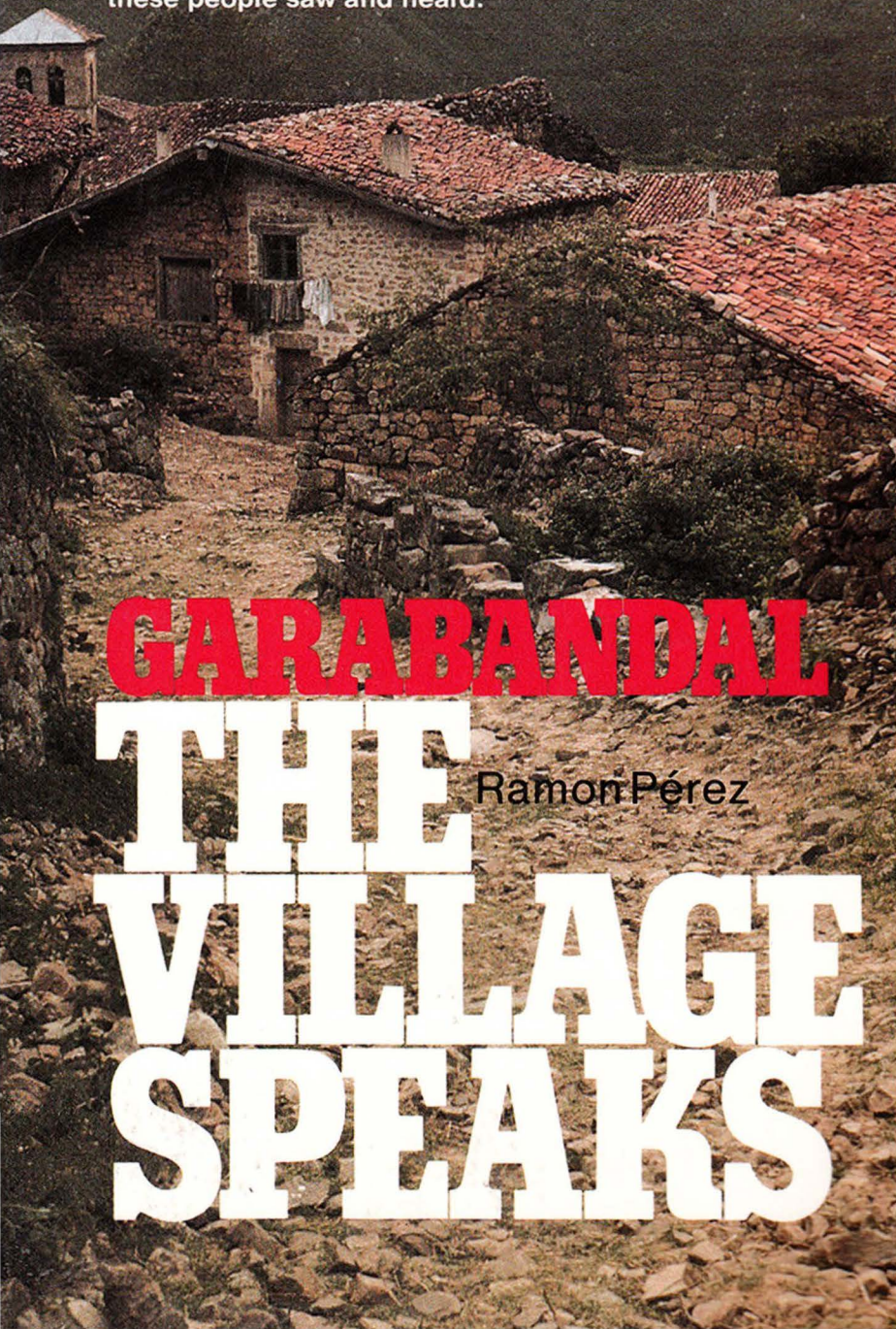


With incomprehensible wonder, the humble mountain folk of San Sebastian de Garabandal watched as their little village became transformed into the stage for humanly unexplainable events. Here are the testimonies of what these people saw and heard.

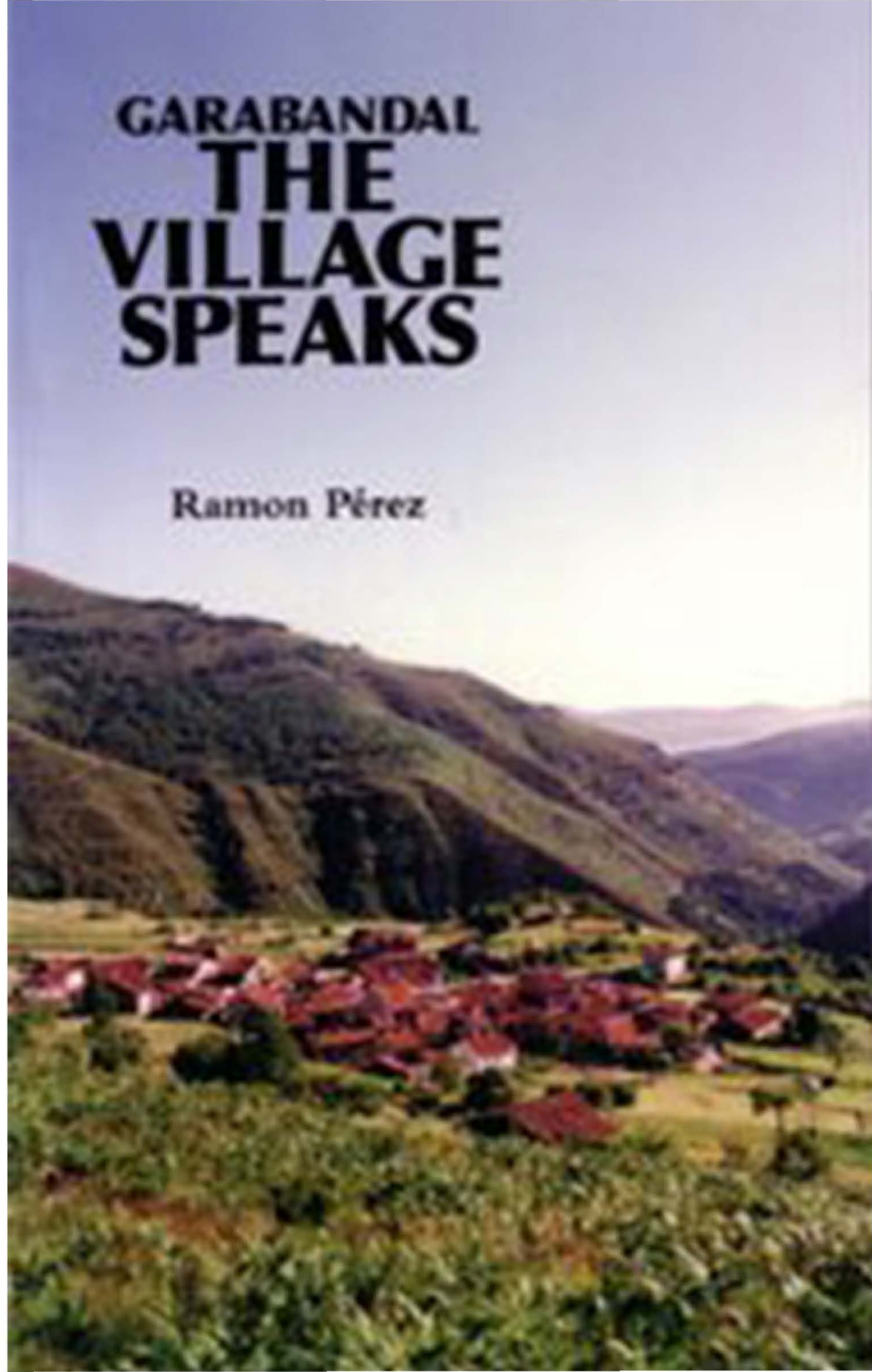


GARABANDAL
THE
VILLAGE
SPEAKS

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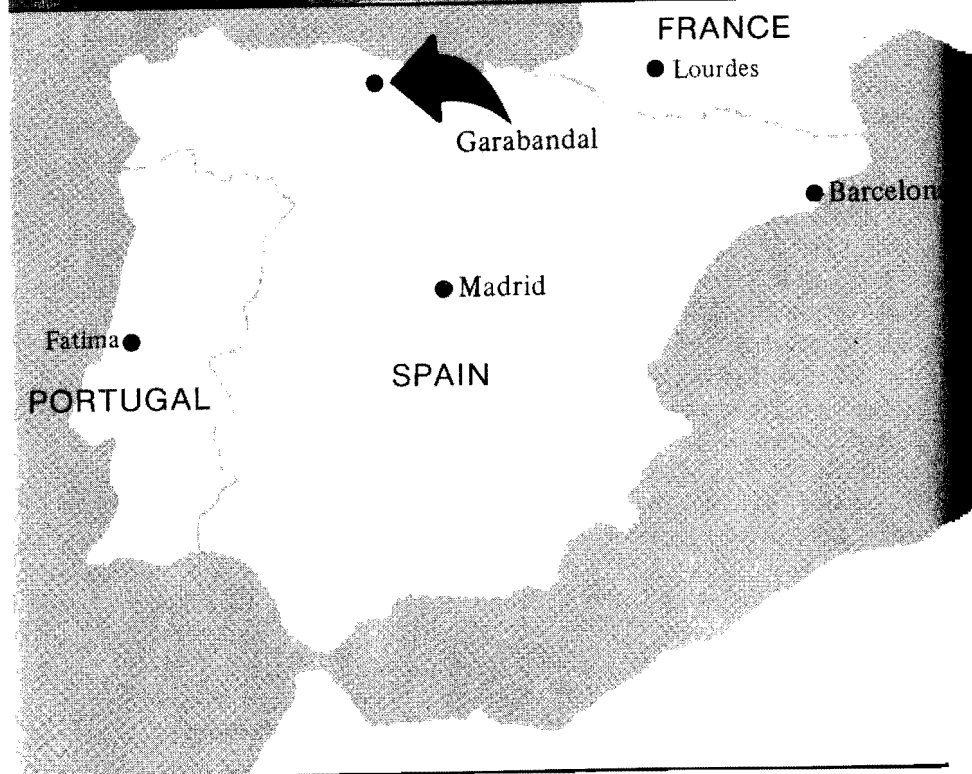


Chapter 1

San Sebastian de Garabandal

San Sebastian de Garabandal is a poor village in the Cantabrian mountains at an altitude of 1,312 feet. It lies thirty-five miles southwest of Santander. In 1961, there were about 300 inhabitants in the village. It has two official schools, one for boys and the other for girls with less than twenty children in each. Attendance at school is not strictly controlled. Religious instruction is given in the school and completed in the home. It appears to be rather rudimentary. It should be noted that before the apparitions began, the children had never heard of Lourdes or Fatima. The pastor, Fr. Valentin, resides in the valley below at Cosio. On Sunday evenings, whenever possible, he makes the steep climb up to Garabandal for a late Mass, prior to which he hears some confessions. The doctor comes on foot when someone is badly in need of him. The village boys who do not climb up the high pastures to watch over the cattle either leave the country or work in the cities. The girls, once their schooling is over at the age of fourteen, serve as guides for donkeys carrying manure or crops. Every day, they make the climb up the mountains, which takes several hours of walking, to bring the daily meals to their fathers and brothers. There are no stores, no telephones, no radios and no cars in Garabandal. All the food, including bread, comes via donkey-back from Cosio which is about an hour's walk from the village. The houses of San Sebastian are miserable and the roads have the reputation of being the most stony in all the region. The village is truly isolated.

However, it is in this poor hamlet, over a span of four years that some extraordinary events will take place as well as the pronouncement of messages which will at the same time give rise to passionate polemics and excursions where curiosity will quickly give way to fervor.



The tiny hamlet of San Sebastian de Garabandal with its cluster of nine pine trees overlooking the village, is located in the northwest mountainous region of Spain.



A typical street scene in Garabandal.

Four little girls are the heroines.

They will be presented here, followed by the chronology of the visits from St. Michael and the Blessed Virgin. Emphasis will be placed on the prophecies and the messages forming the essential part of the events which occurred at Garabandal. Finally, there will be a report of the testimonies gathered on the spot which have been translated as accurately as possible.

Chapter 2

Chronology of the Most Important Events

Sunday, June 18, 1961, 8:30 p.m.

Four little girls, Maria Dolores (Mari Loli) Mazon Gonzalez, born May 1, 1949, in San Sebastian de Garabandal; Jacinta Gonzalez Gonzalez, born April 27, 1949, in San Sebastian de Garabandal; Maria Concepcion (Conchita) Gonzalez Gonzalez born February 7, 1949, in San Sebastian de Garabandal; and Maria Cruz (Mari Cruz) Gonzalez Barrido,¹ born June 21, 1950, in San Sebastian de Garabandal had decided to pilfer some apples from a tree near the *calleja*, a stiff, stony road, climbing from the village up to a bluff where nine pines² are clustered. After the girls had taken the apples and entered the *calleja* they heard “a noise, like thunder³ . . .” and then saw a “beautiful angel appear, engulfed in a brilliant light which was not harmful to the eyes.” He quickly disappeared.

June 19, 1961

No apparition, but around 10:00 p.m. each child hears a voice saying, “Do not worry, you will see me again.”

1. In spite of identical family names, these last three girls are not sisters nor even first cousins. Only Jacinta and Conchita are second cousins.

2. This is the spot designated by Our Lady for the great prophesied Miracle. She appeared to the children here many times.

3. When the Virgin appeared to Bernadette at Lourdes, a similar phenomenon took place, “. . . I heard a noise but saw that the trees were not moving at all. I continued to take off my shoes. I heard the same noise again like the wind blowing. I raised my head and looked at the grotto . . .” Bernadette’s narration

Similarly at Fatima, with the first apparition of the angel, “. . . Suddenly a strong gust of wind—rather surprising under a perfect blue sky—made the children turn in the direction of the hamlet. Seemingly carried by a strong light . . . a figure of glittering whiteness was gliding toward them . . .” *Fatima*, Remy

June 20, 1961

There is recitation of the rosary at the *calleja* by the villagers who accompany the girls. The girls have no apparition today but at the very moment they are getting ready to leave, "we saw a glittering light which prevented us from seeing one another. We were dazzled and terrified by this light and started to scream, but it soon disappeared . . ."

