Communion . . . For it is in this reception of the Eucharist that a *great personal encounter* with Christ takes place.

From the Angel's Hand

From the beginning of the apparitions, the Angel St. Michael gave us unconsecrated hosts.

We had eaten at the time, and he gave them to us all the same.

This was to teach us to receive Communion.

It was like this for many days.

Evidently there was careful preparation—even in outward details—for something that deserved to be well done. (This preparation could be repeated today, even among the old faithful, for how deficient has become the way of receiving Communion. How careless! How irreverent!) Conchita's reference to eating refers to the Eucharistic fast, which in the days of the apparitions was still three hours.

One day he told us that we were to come on the next morning to the Pines

1. A lawyer from Palencia, Luis Navas, went up to Garabandal several times and closely observed everything there. He wrote down in one of his notebooks:

«I asked the girls why they went to the church so often, since it was closed (they were not allowed to enter it in ecstasy), and they answered candidly: *Because the Virgin likes to go near the place where her Son Jesus is.*»

Instructive answer. Those doubts and ambiguities — heretical or semi-heretical — about the *real presence* of Christ in the Host reserved after Mass in the tabernacle, doubts which have infiltrated deeply into the mentality of some Catholics in spite of all the explicit teachings of the Supreme Magisterium, are not acceptable to God.



"The Angel appeared to us with a golden chalice."

—without eating anything—and that there should be a young girl with us.

And we brought the girl.

And we did as he told us.

The instructions having been completed, something serious and important was to begin, something having great exigency for the spiritual progress of the girls (and not only for them). For some mysterious reason, on this day, as on other important times at Garabandal, the presence of a small *child-witness* was required. Two six year old girls were always chosen for this function: Sari, the sister of Loli, and Carmen, the sister of Jacinta; we do not know which of the two was present on this occasion.

When we came to the Pines, the Angel appeared to us with a golden chalice.

And he told us, *I am going to give you Communion, but today these are consecrated Sacred Hosts.*

Say the "I Confess" . . .

And we prayed it, and afterwards he gave us Communion.

And after receiving Communion, he told us to make our thanksgiving to God . . .

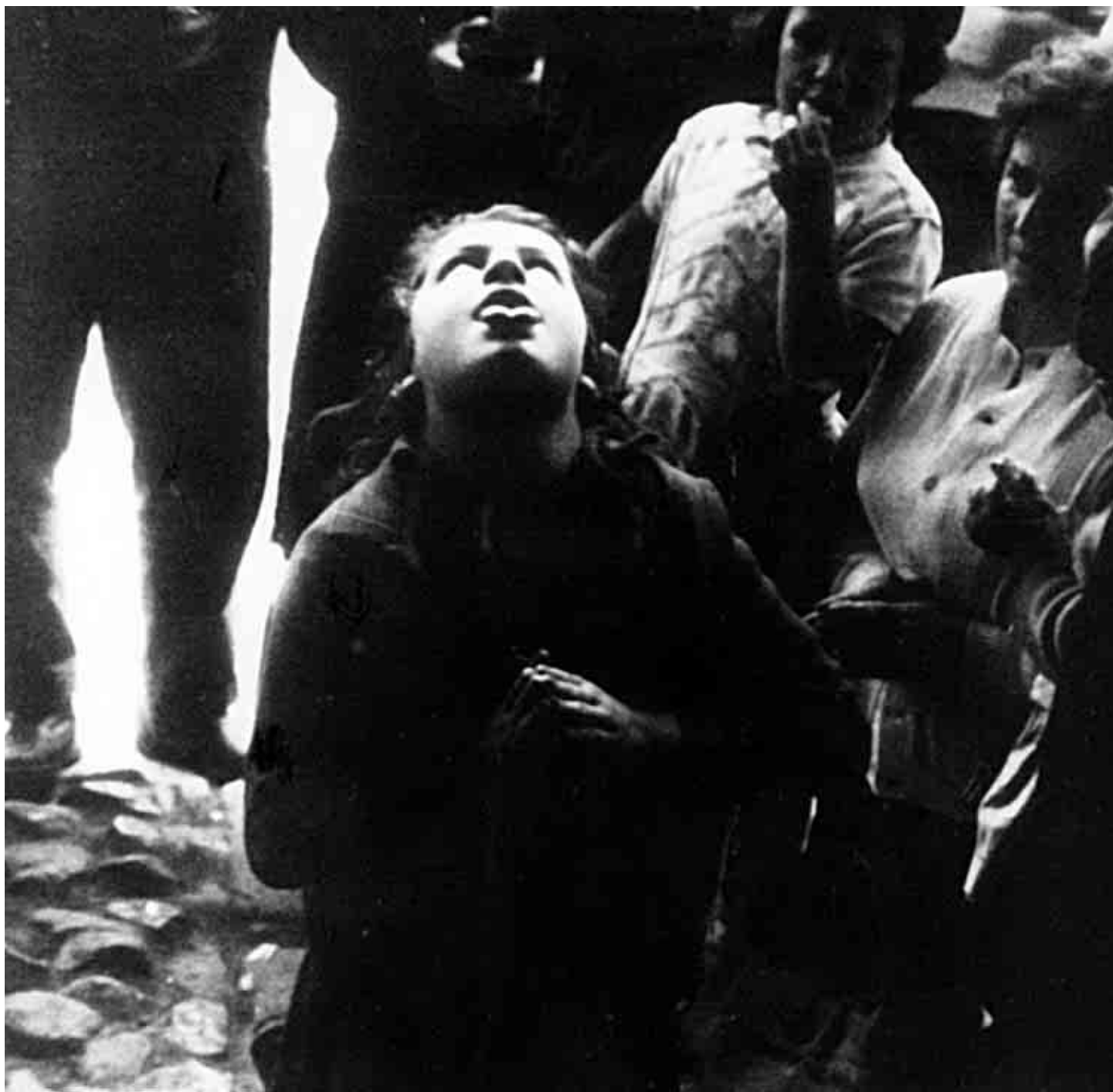
And after making our thanksgiving, he told us to pray with him the "Soul of Christ." And we prayed it.

And he said to us: *I will give you Communion tomorrow too.* And he left.

So Communion was given according to the traditional ritual of the Catholic Church. The first time that the pastor Father Valentín took down in his notes this type of Communion by the girls, he wrote:

«They say that he does it the same as I do when I give Communion.»

The rite started with an act of purification of the



"He told us to make our thanksgiving to God."

soul through the humble confession of sins; and ended by receiving the Lord within, with the making of an effort at concentration so as to communicate with Him.

This is what has always been sought with the *thanksgiving after Communion*; but unfortunately, for many of the *new hour of the Church*, priests and faithful alike, that is not the way it is today.

The Mass ends; the blessing is received. No reason to stay longer . . . It is finished. That's

enough . . . It can be understood: It is not agreeable to remain before eyes that search out everything, to answer to a Presence that . . . Better not to think of that! Oh! The holy motive for rushing out and the great talk of caring for one's neighbor!

The Angel wanted the girls to learn to pray a brief prayer as an ending for their Communions. This particular short and fervent prayer has been used in devout areas of Catholicism since the days of St. Ignatius of Loyola. It can be found in many prayer-books (a rare species of printing that is becoming extinct).



“from the tabernacles”

When we told this to the people (*receiving Communion from the Angel's hands*) **some did not believe it — especially the priests, since they said that an Angel couldn't consecrate.**

And when we saw the Angel again, we told him what the people had said.

And he told us that he had taken

Them (*the hosts*) **from the tabernacles, that he had taken Them from the earth, already consecrated.**

And afterwards we told this to the people.

And some doubted.

And he gave us Communion for a long time.



“from the beginning”

Conchita writes this down at the end of the first year of apparitions. And it is surprising that she does not mention it in the earlier pages, since the phenomena of these Communion—to which the term mystical was given to distinguish them from ordinary Communion—began very early.

From the beginning, she tells us; and in the scrambled notes of Father Valentín we find this brief notation, pertaining to the month of July, 1961:

«They said that they received Communion on the 11th, 12th, and 13th.»



“Communion from the Angel”

This is the first time that he gives dates for this type of Communion. So we can gather from this that it was on July 11th, Tuesday, that the girls first received Communion from the Angel's hands.

And perhaps this updated paragraph in Fr. Valentín's notes refers to July 11th:

«Conchita and Mari Cruz went at 8 o'clock to receive Communion, and they said that he did it the same as I give Communion (*understood, of course, outside of Mass*). The other two, Loli and Jacinta, went about noon and received Communion at the *Campuca*, higher than at other times (*Probably meaning higher than the usual place of apparitions*). And afterwards the Angel showed them where the Virgin was, and the Virgin beckoned them with her hand.»

Father Valentín does not tell us where the Communions of Conchita and Mari Cruz took place; but if this refers to the first reception from the Angel's hands, consulting Conchita's diary, we would have to conclude that their first Communion took place at the Pines. The reception of the other

two girls occurred at the *Campuca*, a small meadow at the end of the calleja, below the Pines, which today has the little chapel of St. Michael located on its right. As a point of interest here stood what was called the *Stone of St. Michael*, because he appeared over this stone when giving Communion to the girls.

Here is a more recent and exact confirmation of this. In the previously mentioned conversation of the painter Isabel de Daganzo with Conchita at the college of Burgos during November of 1967, this remarkable description is found:

Isabel: *I would like to paint an ecstasy of Mari Cruz, since I like her so much.*

Conchita: Yes, I like her very much too. Mari Cruz is very good. Look. Mari Cruz and I received the first Communion from the Angel at the Pines at 5 in the morning. At six on that morning, Loli and Jacinta received Communion close to where the chapel of St. Michael is now— where the Angel's stone is.



"And he gave us Communion for a long time."

We see that Fr. Valentín and Conchita do not agree on the time. Why this discrepancy? Perhaps it was due to the pastor who had to write down so many things on the run. Or perhaps it refers to Communion received on different days.

The circumstances of this first Mystical Communion at Garabandal are enticing, taking place at the beginning of a long and sunlit day in July, in the freshness of morning as things began to take shape in the emerging dawn light, accompanied by the singing of birds, the heralds of the sun.

There high toward the sky,
beyond the troubles and cares of men,
in the marvelous landscape of the Pines,
are three angels and two girls.

St. Michael brings the Lord . . .
The girls' guardian angels adore Him . . .
Prostrate on their knees, the girls receive Him.
This is the mystery of our faith!

O Sacrum Convivium.

When Conchita and Mari Cruz returned from their world of miracles, they could look out over a splendid panorama that would make them feel the truth of the Credo. *I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of what is seen* (spread out now before our eyes!) *and of what is unseen* (how many proofs have we received of its existence!) *and in one Lord, Jesus Christ*, (in whom the two worlds meet joining them eternally in glory).

From Fr. Valentín's notes of July, 1961 can be seen the accuracy of Conchita's tense remark in her diary: **And he gave us Communion for a long time.**

Why then, if this began so early and had such importance, did the girl write it down so late, after having spoken of so many other things?

Perhaps this was due to the young writer trying to explain first of all what appeared most interesting, what she liked the most, and what was striking for the people: the appearance of the Angel and the Marian Epiphany, with their incredible series of exceptional phenomena.



If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you will not have life within you.

Regardless, it cannot be doubted that this series of Holy Communions through the Angel's ministry, although it did not occupy the earliest position in the narration, is an integral part of the mystery of Garabandal.

Place for Instruction

This display of small miracles favoring fervent participation in the Holy Eucharist must have had a telling effect in the setting of an ancient Christian village where Holy Communion had been, since time immemorial, something too serious to be received frequently. And much less, every day!⁽²⁾ Here the Blessed Sacrament was treated more with reverence than love; and the inhabitants, although believing and religious, ordinarily maintained a respectful distance toward It. The people still remained in *Domine, non sum dignus*—Lord I am not worthy.

The people had to be brought, even if through miracles, toward a greater living of the great Sacrament of our faith. The Word of the Lord has been insisting on this since the beginning: **Amen, amen I tell you, that if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you will not have life in you.** (John 6:53) And besides this, we Christian should not neglect another great reason for reception of the Eucharist mentioned by St. Paul (1 Corinthians 11:28), **Every time that you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the immolation of the Lord, until He returns.**

Until he returns. The Eucharistic promotion coming forth through Garabandal has another extremely

2. The case of Garabandal in this regard is not unusual. I have known many other small towns in sections of León and Castille where the frame of mind was about the same. I could name a little village in Burgos that had the most devout practices, where no one missed Sunday Mass or the rosary that followed it, where at specified hours of the day there was prayer in all the houses, where there was never heard a blasphemy. Nevertheless, its inhabitants, as the most natural thing in the world, received Communion only once a year to fulfill the Easter Duty.

important purpose: the imminence of difficult times, the eschatological days when, less than ever, can the faithful remain *alone in the face of peril* . . .

Characteristics of the Eucharistic Proclamation

We can do no more than list them.

● Concerning the *location* of the extraordinary Communion, we can state that the places where they most frequently—but not exclusively—were received by the girls were: at the Pines, before the doors of the church, next to *St. Michael's Stone* in the *Campuca*.⁽³⁾

3. Fr. De la Riva, the pastor of Barro, seems to indicate in his *Memorias* that there was a period in which the Angel gave Communion solely to Conchita and Loli. He wrote:

«Conchita received Communion at the Pines, at the Cuadro, near the courtyard of the church; Loli, in the same places, but not at the Pines (at least to my knowledge).

I watched and took photographs of several Communion of



this type with Loli, and one with Conchita when she was against the door of the church.

These ecstasies with Communion ordinarily didn't last more than ten minutes.»

● Concerning the *time*, it was as if the Angel were scrupulously complying with the regulations then existing in the Catholic Church (at that time evening Communion was considered an exception); the morning hours were almost always mentioned by the girls.⁽⁴⁾

● Concerning the *ritual*, we have seen that Conchita tells us in her diary, and Fr. Valentín in his notes, that it followed the usual form: praying the *I confess*, the reception of the sacred Host, thanksgiving, and the prayer *Anima Christi* (*Soul of Christ*).

There is one fact worth noting. It was observed during these Communion that the Angel always acted as an accessory performer; that is, he acted as *an extraordinary minister*, to make up for the absence of a priest who could ordinarily give Communion. This absence was very frequent in Garabandal since the pastor lived in Cossío, and it was there that he celebrated Mass most of the time. Although he went up to San Sebastián on almost all the afternoons after the phenomena began, at the time—as has already been indicated—it was not the normal custom to distribute Communion during the evening hours. And sometimes it happened that even though there was a Mass in the village, the girls could not assist at it since they had to go work in the fields. Nor did the many visiting priests provide a solution to the difficulty, since they almost always arrived past noon.

From the manner in which the angel acted, it becomes clear once again that—according to the designs of God—there is no reason to expect a miraculous intervention to obtain something that

4. And sometimes at extremely early hours corresponding to the early morning prayers of the ancient monks. The report that I heard from Loli's mother Julia is worth noting. One night the girl had an apparition in her home when her parents were in bed but not asleep. After a while the girl got up, went to the door, and began to descend the stairs . . .

It was about three in the morning. It was hard for her mother to get up because she was tired and sleepy, but she could not leave her daughter alone. She got out of bed, got dressed, and went outside after her.

In ecstasy Loli went to the church and in the courtyard fell on her knees to receive the Communion that the Angel came to give her.

It had snowed and it was very cold. Julia confessed that on seeing her alone at such an hour of the night, surrounded in complete silence by the dull splendor of the snow, alone at the side of her little girl, that she was out of this world! She felt a strange mixture of emotion and fear.

we ourselves can procure the ordinary means at our disposal.

Many examples could be mentioned here to illustrate what has just been said, but the following one should suffice.

Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva, states in his *Memorias*:

«I was able to prove that the Angel didn't give Communion to the girls if the parish priest, or another priest with faculties, was present and exercising this ministry in Garabandal. This I noticed as a result of a study that I completed and things that I repeatedly observed. It can be used as an answer to those who ask the question: *How is it possible that an Angel acts in a ministry that isn't his own?*»

In continuing on, Fr. de la Riva explains a very interesting proof, which will not be put down here, but will be put down later, since it merits being reported completely and with special care.

The daughter of Ramón Pifarré, who ran a pharmacy in Barcelona and was one of the best witnesses of the many happenings at Garabandal, related to me how they had witnessed one of Conchita's mystical Communions in June of 1962.

The girl's ecstasy was much the same as usual in these cases. However the spectator's attention was sharply attracted on seeing the girl, some minutes after receiving Communion, but still in ecstasy, laugh . . .

It was necessary to ask her what happened, and the girl explained:

—Before leaving, the Angel said to me, *You see, I came early today, so that you don't say that I kept you hungry.* (At that time the Eucharistic fast was still long and rigid.)

Mrs. Asunción Pifarré told me that it was a little after eight in the morning, and the girl's mother Aniceta had collected the sheep that were to go up the mountain with Conchita, since that day she had to be a 'shepherdess'.

«I recall that sometime later Fr. Valentín came to Maximina González' home where we were staying. He came from Cossío, and asked

for Conchita. I told him that she had left. And he was irritated, saying that he didn't understand this, how an Angel could come to give Communion, knowing that he was going to come and that he could very well give It himself. But I think that the Angel's attitude in coming early couldn't have been more thoughtful, looking out for the welfare of the girl who was awaiting a long burdensome day.»

Aniceta, Conchita's mother, who can tell us so



many interesting things, has a good recollection of something that she experienced personally.

It occurred during the summer season when she had much work to do in the fields . . . In the morning she set out with Conchita, prepared for a long day's labor; but before going to the place of work, they went up to the Pines, since Conchita had been advised to go there to receive Communion from the Angel. Withdrawn and silent, they waited in that unforgettable site. Time passed and the Angel did not come. The mother, always in a hurry, began to get impatient. She was not used to spending time without doing anything . . . And then she began to get upset, since there was so much that had to be done! Finally, she said to Conchita, *Well, let's go. I think that we've waited long enough. We are wasting time and today we have a lot of work to do.*

The girl implored: *Wait a little longer, mama! The Angel always does what he says. I don't know why he is late today . . .*

The mother agreed reluctantly. And while waiting she glanced down toward the village, and with the excellent vision of a country woman, she clearly distinguished the shape of a frail Franciscan knocking at the door of her home. She turned quickly to her daughter, saying: *This explains everything. We are not going to waste any more time here. Look down below. You have someone to give you Communion. That's the reason the Angel isn't coming!*

They went down in a hurry, approached the priest, and accompanied him to the church, where they received Communion from his hands.⁽⁵⁾

* * *

On several occasions these Communions through the ministry of the Angel were means of important lessons for the girls.

Jacinta will never forget the lesson she received early in the apparitions . . .

One day she, Loli, and Conchita were called to the same location. The three knelt down in a row in front of the Angel; Jacinta was in the middle.

And everything began as usual: some introductory words from the Angel concerning what they were going to do, the "I confess" by the girls, *This is the Lamb of God . . . Lord I am not worthy.*

The Angel gave Communion to the first girl in the row in the usual way. In the meantime, Jacinta, next in line, raised her head, opened her mouth and held out her tongue in preparation to receive. But the Angel—not in the usual way, but as if she

were not there—passed by her with the Body of Our Lord to the third girl . . .



Jacinta was taught a lesson.

Noticing this, the little girl's eyes opened wide and tears began to stream from them. Everything within her asked a distressed *Why? Why?* She did not understand why the Angel had refused her Communion like this.

The explanation (and the lesson) came immediately. Did she not remember the argument that she had had with her mother? What had the Virgin told them so many times? She had to do more to conquer that fault, that lack of submission, that way of speaking . . . She could not receive the Lord in such a state.