June 21, 1961

In the afternoon, the angel appears at the *calleja*. ". . . He wears a long blue robe, without a belt, and has large, pink wings, clear and very beautiful. His little face is neither long nor round. He has a very nice nose, black eyes and a dark complexion. His hands are very delicate and his nails are cut. His feet are not visible. He appears to be about nine years old. Although he looks so young, he gives the impression of invincible strength . . ." This was the girls' first ecstasy observed by witnesses. The children asked the angel his name and purpose in coming but they received no answer. This was probably the first time the civil guard was present.

June 22, 1961

At approximately 8:30 p.m. in the *calleja*, in the presence of Fr. Valentin Marichalar who is pastor of Cosio (and Garabandal as well), the four girls fall into ecstasy and see the angel again. The first medical tests determine that the children while in trance are insensitive to pain.

June 23, 1961

At the *calleja* about 9:15 p.m., an ecstasy takes place before a large crowd. Members of the civil guard accompany the children to the sacristy of the church where Fr. Valentin interrogates the girls one by one and then all together.

June 24, 1961

In the early afternoon, the angel appears to the children in the *calleja*. At his feet is an inscription on a plaque made up of letters and some Roman numerals, ". . . One must . . . XVIII-MCM LXI." The visionaries do not understand the meaning of the inscription (it was the date the First Message was to be made known, October 18, 1961). In the *calleja*, the young men of the



In order to view the ecstasies, the people filled the sunken lane (calleja) behind the barricade (cuadro) set up to protect the children from the crowds.

village set up the *cuadro*, a kind of square corral made up of small trimmed tree trunks. Its purpose is to protect the four visionaries from the crowd.

June 25, 1961

The crowds become larger and larger. At least five priests and many known medical doctors are present. Doctors from the local area are making various experiments to test the sensibility of the children during the ecstasies. For the first time the witnesses become aware of the extraordinary change of weight which the visionaries are undergoing. After the ecstasy, the young girls notice, especially on their legs, slight traces of pinching, pricking, fingernail marks and lumps due to the experiments made while they were in ecstasy. They claim that they did not feel anything. The children are then taken to the church sacristy where they are questioned in the presence of the priests and doctors. Their legs are examined.

June 26, 1961.

No apparition.

June 27, 1961

Apparition of the angel.

June 28, 1961.

Apparition of the angel.

June 29, 1961

No apparition.

June 30, 1961

No apparition.

July 1, 1961, Saturday

Toward 7:30 p.m., the angel appears. The ecstasy lasts two hours. He announces for the following Sunday, the coming of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The children ask the angel, whom they will later learn is St. Michael the Archangel, the meaning of the inscription on the plaque and he answers, "The Virgin will explain it to you."

July 2, 1961, Feast of the Visitation

Around 6:00 p.m. at the *cuadro*, in front of a very large crowd (there were eleven priests and many medical doctors present), the children fall into ecstasy. The Blessed Virgin appears to them accompanied by St. Michael and another angel not identified by the visionaries. The four girls also see a fiery frame in the midst of which appears a triangle with an eye⁴ and a written sign. The unknown letters on the sign seem to be of oriental origin. The visionaries are questioned at the sacristy by Fr. Francisco Odriozola who was sent by the local bishopric. The young girls describe the features and dress of the Blessed Virgin: "The Virgin appears in a white garment and blue mantle with a crown of golden stars on her head. Her hands are delicate but her feet are not visible. The scapular which she wears on her

4. It is the whole of the events of Garabandal rather than any particular part which bears testimony to the presence of God. But there is one sign, in particular which is most striking. It is this gigantic eye that the visionaries saw at the first apparition of the Virgin and which they thought, 'was perhaps the eye of God'. One can see there the visible sign, or the catechetical image that all they were going to live through was coming from God who is the prime cause of everything. Let us also consider the fact that the Blessed Virgin was surrounded by, 'a great effulgence of light which did not hurt the eyes.' The light evokes divine realities, more specifically, the glory of God."
—Robert François



The four visionaries 'in touch' with their Vision. From left to right: Conchita, Jacinta, Mari Loli and Mari Cruz.

right wrist is of a brownish color with a small mountain⁵ designed on it. The Blessed Virgin's hair is of a deep chestnut color, long, slightly waved and parted in the middle. Her face is more long than round with a rather long nose. The mouth is delicate and very nice with rather full lips. Her complexion is tan but lighter than that of the angel. Her voice is different from the angel's; a voice very sweet and very unusual. It is hard to explain. There is no other woman who resembles the Blessed Virgin, either in the face, voice or anything. Sometimes she carries the Child Jesus in her arms. He is very tiny, like a new born babe. He has a round face, similar in shade to that of the Virgin. His mouth is very tiny and pretty. He has blond hair which is slightly long and His hands are tiny. His gown is like an azure blue tunic. The Virgin seems to be about eighteen years of age."

5. The visionaries would not readily understand the meaning of this 'small mountain' because in Spain, the title 'Our Lady of Mount Carmel' is not generally used. Spaniards usually just say, 'the Virgin of Carmel'.



The visionaries hold up religious objects, given to them by the people for the Vision to kiss.

July 3, 1961

The visionaries mention their interior calls—*llamadas*—for the first time.⁶ After the last ‘call’ before the ecstasy, Fr. Valentin separates the girls, Mari Loli and Jacinta are in Loli’s house while Mari Cruz and Conchita are in Conchita’s. Although they are totally ignorant of the time, they all arrive at the *cuadro* at exactly the same moment. They are holding out pious objects such as medals, rosaries, wedding rings and pious pictures to be kissed by the Virgin Mary.

6. There are three successive calls prior to an ecstasy which are marked by the following characteristics: a) They announce the apparitions of the Virgin but not those of the angel. b) The call does not seem to contain any specific communication apart from being an announcement (“I shall come”) but rather is a source of intense desire and of overflowing happiness. c) According to the children, the ‘call’ does not consist of words nor does it use the sense channels. It consists mainly of an interior perception of happiness. d) There is no way of telling when the calls will occur. They can come at any time of the day or night. e) When the ecstasies take place frequently, for instance three or four in a single evening, the first ecstasy alone is preceded by the three calls. f) Between the first and second call, there is usually a lapse of time varying between an hour and a half and two hours. Between the second and third call, the time is shorter, one half hour; the third call precedes the apparition by only a few minutes. g) Jacinta has tried to put her impressions in words: “If the voice would use our human language, it would say at the first call, ‘Come’. At the second call, ‘Jacinta! Run!’ And at the third call it would say, ‘Jacinta! Hurry, hurry!’ . . . but all that is interiorly and without words.”

July 4, 1961

There is an ecstasy from 6:25 to 7:00 in the evening. The Virgin Mary explains the meaning of the letters on the plaque which represent the first part of an important Message which the four girls must make known publicly on October 18, 1961. The Blessed Virgin gives the text of the Message to the four young girls.

Last two weeks of July, 1961

From this point on, the visions become so numerous that it is difficult to establish a chronological order. The visionaries fall into ecstasy many times a day. The duration of the trances varies from ten minutes to five, even seven, hours. It is also about this time that the Blessed Virgin warns the children that there will come a time when they will deny their visions and that they will mutually contradict themselves, causing division between their families.

July 26 or 27, 1961

Upon the request of the diocese, Conchita goes to Santander, accompanied by her mother, Aniceta. The girl falls into ecstasy near the church of *La Consolacion*, in the midst of a considerable crowd. The police intervene. At that precise moment, the three girls remaining in Garabandal, fall into ecstasy as well. Conchita is questioned in the sacristy of the church by Dr. Piñal and by Fr. Odriozola.

July 28, 1961

Aniceta Gonzalez must return to Garabandal but leaves her daughter, Conchita, at Santander where she is examined by Dr. Luis Morales, psychiatrist member of the Commission established by the bishop’s office to study the apparitions.

July 29, 1961

The Blessed Virgin appears to the three children. She asks that two other girls, Maria-Carmen and Sari (sisters respectively to Jacinta and Mari Loli), accompany the three visionaries to the pines.⁷

7. On several occasions, the Blessed Virgin asked that the visionaries be accompanied by children as witnesses. Each time, these children have declared having seen nothing, in spite of their ardent desire to see the apparition. Was it the Blessed Virgin’s intention to prove that the visionaries were not the prey of suggestion?

July 31, 1961

For the first time, the visionaries in ecstasy move about on their knees. They recite the rosary without having learned it, without prayer beads, without counting on their fingers and without making any mistakes regarding the mysteries, as well as the number of 'Ave Marias'. At Santander, in Dr. Piñal's home, Conchita is questioned under pressure and admits that maybe she made a mistake as far as the reality of her visions is concerned. On the other hand, she thinks that the three other girls' visions are, without doubt, true. Dr. Piñal and Fr. Luis, pastor of the church of *La Consolacion*, make Conchita sign a document (the text was not Conchita's words) in which she admits her doubts.

August 2 or 3, 1961

Conchita returns to Garabandal. The 'ecstatic falls'⁸ begin which frighten the people of the village because of their violence, but which cause no pain to the children, nor leave any marks or after effects.

August 5 or 8, 1961

The first 'ecstatic walks'⁹ are observed.

August 6, 1961

Apparition of Our Lady.

August 7, 1961

Apparition of Our Lady.

◀ *Mari Loli, left, and Jacinta bless themselves during an ecstatic walk.*

8. It happened quite frequently that the children would fall either collectively when there were two or more in ecstasy or individually if one girl was alone in a state of trance. The collective falls were marked by a perfect synchronization impossible to simulate or attain by practice. One witness likened it to throwing the light switch in a large conference hall where all the lights would go out simultaneously. When the visionaries hit the ground, they formed what were described as 'beautiful sculptures'. In individual 'ecstatic falls' the visionaries would sometimes fall straight backwards, stiff as a board, without bending at the waist or knees or using the arms to cushion the shock.

9. In ecstasy and with their heads tilted back looking at the Vision, the children were able to march frontwards or backwards with the greatest ease and agility through the rocky terrain of the village and surrounding environs. Sometimes they moved so fast that the young men of the village running at full speed could not keep up with them. At other times they made impossible descents walking backwards with heads thrown back, down the rocky lane leading from the pines to the village.





Mari Loli and Jacinta after an ecstatic fall.

August 8, 1961

At 12:00 noon, the four visionaries fall into ecstasy. At 9:35 in the evening, a second ecstasy occurs in the church, in front of the main altar. Afterwards, Jesuit Fr. Luis Andreu follows the visionaries in ecstasy to the pines and during the trance, cries out, "Miracle, miracle, miracle, miracle! . . ." He dies unexpectedly during the night (actually in the early morning hours of the next day). The children state positively that the Blessed Virgin appeared to them and told them definitely that she also appeared to Fr. Andreu and that he had seen a preview of the "great Miracle" to come. The four visionaries talk for the first time about the great Miracle.

August 15, 1961 (either on or near the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin)

There appear above the village, cosmic phenomena described by many witnesses.

August 16, 1961

The visionaries, in ecstasy, talk in Spanish and in foreign lan-

guages with Fr. Luis Andreu who had just passed away on the ninth of August. His brother, Fr. Ramon Andreu, also a Jesuit priest, being near the four girls, recognizes in the conversation the young girls are having with their Vision, some of the details of the life of his deceased brother, which were known only to the two of them.

August 17, 1961

Some mysterious voices in the night call the four visionaries. Although they had been warned beforehand by the Blessed Virgin regarding this event, they are terribly frightened. The calls and the children's fear disappear when the Blessed Virgin appears to them.

August 19, 1961

The Blessed Virgin kisses the four little girls for the first time.¹⁰ Individual ecstasies begin to occur.

August 22, 1961

An ecstasy takes place in the presence of Fr. Ramon de la Riva, five other priests, an archpriest from Llanes and a canon from Oviedo cathedral. In the evening, four members from the diocesan inquiry Commission arrive: Dr. Piñal (anaesthetist), two clergymen and an amateur photographer.

August 23, 1961

The Apostolic Administrator from Santander, Bishop Doroteo Fernandez, decides to close the village church doors during the ecstasies.

August 26, 1961

The first note from Bishop Fernandez is circulated in the newspapers (see page 63).

¹⁰ Conchita wrote the following to a religious, Reverend Mother Maria des Nieves, in Burgos, during November, 1966: "Just before the Blessed Virgin was about to leave us she would give us a kiss. We did not feel any material contact, nor could we go further, because there was something preventing us from doing so. We wanted to touch her, but when our hands got close to her they wouldn't touch anything nor go any further. We have held the Infant Jesus in our arms, but we could not feel His weight, nor any material contact, although He was truly there." Jacinta experienced the same difficulties in trying to analyze what she felt: "It is hard to explain. While we were giving a kiss to the Blessed Virgin, we were seeing her and we could "feel" positively her presence, but it was neither a physical nor material contact. I do not know how to explain it . . ."

October 18, 1961

The first formal Message of the Blessed Virgin is read aloud at the pines before an estimated crowd of 5,000 people. “*We must make many sacrifices . . .*” (For the entire Message see page 36.)

October 27, 1961

Bishop Fernandez issues a second official note (see page 63).

May 1, 1962

The angel appears to Mari Loli and tells her that when Fr. Valentin is absent from the village, he himself (St. Michael) will give her Holy Communion. Starting from this day, the four girls admit having frequently received Communion from the hands of the angel.

June 18, 1962

Mari Loli, Jacinta and Mari Cruz have an apparition of St. Michael at the *cuadro*. This marks the anniversary of the first apparition of the archangel.

June 19 and 20, 1962

The girls experience visions of a possible future Chastisement. These are two nights of horror.

Two days before the Feast of Corpus Christi, Mari Loli, Jacinta and Mari Cruz are at the pines, a slight distance from the crowd. (Conchita, who is not feeling well, is at home and experiences an ecstasy at the same moment as her three friends.) The girls utter cries of such terror that those around them are deeply moved.¹¹

On the second night (the eve of the feast) Conchita, Mari Loli and Jacinta cry out in even greater terror. With their hands, they

11. During these two nights of terror, Fr. Felix Larrazabal, superior of the Franciscan convent of San Pantaleon in Aras (Santander), who was there at the time, became frightened. He began to pray and persuaded the others watching to pray also. As soon as the prayers started, the visionaries cries of horror quieted and their suffering seemed to ease. But as soon as the prayers stopped, their cries became even louder than before and the frightened crowd implored the Franciscan friar, “. . . Pray, Father, pray! . . .”

We can see a deep significance in these occurrences. In our opinion, one can easily distinguish God in communication with mankind (the villagers) through the intercession of the Church (the priest). When humanity breaks relations with God (when the prayers stop) there will be a catastrophe (the vision of the Chastisement and the girls' increased suffering).

seem to push away or hold back something very formidable. The observers hear them cry, “. . . Oh! Let the little children die before that happens! . . . Give the people time to go to confession beforehand! . . .”

Frightened, all the villagers go to confession and Communion the next day.

June 22, 1962

St. Michael announces to Conchita the miracle of the Visible Communion. The date will be announced fifteen days in advance. Conchita considers this a very small miracle—*un milagruco*—and says so to the angel. Pepé Diez, the village mason, overhears her.

June 23, 1962

During an ecstasy at the church door, the angel tells Conchita that the Virgin will set the date for the miracle of the Visible Communion.

July 2, 1962

At the pines, the four visionaries individually inform Fr. José

Mari Loli receives invisible Communion.





One of the frames of film showing the 'Visible Communion' on Conchita's tongue.

Ramón de la Riva, "... We are going to see the Host—*la Forma* . . ." Thus, he is the first person to be told the nature of the promised miracle.

July 3, 1962

During an ecstasy at the pines, Conchita has a locution (an interior voice) which sets the date of the *milagrucu* for July 18, 1962. Conchita announces the miracle of the Visible Communion. In particular she writes a letter to the Bishop of Santander, which Placido Ruiloba Arias from Santander personally delivers, asking him and Fr. Odriozola to be present.

July 8, 1962

Conchita writes to various friends, announcing the coming miracle of the Visible Communion.

July 18, 1962

About one o'clock in the morning (midnight, sun time) while Conchita is in ecstasy, the Host suddenly appears on her tongue. There is a large crowd present. An amateur photographer records the event. Neither the Bishop of Santander nor Fr. Odriozola come, in spite of the invitation sent to them. They send a dele-

gate, but he cannot get close enough to see.

September 12, 1962

This is the last ecstasy experienced by Mari Cruz. She assumes an attitude of denial and retraction.

October 7, 1962

A note is issued by His Excellency Eugenio Beitia Aldazabal. This is the first note from a Bishop of Santander. The prelate who signed the previous notes was only Apostolic Administrator, *sede vacante* (this apostolic seat being vacant) (see page 63).

January 20, 1963

The apparitions become infrequent. The locutions (interior voice without accompanying vision) begin. From now on, only Conchita will have public ecstasies.

January 1963

The four visionaries experience periods of doubt and retractions.

Beginning of June 1963

Conchita announces that after the death of Pope John XXIII, there will be only three more popes (she has never heard of the prophecies of St. Malachy) and then "... will come the end of time which is not the end of the world . . ." Questioned about this, Conchita declares she does not understand the meaning of the Blessed Virgin's remark.

July 18, 1964

Conchita has a locution; "... On the day following the great Miracle, the body of Fr. Luis Andreu will be found incorrupt in his grave . . ."

December 8, 1964, Feast of the Immaculate Conception

Alone with her mother in front of the church, Conchita, while in ecstasy is told, "You shall not be happy on this earth, but in heaven." The Blessed Virgin tells Conchita that she will again see St. Michael on June 18, 1965.

January 1, 1965

At the pines, Conchita has an ecstasy lasting two hours. The Blessed Virgin tells her about the 'Warning'.



Conchita in ecstasy, June 18, 1965.

The Blessed Virgin also tells her that because we did not pay any attention to the Message dated October 18, 1961, she will give us a new one, and this new Message will be the last one.

The Blessed Virgin also reveals the nature of the Chastisement.

June 18, 1965

At twenty minutes past midnight, Conchita has an ecstasy in front of approximately 700 people from various countries. It lasts twelve to thirteen minutes and is filmed by a Spanish television crew (the N.O.–D.O.) and by Italian television.

Cosmic phenomena occur.

This is the anniversary of the first apparition of St. Michael (June 18, 1961). He appears at exactly the same spot, the *cuadro*, and gives a message to Conchita.

June 19, 1965

About one o'clock in the afternoon, on the doorstep of Conchita's home, the Message is publicly read in French, Spanish and Italian by Fr. Luna and in English by Fr. Marcelino Andreu.

July 8, 1965

An official note is received from Bishop E. Beitia Aldazabal. (See page 64.)

September 19, 1965

Mari Loli and Jacinta go to boarding school at the Sisters of Charity in Zaragoza.

October 24, 1965

Mari Loli has a locution with the Blessed Mother "... I will have many doubts about all I have seen and heard from her mouth ..."

November 13, 1965

At the pines, the Blessed Virgin and the Child Jesus appear for the last time. In the course of this conversation, the Blessed Mother tells Conchita.

"... Do you remember what I told you on your feast day? That you will have much to suffer on this earth.

"... Conchita, I have not come for you alone. I have come for all my children, with the desire to bring them closer to Our (two) hearts.

"... By the kiss I have bestowed on these objects, my Son, when the time comes, will perform prodigies. Distribute them.

"... Do you know, Conchita, why I did not come on June 18 to give you the Message for the world? It was because it hurt me to tell you myself. But I must tell you, however, for your own good and, if you accomplish it, for the glory of God ...

"... This is the last time you will see me here, but I shall always be with you and with all my children ...

"... Conchita, why do you not visit my Son more often in the tabernacle? He waits for you day and night ...

"... Remember what I told you on your feast day. When you appear before God, your hands must be filled with the deeds you have accomplished for your brothers and for His glory. Right now, your hands are empty ..."

November (?) 1965

Fr. Valentin Marichalar receives an order forbidding him to go to Garabandal, of which he has been in charge for ten years. He will never return there except as a visitor (in July 1973).



Reading clockwise from upper left: Mari Cruz and Ignacio Caballero became man and wife on May 2, 1970, Jacinta with her husband, Jeff Moynihan, Conchita married Patrick Keena on May 26, 1973 and Mari Loli with husband, Francis LaFleur.

On May 2, 1970, Mari Cruz married Ignacio Caballero, a glazier. They live at Aviles in the Asturias. They have a son, Ignacio, born April, 1971, a daughter, Maria de Lourdes, born in March, 1974, and another boy, Juan Carlos, born in May, 1976. A fourth child, a girl named Gabriel, was born mid-December, 1978. Mari Cruz visits the village frequently.

Conchita, after working in Bilbao and Barcelona went to the United States. She worked as a nurse in a clinic run by a Spanish doctor in a very poor district of New York. She married Patrick Keena, a thirty-three-year old plumber and the eldest of ten children. They now (1981) have four children: three girls and a boy. The third girl, Ana Maria Josefa, was Christened on August 31, 1976, by Cardinal Rosales of the Philippines. The baby's godfather was Bishop Lawrence Graziano, of New York. Their youngest child, a boy, was born in the spring of 1978 and named after his father, Patrick.

On February 2, 1974, Mari Loli married Francis LaFleur (an American of French-Canadian descent) in Brockton, Massachusetts. They now live near Boston and have a son, Francis, born on May 31, 1975, and a daughter, Melanie Marie, born in April, 1980.

Jacinta, worked for a long time as a domestic in the area around Garabandal. In Garabandal, on February 21, 1976, she married Jeffrey Moynihan of Los Angeles, California, while he was serving with the U.S. Navy in Cadiz, Spain. In November, 1980, they became the parents of a girl who they named Maria-Jacinta.

Since the original edition of this book was published in French in 1977, another prominent figure in the Garabandal events has married. Joey Lomangino, the blind 'apostle' of Garabandal and founder of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Inc., New York, was joined in holy matrimony to Miss Marilyn Luther of Davisburg, Michigan, on December 8, 1977. The bride is an American of Irish-German descent. They live in Lindenhurst, Long Island, New York, and are now the parents of a boy, Joseph Michael, born May 18, 1979.

Chapter 3

The Two Formal Messages of Garabandal

Message Given on October 18, 1961

“We must make many sacrifices, perform much penance¹ and visit the Blessed Sacrament frequently. But first, we must lead good² lives. If we do not, a chastisement will befall us. The cup is already filling up and if we do not change, a very great chastisement will come upon us.”³

Message Given on June 18, 1965

“As my message of October 18, 1961, has not been complied with and has not been made known to the world, I am advising you that this is the last one. Before, the cup was filling up. Now it is flowing over. Many priests⁴ are on the road to perdition and

1. For a Christian, sin is any thought, word, deed or omission (done with full knowledge and consent of the will) that is contrary to the purpose for which God created us; to be one with Him for all eternity, starting here on earth. Sin, therefore, is death to our soul; it is refusing the love that God offers us.

Penance, on the other hand, is first of all, to be aware of our own destiny, and that of others, and then doing whatever is necessary to attain that end. Penance, therefore, means changing, converting, striving to attain that tender love which God offers to man and enables him to realize.

At Fatima, on August 19, 1917, the Blessed Virgin said, “. . . Pray, pray much, offer many sacrifices . . .” At Lourdes, on February 24, 1858, Bernadette repeated the words of Our Lady: “. . . Penance, penance, penance! . . .” and Jesus began His sermon by saying, “. . . Repent, and believe in the good news . . .” (Mark 1:15)

2. The word ‘good’ in Spanish means ‘virtuous’. In the biblical sense it means ‘just’.

3. At La Salette, on September 19, 1846, the Blessed Mother began her discourse thus; “. . . If my people do not wish to comply, I will be forced to release the arm of my Son. It is so heavy and so pressing that I cannot restrain it much longer . . .”

4. In the months following, during many conversations, Conchita maintained that the angel had been more precise: “. . . Many cardinals, many bishops and many priests are on the road to perdition and are taking many souls with them . . .” However, in the many letters that she sent, she only mentioned priests. Some thought she had

are taking many souls with them. Less and less importance is being given to the Eucharist. You should turn the wrath of God away from yourselves by your efforts. If you ask His forgiveness with sincere hearts, He will pardon you. I, your mother, through the intercession of St. Michael the Archangel, ask you to amend your lives. You are now receiving the last warnings. I love you very much and do not want your condemnation. Pray to Us with sincerity and We will grant your requests.⁵ You should make more sacrifices. Think about the passion of Jesus.”

(signed) Conchita Gonzalez

The Messages are the Essential Part of the Events of Garabandal.

This is the point the young girls stress, over and over again.

In December 1965, Conchita writes:

“. . . There is no use believing in the apparitions if we do not fulfil the Messages . . . , to be more precise, this means if we do not obey Holy Mother Church. As we all know, the Virgin is saying here what she said at Lourdes and Fatima. She says nothing new.⁶ The Miracle is coming so that we will fulfil the Message. It is also coming to confirm the apparitions of Garabandal. But if we obey the Message, it does not matter whether we believe in

been influenced or even forced to change the words of the angel. But Conchita stoutly denies this. In a letter dated February 3, 1966, she explains, “. . . Not at all. I changed it myself because I thought they were all priests and were all the same . . .” (Conchita’s *Diary*)

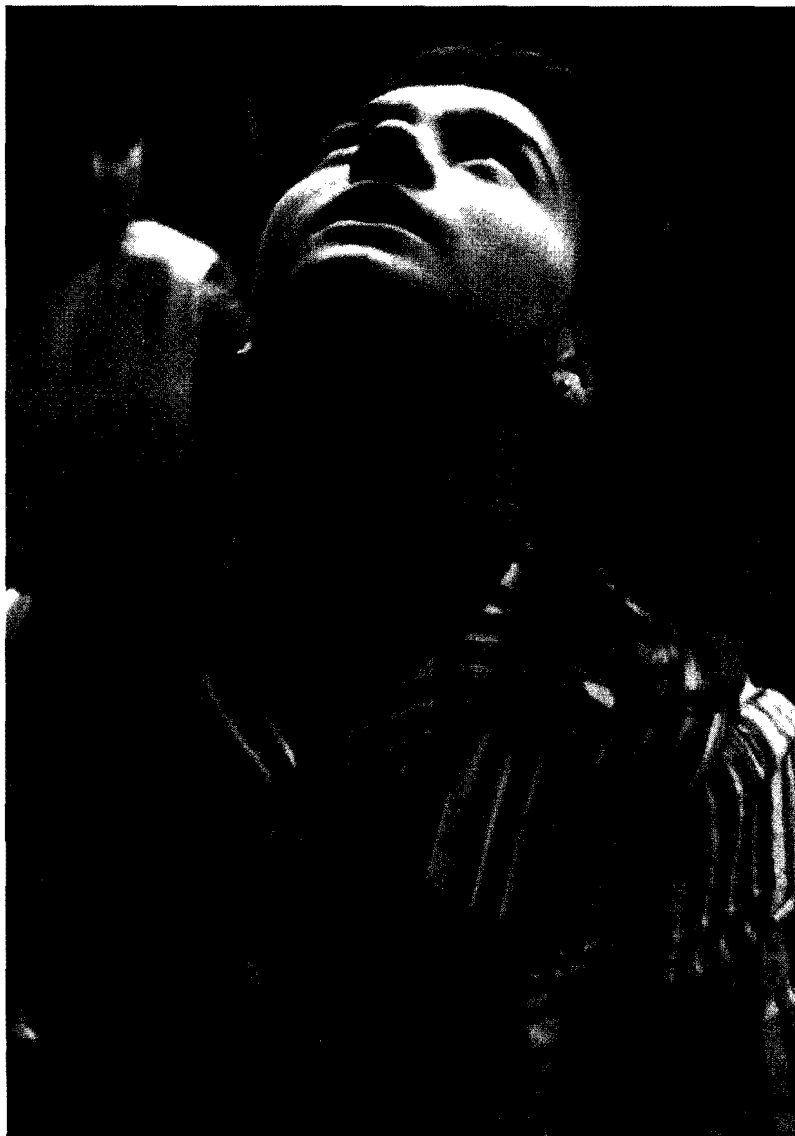
At a general audience on January 28, 1976, Pope Paul VI spoke of the “treason of clerics” and cited the books by Fr. L. Bouyer; *La Decomposition du Catholicisme (The Decay of Catholicism)* and *Religieux et Clercs Contre Dieu (Religious and Priests Against God)*.