Jacinta, weeping, recognized her fault. How could she do otherwise? She had to resign herself to the punishment of remaining without the Eucharist, so painful under those circumstances.

When she returned home, her mother knew immediately that something had happened to the girl. She had come back so different from the other times!

—*What happened to you?*

5. This seems to have taken place on the morning of June 20th, 1962, since among Dr. Ortiz' papers I found a brief note written on June 19th by Eloísa, his sister-in-law:

«On the following morning we accompanied Conchita to the Pines where she waited to receive Communion from the Angel. We prayed while we were waiting . . . A long time dragged by. Her mother went to the side of the hill at the time, and saw a person who appeared to be a priest in front of her home. *He seems to be wearing white cords*, she said.

On hearing this, Conchita hurried down, and we followed her.

Actually it was a Franciscan priest, Fr. Félix Larazábal, now deceased. He was then superior of a Franciscan house in San Pantaleón in Aras (Santander). We went to the church; he celebrated Mass and gave us Communion. Aniceta commented, *That is the reason we have waited so long. Whenever there's a priest in the village to give Communion, she doesn't receive it from the Angel.*»

—*The Angel didn't want to give me Communion.*
(and tears filled her eyes again)

—*And why is that?*

—*Because of an argument that I had with you,
one that I can't remember.*

The mother could not remember either; but things do not pass by so easily before God. Sins do not disappear by a simple forgetting, but by a sincere repentance of the past—strictly necessary for mortal sin—by the sacrament of Penance.⁶

—*The Angel —Jacinta said— won't give me
Communion again until I confess.*

Good lesson! We can be sure that her fault did not enter into the category of mortal sin; and consequently, there was no strict necessity for confession. But Communion requires very much, especially in persons highly favored with gifts of grace; these cannot abandon themselves to carelessness, to an attitude of being good *more or less*; from them is demanded an amendment and a serious effort to be better.



“until I confess”

6. This was confirmed for me recently by Jacinta's father, Simón. He noted that on another occasion he had personally observed as an eyewitness of the Mystical Communions of the three girls—Jacinta, Loli, and Conchita—that the Angel left one of them without Communion. This could be seen by the girl's gestures and actions and it was a punishment for some fault that she had committed.

In the light of this episode, which the visionary will never forget, it is not difficult to understand how God looks on certain attitudes or *doctrines* that today are gaining vogue among so many here on earth. *There is no relationship between sacramental Confession and the Eucharist . . . One can receive Communion without going to Confession. This makes sense only in the very rare case of the worst sins, but in ordinary life . . . The necessity of innocence in order to receive Communion must not be exaggerated . . . and in any case, the general absolution, which is given at times in the liturgy, is all that is necessary; anything else is an excess.* It can be observed that from the moment in which the Mass is looked upon predominately as an assembly of the people of God, and Communion as a symbolic meal among brothers, the necessity for such interior purification will not be recognized.

In this point as in so many others, Garabandal comes to the Church in preview, mercifully and salutarily offering beforehand admonitions from heaven for deviations on earth. Is this not the main reason that it has encountered great hostility?

Garabandal, in its eminent Eucharistic dimension, mysteriously foreshadowed the actual state of Catholicism today. It holds out with striking force the eternal doctrine of our *Mysterium Fidei*, a doctrine which is being attacked by a dangerous crisis, a doctrine whose defense required new documents from the Supreme Magisterium, to culminate in the *Credo of the People of God* that Paul VI proclaimed to the world on June 29th, 1968:

We believe that just as the bread and wine consecrated by the Lord at the Last Supper were changed into His Body and His Blood, which was to be offered for us on the cross; likewise the bread and wine consecrated by the priest are changed into the body and blood of Christ enthroned gloriously in heaven. And we believe that the mysterious presence of the Lord—under what continues to appear to our senses to be the same as before—is a true, real, and substantial presence.

The unique and indivisible existence of the Lord glorious in heaven is not multiplied, but is rendered present in the sacrament in the many places on earth where Mass is celebrated. And this existence remains present —after the sacrifice— in the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, the living heart of all our churches.

And it is our very sweet duty to honor and adore in the blessed Host which our eyes see, the Incarnate Word Whom they cannot see, and Who, without leaving heaven, is made present before us.

I have chosen these high points of our history — the threshold of the second year of the events — to speak of the Eucharistic dimension of Garabandal. Although this dimension was manifested openly during 1961, it came to the forefront above all in 1962 to such a degree as to give the second year a special characteristic, one that for centuries has been described in the ancient axiom of the early Christians:



*to Jesus
through Mary*



chapter

f
i
v
e

As Winter Passes . . .

In the book from the bible entitled *The Song of Songs*, there is a beautiful passage that poetically addresses a tryst for lovers, as winter wanes.

Arise, make haste,
My love, my dove,
My beautiful one, and come.
For winter is now past,
The rains are over and gone.
Flowers have appeared in our land;
Time for pruning is come;
The song of the dove is heard in our land.

(2: 10-12)

And it was during the winter...

The first part of our story has brought us up to the first winter in Garabandal — a long cold winter of official suspicion and distrust, drenching rain and freezing snow.

The weather itself, joining with everything else, seemed to stand in the way of the mysterious and marvelous visits to the village — not in the way of the Visitor, but in the way of those at her destination. Her presence continued there, but in a reduced way, not according to the rhythm of the *good days* of before; but as if waiting for something to happen . . .

Characteristic of this first winter were the prayers of penance at inconvenient times, especially in the early hours of the morning, as has already been seen. Following her comments on the Communions from the hands of the Angel, Conchita consigned to her diary:

The Virgin told the four of us, Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz and myself, to go pray the rosary at the *Cuadro*.

Some days we went at 6 o'clock (in the morning) and on other days, later.

Jacinta and Mari Cruz went at 6 in the morning and at 7; and Loli at no definite time.

Later, since it was not convenient for Mari Cruz to get up so early, she went at 8 o'clock.

And at 6 o'clock like us, Jacinta continued alone, with her mother and people from the village.

During Holy Week, the Virgin told

me to go at 5 o'clock in the morning.

And so I went, since the Virgin always wants us to do penance.

The last days of 1961 were sanctified with these penitential prayers; and with them the first weeks of 1962 began to be sanctified.

On January 3rd, Jacinta wrote to the pastor of Barro, Fr. de la Riva:

«At this time, Mari Cruz and I go to pray the rosary to the Virgin. Yesterday we had bad weather in the morning. So much water came down the calleja that we almost couldn't kneel down . . . Now, since there is no snow, everything is going well.»

With her *maladroit* expression, the girl meant to say that her *dawn rosary* in the dark reveille of the second day of the year had been accompanied by a heavy downpour. The rain had fallen so heavily on the mountains that the water cascading down the calleja hardly left place for those saying their early morning prayers to kneel down.⁽¹⁾

1. Dr. Ricardo Puncernau, a renowned neuro-psychiatrist from Barcelona, writes in his recent leaflet *Psychological Phenomena of Garabandal*:

«Ceferino was a rather rough man due to his straightforwardness. He told me the following:

"It was during the winter. There were no visitors in the village. There was a light snowstorm and it was freezing cold. About 3 in the morning, I heard Mari Loli get up and get dressed.

— Where are you going now?

— The Virgin called me to the *Cuadro*.

— You are crazy, being cold as it is.

— The Virgin called me to the *Cuadro* . . .

—To see if a wolf will leap on you . . . Do what you want . . . But your Mother and I won't come with you.

Mari Loli finished dressing, opened the door of the house and went to the Cuadro, about 200 meters from the village. If I had been sure it was the Virgin, I wouldn't have left my bed . . . The Virgin would have taken care of her . . . But since we weren't sure, my wife and I got up and we made our way toward the Cuadro.

We found her in the middle of a snowstorm, on her knees in a trance.

It was hellishly cold.

Expecting to find her frozen, I slapped her cheeks. They were warm, as if she had never left the covers of her bed.

We were there more than an hour, suffering in the cold while she remained very happy, speaking with her Vision. To see it her parents had to do penance."

That is essentially what Ceferino told me one night while we were sitting on a bench in his tavern.»

What a picture of penitential morning prayer! What a rosary that was, accompanied by the monotonous drumming of raindrops.

And thus, while winter passed — the harsh winter of the high mountains — the sacred flame of hope remained smoldering in the hearts of the people.

* * *

To keep the flame burning in the new year (which was coming with so many unknowns), on its inaugural day, the 1st of January, something happened that could well have served as a sign of the future. Dr. Ortiz⁽²⁾ of Santander recounts it:

«In the city I met Margarita Huerta,⁽³⁾ who had come from Madrid with a group of people. Three of the girls went into ecstasy. And while they were walking together through the street above the plaza, in the direction of the church, it occurred to one of the people who was following them at a distance: *If this is supernatural, let the girl in the middle come now to give me the crucifix to kiss.*

The girl instantly withdrew from the others and came to give the crucifix to her to kiss. Only to her! She told us about it later, very excited.»

* * *

During those icy wintry days of January, an interesting episode occurred. Aniceta described it without remembering the date.

One night, her son Cetuco,⁽⁴⁾ who had been detained by his fiancée's family, came home very late. Conchita had already had *the calls*; consequently the girl's ecstasy could be expected at any moment . . . Aniceta never left her alone under these circumstances, especially at night; but on this occasion she could not wait up. She asked her son at the time not to go to bed but to remain with his sister because of what might happen. The young man agreed, although perhaps not with the best grace.

Toward 2:30, Conchita fell into ecstasy and left

the house. Cetuco took a flashlight and followed her. It was a white night — because of the heavy snow — and bitterly cold.



Cetuco

Skimming over the snow, Conchita made the difficult path to the Pines in haste . . . Cetuco forgot the cold in his efforts to follow her.

Sometime later, Aniceta warmly bundled herself up and went outside to see if she could join her children. The coldness was stunning; but still more stunning was the complete silence amid the faint brilliance of the snow . . .

When she finally arrived at the Pines, breathing heavily, the woman was struck speechless by the scene before her eyes: there on their knees in the snow were her two children praying. Conchita, absorbed in her vision, was leading the rosary; Cetuco was devoutly responding. What else could Aniceta do but join in their prayer?

After awhile, the girl showed signs that she was getting up to walk. The mother then went ahead on the way down to clear out the path, pushing away the snow in the difficult spots . . . It was a useless precaution, since the girl — on her knees and backwards — slid down over the white surface, as if following an invisibly marked path.

2. This name should be familiar to the reader because of the many times that it has been mentioned in these pages.

3. This woman who was a government worker in Madrid would later become one of the most effective proponents and spreaders of the cause of Garabandal.

4. Cetuco (a nickname of Aniceto) was the second son of Aniceta. He was to die in early youth — with an exemplary death — in a hospital at Burgos in 1966.

The extraordinary ecstatic march ended behind the mother's house in the street or alley that — months later— would be the scene of the much discussed *little miracle* of the visible Communion.

* * *

The signs of penance, piety, and sacrifice that characterized the first winter in Garabandal were not destined to be a temporary thing . . .

On a summer day in 1970, Fr. José Laffineur⁽⁵⁾ was speaking to Jacinta in Garabandal:

Fr. Laffineur — Jacinta, on November 30, 1961, Mari Cruz wrote the pastor of Barro, *I go to the Cuadro every day at 6 in the morning to recite the rosary. Jacinta accompanies me. Conchita goes out at 6 o'clock, and Loli at 8:30, but they pray it in the church . . .*

Jacinta — *That's true, Father.*

Fr. Laffineur — Where you all four faithful, during such a cold winter in Garabandal, in spite of the rain, the snow, the ice?

Jacinta — *Yes, Father.*⁽⁶⁾

Fr. Laffineur — Then why haven't you continued doing it until the present?

Jacinta — *Because the Virgin told us to obey our parents.*

What comes out from this conversation concerning the parents' influence — legitimate, of course — on the visionaries with respect to their practices of penance and piety, is corroborated by another *confession* which was recorded from the lips of Mari Cruz' mother Pilar on July 25th, 1964:

«Look. When Father Amador⁽⁷⁾ was present here, he told me that Mari Cruz shouldn't go to pray in the calleja. And one morning I told my daughter this, that she shouldn't go to pray at 6 o'clock — that Father Amador had said that she could go, if she wanted, at another hour.

5. This Belgian priest who lived in France was discussed in a previous footnote.

6. Jacinta is accurate according to her father Simón, an honest man of few words. In 1976 he told me:

«For 6 months we continued going to the calleja to pray the rosary every day at 6 in the morning. I accompanied the girl with an umbrella.»



“The Virgin told us to obey our parents.”

One day I didn't let her go any more; and she stayed in her bed upset . . . And afterwards she said to me, *Mama, I'm not telling you to go with me. If you don't want to go, don't go. You are not obligated. But I HAVE TO GO.*

On the following day I went to find Fr. Amador, who had just returned from a trip. And I said to him, *Look Fr. Amador, this is what's happening to me with the girl. She told me that if I don't go, she would go alone . . .*

He answered me, *Let her go, let her go.»*

7. As shown in the second chapter of Book Two, Fr. Amador was the priest whom the diocesan chancery officials in Santander assigned to the village of Garabandal in the autumn of 1961. He was their substitute for Fr. Valentín on whom they had imposed a *vacation* with the intention of curing him of his supposed inclination in favor of the apparitions.

When did Fr. Amador arrive? I cannot give the exact date. In the notes of Fr. Valentín, there is an intermission that goes from the last days of October, 1961 until January 27, 1962. The day after that, January 28th, we have a note from Dr. Ortiz saying «Conchita, in her ecstasy at 7:10, was heard to say, *Fr. Valentín asked me if the village wants him.*»

This can be seen as a very human question after his *exile*.



"The Virgin told me to make sacrifices for the sanctity of priests

It is evident that the girls were clearly conscious of what was being asked from them; but that they were encountering difficulties in carrying it out.

They were at the time also adequately instructed about the primary end of their practices of piety and penance. Here is what Dr. Ortiz of Santander, an astute eye-witness, reports:

«During one of those days, I asked María Dolores after the ecstasy: *What did the Apparition tell you?*

She responded, *The Virgin told me:*

— *to make sacrifices for the sanctity of priests, so that they may lead many souls on the road to Christ;*

— *that the world is worse each day and needs holy priests, in order that they may make many people return to the right way.*

Previously, the Virgin told me to *pray specially for priests so that they may want to remain, so that they may continue to be priests.*»

The true meaning of these last words surely escaped the girl, since in those days there was only a faint beginning — which she could not have known from her village — of what was soon going to develop into a massive clerical betrayal . . .

Vatican II (which, with its changes and loose atmosphere, would come to be the *occasion* of this betrayal) was at the time only an expectant dream of a beautiful future for a Church that had decided to *update* through a thorough renovation. John XXIII's optimism had spread everywhere; and in order to aid him, everywhere there was prayer and work for the success of the great enterprise.

The news had come to the girls at Garabandal too, and they joined as well as they could in the common prayer . . . On January 11th, 1962, Mari Cruz wrote in her scribbly penmanship to the pastor of Barro:

«I know that the Virgin wants us to be very good and to visit the Blessed Sacrament. I wish that you would pray to the Virgin so that I may be better every day. When I saw the Virgin, I



“The Virgin wants us . . . to visit the Blessed Sacrament.”

told her what you wrote to me, *so that the Pope and those who are with him succeed well in the Council*; also I gave it to the others to read, so that they may do likewise.»

In Waiting

At the end of Chapter II, it was shown that together with the frigid winter season, there was a restriction in the ecstasies. Each girl had her *days* and had to wait the Virgin's return with a proper disposition. In the letter just quoted, Mari Cruz wrote to Fr. José Ramon:

«Yes, I go to pray the rosary every day, at 6 in the morning. The Virgin told me to pray it every day at this time, until the 16th, when I will see her again.»

The day set aside for Loli was January 13th, and the child waited with great anticipation since she was *more accustomed* than the others to these favors. (I was not able to obtain any information about what occurred on that day.)

Jacinta's day was January 18th, and it was not a happy one. Doctor Ortiz, who was present, wrote down:

«After she had her ecstasy, Jacinta exclaimed, *Until February 18th, I will not see*



"holding up various articles to be kissed"

her! Inconsolable, she could only repeat, I will not see her again for a month!»

On that same day, Mari Cruz and Mari Loli were unexpectedly favored, as Doctor Ortiz mentions:

«They had an ecstasy at 6 in the evening. They went to the church, and from there to the home of Mari Cruz, holding up various articles to be kissed. Praying the rosary, they went out then to the calleja, where they finished the third mystery. And afterward they went up to the Pines where they finished the rosary. The ecstasy ended about a quarter after eight.»

Conchita went long weeks awaiting her day, which was the 27th of January.⁽⁸⁾ A week before it, on January 20th, her aunt Maximina wrote to Dr. Ortiz in Santander:

«As you know, Conchita's apparition will be on January 27th. She told me to urge you to come. She wants you to come. Perhaps during these days, she herself will write to you, although she is very negligent in this regard.»

From mid-January, the trances began again to multiply, at least for Mari Loli. Maximina writes in her letter:

«María Dolores sees her very much. On Wednesday, I had Father José Ramón, the priest from Barro, sleeping in my home. At half past three there was a knocking on the door. I got up in a hurry and there was Loli in ecstasy. She gave me the crucifix to kiss, and afterwards gave it to the children.⁽⁹⁾ Then she

8. On January 3rd, Conchita wrote to a niece of Doctor Ortiz:

«I won't see the Most Holy Virgin again until the 27th of January. The time seems very long to me!»

And some weeks later, on January 19th, she says in another letter to the same recipient:

«You tell me to pray for you . . . But every day, when I go to pray, I pray for all the sick, and in particular for you . . . You also tell me that the wait until the 27th to see the Most Holy Virgin seems long. Well, take note of this! I'm counting all the days that remain. They are so long! And now I only need 9 more.»

9. Maximina was the aunt and godmother of Conchita. She had become a widow early in life, having two children from her marriage: a boy and a girl. The boy became a seminarian and studied in Comillas (Santander).

went upstairs and knelt in front of the picture of my husband. She stayed about five minutes praying for him, that he rest in peace. Afterwards she turned around on her knees and went to give the crucifix to the priest in bed to kiss. She left the room and went to give it to my father. After they left, the priest got up and went to accompany them through the village until it was over.»

What Maximina writes in her letter of January 20th concerning Loli's nocturnal visit to her home, coincides amazingly with what the priest from Barro, Fr. José Ramón reports in his *Memorias*. Nevertheless, he definitely situates what happened on a night in August, that is, seven months later than the date mentioned in Maximina's letter. The similarity of the reports is surprising and equally surprising is the disparity in the dates. Is it that one of the writers is mistaken, or does it refer to two different occurrences?⁽¹⁰⁾

The report of Father José Ramón has particular interest because of its copious detail and because it presents Loli's visit at night to Maximina's house as an answer to something that he had requested mentally before going to bed, as a *proof* of the supernatural truth of those unusual phenomena.

* * *

At last, the long-awaited January 27th arrived for Conchita. She had her *apparition*. If it was an important one for her, we do not know. All we know are the few words that Fr. Valentín wrote down for the day (at least it is in his collection of notes pertaining to January):

«Conchita went into ecstasy in her home at 6:30 in the evening. She went out toward the church where she presented to the Vision — for kissing — the medals and rosaries that had been entrusted to her for this. Later, in the same state, she returned them to their owners without any mistakes. It ended at 8:20.»

Father Valentín then added something interesting:

«According to what I was told, since I was

10. After having written this, I found the following in the *Memorias* of Fr. José Ramón:

«The visit to the room where I was sleeping happened twice: the time that I just mentioned at 3:45 in the morning; and another time equally early at 10 minutes to 4.»

already in bed, Mari Loli had an apparition at 2:00 in the morning, and it ended at 2:30. Previously, while in the normal state, they had told her that there was a painter there who wanted to paint the Virgin. Following that, during the vision, the girl was heard to say, *There is a painter here who wants to paint you . . . But so beautiful as you are, how can he do it!*»

The painter in question was M. Calderón, well known in Santander.

* * *

After this date, the apparitions began again to be the order of the day, with the exception of Jacinta, who had to undergo a month of trial, as had been foretold to her.

Concerning the following day, January 28th, Dr. Ortiz wrote down:

«Conchita, in ecstasy, joined with María Dolores at the church door. There they began the rosary, and went from there to the home of Uncle Leoncio. (*An old man of the village, who was unconscious and near death*) They knelt down beside him and prayed, trying unsuccessfully to make him kiss the crucifix that they carried in their hands. They continued praying, and suddenly the sick man regained his consciousness and answered the prayers, something that astounded all of us.⁽¹¹⁾ The girls gave him the crucifix to kiss again, and he then kissed it. And then he said, *I pray because I believe*. And he lost consciousness again. With great signs of happiness, the girls got up and left.»⁽¹²⁾

11. Doctor Ortiz considered it *miraculous*, or close to a miracle, that the old man, so ill and in extremis, would react like this; he was actually in a *coma*.

12. «Conchita and María Dolores were together in ecstasy for two hours. A man was there who was sick, and furthermore he was deranged (*senile*). They went to the place where he was. Look, it was worth seeing how they acted with him. The disturbed man told them that he didn't want to kiss the crucifix. And as he didn't want to kiss it, they prayed a Station with him, and also six Our Fathers for all the sick. He prayed well, but they didn't make him kiss the crucifix, and the girls shed big tears. Afterwards, still in ecstasy, they went outside and went straight to the Pines. They prayed there a while, and came down and walked once again through the village, and went back up again. It was already 9:30 at night, completely dark, and if you could have seen where they went —they were astonishing! Afterwards they came down with great speed, and we tried to stay with them . . . but it was a race! You know how they come down, with their

Children on the March

It can be seen that during those days, God was showing special attention to that old man, who was then at death's door, as if attempting to assist him in his great step toward eternity: facing the meeting he would have with God.

How easily do men forget that we do not end like irrational animals, but that all of us are heading inexorably toward this great encounter, and that we cannot present ourselves there anyway we please. J. Staudinger writes in the introduction to his book *The Holy Priesthood*:

“The encounter of the soul with God starts eternity. In that hour, the person stands in total solitude. As helpless as when he came from the Hands of the Creator, he now appears before Him. The Creator and the creature meet for the first time in front of each other, face to face: God alone and the soul alone . . .

The only thing accompanying the person there will be what he has done during his life.

It will always be supreme wisdom to prepare for that hour . . . This is the most holy task of the Church; her special mission toward every human being is to prepare him for that final hour of encounter.”

Poor Uncle Leoncio, Jacinta's grandfather, blind and *in extremis*, stands in our story as a symbol of the frail human being in his final helplessness, when there is nothing to hope for from the world below, and only from the world above can help and comfort come. Attending to the dying will always be the highest work of Christian charity, a thing that the Church and those in the Church, cannot in any way forget.

And the girls, immersed in the deep mystery of

heads turned backwards, without seeing anything. They walked again through the village and went to sing some songs at the home of Mari Cruz, who had gone to bed since she didn't have an apparition . . . »

(Maximina's letter to the Pifarré family, dated January 30, 1962)



"Ecstatic marches"

Garabandal, did not forget. The case of Uncle Leoncio was not the only one in this regard. Nor was the episode of January 28th that we have just seen the only one with him.

We know, for example, that on January 30th, Conchita and Loli were in ecstasy towards 7:20 in the evening, and after having **«prayed in the Cuadro, they visited the houses where the sick were, holding up the crucifix to be kissed and praying with them.»**

And on January 31st, after the rosary ended in the church, Mari Cruz went into ecstasy and **«she walked through the village, visiting several houses where she gave the cross to be kissed. And she also went to the house of Jacinta's grandfather, where she was with him about a quarter of an hour, praying and holding up the cross to be kissed . . . And a little later, Loli and Conchita did the same, and they were with him for a period of an hour; and they came back to the same place, and sat on the bed.»**



“holding up the crucifix to be kissed”

The old man, semi-conscious, did not respond to the girls' desire for him to kiss the crucifix, and they asked him, **«Why don't you kiss it? If you**

kiss it, the Virgin can restore your sight.» To that, the old man replied, **«And what would I want my sight for?»**

The episode concerning Uncle Leoncio ended a few days later with the end of his stay on earth. Among Fr. Valentín's notes are found these, corresponding to February 8th:

«At 9 at night, Mari Loli went out of her home in ecstasy. She went to the home of Leoncio, who was laid out, and she held out the crucifix to be kissed by the persons who were there (almost the whole village). She prayed a station before the body and then left and went into other houses.»

Return to Astounding "Normal"

During this time — the end of January and the first weeks of February — Mari Loli, Mari Cruz and Conchita once again had apparitions as before in the usual way . . . Each girl with her own style, and each day with its own story. There was much in common in the activities of the three visionaries and the episodes of each day: holding up the articles to be kissed by the Vision, presenting the crucifix to be kissed by the people around them, visiting the church and also the homes, praying at the Cuadro, going up to the Pines . . . Concerning the latter, there was a remarkable thing that occurred about the 5th of February.

«About 8:45 at night, Mari Loli went out of her home in ecstasy. She went toward the Pines, going up by the most difficult way, not by the trails or path, and she did it with extreme ease, without grabbing onto anything and without falling, while all the rest went up almost on their hands and knees, hanging onto the shrubs on the way in order not to roll back down. The girl did this three times. The ecstasy ended at 10:00.» (Fr. Valentín's notes)

On January 31st, we have a more detailed story:

«At 8:00 in the morning, Conchita went to the Cuadro in the calleja to pray the most holy rosary, remaining there in ecstasy. Then she

went through the village, and on passing the fountain, fell backwards, smacking her head hard on the ground. All those present feared that she had severely injured herself; nevertheless, when the ecstasy was over, her mother said that they couldn't find even a bruise.»

This report from the Police Chief, Alvarez Seco, was confirmed by Father José Ramón García de la Riva, who gives us more details:



«I was present and I took photographs of the

ecstasy at 8:30 in the morning — at the Cuadro, at the door of the church, at the place where Conchita fell backwards, striking the back of her neck hard against a stone on the ground. The sound was very loud; Conchita's mother and some of the people present cried out, thinking that she had broken her neck. At first Conchita, lying on the ground, was serious, listening to the Vision. Then she began to laugh and Aniceta and the other women were reassured. I then felt the young girl's head and didn't notice anything abnormal. After the ecstasy I felt the neck again, and once again didn't find anything. Surprised, the girl asked me why I was touching her head like this. When I gave her the reason, she merely smiled.»

Further information, dated February 1st, was reported by Fr. De la Riva:

«Loli was in ecstasy with Conchita in the kitchen. Through the open window, she held out the crucifix to be kissed by the people who were outside . . . This crucifix belonged to a woman who was in the kitchen; she was afraid of losing it since it was a precious relic to her. She continually asked for it back. She became so demanding that Conchita ended up exclaiming, *What an impertinent woman! Give it to her once and for all; so that she will leave!*»

The crucifix was taken from Loli's hand and given to the woman who was then very happy. Loli remained without a crucifix in front of the open window, her hands joined on her chest . . . Then she said, *Conchita, the Virgin says that you should ask Father for the crucifix.*

I was the only priest present, and this certainly was referring to me.

I then said to myself, *If you don't come to get it yourself, I'm not going to give it to you.* And I remained standing there where I was, near to the kitchen entrance, my hands in my pockets.

I don't have the habit of carrying a crucifix with me; but by chance on that day I had a little crucifix in my pocket. Then I grasped it tightly in my right hand, to see what would happen.

Had Conchita heard or rather had she understood what Loli had said? Perhaps, for she didn't ask me anything. Then Loli, still in



"She sees her every day."

ecstasy, turned around and made her way toward me.

With an amazing movement of her right hand, with a stunning suppleness and an incredible agility, she put her right hand in the right pocket of my cassock. She opened up my hand, which was tightly clenched on the crucifix — opening it in spite of me — and she seized the crucifix.

Then I thought to myself, and said in my mind, *Take it, take it! I don't need further proof.*

My excitement did not stop me from noticing that — while at other times the hands of the girls lost their warmth in ecstasy — this time Loli's hand maintained its natural warmth.»

As a resumé of these times, we can transcribe here the letter that Conchita wrote to the pastor of Barro on February 15th:

«Dear Father José Ramón,

Since you've left here, we haven't heard any more about you. We don't know if you are angry or if you are sick, since there's a lot of flu here . . .

Today it is snowing; I'm coming now from praying the rosary at the Cuadro, and last night, at 8 o'clock, I had an apparition there. It was snowing very much, but I saw a clear sky. I wasn't cold; my mother was shaking like a leaf . . .

The apparitions continue in the same way. María Dolores has many — some days more, and others less — but she sees her every day. Mari Cruz saw her every day during the week except for one or two days. Jacinta will see her on the 18th, which will make a month that she hasn't seen her. Mari Cruz and I have had the apparitions for some time now in the Cuadro, but not every day at the same time. Loli sees her in the village, in the houses, and at the Pines . . . There is nothing more that I can say.»

Conchita certainly speaks in a natural and ordinary way about things that are most extraordinary.

A Move Is Planned

The daily flowering of wondrous things in Garabandal seemed to have reached full bloom on February 18th, when Jacinta also was included in the amazing *game*.

That February 18th (Septuagesima⁽¹³⁾ Sunday in that year), began with some early morning spiritual walks that illustrated and practiced the liturgical texts that were later read during the Mass of the day:

— Day after day must be born **the burden of the day's heat.** (Matt. 20: 11)

— One should run without giving up, in a way to **gain the prize.** (1 Cor. 9: 24)

— We should submit ourselves to God, who declares he has **a right to do what I choose.** (Matt. 20: 15)

Fr. Valentín's notes read:

«At 6 in the morning, Mari Cruz and Jacinta went out to pray the rosary at the Cuadro, and there they went into ecstasy. (Jacinta hadn't had an apparition since January 18th, at which time it was foretold that she wouldn't have one until today). They went down to the village in ecstasy, and they held the crucifix to be kissed by several persons . . . And they returned to the Cuadro, where they came out of it. It lasted 70 minutes.»

Such a holy beginning made it easy to continue on devoutly through the ensuing hours of the *Lord's Day* with the morning Mass, the rosary in common at the beginning of the evening . . . And the day had no less a holy ending:

«At 6 in the evening, Jacinta and Mari Loli

13. With what is called Septuagesima Sunday begins the long liturgical procession toward Easter. *This time* — reads the French Missal — *makes us meditate on our earthly condition: suffering and sinful. It evokes a triple effort:*

The effort of the entire human race which through its long history struggles against evil, while groping for God and trying to build a better world.

The effort of Christ Who during His public life fought against Satan, and founded the Kingdom of God.

The effort that the Church pursues in each of us through our daily militant battle against the difficulties of life.



“Conchita made the sign of the cross over all of them, one by one.”

went to the Pines, and there went into ecstasy again. And later they went down to the door of the church, and here they came out of it one after the other, with a minute’s difference.»

Maximina Gonzalez in a letter on February 19, written to the Pifarré family, confirms the pastor’s notes. It is seen that Maximina began the letter on Sunday the 18th, and finished it the next day:

«Today, Sunday, at six in the morning, they had an apparition at the Pines and they came down to the village backwards; and this afternoon they will have another . . .

The apparitions continue, good weather or bad. Recently the girls brought the winter! They get up early every morning with the coldness that there is. It is hard for them and obviously hard for the many people with them. For several days now I haven’t gone since I have a bad cold.

Last night we were at the Pines at an apparition. There were a lot of people and Conchita

made the sign of the cross over all of them, one by one . . . and as usual she asked for a miracle . . . »

* * *

The course of the Garabandal Mystery, as beautiful as it is unusual, was on the verge of being interrupted during those February days. On Wednesday, February 21st, Fr. Valentín wrote down:

«Today they took Conchita to León.»⁽¹⁴⁾

Although this trip had a particular reason for her, the plan or project that had been conceived by several influential people was not limited to her alone. A geographical transplant of all four girls was being contemplated.

On March 1st, Conchita, who had returned from León, wrote to Dr. Ortiz and his wife in Santander:

«I asked the Virgin whether I should go see

14. A beautiful city in the northwest part of the Iberian peninsula holding many claims to glory for services given to the country during the most difficult centuries; it was the capital of the Christian reconquest from the Arabs.



"I went to give the crucifix to be kissed."

my brother.⁽¹⁵⁾ and she told me to go, that I would have an apparition there too, as I did.

I was in León at the home of Mr. del Valle;⁽¹⁶⁾ I don't know if you know him, or have heard his name mentioned. I had the first ecstasy on Saturday. I don't remember if it was at nine o'clock or nine thirty. Mr. Valle, his younger children, my mother, and the house servants were alone. I also had one on Sunday at 11 or 11:30 at night. At the time some men were there, but since the apparition was late in coming, many of them left . . . They said that on that night I went on my knees to the room of Mr. Valle's daughter, which was on the same floor and whose doors joined mine. And they said that I went to give the crucifix to be kissed

by one of his young children who was in bed, and that I recited the rosary. I don't remember anything about the things that I did.

I was also told that I asked the Most Holy Virgin if I could go to college and whether I would see her there. She told me that I would see her the same, although I don't know if I will go where there are Carmelites . . .»⁽¹⁷⁾

This attempt to procure a good education in a religious school for the Garabandal visionaries was being considered with the best intentions by Emilio del Valle and others.

To February 27th corresponds what was written by Fr. Valentin:

«Conchita went to León, to the home of Emilio

15. He was working then in the coal mines of the Hullera Vasco-Leonesa Company in the city of Santa Lucía.

16. This man, Emilio del Valle, was already mentioned in the early parts of this book. But soon he began to appear in the history of Garabandal as someone especially entwined in it, without knowing for what reason he was there.

17. This refers to the *Congregación de Carmelitas de la Caridad* founded in the past century by the holy Joaquina Vedruna. These Carmelites for many years have gone to reputable colleges in León and have contributed much to the education of girls in the city.

del Valle, and there had two apparitions.

Mr. Emilio wanted to put the girls in a school, charging all the expenses to his account: but he met opposition from the girls' parents.»

The matter was on the point of being realized, according to what can be deduced from this letter by Maximina González to Dr. Ortiz, dated March 4:

«When I came back, I had three letters from the Pifarré family of Barcelona at my home. They say that down there they are very happy at the thought that the girls come and go when they please. But notice how upset they will be when I tell them that they are trying to take them all (*the four visionaries*) to school!



Maximina and niece

Conchita says that she is going to leave either on Friday or Saturday; I don't know if this is correct. I don't even want to ask her about it. We're all very upset. It seems incredible. Mr. Emilio! That he is the one who is taking them! What money will do! Heavens! Those who still don't seem persuaded to leave are María Dolores and Jacinta. They'll persuade them . . .

My sister (*Aniceta*) told me, when they went on this trip to León, that the Virgin told them that

they would come to stop where there were some nuns . . . And that the very first thing they saw in León, after getting out of the car, was a school of Carmelite nuns . . . and that they were the first ones to whom they spoke, without knowing any of them. What a coincidence!»

The plan to *transplant* the girls — very well intentioned, but which might have changed the course of Garabandal — ended uneventfully, and the four girls remained in their own environment and with their own affairs.

And so Father Valentín could write in his notebook:

«The matter of San Sebastián de Garabandal at this time continues about the same. The girls have ecstasies almost every day. I continue going up myself to see them.»

As something unusual in the beautiful monotony of those days, I am putting down here something that occurred on March 3rd, and which Dr. Ortiz reported:

«Félix López, a former student of the Seminario Mayor de Derio (Bilbao) who is now the schoolteacher in Garabandal, was meeting with people in Conchita's kitchen. The girl received a letter that she didn't understand, and she requested him to translate it. It was in Italian, and Félix, after reading it, said, *By its style, it could well be Padre Pio.*⁽¹⁸⁾



18. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, a Capuchin priest at San Giovanni Rotondo in Italy, was known world-wide for his stigmata, reading of consciences, and miracles. He died in September of 1968. The process of his canonization is progressing under the auspices of the hierarchy.



"The girls have ecstasies almost every day."

Conchita asked him if he knew Padre Pio's address, and on receiving an affirmative answer, asked him to help her compose a letter to answer it and express her appreciation.

Completing the letter, they left it on the kitchen table, unfolded. After a while, Conchita went into ecstasy and recited the rosary. When she returned to her normal state, the teacher said to her:

— *Did you ask the Virgin if the letter was from Father Pio?*

— *Yes, and she gave me a secret answer to send him.*

The girl went up to her room and came down later with a paper written by hand. In front of everybody, she put the paper in the envelope which had been addressed by the teacher to Padre Pio, and she sealed it.

The letter that had come to Conchita, without a signature, without a return address, but with an Italian stamp, said this:

My Dear Children,

At 9 o'clock in the morning, the Holy Virgin told me to say to you "O blessed young girls of San Sebastián de Garabandal! I promise you that I will be with you until the end of the centuries (possibly 'end of the times'?), and you will be with me during the end of the world. And later, united with me in the glory of paradise."

I am sending you a copy of the holy rosary of Fatima, which the Virgin told me to send you. The rosary was composed by the Virgin and should be propagated for the salvation of sinners and preservation of humanity from the terrible punishments with which the Good God is threatening it.

I give you only one counsel: Pray and make others pray, because the world is at the beginning of perdition.

They do not believe in you or in your conversations with the Lady in White . . . They will believe when it will be too late.»

It would be helpful to have more information in order to understand what this means. If the letter really did come from Padre Pio, where is the original? Is the translation, that Dr. Ortiz has and which we are copying, accurate?

If so, what is the meaning of the expression: "*I will be with you until the end of the centuries, and you will be with me during the end of the world?*"

In the second edition of this book we are able to add something to clarify this intriguing episode.

On February 9, 1975 the people responsible for the magazine *Garabandal* put out by Joey Lomangino, a man well known in Garabandal circles, interviewed Conchita who is now married and living in the United States. The questions and answers were recorded.

— *Conchita, do you remember anything about the letter that you are said to have received from Padre Pio?*

— You know that I have moments in which I remember many things about the apparitions very well, and I have moments in which I hardly remember anything at all . . .

Concerning what you now ask me, I do remember that I received in the mail a letter addressed to me and the other three girls: Jacinta, Mari Loli and Mari Cruz. I was surprised by what it said; and as it was unsigned, I kept it in my pocket until the time of the apparition.

When the Blessed Mother appeared, I showed her the letter . . . And I asked her whom it was from. The Blessed Mother answered that it came from Padre Pio. At the time I didn't know who Padre Pio was and it didn't occur to me to ask her anything more . . .

After the apparition we were talking about the letter, and then a seminarian there told me who Padre Pio was and where he lived. I wrote him, saying that when he made a visit to my country, I would like to see him . . . He answered in a short letter saying, *Do you think that I can come and go by the chimney?* Being twelve years old I had no idea what a cloister was.

Here is something, I repeat, that is very unusual.

— *Do you remember any of the contents of*



"People do not believe in your apparitions . . . When they believe, it will be too late."

the letter that you showed to the Virgin?

I don't remember the whole thing well. But I do remember its beginning:

"Dear children of Garabandal, this morning the Most Holy Virgin talked to me about your apparitions . . ."