In March 1976, Maurice Clavel, in his book, *Dieu Est Dieu, Nom de Dieu! (God Is God, In the Name of God)* states, “. . . Soon the Church, at least in France, will experience a schism worse than that of the two popes as it will divide not only the priests, but the people themselves . . .”

5. At Pontmain, on January 17, 1871, the message was, “. . . But pray, my children. God will grant your prayers very soon; my Son will allow Himself to be touched . . .” Compare this with Mark 11:24; “. . . That is why I say to you, whatever you pray for, believe that you have already received it, and it will be granted to you . . .” Provided we seek first the Kingdom of God, the rest will be granted to us in abundance.

6. Frequently, the supporters of Marian apparitions are accused by certain modern theologians, in the error of ecumenism at any price, of creating a new religion with Mary as the central figure, to the detriment of Christ and even God the Father.

The place of Mary in our faith, the meaning and extent of her interventions or apparitions in the history of the salvation of mankind, were set once and for all by Mary herself without any equivocation. At her first intervention during the public life of Christ, at the wedding feast in Cana, it was summed up in the seven words she spoke to the servants at the banquet: “. . . Do whatever he tells you . . .” (John 2:5) Ever since then, all her apparitions have been but a repetition of that first ‘interference’.



Conchita in ecstasy.

the apparitions or not.”

August 1971. Conchita addresses a group of Americans:

“... I would like to tell everyone that the essential part of Garabandal is the Message. The Message calls for sacrifices, prayers, penance and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. For that reason, there is nothing else to add ...”

Chapter 4

Garabandal Prophecies

Prophecies Which Have Already Come True:

- Prediction of the denials and contradictions of the visionaries.
- Announcement of the miracle of the Visible Communion (*el milagruco*).
- Prediction of the June 18, 1965, ecstasy.

Prophecies Not As Yet Fulfilled:

- Prediction of a religious vocation.
- Announcement concerning the body of the deceased priest, Fr. Luis Andreu, S.J.
- Announcement that on the day of the great Miracle, Joey Lomangino will recover his eyesight.
- Prediction of the Warning.
- Prediction of a general disbelief regarding Garabandal.
- Announcement of the great Miracle.
- Prediction of a conditional Chastisement.
- Announcement about the last pope (John Paul II and the end of our era (*el fin de los tiempos*)).
- Prediction of a Sign which will remain at the pines, after the great Miracle, which in itself will be a miraculous phenomenon: we will be able to photograph and film it, but not to touch it.

PROPHECIES WHICH HAVE ALREADY COME TRUE

Prediction of the Denials and Contradictions of the Visionaries

As early as July, 1961, witnesses hear the four visionaries, while

in ecstasy, say to the vision,¹ “. . . *How is it that one day we will say we did not see you, since we are seeing you now? . . .*” Then in January 1963, Conchita writes in her diary: “. . . In the early days, the Blessed Virgin told us (Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz and myself), that we would contradict ourselves and our parents would contradict themselves, and that we would eventually deny having seen her or St. Michael. We were astonished that she should say such a thing . . .”

In 1962, the negative attitude of Mari Cruz astonishes the three other visionaries.

In 1966, the three other girls deny also.

Announcement of the Miracle of the Visible Communion

On the afternoon of July 2, 1962, at the pines, the four girls each inform Fr. José Ramón de la Riva, pastor at Barro, that during a future Communion, the Host will be visible on Conchita's tongue.

While coming down from the pines, Mari Loli talks about it to her father.

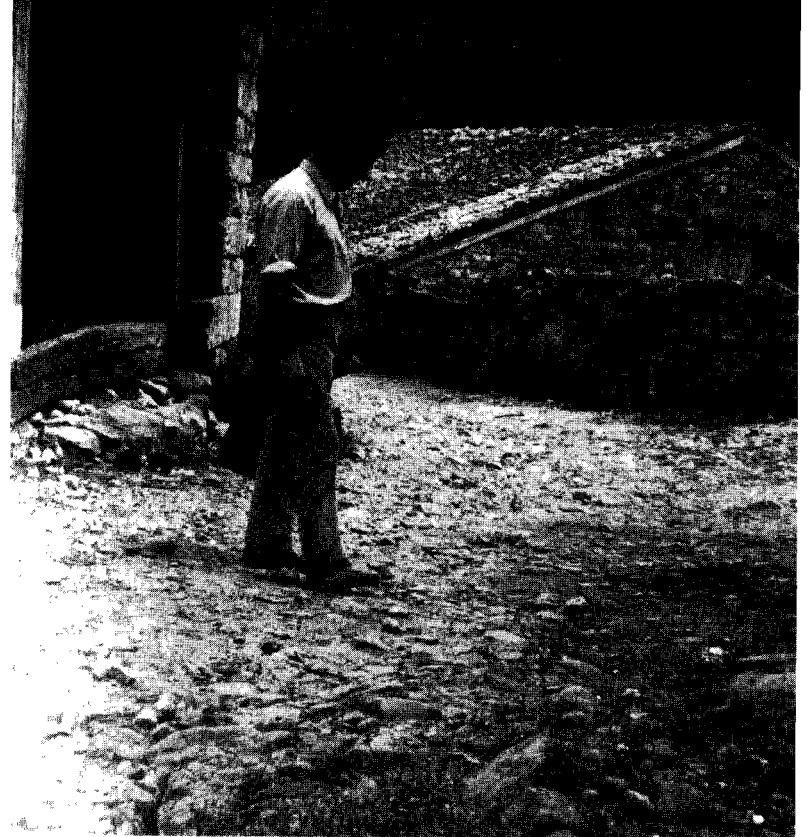
Starting July 3, 1962, the four children announce this news in the village. Fr. Valentin Marichalar is informed, but probably doubting the realization of this miracle, asks Conchita not to compromise herself by such a statement and above all not to put it into writing. Eustaquio Cuenca tells her the same thing.

However, Conchita writes a letter to Bishop E. Beitia Aldazabal of Santander—a letter personally delivered by Placido Ruiloba Arias—asking that he (the Bishop) as well as Fr. Odriozola be present in the village that day.

On July 6, 1962, Conchita writes to a friend and declares, “Just a few words to tell you some news that concerns myself and you, too. The Archangel told me he will give proof. The proof is that when I receive Communion, people will be able to see the Host. It will happen this very month on the eighteenth. For me, to be sure, this will not be a miracle as I always believe they see it.² Will they believe then?”

1. Among the phrases quoted here as coming from the children, we must distinguish between those said while in ecstasy and heard by witnesses, from those which the young girls formulate after the ecstasies, such as most of the messages and prophecies. In the latter case, the children are expressing themselves with their own uncultured childish vocabulary and they do not necessarily recount the Vision's words verbatim.

2. Since about May, 1962, the four children had been receiving Holy Communion from the hands of St. Michael. The spectators could see the movements of the mouth, the tongue and the glottis; the children's attitude made the onlookers think they were receiving Holy Communion, but the spectators had never seen the Host.



The author, Ramon Pérez, stands on the exact spot where the miracle of the Visible Communion took place.

On the afternoon of July 18, Ignacio Rubio, an Andalusian *habitué* of the village, fearing the prophesied miracle might not take place if the dancing going on in the village continued, suggests to Conchita that it be stopped. As the time for the prodigy draws near, Conchita confidently assures him, “Dance or no dance, the miracle will take place.”

As predicted, about midnight (solar time) amidst a large crowd, in a small lane not far from Conchita's house (just in front of Matilde Gonzalez's stairway), the miracle takes place.³

Prediction of the June 18, 1965, Ecstasy

On December 8, 1964, feast of the Immaculate Conception, Conchita, just coming out of ecstasy, tells her mother, Aniceta, who is accompanying her, that she, Conchita, will again see St.

³ See in chapter 8, the testimonies of witnesses Pepé Diez (page 150), Benjamin Gomez (page 168), Lucia Fernandez (page 211), Matilde Gonzalez (page 279) etc.

Michael the Archangel on June 18, 1965. She tells this to many people.

On June 18, 1965, more than 500 persons see the predicted ecstasy during which the Archangel gives Conchita the last Message from Our Lady. The apparition takes place in exactly the same spot where the first apparition of the angel occurred; in the *calleja*, on the anniversary date (June 18, 1961).

PROPHECIES NOT AS YET FULFILLED

Prediction of a Religious Vocation

One day when Maximina has given up her beds to host some visitors to the village and has made her own children sleep on the floor, Conchita, in ecstasy, stops where her cousin Pepé Luis is lying and says in a loud and intelligible voice, as though answering her vision. *"Ah! this one will be a priest? Ah! good!"* She gives him the crucifix to kiss, then leaves. Pepé was then three or four years old.⁴

Announcement Concerning the Body of the Deceased Jesuit, Fr. Luis Andreu

The Andreu family consists of six brothers. The eldest, José Maria is married and lives in Madrid. The next four are Jesuit priests; Alejandro, missionary in Venezuela; Ramón, now living in California; Luis, who died on August 9, 1961; and Marcelino, missionary in Taiwan for many years. The youngest, Rafael, is married.

Mrs. Andreu, having thus given four of her children to divine ministry, takes the veil at a Visitandine convent on March 19, 1962. Her solemn profession takes place on March 19, 1965. On this occasion, His Holiness Pope Paul VI expresses his desire that all the Andreu brothers attend the ceremony. Three times he personally contacts the superior general of the Jesuits, insisting that Fr. Marcelino be given a dispensation to return to Spain. For this purpose, the Pope himself pays the round trip air fare from Taiwan to Spain. Moreover, he sends the newly professed nun (Sr. Luisa Maria) a special benediction. In it, he alludes to the sacerdotal spirit which mothers, better than anyone, can instill in the minds of their children.

The death of Fr. Luis Andreu is an important event in the

history of Garabandal. Fr. Andreu was a professor of theology at the Jesuit seminary at Oña, in the province of Burgos. When he died, he was thirty-six years old.

He had gone up to Garabandal, with his brother Ramón, at the end of July, 1961. He goes again on August 8. On this day, Fr. Marichalar, who has to leave, gives him the keys to the church and Fr. Luis celebrates holy Mass; it is to be his last one.

Toward evening, the four girls fall into ecstasy while they are still in church. Coming out, they have a long 'ecstatic march' which Fr. Luis follows from beginning to end. It is then that the priest, four times, pronounces the word, "Miracle!" While he is uttering these words, his voice is similar to those of the children in ecstasy.

We know he penetrated the girls' "field of vision." The four visionaries described the priest in some detail; he was kneeling down, beads of perspiration were running down his forehead, and the Blessed Mother was looking at him. We have the impression she was telling him, *"In a short time, you will be with me."*

Later that night, (August 8) Fr. Luis goes down in a jeep to Cosío and waits for the arrival of the persons who are following on foot. It is about one o'clock in the morning. Fr. Luis is drows-

Fr. Luis Andreu was assisted by his brother at his first Mass. Inset shows the intensity with which he observed the girls' ecstasies at Garabandal.



4. See testimony of Maximina Gonzalez (page 126).

ing in the car, when Fr. Valentin arrives. The Jesuit says, "Fr. Valentin, what the children are saying is true, but I beg you not to repeat what I have just told you, for the Church has to be very prudent in cases of this kind." (Fr. Valentin records these words in his diary that same night, only a few hours before hearing the news of Fr. Andreu's death.)

Then the vehicles continue on their way; the car in which Fr. Luis is riding, bringing up the rear. While they are driving through Reinoso, Fr. Luis speaks again; *"I am so full of joy! What a favor the Blessed Virgin has granted me. We are so lucky to have such a Mother in heaven! We should not be afraid of the supernatural. The children have taught us the way in which we should speak to the Blessed Mother. For me, there is no doubt possible! Why did the Virgin choose us? Today is the happiest day of my life!"*

While saying this, he lifts up his head. Afterwards, he becomes silent.

"Father, are you not feeling well?"

"No, I am merely drowsy."

His head falls on his chest. The driver turns toward him.

"But the Father is very sick. His eyes have rolled back in his head!"

In a nearby clinic, they can do nothing but certify his death. However, the priest shows no sign of disease. He dies without any sign of distress. There is still a smile on his lips.

As Conchita will note later on in her diary, the story of Fr. Luis Andreu does not end there, for the children state officially that they talked with him during an ecstasy.

"A few days after the death of Fr. Luis, the Blessed Virgin told us we were going to speak to him. August 15, the feast of Our Lady, was the day the Blessed Virgin had chosen as being the day on which Fr. Luis Andreu would come to talk with us. On that particular day, many people came up on an excursion and they wanted to amuse themselves; but as they behaved in a scandalous manner, Fr. Luis did not come.

"At four o'clock in the morning—the exact hour Fr. Luis had died—the Blessed Mother appeared to me, in my kitchen, and told me, *'Do not wait any longer for Father today, but he will come tomorrow.'*

"On the next day, about eight or nine o'clock in the evening, the Blessed Mother appeared to us, smiling very much as usual.

She told the four of us, *'Fr. Luis will come now and talk with you.'*

"A minute later, he came. He called us each by name. We could hear him but we could not see him. His voice sounded exactly the same as it did while he was on earth.

"He stayed a minute talking to us, giving us advice. He also told us certain things for his brother, Fr. Ramón Maria Andreu. He made us pray in Greek. He taught us words in French, German and English.

"After a short while, we no longer heard his voice; the Blessed Virgin replaced him. She stayed with us a moment, then she left."

We have questioned Fr. Ramón Andreu about these conversations the four children had with Fr. Luis during their ecstasies:

"Yes, I was present during the first conversations. The first time they spoke to me about that, I was somewhat disconcerted. I think it was about August 14. We had just buried my brother Luis; then I came to Garabandal. It was a boy from Burgos who warned me, saying, 'During their ecstasy, the visionaries said, "What joy! We are going to talk to Fr. Luis."' "

"At first, I was completely under the wrong impression. I thought we were faced with a typical case of autosuggestion; my brother's death had no doubt troubled the minds of the four children, and we were now seeing the result! I wanted to leave Garabandal, but had to stay because the people who came with me did not want to go.