I also remember that it said:

"Many people do not believe in your apparitions and that you are speaking with the Blessed Mother. When they believe, it will be too late . . ."

I also remember that the letter said:

"I promise to be with you until the end of the times."

That is all that I remember now.

Do you have those two letters?

— Yes, I think my mother has them in Spain.

This matter will be better understood further on in Part Three of these books after the reader

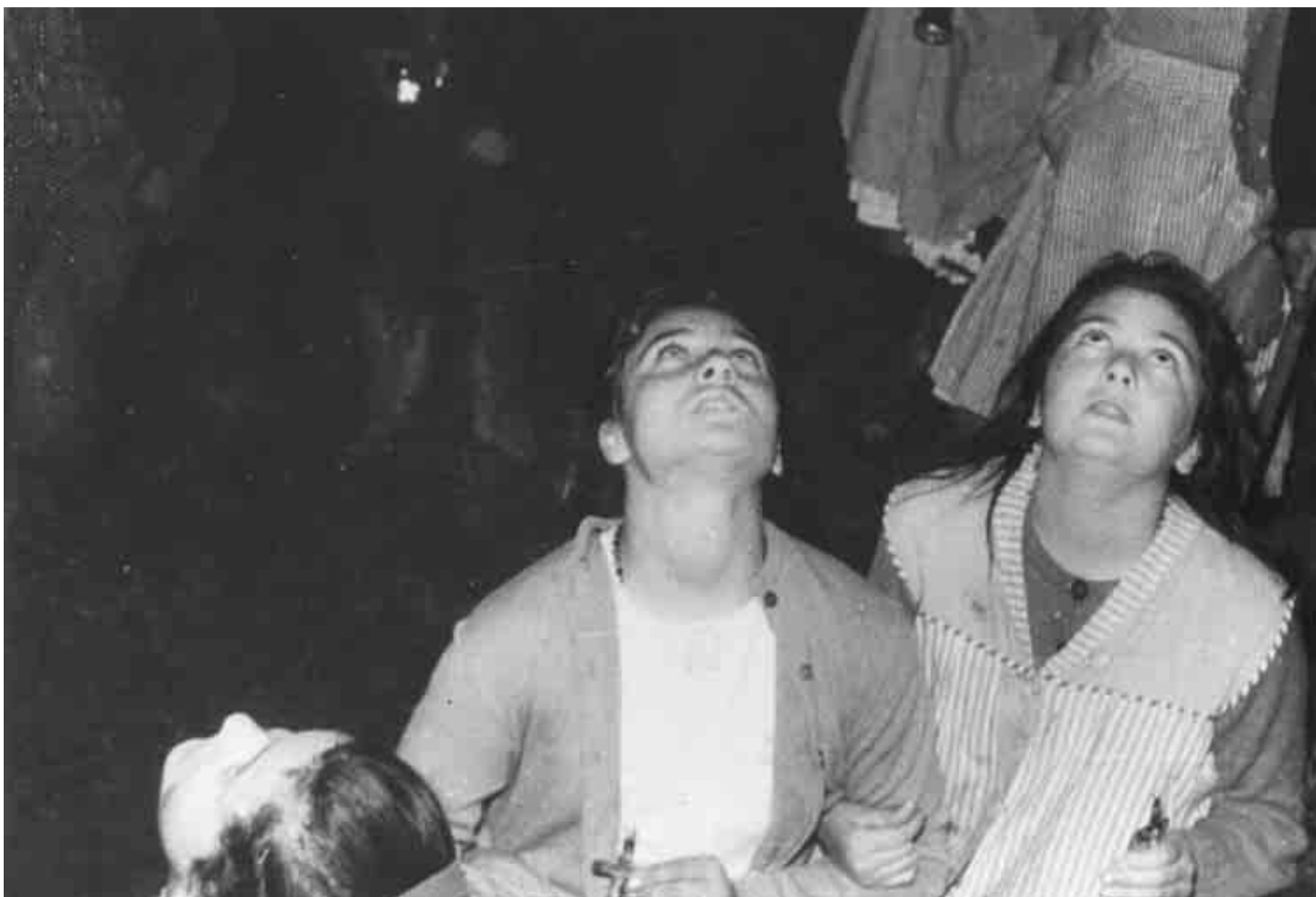
finishes the chapter entitled, *1963, a Year of Interlude* with the section *Only Three Popes Remain*.

It is clear that the *end of the times* is not the same as the *end of the world*.

The visionaries of Garabandal could well experience during their lifetime the coming of the «*end of the times*», and because of this the Virgin will «*be with*» them — through her special assistance and aid — until those great days come. Afterwards they will depart from here on earth to go where she is, and may be present with her «*at the end of the world*» when our Lord will conclude things with His final judgment to close the tremendous epoch of man's history.

Days of Lent

In Spain the students look forward to March 7th, since it is a vacation day commemorating the feast of St. Thomas of Aquinas, the patron of students. In 1962 that day also had a strong



“There must be much penance . . . There must be many sacrifices . . .”

penitential significance for all the faithful, since it was the beginning of Lent: Ash Wednesday.

The girls had to apply themselves with greater intensity at that time to what the Virgin had told them both for themselves and for others: ***There must be much penance . . . There must be many sacrifices . . .***

And the lenten days of Garabandal were permeated with penance during that year of grace, 1962. But in the almost daily ecstasies, there was also a place for the many other things, great and small, that comprised each girl's life.

For example, Loli met again with the departed Fr. Luis Andreu⁽¹⁹⁾ on March 12th and talked to him for a long time:

«What joy it gives me to talk with you! It's like when you were alive. I'm very happy when

you come. It's been a long time since we've seen you!

How sad you would have been if we had gone to school, because we wouldn't be able to see the Virgin anymore!

Look, I want something . . . Do you know what? Perform a MIRACLE, so that they may see that we are speaking with you and the Virgin . . .»

These remarks by Loli were taken from the notes of Fr. Valentín, who also wrote down what happened to Mari Cruz:

«At 11:37 at night, I was in her house. She had received a letter from a priest from Villaviciosa (Asturias),⁽²⁰⁾ in which the priest said that he would pay for her board and tuition in a school in that city, under the condition that she would not see the Virgin again, something that could cause problems with the archbishop of

19. A previous chapter has been dedicated to the death of this Jesuit priest and the first conversations that the Garabandal seers had with him shortly after his death.

20. The Carmelitas de la Caridad also had a college in this city in Asturias. The priest's letter certainly refers to this college.



"I haven't been seeing you with the other three."

Oviedo. The girl hadn't read the letter; but her mother had, who put the letter back in the envelope and told the girl to ask the Virgin what she should reply.

Mari Cruz didn't want to do this, and it disagreed with her to take the letter. Hardly had she taken it in her hand, when she went out to the Calleja, knelt down at the usual place, took the letter — in ecstasy — and held it up. Looking at the envelope upside down, she asked, *What should I tell her? That I'm going to continue to see you? That it's a good place? For a long time now, I haven't been seeing you with the other three . . .*

We can only guess what the Virgin told the girl; however, it is clear that plans for taking the girls from the village were not coming solely from León.

And it is also clear that Mari Cruz was hurt because she was not included in the ecstasies with the other three girls.

On March 14th, it was Conchita who presented a scene worthy to be filmed because of its elegance. Fr. Valentín reports again:

«At 6:30 in the evening, Conchita wanted to be alone and went behind the laundry building, where she was in ecstasy. From there she went up to the Pines, and holding one of the albarcas (*wooden shoes*) that she was wearing, began speaking, *Take the albarcas in your hand, the little shoes with the worn-out laces . . . Go find a donkey? Where is one? In the Cuadro?* (She wanted to bless herself.) With the albarca in her hand, she smacked herself in the face many times. Later she exclaimed, *How good it is today! It is night and the sun shines. And also it snows to make saints (snowmen) and go sledding.*»

In the girls' ecstatic conversations on March 14th came out again the old request that the Virgin perform a great miracle as a sign and finale to everything. Jacinta asked her:

«*Come! Perform a miracle! That way the people will believe.*»

A letter from Maximina González to Asunción Pifarré, dated March 7, reads:

«The other night, Jacinta and María Dolores asked for a miracle as usual. *Please, perform a miracle . . . Please! Are you going to perform it? Please, let light shine. Please, since the people don't believe. Perform a miracle so that everyone will believe . . .*

When the ecstasy was over, we told them what they had said to the Virgin. And they said she smiled when they asked for a miracle.»

The girls would surely not have insisted so often upon the same request, if they had not repeatedly heard from above that there would finally come a great *sign* to end all doubts about the supernatural truth of the events. «*They will believe. They will believe*» was the prophetic-toned response of the mysterious apparition.

If it were not for this, the statements that Loli made two days later, on March 16th, would not be comprehensible.

On that day she was requesting insistently for the cure of a woman whose sight was failing, and according to the judgment of the doctor, would be lost completely. The girl kept on imploring, finally

exclaiming loudly, «*Come! Cure this woman, Alicia's mother, who already does not see out of one eye, and will not see the MIRACLE THAT YOU WILL MAKE IN THE SKY!*»⁽²¹⁾

* * *

True *penance*, presupposing a change from within, spontaneously leads to the sacrament of confession. An interesting episode illustrating this happened on the night that ended on March 19th, the feast of St. Joseph.

The report of it was signed in Reinosa (Santander) on the 23rd of March, 1962, by a priest who went up to Garabandal with Mr. Matutano:⁽²²⁾

«On Sunday, March 18th, the second Sunday of Lent, two priests came to Garabandal with a young boy who was afflicted with severe heart disease, and whose days — according to the doctors — were numbered.

One of the two priests — no one at the time knew who he was — was the renowned Father José Silva, from the *Ciudad de los Muchachos* at Orense. The priests had come disguised as tourists. They walked behind the girls, constantly bothering them. This came to such a point that the Chief of the Civil Guard had to call it to their attention several times — he also didn't recognize them as priests.

When Jacinta went into ecstasy in Conchita's house, they leaned physically on the girl. They were hanging onto her, and holding their ears to her mouth, trying to understand some of what she was saying. The parents of the girls called their attention to this, and on seeing that this accomplished nothing, and that one time they almost made Jacinta fall to the ground, I could not contain myself and I gave a hard shove to the one who was to the right of the girl (this was Father Silva), thinking he was a layman . . . Although perhaps at the time I would have done the same thing, even if I had seen him in a cassock.

During this action Jacinta turned around,

and put the crucifix on my lips. Following this, she did the same to the one that I had shoved. The girl continued her walk, but the two of us looked at each other and we understood . . . We embraced each other, and together went to the church. There the two of us wept.

And I asked him to hear my confession. (We were alone, leaning against the doorway.) He told me that he didn't have faculties, but I insisted vehemently, assuring him that I had a true need. He heard my confession and asked why I had performed that action. I answered that at the time I only meant to defend the girl who was seeing the Most Holy Virgin. He gave me absolution.

Later he asked me to hear his confession, since he said he had a great need, for having abused his position as a priest to go ahead of all those that were following the girl, when his position as a priest obliged him to go behind the last . . . He thanked me for the shove, and told me that up to then he hadn't paid attention to the actual message that the girls came to give us.

Finally, he asked me as a favor to wake up the parish priest so that he — Father Silva — could say the dawn Mass. It was not long until the beginning of the next day, March 19th, the feast of St. Joseph. We weren't able to obtain permission, since there was a prohibition from the bishop that didn't allow Mass to be celebrated by visiting priests. But we could receive Communion and make the most beautiful Holy Hour imaginable. It was fantastic. That priest said wonderful things, and thanked the girls, their parents, and everyone for having made him feel an emotion that, up until then, he had thought didn't exist.

We prayed the holy rosary! Almost all of us holding arms.

This is what I experienced on those unforgettable days in that fortunate little town.»

21. All the previous material was derived from Father Valentín's notes.

22. Mr. Matutano was mentioned in an earlier section of this book.

We can complete this report with some details that we owe to the Captain of the Civil Guard, Juan Alvarez Seco. While that unforgettable night



"MIRACLE THAT YOU WILL MAKE IN THE SKY!"

vigil of March 18th . . .

«. . . was going on to the next day, March 19th, Loli went up to the counter of the tavern in her home in ecstasy, took a pen from a drawer, and holding a card against the wall of the kitchen, wrote on it what the Virgin had told her, *The Virgin congratulates Father José*.

As a result of this, the priest involved was deeply moved, since he hadn't told anyone his name or that he was a priest.

While they were going to ask for permission to celebrate holy Mass, they went to Conchita's house. Father Silva spoke of making a Holy Hour, and the girl asked, *What's that?* Father Silva explained it to her, and it was decided to make the Holy Hour at 1 A.M.

But they didn't have the key to the church. Fr. Valentín was sleeping in the home of Primitiva. Mr. Matutano from Reinosá and I went to ask him for it, since he knew us. I talked to him but he didn't want to give us the key. We returned to Conchita's house and then Maximina said: *Let's go to the church in case it's still open*.

About 20 of us went with Conchita and María Dolores. We found the door of the church open, but we didn't have a key to the sacristy, where the key to open the tabernacle was kept. In the meantime, Father Silva found the tabernacle open, although the sacristy was locked!

We were able to make the Holy Hour, sometimes holding arms. Afterwards almost all of us received Communion.

I testify that this was fantastic. And the Marquis and Marquise of Santa María, Mr. Matutano and others who I no longer remember felt the same way. Father Silva told us that *Garabandal was absolutely true*.»

Maximina also gave a report of what happened in a letter that she wrote to Doctor Ortiz on March 21st:

«There were two priests. They made a holy hour at three in the morning on Sunday (*Actually it was not Sunday but Monday, March 19. Her confusion undoubtedly was due to the fact that Monday was also a feastday, honoring St. Joseph*).

They asked if any of those present wanted to explain the mysteries of the rosary. Mr. Matutano explained the first one. Many of the people were crying! The Marquis said that he couldn't talk because of emotion.

The priests spoke very much . . . And one said, *It would be a disgrace to participate in the apparitions and not meditate*. And he added, *I swear to God that I believe this is true*. They talked at length.»

And so the first feastday of St. Joseph began with a beautiful and edifying Holy Hour.

No one could say that the lenten days of 1962 at Garabandal were not replete with vigils, penance and prayer.

* * *

Those days reached their peak on March 25th. This was the third Sunday of Lent, according to that year's calendar, but also the feast of the Annunciation, according to every year's calendar. And since it was the feastday of the Annunciation of the Virgin, it was also the feastday of the Incarnation of the Son of God. With all these great feasts combined on a single day, there was reason to expect something special . . .

Simón, Jacinta's father, said to Dr. Ortiz several days later:

«I thought something exceptional would occur that day, since it was such a distinguished feastday. And so it happened.

The three girls, Conchita, Loli and my daughter, who until then had only recited the rosary,⁽²³⁾ began to sing it on that day, and they sang the whole rosary. At the beginning of the apparition only a few of us were with them, but the people began to come out of their houses, and finally, I think the whole village was there . . .

I felt a tremendous joy, since I know my daughter well — and how bashful she is — and because of this I thought in my mind that

23. In August, 1961, the girls began singing during their ecstasies. They sang both popular religious songs and original verses that they themselves made up during the ecstasies. What Simón means to say is that on March 25th they sang a complete rosary for the first time.



She had to be seeing something very great to be singing as she was.

After the rosary ended, the girls continued singing, and we heard these verses:



**Men, women and children
Pray the holy rosary,
To find holy rest
In the next world.**

**Indecent dress leads⁽²⁴⁾
To eternal fire.
Dress decently,
If you wish to be saved.**



**The Virgin has warned us
Three times already.
Oh, Virgin of Carmel, how unfortunate!
How unfortunate death is for us!**

Mari Cruz, get up, etc.»⁽²⁵⁾

24. The second verse is from the *Ave Maria* of Fatima. Obviously not all styles of dress lead to eternal fire, but only those — and there are many — that are incompatible with decency.

25. We have already mentioned this verse dedicated to Mari Cruz since they sang it for the first time during the vigils in August of 1961.



Simón ended like this:

«On that day my joy and excitement were so great that they couldn't have been greater if I had seen the Virgin myself.»

There are more particulars about March 24th and 25th in Garabandal. We have a letter that Maximina began writing to the Pifarré family of Barcelona on March 26th:

«The apparitions on Saturday, March 24th were very nice.

Conchita carried an unfolded umbrella since it was snowing and then she went into the houses with the umbrella open. She went in without stumbling anywhere. It was marvelous. They walked throughout the village together — she with the umbrella and Loli. They prayed the whole rosary in ecstasy.

They went to call a woman who was indisposed so that she couldn't go out at night. She was in her bed, and she got up. Mari Loli took her by one arm and Conchita by the other. (Still in ecstasy, they took her half dressed.) First they went to the Cuadro. There they stayed for

a while . . . And Conchita fell full-length like a stone, and still kept the umbrella open. And Loli stayed on her knees. See, they take positions that are beautiful. Afterwards they went down the calleja to other places. We saw the people having great trouble going down; but they went down with tremendous ease . . .

But the greatest thing was on Sunday, the feast of the Annunciation. They began at 9:30 in the evening and they finished at midnight. I almost cannot explain how it went.

They began the rosary singing. Later they mentioned that the Virgin said that all the people should sing . . . Look, we were all singing with violent emotion. They couldn't fake that.

We went to the cemetery singing. There they recited a mystery on their knees. At the gate Conchita stretched her arm through the bars with the crucifix in her hand. And it seemed that she was holding it out to be kissed! It was moving, even for the hardest hearts.»



The cemetery gate through which Conchita held the crucifix as if to be kissed by those in the tombs.

Later we went back another time through the village, singing until it ended . . . She sang the *Salve*, the *Let us sing to the love of all loves*, and later other songs that flow from them while in ecstasy. And they said, *Oh, how happy the Virgin is since there are so many people! How she smiles and how she looks at everyone!*»



"Men, women, children, you know our message."

Continuing, Maximina gave some of the verses that the girls composed in ecstasy. One of these is the following:

*Men, women and children,
You know our message.
The Virgin wants it accomplished,
for the good of families.*

On the next day, March 26th, Maximina wrote to Dr. Ortiz again:

«Apparently I mentioned in a previous letter that Conchita was going to leave this week . . . Well, I can say that she doesn't want to leave. It seems that the trip (to the school at León) has been abandoned for the present.

On one of the past nights Jacinta had a very moving ecstasy. It lasted 2 hours and she asked insistently for a miracle. She said, *I don't want to go from the village . . . Look. Do you know what Maximina said? That although they would cut her to pieces, she wouldn't go. I don't want*

to go either . . . Come. Perform a miracle . . . Call all the people, as you call us, so that they will all come here . . . And once they come, make a great light . . . Yes, perform a miracle! . . . You are going to perform it? . . . Don't look so serious!

It was at night — I was not there — and there were only a few people, but they said that those that were there were crying. It was about 8:30, which in this season is already dark, and they said that they saw her face as if it were daylight.

A young girl, who was very excited, came to tell me about it. She said that she didn't want to see anything more. And it seems also that María Dolores said: *Perform a miracle so that they don't take us from the village. Tell them that I don't have to go. Come. Tell me again that I don't have to go, since I don't want to go . . . Come, perform a miracle! Good, it's enough of a miracle that now the sun is shining, since when I came here, it was snowing.*»



“Perform a miracle!”

Obviously, during the ecstasies, the sun was always shining.

* * *

As *Winter Passes* was the title of this chapter, and now we find that at the beginning of springtime the spectacular events of Garabandal are beginning to sprout. And from the mountainland a mysterious supplication is being addressed to Him who from on high does not forget the earth, as the ancient biblical prayer refrains:

See, the winter is passed.
The rains are over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth.
The season of joyous song has come.
The song of the dove is heard in our land.

Come then, my love. My lovely one, come.
Show me your face; let me hear your voice;
For your voice is sweet, and your face beautiful.
(Cant. 2: 11-14)



chapter

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X

The Ways of God in Garabandal

It might be better to say the ways *to* God, rather than the ways *of* God.

Many souls have found the way *to* God at Garabandal—many more than we know about. Some have simply found the faith there; others have grown strong in it; and through Garabandal others have gone on to give generously of themselves.

The purpose of Garabandal is more to aid in our salvation than to regale us with visible miracles. The final goal of salvation is what can be expected from its *mystery*.

This was previously mentioned in the first chapter, but we now present it again, giving new examples that occurred during the weeks of *reactivation* between winter and spring of 1962.

Finding a Vocation

In the early days of 1962, the news of Garabandal was making itself known in the old Castilian city of Segovia. Father Ramón María Andreu had been giving retreats for the religious there, and the Marquis and Marquise of Santa María had made several public talks on the subject.

Such interest was aroused that in the middle of the winter a bus excursion was organized for the distant village. Among those on the trip was a young woman who until then had certainly not distinguished herself by religious fervor. It was not that this woman led a dissipated life, but rather that she was frivolous and worldly, clashing with the traditional style of that strict Castilian city. She was the first in line for a dance, always ready for amusement, for the beach . . . What was now bringing her to Garabandal in the frigid January of 1962? . . . Even she herself could not explain her reason for being there.

The excursion group arrived at the place of the apparitions on January 18th, a Thursday. That evening her companions, after gathering information by talking to the people in the village, went to situate themselves in the various settings of the anticipated ecstasies. The young girl tried to squeeze into Ceferino's house; but it was too crowded. She had to remain near the door. Fortunately she found

a little bench there against the wall, and she stood on top of it. Thus she was able to observe after a fashion, although from a distance, what she did not have the opportunity to follow up close.

The time for the ecstasy arrived and Loli was in the kitchen, as during so many other ecstasies. The young woman from Segovia had to resign herself to hearing what was going on indirectly, by what was relayed from the spectators in a better position. But even this alone had quite an effect as the atmosphere that normally formed around the ecstasies had a deep religious reverence, even on the part of those most accustomed to it.

In such a climate of silence and waiting, she was able to reflect . . . Withdrawn into herself, in a strange way she was able to feel the frightening proximity of the mystery . . . There came a time when her spirit could not contain itself in that attitude of reverent silence and burst out in prayer: a prayer tremendously obligating:

Most Holy Virgin, if this is true . . . And God wants something from me . . . I am ready for whatever it is . . . Even to renouncing everything to become a religious! I only ask you, in exchange, for the salvation of . . . whom you know.

During the terrifying silence following such a prayer, in the depths of her soul there seemed to resound most clearly the answer: ***I hear you. I hear you. Yes. Yes.***

This unexplainable refrain left her trembling with emotion. But it did not take long for uncertainty to settle in. ***Who can assure you that this is the voice of God? Couldn't this have been your imagination? Are you losing your mind?***

Full of distress, she once more raised up an inward request to the compassionate Mother who could well be present there, not far from her.

Most Holy Virgin, if this is true, if all this comes from you . . . Let the girl come to give me the crucifix to kiss. Let her come to me ahead of everyone else!

Hardly had the petition been formulated in the hidden recesses of her conscience, when Loli got up off the kitchen floor where she was kneeling. She made her way through the shoving and surprised

spectators and went directly toward the young woman, who had some idea of what was going to happen. Indescribable emotion swept over her, but she did not have time to think or do anything. Loli was there in front of her, and without looking at her, Loli raised the crucifix firmly to her lips, and gave it to her to kiss twice. Overcome, the young woman got down from the bench and tried to hide and disappear from the many people who were there; but it was futile. The little visionary followed her, without seeing her, and repeatedly put the sacred image on her lips.

Could God's answer have been more clear?

But it did not stop there. During the rest of the day, each girl that went out into the street in ecstasy⁽¹⁾ unfailingly went in search of the young woman from Segovia in order to offer her, and to her ahead of anyone else, the figure of the Savior.



By presenting the crucifix to be kissed, the visionaries confirmed a vocation.

1. In the previous chapter it was shown that Jacinta and Mari Cruz also had apparitions on January 18th.

It was a distinction that gave both pleasure and pain. Although it showed the greatest profession of love, it also implied a frightening program of self-renunciation and self-denial.

It would be expected that the young woman in the flush of youth, who was being unequivocally asked to make a total gift of herself, spent the next hours with sentiments never previously felt.

She had come to Garabandal accompanied by her mother; both had found lodging at the house of Piedad, who had furnished them a little room. It was well into the night when they returned and went to bed. But those few hours in bed were not hours meant for sleeping; at least not for the daughter, who did not cease weeping.

The mother, unaware of what had happened in her daughter's conscience, commented on the following day, *Something tremendous must have happened to her . . . She didn't stop sobbing all night long. And I don't recall her ever crying before.*

* * *

For years now the young woman in this story has lived her consecration to God in a religious order. And she can never forget that her road toward God definitely passed through the faraway, controversial village of san Sebastián de Garabandal.

Encounter with the Faith

Shortly after this woman found her vocation in Garabandal, the time came for Máximo Föeschler to find the Faith. (I write the word with a capital to indicate that this does not refer to *a faith*, but to *the Faith*, the Catholic religion, the only one which I consider truly authentic . . . without in any way, showing disrespect toward the others, provided that they are practiced with what we call *good faith* and good will).

With the best of good will, Máximo practiced the Protestantism in which he had been brought up by his devout parents. He was German by race and by birth, an engineer by profession. In 1931 he had married a Catholic Spaniard, and had spent many years stationed in Spain, but it had never occurred to him to change his religion. He devoutly lived his protestant Christianity.

Máximo was stunned by the death of Fr. Luis María Andreu, whom he had known since he was a child. For this reason, one day he decided to go up to Garabandal, with the desire to see the places and the persons that meant so much to the beloved deceased in his last days.

As we have seen in the first part of this book, on Saturday, October 14th, 1961, he arrived for the first time at Garabandal, in spite of an almost tragic automobile accident at the mountainpass of Piedras Luengas.⁽²⁾ He did not come alone; his wife accompanied him, together with Fr. Ramón Andreu, Mr. and Mrs. Fontaneda from Aguilar de Campoo, and several friends. What he saw and felt on his first visit has already been described: in brief, it did not have much of an effect on him.

But after some months, as if waiting for some mysterious rendezvous, Máximo decided to return to Garabandal. Let us listen to his description:

«Fr. Ramón Andreu was beginning the Spiritual Exercises in Loyola on March 19th, 1962. He wanted me to assist at them. Frankly, I was reticent to go, and I wondered what a Protestant could do in a sanctuary like Loyola.

For that reason, I decided to return to Garabandal, hoping for some solution to this.

We came there on Saturday, March 17th, with several friends from Madrid; also with my wife and one of my children. We saw the first ecstasy—with Mari Loli—at 9 at night. And I observed that she was almost entirely concerned with my wife, my son, and also myself. To describe this in detail would be an unending story.

At six at night on the following day, Sunday,⁽³⁾ we all assisted at the holy rosary, which for me was really moving.

When we went out, I found Jacinta, whom I had not seen since the early morning of the past October 14th or 15th. I asked her why she hadn't given me the cross to kiss at that time. She didn't answer me. On insisting and telling her that I knew the reason (I thought it was due

to my being Protestant), she repeated that she certainly didn't know.

Then I asked when she had last seen the Virgin and she told me, with great sadness, that 5 days had passed without seeing her.

—But I petitioned during the holy rosary for you to have a vision this very night. I have to leave tomorrow morning, and I need a great sign from the Virgin by means of you.

Actually, without telling anyone, I had asked that if *this were from the Virgin*, that she would give me an unmistakable and outward demonstration in an ecstasy with Jacinta: *that something would happen to me! And to me alone!*

At 9:30 at night, Mari Loli went into ecstasy in Jacinta's house to tell her that at 12:00 at night she would see the Most Holy Virgin.

And so it was. The girl went out onto the street in an ecstatic march, and every 10 meters she gave the cross to the 8 or 10 of us who were following her. Later I left the group and the girl went toward the church, where she prayed; and there she returned to the normal state again.

Since *nothing in particular* had happened to me, I thought that Loyola was not my destiny.

But Jacinta announced that there was going to be another vision at 3 in the morning. And still waiting, I went there by her house. At 3 on the dot the trance began, and as usual she went out on the street. I accompanied her during her trip; but finally I separated from the group and went into Loli's house, where they had a tavern. But toward 3:30 Jacinta came in there in ecstasy, and she made her way toward me through the many people that were there, gave me the cross to kiss, and made the sign of the cross over me three times. On that occasion no one else had the good fortune of kissing the cross. For me, this was very clearly the sign that I had asked.⁽⁴⁾

.. *

I considered that call of the Most Holy Virgin as a definite answer. And on the evening of

2. Between the provinces of Palencia and Santander. It is one of the highest mountains in the Cantabrian range.

3. Liturgically the second Sunday of Lent, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

4. Actually what was done by Jacinta corresponded exactly to what Mr. Föeschler had requested secretly in his conscience.



Fr. Ramón with Jewish convert Catherine and Protestant convert Máximo, prototypes of the massive conversions that will follow the Miracle.

January 19th, I was in Loyola, beginning the Spiritual Exercises in the house of St. Ignatius.

I had come there with such feeling—having known the Most Holy Virgin for the first time—that I derived the greatest fruits from the days of retreat.

On the third day, while at the holy Mass that they had in the Chapel of the Conversion, on seeing that the others who were making the retreats were receiving Jesus (*in Holy Communion*), and that I was not, I broke out in tears.»

The reader can suspect what happened later. Máximo Föeschler received baptism according to the rite of the Catholic Church on March 31, 1962, and on the following day, April 1st, with great feeling he received his First Communion.

«I will be eternally grateful»—he confessed—«for all the special graces I received through the Virgin's mediation, and which actually brought

me into the arms of baptism. And I don't know how to give Our Lord and the Most Holy Virgin the thanks that they deserve for the miracle worked in me.»

* * *

With his entrance into the Catholic Church, did the affairs of Garabandal end for Máximo?

«A great many things happened to me on further visits, which would lengthen this report excessively. I only wish to mention a few:

One day, after Mari Loli had come out of ecstasy, she called me aside and told me what the Most Holy Virgin had said about me. In spite of the timidity that the girls had and though they were 12 years of age at the time, Mari Loli talked a long time to me with the greatest naturalness. She told me about me life, what I had done, and what had happened to me from my early youth until the present date. Absolutely no one in the village could know those

details (some, not even my wife!) and many of them came to my memory again, due to hearing them from the girl.»

* * *

It occurs to me at this point: Why do some continue to say that all this is the fruit of *a game of children*, of their ability to deceive, a result of the *atmosphere*, or *mass hysteria*, that in all its elements *has a natural explanation*? Why do they not rather proceed without delay to do a work of charity by illuminating the darkness in those who continue believing in the Miracle, convinced that this is *the finger of God*?

This reminds me of what St. Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians:

For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the prudence of the prudent I will reject.

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?
(1: 19-20)

But we are not thinking evil of anyone. All of us are in need of mercy.

Mercy in Discipline

In spite of leafing over and over again through many papers and notes, I am not able to determine the exact date, but I think that it is approximately here, in the final days of March, that something very interesting took place. I came upon this unexpectedly one day in Santander, from the lips of Jacinta. All she remembered was that it was in 1962 at the end of the winter.

It was a cold night. Jacinta wanted to remain awake in the kitchen since an apparition had been foretold for 4 o'clock in the morning; but her father, Simón, told her to go to bed to rest, that he would advise her in time.

The girl resisted, became stubborn, even obstinate. Her father did not permit her to have her way and forced her to obey. Then she went up to her room in a bad mood, crying and protesting. She was afraid of falling asleep and missing the apparition.



Jacinta showed disrespect and disobedience to her father.

And so it happened. After some time she woke up abruptly (her father had made a noise in getting up) and she immediately asked him:

—*Papa, what time is it?*

—*A quarter to six.*

—*You see? I haven't had an apparition on account of you!*

And she began to cry, as much with pain as with regret.

You can go now to pray in the Calleja, Simón answered her.

The girl did this; but she waited futilely for *a visit* to take place as had happened on so many other days at that time.

She returned home unhappier still; and during the days that followed her unhappiness changed into real suffering, on seeing that what she hoped for so much was not coming. Her companions, on the other hand, continued with their ecstasies and apparitions just as before.



"You must obey your parents."

Jacinta began to languish. Her parents started to worry seriously as the girl's mental suffering began to affect her health. Her color became pale, she lost weight, she stopped smiling.

Jacinta had to ask herself, *Why is the Virgin doing this? Will I ever see her again?*

She could not support this last thought. She leaned on her companions whenever they had an apparition and anxiously said to them, *Ask the Virgin why she isn't coming to me. Ask her if I will see her again. Ask her . . .*

And Loli and Conchita asked and asked . . . But their questions remained unanswered day after day.

Finally, after almost a month, Loli came to Jacinta with important news, *The Virgin told me that you are going to see her on . . .*

For Jacinta that was as if she had suddenly come into the light at the end of a long dark tunnel. She smiled again, her face regained its color, her heart filled with hope.

The longed-for visit came on the day predicted. As soon as Jacinta found herself again before the gracious countenance of Mary, she could not hold back the question, *Why haven't you come? Why have you kept me so long like this?*

—*For the wrong that you did with your father on that night. How many times do I have to tell you that you must obey your parents, even before obeying me?*

The punishment had been strict, but it had been full of mercy. The Virgin only sought the welfare of her little girls, so full of good will, but also so full of defects. They had to change.

The punishment had lasted a month.

The lesson would last forever.



Jacinta with her mother

Does the case of Mari Cruz have something to do with this *mercy in discipline*?

Let me state that I do not wish to get involved in explanations as to why she was the least favored of the four girls with regard to the number of ecstasies. But I cannot evade the question that comes up from time to time about the possible reason for this undeniable fact.

Is it simply that the plans of God were not the same for all four girls? He allots his gifts gratuitously as He pleases, not always as they are merited. Could it have been that the girl, because of external pressures, was not able to correspond to what was asked of her?

We do not know, nor probably will we ever know. Furthermore, we should not judge rashly. Nevertheless, as a point of illustration, I want to put here what a person from Garabandal wrote to Doctor Ortiz in Santander during the Holy Week of 1962:

«With regard to the apparitions, they are the same as always, as you know.

I think that in a month Mari Cruz has had only one apparition, and that was a small one. She had it on Tuesday morning while she was praying at the Calleja. She was told that the Virgin would return again on Saturday. But, as you know, she went to bed following that, and so didn't have it.



Mari Cruz in ecstasy

Here is how I interpret this. From the beginning the Virgin has asked for sacrifices.⁽⁵⁾ And Mari Cruz hasn't been making them, since on many days she was in bed at nine o'clock. So how was she going to have an apparition? As you are aware, the other girls, when they were told they would have one, stayed up until the hour that it happened.»

I am putting down these observations and opinions; God alone knows for whom they can be instruc-

5. Another eloquent confirmation of the need for sacrifices is mentioned in these lines from Conchita's diary:

During Holy Week, she told me to go out at five in the morning. (to pray the rosary at the Calleja).

And so I went, since the Virgin always wants us to do penance.

tive. I do not wish to disparage the girl to whom I refer, nor her parents; they thought they had to act like this, and she believed it was her duty to obey.

Easter Joy

The police chief Juan Alvarez Seco tells of the arrival of a visitor at Garabandal:

«I don't remember the date, but I do remember what happened.⁽⁶⁾ I was present in the village on that night and I went to the bar of Ceferino, who came out to meet me, remarking to a woman: *This is the Police Chief, who has been present first hand at many apparitions.* And afterwards he brought her up to me. *This woman is from Barcelona and wants someone to explain some of this to her.*

Turning to the woman, I greeted her courteously. And she immediately asked me if I believed in the apparitions. I answered that I did and she recorded it on a tape recorder.

Later she did the same with a cattleherder from the village. He declared sincerely, *Look Señora, I don't know what this is that's happening, but since I have been present at the apparitions, I don't talk as I used to. Before I blasphemed a lot, but I don't do it now.*

The woman also questioned a priest⁽⁷⁾ who was there, and recorded his answers. This priest stated confidentially that he believed too.»

The woman mentioned here is Mercedes Salisachs of Juncadella, known in Spain as a writer. (Some years previous to her visit to Garabandal, she had won the prize *Ciudad de Barcelona* for a novel.) She herself confessed her reasons for coming to the site of the apparitions during these days of April, 1962, in a report that Sánchez-Ventura quoted in his book *Apparitions are not a Myth*.

She began briefly explaining whom her son Miguel was, what he meant to her, and consequently, the terrible pain that had struck her when

6. It was on Good Friday of 1962: April 20th.

7. Perhaps this was a Jesuit who is mentioned later in the woman's narration.

on October 30th, 1958, with life just beginning—18 years of age—the young man had met death on the highways of France in an automobile accident.

«I don't know»—she said—«what other mothers would have felt in losing a son of Miguel's quality. But I doubt that they could have overcome an emptiness and grief like the one that fell upon me.

His death destroyed the main reason for my life; and on losing him, I felt myself crushed by a horrible darkness.

They told me that I would adjust with time. And, although I would not forget him, his memory would fade away, to remain a pleasant remembrance. They told me that, little by little, I would become accustomed to not seeing him, to not hearing him, and accept my situation without regret.

But time passed and I continued in despair. Although I tried to hide my melancholy, especially so as not to hurt my other four remaining children, as time went by the void increased, together with despondency and suffering.

People used religious arguments to help me. They talked about Christian resignation. They reminded me of Miguel's faith, his exemplary life, and they told me that I should give thanks to God for having taken him in conditions so conducive to the welfare of his soul. But resignation didn't come and all these arguments struck me as inapplicable and inconsistent.

There came a time when doubts against faith revolved over me obsessively. And all that I had previously professed without effort began to waver, leaving me all the time more discouraged. I changed into a different person, without any future except the past, without any hope except to die; but with the feeling that death ended everything, that hope was a great lie, and faith a childish device for holding us in line.

But my doubts were not always strong. At times, without knowing why, hope returned. *And if Miguel could see me . . . If the Communion of Saints⁽⁸⁾ were a real thing . . .*

At the time I couldn't keep on praying. I was

always smashing against a wall of doubt. On one occasion I remember my mother suggested praying the rosary together, and (I am still ashamed of my reaction!) I refused, considering it *vulgar*.

I needed a sign. Something that could make me realize that life could continue after death.

But the sign didn't come; nor did I seek it. For example, my devotion to the Virgin was practically nil.

Until one day—the feast of the Most Pure Heart of Mary—I instinctively went before an image of the Sorrowful Mother, requesting her to give me a sign if Miguel were saved.

It was not long in coming . . .

From that day onward, I had no more obsessions than to return to God. And five months later, on May 4, 1958, after a general confession, I came to God finally, with the intention of never separating an instant from Him for the rest of my life.

From that time everything began to change for me. Although my enormous loneliness for Miguel continued, and solitude continued tormenting me, my interior tranquility was great. Praying the rosary stopped appearing *vulgar* and my devotion to the Virgin increased day by day.

Then when I heard talk about the girls of Garabandal, I thought of visiting that isolated village not only out of curiosity, but also with the intention of rendering honor to the Virgin, even though the phenomena were open to discussion.