"Afterwards, I was near the four children in ecstasy, while they had another conversation with Fr. Luis. For a little while, I did not know what to think. I was completely dumbfounded: the four girls were repeating in my presence the words of their Vision and I could hear them relating the death of my brother and describing the funeral ceremony. They were giving a number of very precise details on the special rites for the burial of a priest. The girls even knew that Fr. Luis' funeral had been the occasion of a few exceptions to the traditional rules governing the vestments of the deceased. For example, we had not put the biretta on my brother's head, and the chalice he was supposed to hold in his hands had been replaced by a crucifix. The four visionaries also explained the reasons for these changes.

"On another occasion, I heard the four little girls say, while in ecstasy, that my brother died before making his profession. They also spoke about me and my vows; they knew the precise date of my profession, the exact place where I pronounced the

vows, and the name of the Jesuit who had taken his vows at the same time as I.

“You can understand my astonishment and amazement in the face of this implacable recitation of facts—exact in every detail—while I knew for a fact the girls could have no knowledge of these events; not, at least, from a human standpoint.

“Yes, the four children did speak many times in foreign languages. I personally heard one of them recite the Hail Mary in Greek.”

In her diary, Conchita writes: “Upon arriving at the pines, Fr. Luis, who was following us, exclaimed, *“Miracle, Miracle!”* And he remained looking upward. We could see him very well; usually we could not see anybody during our ecstasies except the Blessed Virgin. We saw Fr. Luis, and the Blessed Mother told us he was seeing her and the great (prophesied) Miracle as well.”

On July 18, 1964, Conchita states, “. . . On the day after the great Miracle, the body of Fr. Luis Andreu will be taken out of the grave, intact . . .”

On August 2, 1964, she writes to Fr. Ramón Andreu, “. . . On July 18, I had a locution in which I was told that on the day after the Miracle, they will take your brother out of the tomb and his body will be found incorrupt . . .”

This priest who, on August 8, 1961, at the pines, surely saw Mary as well as a preview of the great Miracle, was buried on August 11, 1961, in the cemetery of Oña, in the Burgos province where the Jesuits have a seminary.

The beginning of 1976. The seminary becomes an asylum. At the request of the directors of the new establishment, the Jesuits remove the bodies of the priests buried in the cemetery and transfer them elsewhere. The body of Fr. Luis Andreu is found in a skeletal state. His remains are now in the ossuary of the Society of Jesus in Loyola. In the other half of the divided compartment are the remains of another Jesuit priest, Fr. F. Tiburcio Larranaga.⁵

5. Fr. Alfred Combe who, on August 12, 1976, published this information in one of his bulletins, makes these remarks:

“By this event, Divine Providence has permitted the most formal verification of the corrupt state of Fr. Luis Andreu’s body. Conchita has repeatedly said that in a locution with the Blessed Mother, she was told very precisely that on the day *after* the Miracle, we would find Fr. Luis’s body *intact* and *incorrupt*.”

Therefore, this announcement does not concern the state of the body *before* the great Miracle, but *on the day after*.

Announcement That on the Day of the Miracle, Joey Lomangino Will Recover His Eyesight

Joey Lomangino was born in Brooklyn, New York, on October 5, 1930, of Italian-American parents. He is the oldest of five boys and a girl.

In June, 1947, while Joey is inflating a tire, the tire bursts and Joey is struck in the face by the rim. The bones of his forehead are crushed, resulting in a three inch fracture between the eyes. The optic and olfactory nerves are damaged. Joey remains in a coma three weeks before regaining consciousness, awakening to total darkness which he has known ever since.

In 1949, he enters the New York Institute for the Blind from which he receives a diploma three years later.

In 1954, Joey secures a Filderman loan to restore a failing refuse collection service in Farmingdale, New York. The business prospers but Joey tires. He goes to Europe.

His uncle suggests he go to San Giovanni Rotondo. He goes there in 1961. Padre Pio calls him by name, touches his cheek and blesses him.

Joey Lomangino in 1981 with his wife, Marilyn, and two-year-old son Joseph Michael.





Joey receives Communion from Padre Pio during one of the blind man's many visits to San Giovanni Rotondo.

In 1963, he pays a second visit to Padre Pio. Joey wants to make his confession,

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned . . ."

But the monk interrupts,

"Joey, you angry?"

"No, Father, I work hard; I am tired."

"No, Joey, no. You are angry, eh?"

As Joey looks into his soul to discover the plain truth, Padre Pio lifts up his arms and says, "I pray to Jesus and Mary for you." At this moment, and Joey can remember it as if it were yesterday, he knows that Padre Pio is seeing the true state of his soul. "I knew that I felt sorry for all the sins of my life and that Padre Pio knew them also and that I was being absolved for all of them."

Padre Pio touches Joey's lips, makes him kiss one of his stigmatized hands, embraces him and says, "Joey, have a little patience, a little courage, and all will be well."

Later, Joey kneels together with the other men in the sacristy of the church at San Giovanni Rotondo while waiting for Padre Pio to come by. Suddenly, he flings his arms upward and prostrates himself in order to protect himself from what, in his blind state, he thinks is an explosion. It is the essence of roses. But Joey has not smelled any odor for a long time, so it seems to him like an explosion. Padre Pio gets close to him, and taking him by the arm, he tells him, "Joey, do not be afraid."

Although his olfactory nerve was severed sixteen years previously, in the accident which also blinded him, Joey recovers his sense of smell. Although he has no physical means to do so, his ability to smell is as good as anyone's, by the grace of God working through the intermediary, Padre Pio.

The friend who accompanied Joey to San Giovanni tries now to persuade him to go to Garabandal. Joey, at this time, does not know much about the apparitions and does not believe much in them. He only wishes to be near Padre Pio. So, he will depend on Padre Pio's decision whether or not he should go.

"Father, is it true the Blessed Virgin is appearing to four young girls in Spain?"

"Yes."

"Father, should we go to Garabandal?"

"Yes. Why not?"

And so, the blind American departs from the holy sanctuary of San Giovanni, where he began to understand the meaning of life.

This brings us to February, 1963, the time chosen by God for Joey to take part in the Garabandal events.

On March 19, 1964, Conchita sends him a letter:

"Dear Joey,

Today at the pines, in a locution, the Blessed Virgin Mary has asked me to tell you that you will receive "new eyes" on the day of the great Miracle . . ."

Despite the fact that his blindness is incurable, and that the letter dates back to 1964, Joey believes he will one day see again.

Conchita adds that the Virgin told her, ". . . *The first thing* Joey will see will be the Miracle that my Son will perform through my intercession, and from that time on, he will see permanently."

Conchita explains further that by "new eyes" the Blessed Virgin means eyes like we all know them - not necessarily "vision"

of a spiritual nature—and that Joey’s new eyes will be useful for the glory of God. (See *Needles* magazine [now renamed *Garabandal*] No. 3, 1972.)

Prediction of the Warning

On January 1, 1965, Conchita is in ecstasy at the pines. It lasts for two hours. The Virgin makes known to her the Warning.

(Before the Warning, there will be a pre-warning: “At the Episcopal See of Santander, there will come a bishop who will not believe in these events at first; but the Blessed Virgin will give him a sign. He will then believe and will lift the prohibition for the priests to go to Garabandal.”) Conchita tells us the Warning will then be very close; the rest should not be long in coming.

“The Warning which the Blessed Virgin will send us is like a chastisement to make the good draw closer to God, and to warn the wicked. I cannot reveal what this Warning will be; the Blessed Virgin did not tell me to reveal it, or anything else. Through this Warning, God wishes to make us mend our ways and stop sinning against Him.

“If anyone dies during the Warning, it will not be due to the Warning itself, but to the emotion he will experience while seeing and feeling the Warning.”

September 13, 14 and October 22, 1965. Conchita gives more precise details:

If I did not know about the other Chastisement to come, I would say there is no greater chastisement than the Warning. Everybody will be afraid, but Catholics will bear it with more resignation than others . . .

It will last for only a short time.

The Warning comes directly from God. It will be visible in every part of the world, no matter where we live . . .

It will be like an interior realization of our sins. Believers as well as unbelievers, wherever they are at the time, will see and feel it . . .

Oh! yes, the Warning will be very formidable! A thousand times worse than earthquakes. It will be like fire; it will not burn our flesh, but we will feel it corporeally and interiorly. All nations and every person on earth will feel it. No one shall escape it. And unbelievers will feel the fear of God . . .

One day, we are going to suffer a horrible catastrophe in all parts of the world. No one will escape. It would be preferable to die than to bear for five minutes that which awaits us. It will only last a short time . . .

We could suffer it in the daytime as well as the night, whether we are in bed or not. If we die during that time, it will be of fright.

I think the best place to be at that time would be in church, near the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus would give us the strength necessary to bear it . . . It will be a horror of the worst kind. If I could only tell you how the Virgin described it to me! . . .

But the Chastisement, that will be worse . . .

We will understand that the Warning comes to us because of our sins . . .

It can happen at any moment. I am expecting it every day . . . If we but knew what it consists of, we would be horrified to the extreme . . .

I am tired of announcing it, and having no one pay any attention to it . . .

We cannot imagine how much we offend God. The Blessed Mother told me that people know very well there is a heaven and a hell. But can’t we see that we think about it only through fear and not for love of God? . . .

On account of our sins, we have only ourselves to blame for the Warning. And we must suffer it for Jesus; for the offenses committed against God . . .

On August 15, 1972:

I [Conchita] want to tell you that first will come the Warning, which is like a chastisement; but it will not injure the body. It will, however, cause us to suffer. Afterwards, if we do not change in spite of all these things (which are truly the last warnings—the last remedies that God will send us) He will then send us a Chastisement . . .

July 27, 1975. Extract from an interview granted by Mari Loli to *Needles*:

Q. You have told us that you know the year of the Warning. Can you tell us if this will take place in the next few years or is it still in the distant future?

A. No, I cannot say anything.

Q. Did the Blessed Virgin tell you not to speak about the Warning?

A. No, she did not tell me, but due to the fact that there will not be more than a year between the Warning and the Miracle, I feel interiorly that I should not speak.

Q. How do you know that there will not be more than a year between the Warning and the Miracle?

A. The Blessed Virgin told me so during an apparition; I don’t remember just when.

Q. It is said that you have mentioned that at the time of the Warning, everything will stop—even the planes in the air. Is this true?

A. Yes.

Q. When was this information revealed to you?

A. The Blessed Virgin told me this during an apparition.

Q. Was all this information given you during a single apparition of the Blessed Mother, or did she tell you during the course of several apparitions?

A. She told me all this during one apparition. I do not remember now if she talked about the Warning during other apparitions.

Q. Do you know how long the Warning will last?

A. Only a few minutes.

Q. Are you afraid of the Warning?

A. Yes. Like anyone else, I have faults, and the Warning will make me see these faults, and that frightens me.

Q. Can you tell us anything else about the Warning?

A. All I can say is that it is very near,⁶ and that it is very important that we get ready for it, as it will be a terrible event. It will make us realize all the sins we have committed.

Prediction of a General Disbelief Regarding Garabandal

On Thursday, December 6, 1962, Conchita has an ecstasy at 5:30 in the morning which lasts for ninety minutes. Coming out of the ecstasy, the visionary declares, "One day, shortly before the realization of the Miracle, something will happen which will cause many people to disbelieve in the apparitions of Garabandal. These doubts and desertions shall not be caused by the length of time we have been waiting for the coming of the great Miracle."

Later that day she says, ". . . On the day of the great Miracle, the note that I signed at Santander—in which I state that the apparitions were not authentic—will disappear . . ."⁷

Extract from the deposition of Laura Gonzalez (page 139),

"The little girls told us the Virgin warned them that before the great Miracle, there would be many people who would no longer believe in the apparitions, including themselves."

Extract from the deposition of Antonia Gonzalez (page 206),

". . . Conchita said: '*And when everyone will stop going up to the village, when no one believes anymore—then you will perform the Miracle? . . .*' I could only hear the answers which Conchita was making to her Vision. What I heard her say was, '*. . . And there will come a day when we contradict ourselves? The priests will not believe, no one will believe, then*

6. This is a common trait in visionaries attempting to transmit prophetic messages with which they have been entrusted. They seem to feel the realization of the prophecies is imminent, whereas several years may elapse before the events take place.

Such was the case when Lucy of Fatima wrote at the beginning of 1943, that Our Lord promised that the war would end "soon," thanks to the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by Pope Pius XII, on October 31, 1942; whereas we had to wait until 1945. (This note taken from *Exciting Fatima News* by Fr. Joseph A. Pelletier, A.A.)

7. These two announcements were entered in Fr. Valentin Marichalar's diary.

the Miracle will come? And will we contradict ourselves? Will families divide?'

"I heard this in Conchita's house, it is true. But perhaps I do not relate the words exactly as I have heard them."

Extract from Avelina Gonzalez' deposition (page 242),

"Conchita one day answered Carmen Fontaneda: '*A time will certainly come when people will no longer believe in the truth of our apparitions; no one or almost no one; very few at any rate. We ourselves will one day deny them. When the great majority of people no longer believe, then the great Miracle will come.*' That night when Conchita was telling us all this, she was not in ecstasy."

Announcement of the Great Miracle

August 8, 1961. During an ecstasy at the pines—the one in which Fr. Luis Andreu took part—the four visionaries, talking about his ecstasy, said that he had seen a preview of the great Miracle.

Since that time, Conchita has made numerous statements, both written and verbal, constantly asserting that we must believe that the Miracle—as well as the Warning—will happen without fail.

- Conchita knows the exact date of the Miracle and will announce it eight days in advance.⁸
- The predicted Miracle will be greater than that of Fatima.
- It will be visible in Garabandal, and from the mountains surrounding the village, provided you are in sight of the pines.
- The great Miracle will take place at 8:30 in the evening, on the feast of a martyr who had a great devotion to the Holy Eucharist.
- It will coincide with an important event in the Church. (Such an event has already happened a few times in the past, but not since Conchita was born.)
- It will last ten to fifteen minutes.
- A Sign will remain at the pines, which in itself will be a miraculous phenomenon; it will be able to be photographed or filmed, but not felt or touched.
- It will not be necessary for the visionaries to be there at the time of the Miracle, which God will perform at the request of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

8. It is generally believed that Conchita revealed the date to Cardinal Ottaviani and Pope Paul VI during her stay in Rome, and that she has also revealed the date to her mother, Aniceta.