Taking advantage of the absence of my family, who had gone to Suiza, I left Barcelona on Holy Thursday in 1962,⁽⁹⁾ accompanied by José, my driver, and his wife Mercedes.

8. The Communion of Saints is one of the most beautiful dogmas of Catholicism. Catholics believe by this that there is an ineffable communication between *those who have gone*, and *those who still remain*; and also a mysterious interchange between them, in Christ and for Christ, in the Church and for the Church.

9. In Spain, half the day of Holy Thursday, and all of Good Friday are observed as feastdays, and are government holidays.

We arrived at Cossío at noon on Good Friday, and there I met the pastor of Garabandal, Fr. Valentín Marichalar. While we were waiting for a vehicle to take us to the village, I used the occasion to converse with him. In spite of his understandable reserve, he finally admitted to me that he was basically convinced that the phenomena occurring there were supernatural, and that the girls were the proper persons, because of their innocence, to receive the Virgin's visits.

It was already two in the afternoon when the car appeared that would transport us to Garabandal. Its driver, Fidel, informed us that Fr. Corta (a Jesuit priest who had come to help Fr. Valentín with the services of Holy Week) would give Communion up there, and that the whole village was congregated in the church.»⁽¹⁰⁾

Once in the village, Mercedes was able to establish contact with the visionaries and their families, perhaps through the services of the Police Chief Juan Alvarez Seco to whom, as we have seen, she was introduced by Ceferino at his tavern. She was also helped by the Marquis and Marquise of Santa María who were staying there again.

«That same night»—continued Mercedes—«I handed Jacinta some objects for her to give the Virgin to kiss, and I made the same request to her that I had made to the other three, *When you see the Virgin, ask her about my son.*

I think Jacinta asked, *And what happened to your son?*

I answered, *He died.*

Everyone had gathered at Mari Loli's house, waiting for the apparition. I gave her a paper, written on both sides, and while giving it, I said to her: *I don't expect an answer. The only thing that interests me is knowing where my son is.* I didn't give his name.

I didn't yet know how the visions took place.

10. In Garabandal as in so many other villages in Spain (at least at the time), Holy Thursday and Good Friday were days consecrated to the observance of religious devotions; no one missed the liturgical services.

Good Friday services took place at one o'clock in the afternoon, seeking to correspond with the time in which Jesus expired His last breath.



“When you see the Virgin . . .”

Although it had been explained to me, it was difficult to picture them actual happening. Now, after having been in Garabandal several times and having seen so many ecstasies, I still feel that there can be no possible way of describing either the *falls* of the visionaries, their expressions and motions, or the attitude of respect that, in spite of the character of some of the visitors and the customs of the village, occurred whenever *an apparition came*.

At first glance, nothing that the girls do seems to have a meaning: their movements, their oscillations, their swift runs, their low-pitched conversations, their insistence on presenting the crucifix to be kissed . . . In summary, everything from the beginning causes wonderment because of its incongruity and appearance of being something without much depth. (*There is a priest who, in his report, states that all this is “not very serious” probably being oblivious of the “not very serious” things that happened at Lourdes too.*) Nevertheless, one finishes by expecting that everything that is occurring there has a meaning. The bad part is that, in



"Mari Loli went up to the table that held the objects to be presented to the Virgin."

order to understand it, one has to *live* in the village at least three days. As soon as one familiarizes himself with some of the apparent incongruities, everything becomes clear; the explanation, immediate or delayed, always comes.

* * *

In my case, I have to confess that, although I desired much, I expected little. I had envisioned my voyage as one should envision a pilgrimage: ready to face hardships and obstacles.

Waiting, as I said, at Loli's house, we were not long in hearing the characteristic thump of the *fall* in ecstasy; it came from the upper floor. This caused a general silence, and a little later we saw Mari Loli coming down the stairs, holding the hand of another girl, looking upward with an enraptured expression. I don't think the greatest actress could imitate that expression.

Mari Loli went up to the table that held the objects to be presented to the Virgin, and began to give them to be kissed. I saw how she took my paper, lifted it up, turned it to the other side, and set it down again on the table. Later she went out into the street holding a cross.»

In order to better understand this, it should not be forgotten that this was Good Friday, celebrated in such an extraordinary way in Spain. Loli's ecstasy took place at nightfall after an afternoon sanctified first by liturgical services, at which the whole village had assisted, and afterwards, by the way of the cross that many people had made. And Loli's going out on the street coincided with the hour in which, through all the towns of Spain, the traditional processions of Good Friday were in progress, accompanied by tambourines and music from the best orchestras. In Garabandal during that year the processional marches had a very different sign. There were no marching steps, no music, no gatherings; but certainly it was lived like no other. Through one or another of the girls, the people participated in the mystery that the other processions could only recall.

Mercedes continues:

«The girls step was light, rhythmic, regular.

It appeared that she was walking on smooth and flat pavement; for her there did not exist all the things that we had under our feet: ruts, gravel, stones, rubbish.

As well as I could, I clung on to the arm of the girl that Loli held; but when, after stopping at the door of the church, the visionary undertook the ascent up the hill, I had to let go. I couldn't follow them, I had the feeling that my heart, which was racing, was going to stop at any moment. The slope going up to the Pines was so steep! Exhausted, I rested halfway up the hill waiting for them to come down.

I began to think. The night,⁽¹¹⁾ up until then, had not been too pleasant for me. Whenever the girl had given the crucifix to kiss, she had obviously avoided my lips. The suspicion that, if this were true, it was the Virgin who was refusing my kiss, hurt me deeply.

When the descent finally came, I saw Mari Loli running backwards—her gaze always looking upwards—avoiding the obstacles and obstructions as if she had eyes on the back of her head.

On arriving at the village, she joined Jacinta. They laughed on meeting, and later they presented the crucifix to be kissed, and they walked onwards, holding arms.

Jacinta *woke up* at the door of the church, but Loli continued to her home still in a trance.

Then I went to search for Jacinta and I questioned her about Miguel. She told me that the Virgin had not answered her question. Dismayed, I went to the place where Loli was, who told me the same.

—*Did she at least read my paper?*

—*Yes, she read it.*

Father Corta was there, and on noticing my dejection, asked the girl if the Virgin would return. *Yes, at 2 or 2:30.* Then Father recommended that I come back to talk about the matter of my son.

11. It was the night that for centuries had been consecrated to the solitude and sorrows of Mary, who had just seen the death and burial of the most perfect of Sons.



“Mari Loli . . . joined with Jacinta, also walking in a trance through the street.”

At the hour foretold, Mari Loli fell again into ecstasy; she went out of her house and immediately joined with Jacinta, also walking in a trance through the street. They presented the crucifix to be kissed by all those who were there; but again they passed over me, as if avoiding my lips.

And the worst was what they told me *on waking up*. Both Jacinta and Loli gave me this answer: *The Virgin has answered me; but I can't tell it to you.*

That outdid everything. I didn't deserve that the Virgin notice me; and Miguel, in spite of everything that I supposed, was in a place . . . That it would be better not to know!⁽¹²⁾

I still had the courage to ask Mari Loli whether the Virgin's answer was good or bad.

She was evasive: *I can't . . . I can't . . .* And the expression on her face was truly impenetrable.

Again Fr. Corta tried to help me. (He saw my defeated look, and undoubtedly had pity on me.) He asked the girl, *Could you tell her tomorrow?*

Loli shrugged her shoulders and limited herself to answering, *Perhaps.*»

* * *

Her first day in Garabandal was really becoming a day of testing for Mercedes Salisachs, an actual Good Friday, with its sorrows, its humiliations, its confusions, almost with its agony.

«When I awoke (*undoubtedly in the early hours of the morning*),⁽¹³⁾ I had the impression of being changed into a block of ice. The suspicion that neither God nor the Virgin were on good

12. In spite of the present policy of not preaching about hell in the churches, its existence hangs inexorably over every Christian's future, with the possibility of a final fall into absolute disaster.

13. We know that the nights of Garabandal were not made to give pleasure, nor for restful sleep. Ordinarily they consisted of penitential *vigils*, long periods of prayer, waiting without sleep, and *marches* with their inconveniences.

terms with me left me as defeated as the thought that Miguel could be undergoing punishment . . . although it seemed illogical to doubt Miguel's salvation.

Before going to sleep, I reviewed one by one all the phenomena that I had witnessed during the hours of the day and later throughout the night. And I wanted with all my heart to find some *error* that would show its falseness; something that would make me see that all this affair at Garabandal was pure superstition. But the more I thought over the events, the more authentic everything seemed. I had to be the one in error! For that reason, undoubtedly, the crucifix hadn't been given to me to kiss.»

We do not know if Mercedes made it to sleep that night; but we do know that the next day did not bring her much consolation.

The calendar read: April 21st, Holy Saturday.

Liturgically it was a day full of quiet peace, of holy waiting. The prayer that was recited at each hour of the Divine Office beseeched: *Almighty God, while we piously await the resurrection of Your Son, concede to us, we pray you, to be participants one day in the glory of His resurrection.*

For assisting us in difficult times, there is nothing like the support of holy hope, of expectation based on faith.

But for the unfortunate woman from Barcelona, this seemed to have ended:

«Holy Saturday was no better. In spite of the cordiality that the marquis and his wife, Father Corta, Father Valentín, the Police Chief, and even the mothers of the girls lavished on me, everything in the village seemed hostile. It was undoubtable that all this courtesy was due to the pity and suspicion stemming from the isolation to which the Virgin had sentenced me. But what the people thought mattered the least to me; what hurt me the most was perceiving the continuing disdain coming from above.

Finally I began to have a premonition that what was happening had some relation with the significance of the days that we were celebrating. Could all this have a liturgical meaning? I almost dared not think it, for it seemed too far-fetched.

But what was certain was that after that premonition, the anxiety left me. I resigned myself to everything and submitted myself to the will of God.

That night I ate dinner early, alone in the tavern. Afterwards the Chief of the Civil Guard took me to Conchita's house. Her mother received me politely, and offered me a place next to her daughter.

The heat of the fireplace was stifling, and my physical state was getting worse; but my moral state was improving as each hour went by.



“What is happening seems normal to them.”

We talked of a thousand things. The most striking thing about the girls is their naturalness in the current of everyday life. They accept the supernatural with a simplicity bordering on the unbelievable. *Seeing the Virgin* seems to them to be within the reach of everyone; and what is happening seems normal to them.

What really concerns them is observing the incredulity of the people. They ask this question endlessly, *Do you believe? Do you believe that we really see the Virgin?* They probably think that upon this belief depends whether the Virgin will perform the great miracle that they

have been predicting since the beginning. Outside of this, they always show signs of great certainty concerning theological matters. In spite of their evident lack of education, the knowledge with which they give out comments is astounding.

When Conchita fell into ecstasy, I had gone out of the kitchen (because of the unbearable heat) and so I couldn't observe exactly how the phenomenon occurred. Nevertheless, on going out on the street, I could observe well what happened to Mr. Mándoli,⁽¹⁴⁾ a recent arrival at Garabandal. Although a man of faith, he didn't accept the apparitions. Soon I saw Conchita detour from her path and come right toward us (Mr. Mándoli was at my side) to present him the crucifix. But the man, either embarrassed or as a test, evaded it. Conchita, always with her head thrown backwards so as to make it impossible for her to see what was ahead, pursued him tenaciously with the cross until she managed to have him kiss it.

Turning then toward me, Mr. Mándoli admitted with feeling that he had petitioned the Virgin that, if this were true, Conchita would seek to make him kiss the crucifix. If my memory doesn't fail me, on that night also, she didn't give it to me to kiss.

Later Conchita joined the other three girls who were walking through the village in ecstasy too. All four held hands and with their customary light step made their way through the streets, followed by the crowd with flashlights.

I remember that other apparitions (Lourdes and Fatima) had been stationary and quiet. And it seemed as if the *actions* or *movements* in the ones which were now presenting themselves could have something to do with the characteristics of our times. It was as though the Virgin, just like John XXIII,⁽¹⁵⁾ wanted to adapt her mercy to the *restlessness* of modern needs. Ecstasies like those at Lourdes or Fatima could

have appeared incongruous in our times. The people needed another style. And what the girls of Garabandal demonstrated was well adapted to our ways.

The apparitions were accessible through the girls; everyone could, keeping a distance, participate. Each person, if he took the trouble, was able to take part, although indirectly, in the dialogues that the visionaries held with the Apparition. From the beginning—according to the girls—the Virgin showed signs of *wanting to approach* the spectators; she allowed them to ask questions, answered their prayers, accepted articles to kiss . . . Certainly this gave the impression of wanting to break down barriers.

Nevertheless, I found myself at the time so disconcerted by the ostensible *disdain* that the Vision was showing toward me that—without thinking of the unquestionable generosity that she was demonstrating to others—I made up my mind definitely not to ask any more questions, or to expect the least sign from the girls.»

The woman's reaction, although not perfect, is easily explainable. What had happened was not what she had expected when she had set out on her *pilgrimage*.

We do not know at what time the ecstatic processional march, led by the group of visionaries, came to an end; but it must have been before 11:30, since at that hour the solemn pascal vigil services began in the church.

The streets were then deserted, as were most of the houses; the villagers and visitors had gathered in the sacred precinct to participate in the beautiful liturgy that concluded the Mass of the first pascal alleluias.

When the people left the church, the most beautiful Sunday of the year had begun, the day that celebrated the Resurrection, the true *Day of the Lord*.

There was not much time to rest, at least for this woman. Let us return to Mercedes:

«The women of the village, following an ancient custom, began to sing the rosary in the

14. This man is completely unknown to me.

15. It should be taken into consideration that Mercedes Salisach's report was written in the spring of 1962, a period when the popularity of the Pope at the time, John XXIII, had reached its apogee due to innumerable demonstrations of his good-natured personality and by the appearance of speed with which he was preparing the second Vatican Council.



“walking through the village in ecstasy”

streets.⁽¹⁶⁾ In spite of my exhaustion, I felt impelled to follow them. The devotion that one sensed in the atmosphere was really moving. I cannot remember experiencing a more fervent Easter than that one!

The night seemed to get clearer as the rosary went on. The tile roofs shone in the darkness almost like the moon and the stars.

We must have been on the third mystery when the unexpected happened. Someone tapped me lightly on the shoulder. On turning around, I met the marquise of Santa María who was holding Mari Loli's arm. She spoke to me confidentially, *Mari Loli says that she has something to say to you.*

At the time I was confused. It didn't occur to me what this could be for. I already had many disappointments and I wasn't expecting anything.

But Rosario Santa María added, *This concerns something that the Virgin told the girl yesterday, with the request not to mention it until after one at night* (that is, until after the pascal vigil).

Mari Loli repeated somewhat bashfully, *Later, later I will tell it . . .*

Bewildered and intrigued, I did not know what to say. But Rosario—who had been with me during my bad times—intervened, *Not later. You are going to tell it right now. You aren't going to let this woman worry like this any longer.*

Then Mari Loli and I went apart from the group. I leaned toward her and she whispered a message in my ear, but in a very clear voice: *The Virgin says that your son is in heaven.*

What I experienced afterwards, I can't describe. Everything, absolutely everything dissolved in that wonderful statement.

I only remember that I embraced Mari Loli as if I were embracing Miguel. Later I found

myself in the arms of Rosario; she was crying too, and was telling me so many things that I couldn't understand. The people gathered around me, and in the throng I vaguely saw Father Valentín, Father Corta, Eduardo Santa María, the chief of the Civil Guard . . . All were looking at me, astonished and excited. Conchita's mother also came, alarmed by the commotion, and wanting to help, exclaimed, *Tell that woman, that if she is crying because she hasn't received the crucifix to kiss, that she shouldn't be disturbed, that during the whole night it hasn't been given to me either.*»

This must certainly have been a gripping scene since years later the chief of the Civil Guard mentions in his memoirs:

«The scene that occurred around the lamp-post was imprinted on my heart, and I think that it will never be erased. The same had to happen to the others who were there at the time.»

«The rest of the rosary»—continues Mercedes—«was like an ascent to heaven. I remember that I handed my cane to Rosario Santa María and seized Mari Loli's arm; never in my life have I felt so light and so secure. Still crying, we continued with the rosary, walking forward, onwards into the early morning. I think that I prayed more with my eyes than with my lips, since Mari Loli kept repeating, *Don't cry, don't cry.* But it was impossible for me not to; I had so many reasons for crying!

I didn't need a flashlight, nor did I look at the ground; holding onto Mari Loli's arm and full of faith in the Virgin, I walked the remainder of the time looking only upwards. Never have I seen a sky so full of stars and so clear! Each star was a smile.

Toward 3 in the morning, we went into the tavern of Loli's father, talking about the things that had occurred on that memorable night. Still bewildered by what had happened to me, I saw that Rosario was whispering to Loli . . . A little later she came toward me, *Mari Loli says that the message she gave you is not complete; but since you started to cry so soon, she wasn't able to continue telling you about it.*

The girl confided to me what was missing, and what left me still more perplexed.

16. This custom seems absolutely admirable to me. Hopefully it will not be abandoned, but rather spread to other areas! Could there be anything more indicated than a rosary at dawn to celebrate and relive that unique dawn of our history when the Son of Mary came forth from the sepulcher?

She also told me that your son is very happy, most happy, and that he is with you every day . . . I know that your son is in heaven! I found this out yesterday when the Virgin told it to me. But I had to keep quiet about it since she said to me, "Do not tell it to the woman until after the Easter Mass tomorrow."

Certainly such finesse could not have come from the young girl . . . »

It is easy to understand the reason for this statement. Heaven's response to Mercedes Salisachs' tremendous worry had to be too complicated, in effect, too intermeshed with the liturgical season, to be attributable to the inventive genius of an uneducated young farm girl.

During Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the time of the suffering and annihilation of Our Savior, and also of Mary, the co-redemptorist, this woman had to pass through long hours of humiliation and darkness . . . And only after the liturgy proclaimed the first alleluias of the Easter morning Mass, in the *most sacred night*, did she receive the gift of that unexpected and wonderful joy.



"The girl fell into ecstasy again."

«After that moment»—continued Mercedes—«everything changed for me. Soon the girl fell into ecstasy again. To demonstrate that the *game of silence* of the previous days was concluded, she immediately came to me and applied the crucifix on my lips, once, twice, three times . . . Then making with it the sign of the cross on my forehead, on my lips, and on my chest, she gave it again to the Virgin to kiss. And to definitely seal everything that she had just confirmed, she offered it to me again. Afterwards, without offering it to anyone else to kiss, she went out on the street.



Ceferino outside his home.

Outside the house, Ceferino, the girl's father, waved for me to come near. *She was talking about you with the Virgin*, he told me. Briefly, this is what she said: "I told her that she shouldn't cry, that she had to be happy . . . But she didn't pay attention . . . And if she cries again when I tell her about it?"

As soon as the ecstasy was ended, Mari Loli came toward me and whispered that she had another message. She waited until we were alone and then said to me:

—While I was speaking now with the Virgin, I saw that she was laughing very much; and that she was looking upward. On asking her why she was laughing so much, she answered me, "that at the same time in which she was speaking to me, he was looking at you. And that his joy was great."

—Mari Loli, to whom are you referring? About . . .

I didn't get to pronounce his name, for she interrupted:

—Yes. Miguel. The Virgin told me, "Above all, tell the woman that while I am speaking with you now, Miguel is looking at her, and that he is very happy; he is pleased, very pleased."

—Tell me, Mari Loli! How did you know that his name was Miguel?

—Because I asked the Virgin, "Who is Miguel?" And she answered me, "The son of that woman."

When this all ended in the early morning, our return to the house where I lodged was like walking on a cloud . . . The village nestled under a sky full of stars. The sun was rising on the other side of the mountain.»