- Sick persons present at the time will be cured and unbelievers will be converted.⁹
- The Pope and Padre Pio will see it. (Padre Pio saw it before he died.¹⁰)
- This great Miracle will be sent as proof of the tender love of God and His Blessed Mother for the world.¹¹
- Afterwards, if the world does not reform, God will send us a terrible Chastisement.

July 20, 1963. After receiving Holy Communion, Conchita has a locution with Our Lord,

“What is the purpose of the Miracle? To convert many souls?”

“To convert the whole world.”

“Will Russia be converted?”

“She will be converted also, and then everyone will love Our hearts.”¹²

9. Conchita has assured Joe Lomangino that he will be cured on the day of the great Miracle. Joey is now (in 1981) 50 years old. Assuming he will reach the average age of 70, that leaves only 20 years! (And we would like to think that the Virgin will let him enjoy his eyesight for a few years before dying!)

10. Padre Pio died on September 23, 1968 and as this seemed to contradict the prophecy made by Conchita, it delighted the opponents of Garabandal.

During an interview with *Needles* (now *Garabandal* magazine) on February 9, 1975, Conchita told of the trip she made to Lourdes in October 1968, with Fr. Alfred Combe of Lozanne, France. There she met Fr. Bernardino Cennamo, a monk at San Pascual Monastery in Benevento, Italy, and a personal friend of Padre Pio. She asked him, “How come the Blessed Virgin told me Padre Pio would see the Miracle, and now he is dead?” Fr. Bernardino replies, “Padre Pio saw the Miracle before he died. He told me so, himself.”

11. We can ask ourselves if this might not be the miracle Pope Paul VI was hinting at in his discourse during a general audience on January 7, 1976: “. . . This Holy Year has opened our eyes; the world is in need of the Gospel. The heritage of doctrinal and pastoral wisdom of the recent ecumenical council which is ready to be put into action in an incisive and coherent manner; the personal consciousness that each Catholic should have of his co-responsibility in view of the needs of our time; the dialectic meeting of today’s Church with the problems, the polemics, the hostilities, and the catastrophes of a godless society, which tragedy is today felt by said society at a particularly tense moment of its history; the discovery of unsuspected evangelical possibilities in souls sorely tried by the deceiving experiences of modern progress; and finally, certain secrets of the Divine Mercy in which are revealed the thrilling resources of the Kingdom of God; all this is indication that we have reached a decisive and great hour . . .”

12. According to Fr. J. Pelletier, A.A., in the book, *Our Lady Comes to Garabandal*, Conchita said in October 1968, that this conversion will take place right after the great Miracle.

Further on:

“Why do you come into my poor heart which is without any merits?”

“I have not come for you alone. I have come for all.”

“After the Miracle, I am afraid people will believe that I alone saw the Blessed Virgin.”

“By your sacrifices, your great desires, it is you who will intercede so that I will perform the Miracle.”

I then said to Him,

“Would it not be better that the four of us intercede, or else none of us?”

“No.”

November 27, 1964. In a letter addressed to Fr. Ramón Andreu, brother of Fr. Luis, Conchita writes:

“. . . Then the Virgin told us that he (Fr. Luis) was seeing her also; at the same time he was seeing the great Miracle which God will perform . . .”

February 13, 1966. In the course of a locution at the convent of the Discalced Carmelites, Our Lord tells Conchita:

“. . . I want to tell you, Conchita, that before the Miracle comes, you will suffer much, for few will believe you. Even your own family will believe you have lied to them and have deceived them . . .”

August 15, 1972. Addressing herself to a group of young Frenchmen, Conchita says again:

“. . . I want to tell you that the Blessed Virgin has promised a Miracle here and that this Miracle is for our conversion. It will be performed in order that we can see the love God has for us . . .”¹³

Prediction of a Conditional Chastisement

June 23, 1962. Mari Loli and Jacinta write:

“. . . The Blessed Virgin told us that the world goes on without the least improvement. There will be very few who will see God; there are so few that it causes the Blessed Virgin much distress!

What a pity they do not change! The Blessed Mother told us that the Chastisement is coming. Because people do not improve their ways, the cup is filling up. How sad the Virgin was! Although she did not want to

13. In fact, this will be the last attempt on God’s part to convert mankind and thus avert the predicted Chastisement that our own faults would unleash.

show it because she loves us so much; she bears that suffering alone because she is so good.

Be good, all of you, so as to please the Virgin. She told us that the good people should pray for the bad. Yes, let us pray to Almighty God for the whole world, for all those who do not know her.

Be good, very good, all of you.”

(signed) Maria Dolores Mazon—age 13

Jacinta Gonzalez—age 13

October 7, 1962. Answering Mrs. Maria Herrero de Gallardo's questions, Mari Loli exclaims:

“... Oh! it was horrible to see. We were absolutely terrified... I cannot find words to explain it. We saw the water in the rivers turn to blood... Fire was falling from heaven... And something worse still which I cannot reveal at this time. The Message that we gave you then said that the Chastisement would come when we least expect it. The Virgin said that everyone should go to Confession and receive Holy Communion...”

February 2, 1965. Conchita writes to Fr. Laffineur:

“... I cannot disclose the nature of the Chastisement, although the Virgin has revealed it to me as well as to Loli and Jacinta. I can only say this: it will be a direct intervention from God, which makes it more fearful than anything we can imagine.¹⁴ It will be less terrible for little children to die a natural death than to die of the Chastisement. All Catholics should go to confession before the Chastisement; others should repent of their sins. This Chastisement, if it comes—and I believe it will come—will take place after the Miracle...”

September 14, 1965. Conchita tells a group of Americans:

“... The Chastisement, if we do not change, will be horrible, as we deserve. We have seen it (Loli, Jacinta and I) but we cannot reveal the nature of it, because I do not have permission from the Blessed Virgin. When I saw it, I experienced a great fear, despite the fact that I could see the Blessed Mother at the same time...”

In another letter, Conchita writes:

“... Furthermore, I saw the Chastisement and I can assure you that if it happens, it will be worse than if we were enveloped in flames; worse than if we had cinders or hot bricks under our feet and on top of our head. I do not know the length of time which will elapse between the Miracle and the Chastisement...”

14. Fr. Laffineur notes: “By direct intervention from God, Conchita means that everyone will see that it is God Himself who sends us this Chastisement. It will not be produced, like wars or revolutions which are caused by direct acts of men, by their ambition, their pride or their hardness, and which are habitual causes of our unhappiness.”

In another note (undated) Conchita states:

“... This future Miracle will come before the Chastisement; and if people change their lives,¹⁵ the Chastisement will not take place...”

November 13, 1965. After her last ecstasy, Conchita states:

“... Previously, the Blessed Virgin told me that Jesus is threatening us with the Chastisement, not to discourage us, but to help us and to rebuke us because we do not heed Him...”

Sanchez Ventura¹⁶ possesses a manuscript from Conchita in which she says, among other things: “... The Chastisement remains conditional, depending on whether or not humanity will comply with the demands of the Blessed Mother's Message and on whether or not they believe in the Miracle. If this Chastisement does come, I know what it will consist of, as the Blessed Virgin told me, but I cannot reveal it...”

End of 1967. Mari Loli writes to a Mexican priest, Fr. Gustavo Morelos, the following text (Now in the possession of Mrs. Carmela Saraco of California, formerly of Brockton, Mass.):

“... During the night of terror, although we could still see the Blessed Virgin, we also saw a great multitude of people who were suffering very much and screaming with great anguish...”

“The Blessed Virgin has explained to us that this great tribulation—which was not, as yet, the Chastisement—will arrive because there will come a time when the Church will seem about to disappear; it will undergo a terrible trial. We asked the Virgin what this trial was called and she told us, “Communism.”¹⁷

“Then the Virgin made us see how a great Chastisement would come upon mankind and that this Chastisement would come directly from God.

“At a certain time, not a single motor or machine will operate; a terrible heat wave will come down on the earth and men will start experiencing a great thirst; they will search desperately for water, but due to the

15. At Fatima, in 1917, Mary warned the young seers: “The war is coming to an end, but if we do not stop offending God, then, during the reign of Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) another one will start, which will be much worse...” World War II left forty to fifty million dead, without nations and politicians having learned a lesson.

16. Author of *Is the Virgin Appearing at Garabandal?* and *The Negations of Garabandal*.

17. This is the first and only time, to our knowledge, that an allusion to communism is made during the events of Garabandal, aside from the testimony of Antonia Gonzalez (page 206) who speaks of Russia, but in very vague terms. We find another instance where communism is mentioned, in the interview granted by Mari Loli to *Needles* on July 27, 1975:

Q. One time, you alluded to the fact that Our Lady spoke to you regarding communism. Can you tell us what she said?

A. She told me that communism would dominate the world and that it would seem as though the Catholic Church had disappeared, for it will then be very difficult for priests to be able to celebrate Mass.

great heat, the water will evaporate. Then, most people will fall into despair and will try to kill one another . . . but they will not have the strength to do it; they will fall to the ground, one after another. That is when they will realize that it is God who justly permits all this.

“Finally, we saw a large number of people enveloped in flames. They were running to throw themselves into the sea and the lakes, but as they would enter the water, the water seemed to boil and instead of putting out the flames, would make them worse.

“It was so horrible that I asked the Blessed Virgin to take with her all our little children so that this would not happen to them. But the Virgin told us that when this day comes, the children will have already grown . . .”

August 7, 1971. To a group of Americans, Conchita declares:

“ . . . The Virgin will ask God to perform the Miracle so as to avoid the Chastisement, but the Chastisement cannot be avoided, because we have lost even the meaning of sin. Now we have reached such an extremity, that God has no choice but to send the Chastisement. But we need it for our own good. As a result of the Chastisement, those who survive will change enormously and then we shall truly live for God until the end of time, which is also coming . . .”

Announcement About the Last Pope (John Paul II) and of the End of Time

Fr. Lucio Rodrigo, S.J., professor of moral theology at the Pontifical University of Comillas (Santander) reports this episode:

“ . . . It was during the early part of June 1963, the bells of Garabandal started to ring. Conchita, who was at home in the kitchen with her mother Aniceta, immediately exclaimed,

“The bells are tolling for the dead! It must be for the Pope (John XXIII, 1958-1963). Now only three remain.”

Aniceta answered,

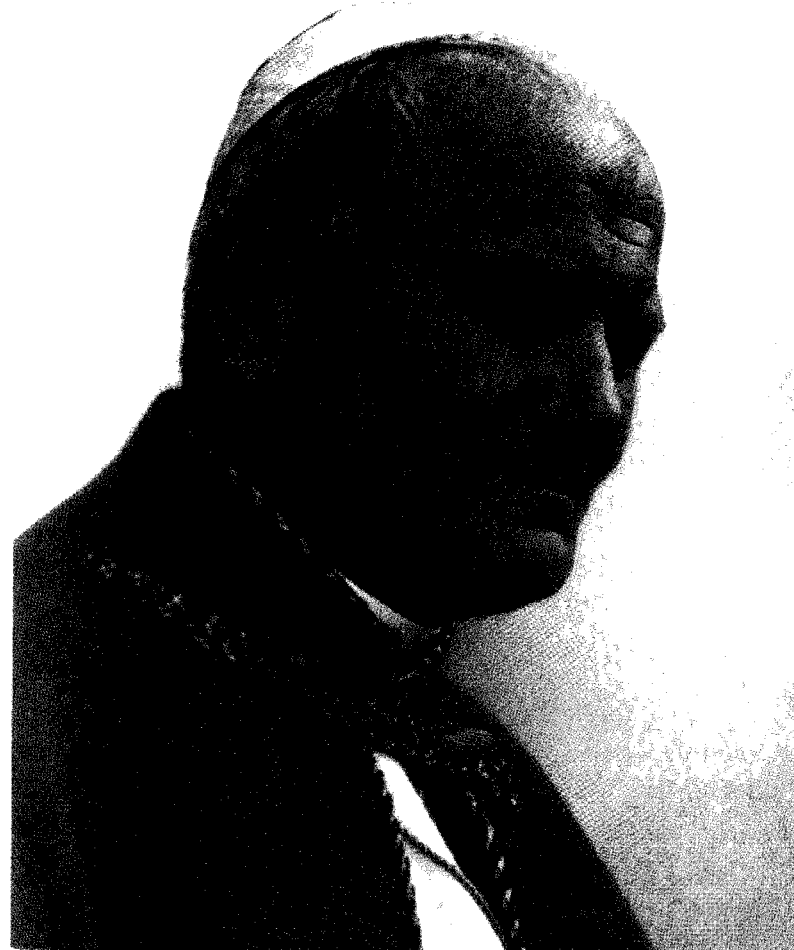
“What nonsense are you talking about?”

“It is not nonsense. The Virgin told me, ‘*After this Pope, there will be only three more.*’”

“Then what? Will it be the end of the world?”

“The Virgin did not say, ‘*the end of the world,*’ but ‘*the end of time.*’”

(Fr. Rodrigo died in March 1973. On his death bed, he declared having received from Heaven an irrefutable proof of the authenticity of Garabandal.)



John Paul II, is he the last pope?

A few days later, some persons coming from Santander reported a similar incident to the Capuchin, Fr. Eusebio G. de Pesquera. Mrs. Paquina de la Roza Velarde (wife of Dr. Ortiz) relates:

“ . . . We were on the way to church, holding one another by the arm, Maximina, Conchita and myself. We were talking about the recent death of the Pope . . .”

“Another pope will come and the Council will continue,” said Conchita.

“Why do you say that?”

“Another pope will come and the Council will continue,” was her only answer.

Maximina replied,

“Certainly, another pope will come, but as far as the continuation of the Council is concerned, the new pope could declare it terminated.”

“I am telling you again that another pope will come and that the Council will continue . . . and what’s more, there are only three more popes.”

“Well,” I answered her, “You say that according to the prophecies of St. Malachy, which we find everywhere, but who knows?”

“What prophecy of St. Malachy?¹⁸ I do not know anything about that prophecy. The Virgin told me, after this pope who had just died, there would be only three more before the end of time.”

“Do you mean to say that the end of the world is coming?”

“The Virgin did not say the end of the world, but the end of time.”

“What is the difference?”

“I do not know.” (Conchita is thus transmitting a message of which she does not know the meaning.)

Later on, Fr. Rodrigo had occasion to question Conchita again

18. The prophecies of St. Malachy were first mentioned in a book called *Lignum Vitae*, published in 1559 by a Benedictine historian, Arnold Wion. Because Wion introduced them with only the briefest summary of the life of St. Malachy, their authenticity has been argued, pro and con, ever since.

St. Malachy was a twelfth century Irish monk who died in 1148 at Clairvaux in the arms of St. Bernard. Although Bernard subsequently wrote a biography of St. Malachy, extolling his many virtues and documenting his other writings, he made no mention of the now famous prophecies. The mystery has remained unresolved to this day.

The prophecy is a list of 110 mottos which qualify the popes starting in the year 1143, and ends thus:

- Pastor angelicus (Angelic shepherd) Pius XII
- Pastor et nauta (Pastor and mariner) John XXIII
- Flos florum (Flower of flowers) Paul VI
- De medietate lunae (Of the half moon) John Paul I
- De labore solis (From the toil of the sun or the eclipse of the sun) . . . John Paul II
- De gloria olive (The glory of the olive)
- Petrus Romanus (Peter of Rome)

After Paul VI there remain four popes on St. Malachy’s list, whereas Conchita claims there are only two. Some people trying to make these two “prophecies” agree, have suggested the hypothesis that the last two mottos composed by the holy monk designate anti-popes.

about the above, and she confirmed it fully.

On November 1, 1966, Conchita, while talking with Mother Maria des Nieves, superior of the boarding house in Burgos where the visionary was living, told her the following:

“One day I said to the Virgin, ‘At the time of these future events (Warning, Miracle and Chastisement,) will that be the end of the world?’” And she answered me:

“No, the end of time.”¹⁹

Conchita also told Mother Maria des Nieves:

“After Paul VI, there will only be two more popes; then will come the end of time.”

19. Frs. Holstein and Ravier, S.J., in *Jesus-Christ, Maître de Pensee (Jesus Christ, Master of Thought)*, point out: “. . . The end of time in no way signifies the end of all time: it designates that period of holy history which separates the two advents of Christ: His coming on earth at Christmas, and His glorious return. Inaugurated by His birth in Bethlehem, it is still going on and will terminate at the Parousia (The Second Coming of Christ.) . . .”

- St. Louis de Montfort says: “. . . According to the Council of Trent, the three signs which shall announce the end of time will be:

- a) the preaching of the Gospel in the whole world;
- b) the general apostasy of nations;
- c) the appearance of the Antichrist.”

Regarding these three signs, Sanchez Ventura writes in the French book, *Marie Announce la Fin des Temps (Mary is Announcing the End of Time)*: “. . . The first sign has already been realized in a way, if we take into account the rapid means of communication which exist today; the second is happening right now at a dizzying pace; and in respect to the third—i.e. the Antichrist—he has not as yet appeared in an official way, but who can say he is not already born and ready to manifest his power?”

Fr. Adaire, in *Le Messie que J’Attends (The Messiah Whom I Am Expecting)*, writes: “. . . For us Christians, the expression “end of time” should mean, before all else, rejoice! The coupling of times—their juncture—is well begun. It keeps going on; the “bad age” is going towards its end, which means the new world is already there . . .”

His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, in his 1957 Easter Message, said: “. . . Come, Lord Jesus . . . there are so many signs that Your return is not far away . . .”

Pope Paul VI, in his speech dated October 23, 1965, said: “. . . The expectation of the people is more anxious than ever; the sadness of times, the dangers incurred by peace, lead us to think that God’s time is near . . .”

Chapter 5

Position of the Santander Diocese

Six Bishops from 1961 to 1972

Six bishops will succeed one another at the Apostolic See of Santander:

1. Bishop Doroteo Fernandez Fernandez until 1962
2. Bishop Eugenio Beitia Aldazabal until 1965
3. Bishop Vicente Puchol Montis until May, 1967
4. Bishop Enrique de Cabo (Titular Bishop) until 1968
5. Bishop José Maria Cirarda Lachiondo until December, 1971
6. Bishop Juan Antonio del Val Gallo since January 1972

Although all these prelates (except for Bishop del Val Gallo, who has not yet declared himself) will speak out against the apparitions, two of them will distinguish themselves by the energy they will display in this controversy: Bishop Puchol Montis, who will believe he has ended this business of Garabandal; and Bishop Cirarda Lachiondo who will do everything in his power to end it.

(Bishop del Val Gallo was a member of the inquiry Commission in 1961, when he was not as yet a bishop but quickly resigned from that Commission. He asked Rome, at the beginning of 1977, to appoint a joint [Rome/Santander] Commission to investigate the affair.)

August 26, 1961. A little more than two months after the first apparitions at Garabandal, His Excellency, Bishop Doroteo Fernandez, Apostolic Administrator to the See of Santander in which the village is situated, makes public a note, reprinted by

the press at the beginning of September, 1961. At that time, he declares:

“Due to the repeated questions which we are being asked regarding the nature of the events happening at the village . . . we have appointed a Commission made up of persons known for their circumspection and their doctrinal science, so that they may inform us, in all objectivity and competence, regarding the above mentioned events.”

(Regarding the “objectivity” . . . the way in which the Commission proceeded has roused the indignation of many witnesses.)

“Upon examining the document which has been presented to us, we think it is premature to issue a definitive judgment on the nature of the phenomena in question. Nothing, up to now, obliges us to declare their character as being supernatural.

“Subordinating our definitive judgment upon future developments . . . we ask religious and laity to refrain from going up to the village.”

October 27, 1961. In a second note, Bishop Fernandez is more precise:

“. . . To oppose all those who issue superficial and daring interpretations, judging in a definitive manner that which the Church has not deemed prudent to do, and lastly, to give instruction to souls, we declare that:

1. So far, none of the aforementioned apparitions, visions, locutions or revelations can be held as evidential or as having a serious foundation of truth and authenticity.

2. Priests must totally abstain from all that could contribute to causing trouble among the faithful. They will therefore avoid, insofar as they are able, organizing visits and pilgrimages to the locality mentioned.

3. Our faith does not need to depend upon unapproved revelations and miracles. We believe in what God has revealed to us and what the Church teaches us; to this teaching belong the authentic and unequivocal miracles performed by Our Lord Jesus Christ. He has given them to us as proof of His doctrine to which there is nothing to be added. If God, either Himself or through the intercession of His Holy Mother, wants to speak, we must listen attentively to His words and say like Samuel, ‘Speak Lord, your servant listens.’”¹

(The end of this note contains an admonition for priests and laity to avoid any worry concerning the events in question.)

October 7, 1962. Bishop Beitia Aldazabal, new Apostolic Administrator of Santander, publishes an article in the official bul-

1. The miracles of Jesus were well authenticated, unequivocal (like those of Lourdes today), seen by many people . . . and not believed. “. . . Then He began to reproach the towns in which most of His miracles had been worked. ‘Woe to thee, Corozain! woe to thee, Bethsaida! . . .’” (Matt. 11:20, 21)

letin of the Diocese, confirming the position taken by his predecessor:

"... The special Commission, qualified to judge the events which are happening in San Sebastian de Garabandal village, has handed us the enclosed report, dated October 4 of this year. This Commission maintains its previous position and judges that these phenomena do not have any supernatural character, but are due to natural causes . . ."²

July 8, 1965. A new note from Bishop Aldazabal reads:

"... The See of Santander has accumulated, these last few years, abundant documentation on all that has happened at Garabandal. *We have not closed the file on this subject.* We will always receive with gratitude all the information anyone wants to send us in order to judge same . . .

"... And our conclusion for the present, is the same as that of our predecessors. The Commission competent to judge the facts, has not found sufficient grounds to modify the judgment already given, estimating that the supernatural character of the scrupulously examined phenomena is not self-evident.

"... We would like to say, however, that we have found no grounds for an ecclesiastical condemnation, either in the doctrine or in the spiritual recommendations that have been divulged in the events and addressed to the Christian faithful; furthermore, these recommendations contain exhortations to prayer, sacrifice, devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin under traditional praiseworthy forms; these are also exhortations to a holy fear of the Lord, offended by our sins . . .

"As far as priests are concerned, in view of the special importance which their intervention could have, either by their active participation and collaboration in the development of the events, or by their simple presence as spectators, we forbid their assistance in a very explicit and formal manner . . ."

March 17, 1967. Bishop Vicente Puchol Montis, successor to Bishop Aldazabal, writes:

"... On August 30, September 2, 7, 27, and October 11, 1966, in the presence of Bishop Aldazabal of Santander, and of the pastor of San Sebastian de Garabandal, at the request³ of the interested parties addressed to said pastor, we have ourselves received the declarations made by Conchita Gonzalez, Mari Loli Mazon Gonzalez, Jacinta Gonzalez and Mari Cruz Gonzalez Madrazo, upon the events which have happened at San Sebastian de Garabandal starting on June 18, 1961.

2. Can Bishop Beitia prudently give the Commission the responsibility for that which he affirms? How can we recognize the position of the Bishop, based on conclusions of a Commission which should only have had the role of investigator and not that of judge?

3. See page 77 for the conditions which led to this request.

"From the declarations of the interested parties, it follows that:

1. There has been no apparition either of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael the Archangel, or any other celestial being.⁴

2. There has been no message.⁵

3. All the events which took place in said locality have a natural explanation.

"In publishing the present note, we cannot fail to congratulate the clergy and faithful of Santander who, at all times and with filial obedience, have followed the injunctions of the hierarchy. We regret that this example has not been followed by other persons who, by their imprudent conduct, have spread confusion and distrust toward the religious authorities, thus preventing, by formidable social pressure, that which began as innocent child's play from being demystified by the authors of the game themselves.

"Once more it is well to repeat that the real messages from heaven are transmitted to us through the words of the Gospel, the Pope, the Councils, and the ordinary magisterium of the Church."

(*Ed. note:* Regarding this last paragraph, this is true enough, but this does not mean that messages given differently are not of divine origin. Otherwise, Lourdes, Fatima, Rue du Bac in Paris, etc., would need to be rejected.)

October 9, 1968. Bishop José Cirarda Lachiondo, fourth Bishop of Santander since the apparitions (actually second bishop as the two before him were apostolic administrators, one a titular bishop) gives his full accord to the text of the communique from Bishop Puchol, his predecessor.

June 1970. Bishop Lachiondo publishes a lengthy document addressed to his brothers in the Episcopate, on the "alleged apparitions" of the Blessed Virgin in San Sebastian de Garabandal.

The French newspaper, "*La Documentation Catholique*," in its publication dated March 1, 1971 (No. 1577) tells us that Bishop Lachiondo's communique was sent through the Secretary of State, to all the undersecretaries who in turn sent it to all the

4. Conchita and her three friends would thus have been lying verbally and in writing (Conchita's diary had been published with numerous photocopies) for nearly six years since June 18, 1961.

5. A. Marty, in his book *Balestrino*, writes: "... No doubt Bishop Puchol means to say 'no message coming from heaven,' because everyone knows that two Messages have been published. Bishop Beitia (Bishop Puchol Montis' predecessor) has even recognized that these Messages of Garabandal only repeat the warnings given by the Virgin at Rue du Bac in Paris, LaSalette, Lourdes and Fatima. Moreover, the author of these two Messages was very well informed, since the Pope, shortly after the last Message was published, issued an encyclical on one of the points mentioned in said last Message: The weakening of devotion toward the Holy Eucharist." (Mr. Marty alludes here to *Mysterium Fidei* published by Pope Paul VI, September 3, 1965, which reaffirms the dogma of the Real Presence.)

bishops of the whole Church. His aim is to put a final point to the discussions which have taken place concerning the alleged apparitions of Garabandal, and to alert the bishops to the interdiction on the pious manifestations of which these apparitions are the origin.

(Note: A year after the “final point,” the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith requests the Archbishop of Oviedo to send them all the documentation which he can gather on these events. For Rome, the file is far from being closed.)

The French paper, *Cahiers Marials*, dated April 1, 1971, notes: “. . . The exceptional circumstances of its diffusion by an organ of the Holy See . . . confer on it an exceptional value . . .”

Bishop Cirarda explains his reason for issuing the communique:

“. . . Numerous bishops are consulting the Diocese of Santander on the alleged apparitions of the Blessed Virgin in the village of Garabandal, situated in our diocese. One of these bishops has even written to me announcing his arrival in Santander, at the head of a pilgrimage from his diocese, in order to visit Garabandal.” Bishop Cirarda continues:

“. . . During a recent visit to Rome, I have also learned that many inquiries on this subject are being sent to them . . . Some inquiries, often from the same prelates, reach Santander from various countries in Europe, America and even Asia and Oceania.⁶

“. . . On the other hand, the partisans of the alleged apparitions mentioned above, continue to publish books and articles in which they never cease to defend:

- a. The authenticity of the said apparitions.
- b. The absence of the authority of the Bishop of Santander to judge their authenticity or non-authenticity, because this is an affair which concerns the Holy See.
- c. A seeming contradiction between the Holy See and the Curia of Santander . . .”

Bishop Cirarda then recalls the first decisions of the bishops of Santander:

“. . . Between 1961 and 1965, the two prelates (Bishop Fernandez and Bishop Beitia) published four notes which all agreed

6. Four young, unsophisticated girls, aged eleven and twelve, barely literate, living in an isolated village in the mountains, are going to unleash such events in 1961, that nine years afterwards, in all parts of the world, laymen, priests and even bishops are affected. What, then, is the secret of this “innocent child’s game?”

in their fundamental issues. Two conclusions clearly stand out:

- a. The alleged message which some confirm as having been communicated by the Virgin, does not contain anything contrary to the traditional teaching of the Church on faith and morals.
- b. Nevertheless, it does not appear that the phenomena which took place in San Sebastian de Garabandal can seriously be taken as being supernatural, for they all have a natural explanation.”