Encounter with Mystery

The first Holy Week in Garabandal during the apparitions (April 15th to 22nd) left indelible traces engraved on many hearts.

In the same places and at the same time that Mercedes Salisachs had the personal experiences that have just been mentioned, another distinguished visitor to the village was also having his own deeply felt experiences. The visitor was a doctor from the city of Vitoria named José de la Vega. A believer, but not easily aroused, he went up to Garabandal like many others, simply out of curiosity to see what was happening.

What happened there had such an effect on him that he felt it his duty in conscience to make it known. Under his name appeared an article in the newspaper *El Pensamiento Alavés* on April 27, 1962, during Easter Week:



“The Virgin passes almost daily . . .”

«From the 18th of last June, the Virgin passes almost daily through the winding streets of a little village lost in the hills of the Picos de Europa.⁽¹⁷⁾

17. For the sake of accuracy, the doctor's statement should be clarified: Garabandal is not in the group of mountains composing the Picos de Europa, although it is near to it in the Peña Sagra chain of mountains to the northeast.



“ . . . through the winding streets.”

This is what is affirmed by four girls between 11 and 12 years of age, born and brought up high in the Santander mountains, without any more education than grade school and instructions by their parish priest.



the ancient village school

The entire village of about 70 families has lived for months in complete disorder. Once or more on almost every day at pre-fixed hours the girls pray, speak to, and kiss the Virgin, and are swept up in deep ecstasy. The simple parents of these young girls are frightened . . .

The Church prudently refrains from giving its opinion. The doctors, even the most incredulous, have recognized that this matter doesn't have any logical explanation. But thousands of believers—coming each day to the village from the most faraway places—find in fervent and tearful faith, the only explanation for the extraordinary events that happen every night at San Sebastián de Garabandal.



"I was forced to believe in a miracle."

I passed the Holy Week among these people. I listened to the inhabitants of the village and to the visitors. I talked with the *girls* before and after their visions.

And as I could find no professional explanation for what I myself had seen, I was forced to believe in a miracle.

* * *

—*Have you seen the Virgin?*—some people asked me.

—*No. I haven't seen her. But I have felt her with my heart and soul.*

A Jesuit Father,⁽¹⁸⁾ who was with me there, said to me:

—*I see you are very skeptical, doctor.*

—*No, Father, that isn't so. I'm completely*

confused. My most vehement desire would be to feel like the girls and those that accompany them. But you know better than I that faith is a gift that God doesn't concede to everyone in the same way.

Sometime after this conversation, I was able to follow an apparition for the second time and close at hand. It was the dawn of Holy Saturday. It was raining ceaselessly, and the entire village seemed to be covered with mud and stones. With flashlights in our hands, we hurriedly followed one of the visionaries who was running through the streets in ecstasy. With her hands joined, she was holding a crucifix; her head tilted sharply backwards; her eyes fixed on the sky, but smiling. From time to time, she knelt down, prayed, and kissed the cross . . . Half the village and all the visitors, including children, followed her as if hypnotized.

In the little kitchen of her house (where later she talked with us half asleep—it was 4 o'clock in the morning) we succeeded in seeing her enter abruptly into ecstasy, and fall on her

18. Perhaps this was Father Corta who had gone to make the Holy Week in Garabandal.



“where the Virgin appeared for the first time”

knees without burning herself on the hot stones of the blazing fireplace. Later she got up, and as if transported by angels, she began to run through the village. Stumbling in the darkness and splashing in mud up to our ears, we followed after her, unable to stop ourselves.

I asked God fervently for the grace of faith.

In spite of the dim light, we ran through all the little streets of the village. We went to the courtyard of the church, the cemetery, and then to the hill where the Virgin appeared for the first time.⁽¹⁹⁾

The roughness of the way, the blackness of the night, the bad weather, and my flabby condition as a city dweller made me stumble so many times that I fell behind. Finally, I could go no more and decided to wait for them to

return. On the contrary, my wife didn't want to stop—in spite of being short of breath—and she continued onward, asking help for my lack of faith . . .

Soon the girl stopped without arriving at the crest of the hill, and came back on the trail down, marching backwards, hardly touching the stones, continuously looking upward and smiling at the sky.

On coming to my level, she stopped again, fell hard on the gravel with her bare knees, raised the cross to the sky and . . . gave it to me to kiss! Then she searched with her hands among the multitude of chains and rosaries that hung from her neck, seeking for a special chain, while whispering to the invisible Apparition, *Tell me which is it . . . Is it this one?*

With her hand she raised up the medal to give it to the Virgin to kiss in her vision. And we all heard her whisper again, *Tell me whom it belongs to.*

And then, without hesitating any more, she

19. The doctor is referring to the hill of the Pines; but it should be remembered that the first apparitions, including those of the Virgin, did not take place there, but rather on the narrow road that leads up to the Pines, in the *Calleja*, nearer to the village than the Pines.



“Try to explain the mystery of the four village girls from the Montaña.”

turned toward my wife and put the chain around her neck, and without looking, latched the little gold fastener in place. Thrilled and weeping, my wife fell on her knees there, as I did and many of those that were witnessing the unusual scene. The girl had her kiss the medal blessed by the breath of the Virgin, and helped her to get up from the ground with an angelic smile that we will never forget.

Later my turn came. In the same way as with my wife, and with the same or similar words, she put on me my medal that had been kissed by the Virgin . . . I could not contain myself, and tears ran down my cheeks.

At the same time, I found the explanation for everything I had not understood. In the heavenly expression of the girl, I saw a reflection of the Virgin's invisible presence over our heads. On my knees as I was, weeping copiously, I began to ask pardon from God for my lack of faith.

I will return to San Sebastián de Garabandal, as everyone who has come returns. I will bring doctors and friends, and will ask them to try to explain the mystery of the four village girls from the Montaña. But still more, I will ask God that the feeling I felt on the early morning of Holy Saturday never leave me. It is so beautiful to believe in a miracle!»

* * *

The chapter finishes. The woman from Segovia, the Protestant engineer from Germany, the novelist from Barcelona, the doctor from Vitoria . . . These are just a few cases that have come by chance or by providence to our knowledge. How many others are still unknown? How many others will remain forever hidden from human eyes?

But by the few that we know about, we can say that many ways toward God for the help of souls, have passed, and will continue to pass, through . . .

Garabandal



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**From the Month of
Mary to the Feast
of the
Blessed Sacrament**

With the conclusion of Lent—so important for Christians, especially during its last weeks—starts the no less important Eastertime.

This season is characterized on the one hand by jubilant celebration of the Resurrection of Christ; on the other hand, by the Church's holy work of bringing souls to *Communion* with Him through the Eucharist. It is in this that Christ *our Pasch* now and forever immolates Himself for us as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

In correlation with the Eucharistic theme of the season, the Mystical Communions that the girls received from the Angel became more frequent.

In a letter from Maximina González to Doctor Ortiz in Santander, dated April 20, 1962, we find this:

«On Friday morning⁽¹⁾ I went with Conchita to the Pines, since the Angel gives Communion to her there on many days. After receiving on that day, she said to me, *The Angel told me that in the morning I would see the Virgin at 9 o'clock, and again at midnight.* And since I knew about it, I watched; and according to my watch, at 9 o'clock sharp, she had an apparition. I wasn't present at the other apparition, but it was at midnight. And on Saturday, the Angel told the hour and he didn't err.»

In another letter that Maximina sent to the Pifarré family in Barcelona which was dated April 22,⁽²⁾ we find information on a very important matter:

1. I have observed repeatedly that Maximina has not been very careful about the dates by which she begins her letters. The good woman—a widow—had many duties since, besides being alone to care for her two small children, she received lodgers in her house requiring room and board; and she had to find a few minutes time between her many occupations to write letters. And besides possible carelessness in writing the date, frequently several days would go by from the time she started the letter until she finished the last sentence.

The Friday about which she is speaking here would seem to be Good Friday according to the date of the letter. (April 20th) It cannot be the previous Passiontide Friday (April 13th in that year), from what is seen in another of her letters later on. And so I conclude that despite the date on the letter it refers to Friday of Easter Week, April 27th.

2. I refer the reader to footnote 1, adding that this letter could not have been written completely on April 22nd, Easter Sunday. The text that we are reproducing from the original (as we have done with all of Maximina's letters to the Pifarré family) must have been written on the following Wednesday, April 25th.

«It has been a long time since the girls saw the Angel, and yesterday, Tuesday, they talked with the Virgin for a long time. We didn't hear them, but they were seen to be very happy. And it was due to the Virgin telling them that every day that they didn't have Mass, the Angel would come to give them Communion. And this made them very happy . . . So now they will see the Angel and the Virgin, since we have very few Masses other than the ones on Sunday. Yesterday the Angel gave them Communion at 5 in the morning. They were seen holding out their tongues and swallowing the Host. Afterwards they prayed a Station. All this while in ecstasy.

And so now I don't know; perhaps they will have an apparition every day, since in order to receive Communion they have to be in ecstasy. I don't know if this is the way it will be, since today is the first day that he gave them Communion like this. He hasn't given It to them since last summer.»

Another letter from Maximina to the Pifarré family is dated May 4th:

«The Angel gives them Communion every day that there isn't a Mass, and Mass is on few other days than Sunday. As for still not giving Communion to Mari Cruz, I don't know why that is. Today Loli and Jacinta received Communion at 6 in the morning, and Conchita at 8 o'clock. Indeed, it is beautiful to see them come to the door of the church in ecstasy, kneel down and pray the *I confess*, and end with a Station. To see this thrills me. Conchita said to the Angel, *You haven't put on any weight or grown in the past year . . . Look what innocent things they talk about!*»

Truly! With the ingeniousness of simple children, they judged the realities of the next world by those that they saw in this one. They were surprised, after not having seen the child Angel for many months, that he was still exactly the same as when they had first met him.

Fr. Valentín's notes, that begin again on May 12th after a long intermission, mention on many days the occurrence of these Mystical Communions from the hands of the Angel.

We can therefore describe the *developments* seen at Garabandal in the weeks of spring, 1962, as a



"Mari Loli had an apparition."

continual passage from Mary to the Eucharist, and the converse.⁽³⁾

«May 12th: Mari Loli had an apparition at 2 in the morning. She went to Conchita's house, and then to the house of Jerónimo, who was on his death bed; she gave him the crucifix to kiss. At 8 in the morning, as was the custom, Conchita went with her mother and some people to pray the rosary in the Calleja. She recited it in a normal state. Afterwards she went to the door of the church, where she spoke for a while, and in ecstasy prayed the *Confiteor*, and afterwards a Station, and then she returned to normal. She said: *The Angel gave her Communion*. It lasted 15 minutes.» (Fr. Valentín's notes)



“The Angel gave her Communion.”

The following day, May 13th, was the 45th anniversary of the first apparition at Fatima. Probably no one in Garabandal remembered it; but by chance or providentially, the day was outstanding.

3. If the word *Marian* has special meaning in the flow of events at Garabandal, it would be logical to expect a brilliant manifestation with the coming of May, the *Month of Mary*. And so the invitation of the Spanish song ‘*Venid y vamos todos*’ would find special resonance in that location distinguished by the Virgin-Mother, the Queen of Flowers.

Thanks to some notes from Fr. Valentín, we know, for example, that it was unseasonably bad weather. «It rained and it hailed.» Under the rain and hail, at the beginning of the night, Jacinta and Mari Loli traveled through the village, singing songs and praying in ecstasy. Going to the house of Jerónimo, who was still alive, they fulfilled a work of mercy by praying for the dying and consoling the living. And finally they went to the Pines, where they prayed the rosary, and then came down backwards to the village.

As always the *vigils* were more frequent in the middle of the night, and at that time Conchita went out into the middle of the street in ecstasy, prayed another rosary, and gave the crucifix to be kissed.

Seldom, even in Fatima, have the recommendations of Fatima been fulfilled so exceptionally:

**Do penance.
Say prayers
to implore pardon
for sinners**

On May 15th, the feastday of St. Isidore, the patron saint of farmers, toward 8 o'clock in the morning . . .

«Conchita went to the Calleja as usual to recite the rosary. From there she went to the door of the church, and said that the Angel had given her Communion, and that in the evening she would have an apparition at 9 o'clock.»

This is almost the same as was said for the 16th, according to Fr. Valentín's notes:

«Today Conchita went to the Pines at 9 in the morning. According to what she said, the Angel gave her Communion.»

On May 19th, a Claretian father from Segovia traveled to Garabandal and Fr. Valentín took down his impressions:

«The father told me that in one of the apparitions he heard the girl say, *Oh! He isn't a Jesuit? He is from the Immaculate Heart of Mary?* (The only way one could be differentiated externally from the other was by the manner of wearing the black cincture.) He thought that some of the things, taken individually, could be explained; but that the sum of all the things that were happening as a whole would be very difficult to explain humanly.»



“trips through the village”

This father had an injury to his leg, and he said that the Virgin told him that she would not cure him, that he should go to a doctor; he had borne this injury 8 days. Useful advice! It is not necessary to seek a miracle to get rid of problems that can normally be solved by natural means.

A week later, on May 26th,⁽⁴⁾ Mari Loli and Conchita walked through the village together in ecstasy, praying a rosary that ended with a beautifully sung Salve . . . as might be expected, since it was Saturday, the day of the week consecrated to the Virgin!

After the Salve, they made a devout procession to the cemetery . . . something that could be expected from Christians. *Be mindful, O Lord, of those who have preceded us with the sign of faith and repose in the sleep of peace.* (Roman Canon of the Mass)

On the last day of May, there was a long rosary through the streets and the singing of the Salve.

There can be no doubt that the month of May,

4. On the last Saturday of the month, May 26th, Conchita again received Communion from the Angel. Guillermo Freudenthal Miret of Barcelona was present and he was able to take some beautiful pictures.

the month of Mary, was something very exceptional at Garabandal. In many places throughout Spain, the *Venid y vamos todos* resounded each evening:

*Most pure Virgin,
Lovelier than the moon,
Turn again toward us,
Prostrate at your feet.*

But surely in no other place did it resound with the meaning and depth that it had, day after day, in that little village lost in the mountains.

* * *

The girls of Garabandal, transported with joy, lived in expectation of seeing their Mother, and she did not fail to use her visits to instruct her children almost continually.

Again it is Maximina giving us information in a letter to the Pifarré family:

«We make trips through the village (following the girls in ecstasy) and every night or almost every night they recite a rosary; sometimes they sing it.

One night Mari Loli was heard to say, *There is going to be a chastisement? . . . Oh no! Don't let it come! Give it to me alone!*



“ . . . a Chastisement?”



"May it not come!"

And another night Conchita said, *It's going to come to Spain? . . . Oh, may it not come, may it not come!*

Later I asked her what this was in the ecstasy, and she told us that she couldn't say anything.»

If Conchita cannot say anything, I think that we can certainly say something. Lucy, the sole survivor of Fatima, lived 21 years in Spain as a religious, staying alternately in Tuy and Pontevedra. She was in Spain from 1925 until 1946. During this time she had frequent conversations with the bishop of Tuy-Vigo who later went on to be archbishop of Valladolid: Bishop Antonio García.

While archbishop in the beginning of 1943, Bishop Antonio received three statements from Lucy on what God wished and asked "*from the bishops of Spain*" for the welfare of their own and other nations.

The third statement made at Tuy on February 28th is the most extensive and contains a very clear paragraph:

"If the bishops of Spain listen to the desires already manifested by our Lord, and begin a true

reform of the people and clergy, then it will go well. But if not, she (Russia) will again be the enemy by which God will punish her once more."

Unfortunately our bishops — not all of them, certainly — have been for years giving the impression that they were more interested in promoting social and political changes and democratic freedom than in fulfilling their primary duty: the advancement of the clergy and people in living the faith and leading good moral lives.

We have more information. On Saturday, May 26th, Mari Loli wrote to the Pastor of Barro, Fr. José Ramón. The letter, as all those of that period, was a disaster in penmanship and presentation. However, among the words laboriously written down, many of them trivial, there is something that could not be missed:

«The apparitions continue the same. We see her almost every day.

You said that I should tell you some of what she told me. Well I cannot say anything; nothing more than what, as you know, she tells us everyday:

—That we should be very good,



"We should be very good."

—*And visit the Blessed Sacrament often,*

—*And recite the rosary every day . . . »*

(The distribution into paragraphs and punctuation were made by me. Mari Loli wrote all these things one after the other in irregular lines and without a single period or comma.)

* * *

June, the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus came and continued with similar characteristics.

June the 2nd was a Saturday. A very astute doctor must have been there at the time; at least pertaining to this day there is this notation from Fr. Valentín:

«A young doctor from Valladolid (*Fernández Marcos*) told me that he didn't see anything seriously opposed to this being supernatural; and that reasoning without prejudices, it was very difficult to affirm the opposite . . . It's necessary to be uncomplicated to accept that the phenomena are not normal. Naturally if we seek some "theoretical" explanation to a given fact that we have seen, we will always find it; but only this, the "theoretical" explanation, based on a "hypothetical" argument without concrete and objective findings.»

June 13th came; the day that is distinguished by the number of people who honor St. Anthony of Padua or Lisbon,⁽⁵⁾ but in Garabandal it was only distinguished by two not very exceptional things:



“an apparition together”

5. St. Anthony of Lisbon, as the Portuguese call him since the saint was born in the capital of that country; Anthony of Padua, as others call him for having died and been buried in that Italian city.

«In the evening the four girls had an apparition together, something that hadn't happened for some time.

There were no people outside.» (Anyhow this is what Father Valentín put down. On that day the people were occupied with St. Anthony.)

On Sunday, June 17th, «**there was a man from Palencia**»—as Father Valentín writes—«**who was somewhat skeptical, and during one of the apparitions said to himself, *If the girl comes back here to give me the crucifix to kiss, I will believe in the truth of this.* Immediately the girl made her way through the crowd and gave it to him to kiss.**»

I set down this detail, not because it is new or unique, since we have already seen so many others like it, but for the intrinsic value that it contains. There are things about Garabandal that separately could be attributed to natural causes and even, if you wish, diabolical intervention. There is much that the devil can do if God permits him. But we have here something that certainly exceeds the powers and abilities of the devil. There are texts in Scripture from which we see that penetration into the hidden thoughts of a person, and understanding perfectly his secret ideas and thoughts, is the exclusive domain of God.

For example, St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (4:5), speaking of our inclination to judge, gives this warning: **Judge not before the time: until the Lord comes, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of hearts.** As if to say that Christ is the only one capable of knowing the deep secrets of man, and because of this, the only one capable of judging with total justice.

And in the epistle to the Hebrews (4: 12-13) the paragraph on the great power of the Word of God ends with this proclamation: **Neither is there any creature invisible in His sight: but all things are naked and open to His eyes.** He could not proclaim as an eminent divine attribute this knowledge of all man's intimate secrets, if the devil could also penetrate into these secrets.

Then, before so many cases of *answers* to thoughts or questions that were formulated only in the deepest consciences of the people at Garabandal, could one seriously say that all this had a natural explanation, as the hierarchy repeats? Or that it could be the work of the devil, as others have suggested?



“Visit the Blessed Sacrament.”

Return of the Angel

Nights of the Screams



Revolving around the feast of Corpus Christi in 1962, Garabandal experienced one of the most outstanding times in its history.

This feast honoring the Eucharist is celebrated in Spain with greater external solemnity than any other. The feast was soon to suffer a great eclipse in the days after the Council as a result of certain doctrinal derangements, as a result of a heated fight against *triumphalism* in the Church, as a result of a tendency in many of the clergy to *desecrate*, as a result of etc., etc . . . But in Garabandal, in the year 1962, it was celebrated as never before.

Three days previously something occurred that seems not to have been sufficiently noted: *the active reappearance of St. Michael the Archangel*.

We can speak of reappearance, not because he had disappeared completely, but because his presence had been reduced for some time to interventions of a lesser degree: fleetingly supplying for the absence of a priest in giving Holy Communion to the girls, and accompanying the Virgin from time to time as a silent witness. Now on the contrary, on the evening of the feast of Corpus Christi, he returns to play a role almost as he did in the beginning.



“They said that they would put it in writing.”

In that year Corpus Christi fell on the 21st of June, a Thursday. On the preceding Monday, June 18th, Fr. Valentín wrote:

«In the evening Mari Cruz went to the Cuadro and there was in ecstasy, and afterwards she went through the village. A little later, Jacinta and Mari Loli went outside. They also went to the Cuadro and then fell into ecstasy. They said that they saw the Angel.»

Did Fr. Valentín notice the newness of this? St. Michael comes alone again, and acts alone.⁽⁶⁾

Did Fr. Valentín notice what date it was? June 18th! Exactly one year since the Archangel and the girls had met for the first time in the same place. How many things had happened in the meantime! And many more were still to happen.

On the following day, Tuesday the 19th, he wrote:

«At 10:30 (at night) Jacinta, Mari Loli and Mari Cruz were in the Cuadro. Previously Loli and Jacinta had gone there running, and on arriving were in ecstasy. And they said that they

saw the Angel, and that he told them to return to the Cuadro at 10:30. Then they went down to the village and later went up with Mari Cruz . . .

The girls cried and said: *Don't tell us these things! Take us away . . . They should confess! They should get ready!*

Afterward they said that they would put it in writing (as the Angel had told them to do). It lasted 50 minutes.»

In the meantime, what was Conchita doing? Why was she absent during the important activity in the *calleja*? Some notes from Dr. Ortiz clarify this for us:

«My sister-in-law, Eloísa (who was passing some time in Garabandal with her daughter), told me that on the evening of June 19th she met with other people in Conchita's house. Conchita's mother would not let her go outside since she had a bad knee. Soon the girl went into ecstasy, falling so hard on her knees that she made them bleed. Then Eloísa said to Aniceta:

—*You haven't accomplished anything by not letting her go out. Look what she has done.*

—It's all right with me if she goes out.

6. That the Angel appeared alone this time seems clear from what Fr. Valentín wrote afterwards: «They said that they would see the Virgin later.»



“She began to write on it with a pen.”

The girl didn’t go out, but in ecstasy as she was, she picked up a piece of paper and holding it by the lower border—in the air!— she began to write on it with a pen. Approaching with flashlights, the people wanted to read what she was writing, and she tried to hide it.

Don’t look.—said someone—She doesn’t want you to.

Then she went up to her room, changed her pen and continued writing.

When this had ended and she was normal again, Plácido⁽⁷⁾ came into the house, all excited, and exclaimed:

—Did you hear the screams that the girls made in the Calleja?

—No.

—They were horrible!»

What happened in the Calleja on that night of June 19th, the first *Night of the Screams* (*Noches de los Gritos*) as the people began to call them, must have been very impressive and serious.⁽⁸⁾ We

have just seen Fr. Valentín’s notation: **«Afterward they said that they would put it in writing.»** And so it was actually done; there came out from this a short message dated June 19th, 1962, with the signatures of Mari Loli and Jacinta. (Could this have been the same message that Conchita, at home in ecstasy, was attempting to write on the piece of paper she was holding up in the air?)⁽⁹⁾

I have seen many copies of this message with slight variations. But I am setting down here a photocopy of the text that the girls gave to a trustworthy person, written and signed in their own handwriting. Evidently, this message is a very weak reflection of what they saw and heard on that first night of *the screams*.

The magazine *Needles*, now titled *Garabandal* out of New York, in its fall issue of 1977, reported some statements by Jacinta’s American husband (as spokesman for her). According to these statements, what Loli and Jacinta heard during the first *night of screams* related specially to the Warning. (See further on in Part Three of this book.) And it was on the following night that these two girls and Conchita had visions of the Chastisement.

At the time Jacinta and Loli possibly did not understand the distinction between the Warning and the Chastisement, or else they deliberately kept silent about the Warning, since Conchita was the only girl who spoke about the Warning that was going to come before the Miracle — as a result of the vision she had on January 1, 1965.

9. Father Valentín, who was absent, wrote in his memoirs: **«Conchita wrote responses for three persons.»**

7. The businessman from Santander, Plácido Ruiloba.

8. Many years passed before definite information was revealed on the contents of that night.

The Virgin told us:⁽¹⁰⁾

That we do not expect the Chastisement;

That without expecting it, it will come;

Since the world has not changed.

And she has already told us twice;

And we do not pay attention to her,

Since the world is getting worse.

And it should change very much.

And it has not changed at all.

Prepare yourself. Confess,

Because the Chastisement will come soon.

And the world continues the same . . .

I tell you this:

That the world continues the same.

How unfortunate that it does not change!

Soon will come a very great Chastisement,

If it does not change.

**María Dolores Mazón
Jacinta González**

10. It is difficult to determine if it was the Virgin who personally presented all these things to them, or if it was done by the Archangel.

This is the message faithfully reproduced; the only thing I have added is the punctuation and the distribution into lines to make it easier to understand. (the girls wrote all these things one right after the other without a single comma or period.)

With their poor capacity for expression, they sought with this repetition of ideas to inculcate forcefully the few basic things that they had heard and seen (and in what a way!) in the course of the apparition:

—That the Chastisement (I write this with a capital so that no one will interpret it to be an ordinary chastisement) announced in the first message of October 18th was inexorably going to come. The reason for this is that only penitential reform could save us from it, and instead of this, what is happening in the world today is a rapid progression down the road of filthiest deviations.

—That only those who *prepare themselves* by a sincere return to God, together with constant prayer and watching, will be able to face the terrible test⁽¹¹⁾ in the proper state.

On the night after the girls' terrifying screams, tears, and broken, incoherent speech, Garabandal could not sleep tranquilly. But the next day was even worse.

Early in the morning arrived Fr. Félix Larazábal, the superior of the Franciscans of San Pantaleón de Aras (Santander), summoned by Fr. Valentín to perform services for Corpus Christi in the village. A little after his arrival, he went to Conchita's house; but he found no one there.

«We were accompanying»—said the sister-in-law of Dr. Ortiz—«Conchita at the Pines, where she was waiting to receive Communion from the Angel. We were praying and waiting; the time was dragging on. In the meantime her mother went to the edge of the hill and saw in front of her house someone who appeared to be a friar or a priest.

—*He seems to be wearing a white cord . . .*

11. The punishments of God in this world never have the exclusive reason of *getting even* vindictively. They always come impregnated with mercy, offering an occasion for each one to *satisfy* for himself and for others by willingly accepting the hardships that come.

Hearing this, Conchita hurried to descend and we followed her. Actually he was a Franciscan father; he celebrated Mass and gave Communion to us. Conchita's mother commented:

—*That's the reason that we've waited so long up above! Whenever there's a priest to give Communion, she doesn't receive it from the Angel.*»

In the evening some devout persons made confessions at the time of the rosary. The majority of the people were working in the fields, which required a lot of labor at that time of the year, especially since the next day was a feastday on which they could not work.

As the evening shadows fell on the village, almost everyone was awaiting what might happen, since all had been startled by what had occurred on the previous night.

«At 1 o'clock at night»—states Eloísa de la Roza Velarde—«I went to Mari Cruz's house to pick up a rosary that I had left, and on the way I heard that the others were already in the Calleja. I returned immediately to search for my daughter, but I didn't find her. Then I hurried to the Calleja, and there she was with Maximina (in whose house we were staying) and many other people, among whom was Fr. Félix Larrazábal.»

We know from Fr. Valentín, who wrote down what they said, that the girls . . .

«. . . went to the Cuadro as on the previous day, toward 10:30 at night. They said they had seen the Angel who told them that the Virgin would come later, but that the people should stay at a distance . . . that no one should pass beyond the last house in the village. And so everyone did this; but it seems that a Franciscan father—who was surely the only priest present—showed the intent of going to where the girls were. Ceferino blocked his way, saying: *Here we are all equal*. Afterward, it appears that the girls were heard to cry very hard . . .»

What Fr. Valentín refers to here as being heard, is well confirmed by the personal experience of Eloísa de la Roza:

«The girls let out terrifying screams . . . And they said, *Wait! Wait! . . . Everyone should confess! Oh! Oh!*



“A horrible thing was going to happen.”

The people began to pray and to ask pardon publicly . . .

The priest, who was very excited, prayed in a loud voice, and we all followed him. When he stopped a moment, the girls cried and screamed again in a very anguished manner. They calmed down again when the prayer restarted.⁽¹²⁾

On returning to normality (*Father Valentín's notes say that this remarkable apparition ended at about 2 in the morning*), the girls said that they would stay there all night in prayer.

—*And us?* the spectators asked.

—*As you wish.*

I don't think anyone moved; we prayed with them (*Father Valentín said that they prayed many rosaries*) until six in the morning.

At that time (*there was a beautiful sunrise*), Father Larrazábal went toward the church, followed by all the people. And he began a series of confessions. The whole village confessed; and it appears that they were confessions of truly exceptional sincerity and repentance.»

12. This scene at Garabandal during these latest times of the world (1 John 2:18) can be compared with the scene of Exodus (17:8-12), when the story of salvation was almost beginning:

The Amalecites came and attacked Israel at Refedim . . . Joshua did as Moses told him and marched out to engage Amalec.

Meanwhile, Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. As long as Moses kept his arms raised, Israel had the advantage; when he let his arms fall, the advantage went to Amalec.

A telling lesson on how our prayer is able to overcome in the face of all types of situations!

How could it have been otherwise, after such preparation, both personal and communal, at the Calleja? The pure love of God will always be of the greatest value and the greatest measure of every spiritual life. But the *holy fear of God* should not be neglected, which from ancient times has been shown to be the *beginning of wisdom*. (Eccl. 1:16)

The holy fear of God was experienced as never before by the men and women of Garabandal on the two ‘*nights of the screams*’. Months later, the memory of it was still vivid. On September 24th, María Herrero de Gallardo wrote from Santander to her sister, Menchu:

«I spent a long time speaking alone with Jacinta's mother, and she told me that the night before Corpus Christi had been terrifying . . . The girls ran to the Cuadro. Afterwards they advised the people that they should approach no further than a certain distance, that they shouldn't go beyond a place in the road from which the girls couldn't be seen.

Jacinta's mother told me that she heard them cry with such voices and such horror that she wanted to run toward her daughter to see what was happening; but the people held her back. When the vision ended, the girls came to the place where the people were, and the people saw that the girls were covered with tears. The girls requested the whole village to confess and receive Communion, as a horrible thing was going happen. María (*the mother of Jacinta*) experienced such fright that she couldn't sleep.»

Six years later, Pepe Díez, the village stonemason, spoke to a married couple from Asturias in words similar to these that I overheard:

Look, I don't want to brag, but I'm a man, it might be said, who doesn't know fear. I go out to all parts of the village, and over the distant trails in the night just like in the day. I have never been afraid. But on those nights of the screams, with everyone together in the darkness, in silence, hearing the girls' sobbing and screeching in the distance, I shook so that my knees knocked against each other so much I couldn't stop them.

You can't imagine what that was. I have never experienced anything like it.

What could the girls have seen to break out like this with the shrill shrieks and screams that terrified everyone?

María Herrero de Gallardo, in Garabandal several months later, spoke with Loli on Sunday, October 7th, the feast of the Holy Rosary. She questioned Loli, among other things, about what the girls had seen during the feast of Corpus Christi:

«Oh!»—exclaimed the girl—«That was horrible to see. We were really frightened. And I know no words that will explain it.»

We saw rivers change into blood . . . Fire fell down from the sky. . . And something much worse still, which I'm not able to reveal now.

The message that we gave at the time said that we don't expect the Chastisement, but that, without expecting it, it will come . . .

The Virgin asked everyone to confess and receive Communion.»

The girl did not say many words; what her few words said was enough.

In 1970 Fernando Corteville wrote in issue N°31 of the *L'Impartial* about the messages of the 19th and 23rd of June, 1962 — up to then unpublished — that Mari Loli had verified and presented to Mrs. Saraco.⁽¹³⁾ Three years previously, these messages had been given to Father Morelos.⁽¹⁴⁾ The girls had received them when they had seen visions of the Chastisement.

13. Mrs. Carmela Saraco is a promoter of the cause of Garabandal in the U.S.A.

According to the text that Mrs. Saraco had in her possession (signed by the visionary), Loli said this to Father Morelos:

14. Father Gustavo Morelos, a Mexican, played a great part in the pro-Garabandal movement following the events. He came to Spain toward the end of 1964, *with the proper authorization of his ecclesiastical superiors*, as he himself stated in writing in 1965, *to study the apparitions of the Most Holy Virgin in the in the village of San Sebastián de Garabandal.*

First he collected all the information of a negative type that the Commission at Santander could give him, with a result that could be imagined. But later, on dealing directly with the visionaries and on hearing the eyewitnesses, he became convinced that what was occurring in Garabandal could not have any human explanation. *Returning to my country, Mexico, I dedicated myself to informing our most excellent prelates . . . with the desire of making known — more than the "events" themselves — the "messages" that the four girls had transmitted to all mankind on behalf of their Vision.*

For some time now, due to pressure by the upper ecclesiastical hierarchies (the passionate zeal with which the former bishop from Santander, Bishop Cirarda, attempted to finish with Garabandal between 1968 and 1971 should not be forgotten), he has come to keep silence.

As a tabulation of the actors, the fact can be pointed out here that there was an unusual *procession* of prelates in the Santander diocese from the beginning of the *events* of Garabandal. There were six bishops in the first 11 years. They were the following:

Doroteo Fernández Fernández: initially auxiliary bishop with Monsignor Eguino Trecu and afterwards, apostolic administrator; transferred in 1962 to Badajoz.

Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal: in 1962 took possession of the diocese as the titular bishop of Santander; not much later, for reasons not sufficiently known, he presented his resignation. This was accepted, although he continued for some time at the head of the bishopric as the apostolic administrator.

Vicente Puchol Montis: entered into Santander as a new bishop in 1965; he came with great hopes: he was rather young and had recently been promoted. On May 8th of 1967, he died tragically in an automobile accident.

Enrique de Cabo: elected vicar head on the death of Bishop Puchol; he was at the head of the diocese a little more than a year. Not long after finishing his service, he died suddenly.

José María Cirarda: came in the summer of 1968 to Santander as the new bishop; much was expected from him also. In December of 1971 he went to the diocese of Córdoba.

Juan Antonio del Val Gallo: in the winter of 1972, he took possession of the diocese of Santander, to which diocese he belonged and to which he was then returning after a short reign as auxiliary bishop to the archbishop of Seville.

With regard to Garabandal, although these bishops have officially upheld the negative position of the Commission, only two have fought openly against it: Bishop Puchol, who thought he had finished with Garabandal; and Bishop Cirarda, who tried to finish it with all his might . . .

I do not question their good intentions; undoubtedly they thought that they were doing God a good service.

In spite of seeing the Virgin, (*during the ‘night of screams’*) we began to see a great multitude of people who were suffering intensely, and screaming with tremendous fear . . .

The Most Holy Virgin explained to us that this great tribulation — which was not the Chastisement — would come because a time would arrive when the Church would give the impression of being on the point of perishing . . . It would pass through a terrible test. We asked the Virgin what this great test was called and she told us that it was *Communism*.

Then she showed us how the great Chastisement for all mankind would come, and that it would come directly from God . . .

There will come a time when all motors and machines will stop; a terrible wave of heat will strike the earth and men will begin to feel a great thirst. In desperation they will seek water, but this will evaporate from the heat . . . Then almost everyone will despair and they will seek to kill one another . . . But they will lose their strength and fall to the earth. Then it will be understood that it is God alone Who has permitted this.

Then we saw a crowd in the midst of flames. The people ran to hurl themselves into the lakes and seas. But the water seemed to boil and in place of putting out the flames, it seemed to enkindle them even more.

It was so horrible that I asked the Most Holy Virgin to take all the young children with her⁽¹⁵⁾ before all this happened. But the Virgin told us that when it would come, they would all be adults . . .

15. It might be noted that Loli had little brothers at that time.



page from the Apocalypse

Loli's words could be compared to those written in the Apocalypse (16: 3-12) about the effects that would result from the pouring out of the fourth, fifth and sixth chalices . . .

This is startling, shocking. It should make every person reflect on his *salvation*. But I am afraid for many . . . The *charismatics of optimism* do not see more in the actual situation of the Church today, in its convulsions, than a *crisis of growth*. They detect with certainty (I don't know by what signs) the coming of a *new springtime*. And they regard everything that has just been mentioned as an erroneous prophecy. An erroneous prophecy from outdated medieval *prophets of doom*.

The true prophets were sent to communicate to the people of God, time and time again, what it was necessary for them to know. And it cannot be denied that we have needed — more than once — the sternest warnings and corrections.

The words of the prophecy itself distinguish the false from the true prophet . . . It is clear that the people of God do not like to hear certain matters, even though they are conducive to their salvation, and their *guides* like to hear them even less. It was the same in Israel in the days of Jeremiah the prophet. The insistence on reform by that *prophet of doom* did not please the Israelites; they preferred instead the pleasant predictors of a prosperous future. But it is well known what then happened.

We can well imagine how the feast of Corpus Christi, the great feast of the Eucharist, was celebrated in Garabandal during that year of grace, 1962, after such a *vigil* and after such reception of the sacrament of Penance.

No one missed the solemn Mass and almost everyone received Communion. Later, during the procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the cleaned and garlanded streets of the village, there resounded the traditional hymns of homage to the hidden God in the Blessed Sacrament.

As if for the purpose of directing all attention toward the mysteries celebrated on that day, the visionaries did not present any spectacle.

«Mari Cruz went to the Cuadro»—Fr. Valentín wrote—«**she went there in the natural state, and on arriving, knelt down and went into ecstasy; but she didn't say anything . . . The other girls didn't have an apparition.**»

The following day, Friday, there was no apparition at all. But on the next day, Saturday, June 23rd, came the final statement from the *nights of the screams*; the second message from Loli and Jacinta¹⁶ bears this date:

16. The reader can notice that Conchita was not taking a significant part in the important events occurring in Garabandal on the feast of Corpus Christi.

The Virgin has told us:

That the world continues the same, that it has not changed at all;

That few will see God; so few they are, that it is causing the Virgin great sorrow.

How unfortunate it is that the world does not change!

The Virgin has told us that the Chastisement is coming.

As the world is not changing, the cup is filling up.

How sorrowful is the Virgin, although she does not allow us to see it.

Since the Virgin loves us so much, she suffers alone, since she is so good.

Everyone be good, so that the Virgin will be happy!

She has told us that those who are good should pray for those who are evil.

Yes, we should pray to God for the world, for those who do not know Him.

Be good, be very good.

María Dolores Mazón, 13 years

Jacinta González, 13 years

Novena to St. Joseph

It consists in turning to St. Joseph four times a day (it does not matter when or where) and honoring him in the four points of:

- 1. His Fidelity to Grace.** Think about this for a minute, give thanks to God and ask through St. Joseph to be faithful to grace.
- 2. His Fidelity to the Interior Life.** Think about this for a minute, give thanks to God and make the request.
- 3. His Love of Our Blessed Lady.** Think about this, give thanks and make the request.
- 4. His Love for the Holy Child.** Think about this, give thanks, and make the request.