Bishop Cirarda, in referring to Bishop Puchol’s declaration, writes:

“. . . After an exhaustive study of the whole problem, Bishop Puchol closed the file on the above mentioned apparitions, supposedly coming from the Blessed Virgin, in a note published on March 17, 1967. The whole file and the text of the note were transmitted to the Sacred Congregation on October 27, 1966. Cardinal Ottaviani acknowledged receipt of the documents in a letter dated March 7, 1967, in which he stated: *“This Sacred Congregation has carefully and attentively examined all the documentation, including those received from other places, and has finally arrived at the conclusion that this question has been meticulously examined and settled by yourself, and consequently, there is no reason why the Sacred Congregation should intervene . . .”*

“This is why, having studied the voluminous file and verified the grounds of complaint against the judgment of my predecessor, of venerable memory, I have re-affirmed his position in my note published by my secretariat on October 9, 1968.⁷

In regard to the Holy See and Garabandal, Bishop Cirarda states:

“. . . The bishopric of Santander, as we have mentioned before, has always kept the Holy See well informed regarding this problem. I myself went twice to Rome—in January 1969 and February 1970—to discuss this matter with the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Chancery of State and His Holiness the Pope, himself. On January 31 and March 10, 1969, correspondence was exchanged between Cardinal Seper and myself. Consequently I can and must communicate to you the following:

- a. Bishop Puchol, as well as myself, asked the Sacred Congregation, in due course, to study whether it suited them to reserve judgment on the

7. We have no reason to suppose that the bishops of Santander concerned in these events are held in poor esteem by Rome, which would mean that the nature of their relationship is not very Christian. But there exists a letter written by Cardinal Ottaviani, addressed to Fr. Luna, which says—and we quote verbatim—“. . . With or without the permission of the Bishop, bring the young girls to me . . .”

problem of the alleged apparitions.

b. On March 10, 1969, Cardinal Seper wrote: ‘. . . *The Sacred Congregation has already studied this problem more than once, and your recent letter (Bishop Cirarda’s letter of January 31, 1969) has given it the occasion to re-examine it attentively. Therefore, it thinks that since this examination did not uncover any new element, there is no new reason for the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to intervene directly in this affair.*’

c. In the same letter, Cardinal Seper continues: ‘. . . *Our Congregation contents itself with praising the prudence and the pastoral concern of which your Curia (the one from Santander) has given proof without ever having given a judgment involving the Holy See . . .*’

d. Verbally and in writing, I was told by the Sacred Congregation that the reason it does not want to render any judgment is that if it decided to do so, it would have to reserve the cause for itself by taking from the Bishop of Santander the authority which belongs to him on that question. In fact, as mentioned by Cardinal Seper in the above mentioned letter: ‘. . . *We should not forget that when the Sacred Congregation engages its authority in the study of a question, it gathers all the data of the problem in order to examine them. But, in this case, it has judged that to be unnecessary.*’

e. This is why the Sacred Congregation does not want us to say that it has made any kind of declaration on this problem.

f. Furthermore, the visionaries claim that the Pope has personally expressed his affection for them. After having duly informed myself, I am able to announce to my fellow bishops, in all certainty, that none of these claims has any foundation, due to the fact that the Holy Father identifies himself totally with the Sacred Congregation and that he leaves the judgment of this affair in the hands of the Bishop of Santander, to whom it belongs as long as the Holy See does not take over; which, as we have mentioned before, the Holy See expressly refuses to do.”

Prohibition of Any Cult Based on the “Alleged Apparitions.”

“. . . Consequently, all manifestations of piety based upon the alleged apparitions at San Sebastian de Garabandal, are absolutely prohibited. On the other hand, it is forbidden any priest, whether he be from this diocese or elsewhere, to go up to the said village without special authorization, under penalty of withdrawal of the right to exercise his ministry in any part of the diocese . . .

“. . . As to the prohibition of pious manifestations, which we have just mentioned, the Sacred Congregation also desires that it be observed everywhere, in accordance with the disposition of the Bishop of Santander, as mentioned by Cardinal Seper in the following lines which are definitive:

‘. . . *The decree delivered by the authority of the diocesan Bishop, who possesses this competency by right, must constitute, even for other bishops, a sufficient motive to discourage all pilgrimages and exercises in respect to the alleged apparitions and communications in question . . .*’

“May God permit that this communication serve to clarify, in its entirety, this irritating problem of the alleged apparitions.”⁸

(signed) José Maria Cirarda Lachiondo,
Bishop of Santander

Commentaries on the Position Taken by the Bishops of Santander

Upon reading this series of documents, it is apparent that the judgment of the successive bishops of Santander was dictated exclusively by the reports from the Commission and the retractions of the four visionaries.

But how reliable is this Commission? Let the witnesses speak:

Upon presenting the memoirs of Juan Alvarez Seco, Brigadier Chief of the Civil Guard, and the man responsible for maintaining order in the village during the apparitions, Antonio Pacio, M.S.C., Professor at the University of Barcelona, writes:

“. . . I would like to state only one thing to forestall the objections of many based on the various official communiques coming from the Diocese of Santander. These communiques should have been preceded by a substantial interrogation of the myriad eyewitnesses.⁹

“Among these eyewitnesses, one who stands out is Juan Alvarez Seco, Brigadier Chief of the Civil Guard, author of these memoirs. He was present from the beginning until 1962, and in 1965, at the time of the Message, and he had the duty of informing his immediate superiors and the Civil Governor of all that was going on in Garabandal, while at the same time he had to maintain order in the village.

“Well, none of the commissioners, who rejected the supernatural nature of the events of Garabandal, ever asked him to testify; nor did they even deign to interview him who was the official informant to said authorities.

“This detail suffices to illustrate the ‘true and total impartiality’ with which the various episcopal commissions endeavored to inform themselves. They were not interested in the believing witnesses, but only the unbelieving. They wanted, at all

8. To be convincing, it would take more than a simple act of authority. It would be necessary to give a clear explanation proving the natural origin of the signs of credibility which we will enumerate later on, a thing which has never been done.

9. Canon Porro writes: “Should the affirmations of the Commission be the only true ones: that is to say, the word of five men against thousands of other persons? I say this with all my soul: that this is the absurdity of it all, that five commissioners should be infallible, whereas thousands of others must admit to being ignorant, deluded, or should we say, insane . . .”

cost, to discredit the manifestations, and in order to achieve this, they had to eliminate any witness inclined to be favorable, no matter what his competency.”

In his memoirs, Brigadier Alvarez Seco declares:

“... I must say that I saw the doctors appointed by the Commission only three times in the village during the year 1961. Mr. Rocha de la Nansa planned to stop the children in the *calleja* and hypnotize them before they got to the *cuadro*. He was unable to hypnotize them which was a great disappointment to Dr. Morales who wanted to perform some tests while they were under hypnosis.¹⁰

“... A second time, on October 18, 1961, when the first Message was given and while the police forces were protecting these doctors so that the crowd would not cramp them, the behavior of these physicians was such that they could not accomplish what they wanted to do.

“... The third time, the doctors came to Garabandal during the night while all the neighbors were asleep. They tried to bring the young girls to Santander without the consent of their parents, or of the village...” (See testimony of Juan Seco, page 335.)

Doctor Julio Porro Cardeñoso. Doctor Porro, Canon at the Cardinal's Chapter of Clergymen at Tarragon, and a doctor of theology, was present at numerous ecstasies. He observes:

“... It is obvious that members of the Commission never went as a group to observe the phenomena. Not one of its members, to my knowledge, went to the village more than twice, and one of them never went at all...”

Fr. Materne Laffineur. Fr. Laffineur who was present at about ten ecstasies, states:

“... As I have written in *Star on the Mountain*, in the chapter entitled ‘Before the Commission,’ I came to realize that a registrar—who is nothing more than a clerk—played successively the role of procurator, lawyer and assessor. Never, at any time in my life as a canonist have I seen anything like it, nor anything as scandalous. All the answers I gave were interpreted beforehand and given an unfavorable meaning for Garabandal. Listen

10. According to Dr. Morales' diagnosis, the ecstasies of the children were simply a collective catalepsy. He publicly declared: “I, Dr. Morales, assure you that today these children will not come here and that this farce is terminated.” But scarcely ten minutes had elapsed after this declaration, when the visionaries returned, all of them in ecstasy... but Dr. Morales? He had gone!

to this: When my testimony (which was being taken in a restaurant) was terminated—this clerk tells me, ‘Sign’. This is what I answered: ‘I will not sign!’ Then—you won't believe this—with his ballpoint pen, in capital letters, he signed my first and last name! This is called, in civil rights, a forgery!

“What's more, when some of my friends from Germany went later on to Santander, the Commission ‘proved’ to them that I had made a statement against Garabandal and that my statement was signed with my name!”

The visionaries. “... The Commission has come up here very few times; never did it bother with us; they interrogated only certain persons in the village chosen among those who did not believe in the apparitions.”

Fr. Valentin Marichalar. Fr. Marichalar was pastor at Garabandal until November 1965. This man, the most informed regarding the children and their ecstasies, has never been interrogated, either by the bishop or the Commission! He states:

“... For the Commission, I was less important than a zero to the left of a figure...” (This is a current Spanish expression indicating the little worth of someone or something.)

“... The Commission tried to give me a vacation... They suggested this: ‘In order that the people understand that we are not trying to get rid of you, ask, in writing, for a vacation, and we will grant it to you.’ I answered, ‘Listen, if you send me on vacation, I'll go, but I am not requesting it.’ I don't know, but I had the impression that they were trying to deceive me. I had a lot of respect for the bishop, but it seems to me there was a force compelling me to say, ‘No’.

“Nothing was done in the prescribed manner. A psychiatrist from Madrid came one time to examine the girls. He arrived at ten o'clock at night and the girls were already in bed. He told me, ‘You see, they forced me to come here.’ I asked him, ‘So you want to see the girls even though they are already in bed?’... Well, I think he saw one. He wrote in his report that he saw them all, but that was false. I do not remember his name, but he is a professor in psychiatry.” (Interview granted to *Needles* magazine, June 16, 1976)

The village inhabitants. In 1971, there were thirty-seven eyewitnesses living in the village, including the parents of the girls (the testimonies of the great majority of them appear later in

this book). None of them, with one possible exception, has ever been questioned by the so-called Commission.

The judgment of one qualified witness. Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva, pastor at Barro, in publishing his memoirs, has created considerable impact with his testimony. He has never been summoned by the Commission, although he claims to have witnessed more than 200 ecstasies.

An example of his estimation of the Commission is the following extract from his book, *Memoirs of a Spanish Country Pastor*.

“... Tonight, August 22, 1961, at the rosary hour, many members of the episcopal Commission came up to Garabandal, incognito. I did not know them and only later on did I find out their names. There were at least two clergymen, a physician-anesthetist (not a psychiatrist as was incorrectly reported), and an amateur photographer.

“... We are going to see them ‘operate’ (if I may use the expression) and hear them, and I shall not hesitate to give my impression, which is most objective coming as it did, at the time the events took place and whilst I was totally ignorant of their identity, and even more so, of their intent.

“The aforementioned members of the Commission arrived in the church at the precise moment the children were there in ecstasy in front of the crowd. One of them (I learned later that he was the physician-anesthetist, Dr. Piñal), unceremoniously said loudly,

‘So, the comedy is continuing?’

“At that moment, kneeling in front of me, Dr. Celestino Ortiz, well known pediatrician in Santander, who had been following this affair since the beginning, was checking Conchita’s pulse. He wanted to see if the rapid marches of the visionaries through the village had changed the cardiac rhythm more than at other times. Without raising his head, while studiously continuing his vital examination, Dr. Ortiz retorted,

‘If there’s a comedian here, it is yourself. A church altar is no place to talk that way, especially in public!’

“Then his work completed, Dr. Ortiz got up and the two doctors recognized each other.

‘Oh! It’s you, Piñal.’

‘Ortiz, I must tell you certain things in the sacristy.’

‘In the sacristy, yes!¹¹ There you can tell me anything you think is significant.’

“Then the two doctors left the altar.¹²

“This was the extent of the ‘medical examination of the ecstasies’ by the doctor appointed by the Commission. I thought to myself, ‘the scientific work was finished before it even started.’ What a difference from the professional conscience of Dr. Ortiz, a qualified pediatrician, whom I had just seen kneeling in front of Conchita and whispering,

‘The pulse is no more rapid than normal!’

“I understand now the credence the whole world has given to his medical remarks and observations, and to his conclusions in favor of the apparitions.

“Now, let us very objectively examine the attitude of the two priests, and I re-emphasize the fact that, at the time, I did not know either their names or their functions.

“The first one ascended the altar. Turning his back on the Blessed Sacrament, he faced the crowd and with the girls in ecstasy at his very feet, he decided the issue in a very definitive manner. In a loud voice, he proclaimed, ‘No matter what happens, I do not believe in this!’

“The second priest, also near the altar, was talking to a layman and declared, ‘I was a professor of philosophy for five years, and of theology for ten.’

“What kind of philosophy? I thought; what kind of theology? Would he by any chance be a professor of ascetical and mystical theology? That would be the only kind fully qualified to judge the phenomena going on at that time. No doubt he wanted to convince the layman that he was qualified to approve the unbelievable declaration, just quoted, of his confrere and fellow commissioner.

“This second priest then left, and his companion approached me:

‘I am their photographer.’

‘Professional?’

11. He meant that it would be better to discuss matters in the sacristy than in the church proper.

12. Only two months after the first apparition (whereas the events were to continue for four years) and less than one month after its inception, this is the state of mind of the members of the commission! This is a far cry from “. . . persons known for their prudence and their doctrinal science, so that they may inform us in total objectivity and competence . . .” to which Bishop Doroteo Fernández referred.

‘No, amateur.’

“My interest quickened, because I know a little bit about photography myself.”

‘Ah! You have an automatic flash camera with color film?’

‘Yes,’ he answered.

‘Well, look there! You are going to miss a charming picture. Look at Jacinta and Loli, kneeling on the altar step. How graceful! What an exceptional pose!’

‘Father, I have completed my work; I have all the pictures I need.’

‘Surely not?’

‘Certainly.’

“Had I known at the time that he was the photographer appointed by the Commission, I would probably have become upset. I would have lost the spirit of interior recollection demanded by the present circumstances. Why? Well, because I would have had the same conviction then, as I do today. The Commission should have been accompanied by a professional photographer whose job it should have been to photograph all the events and the participants thereof, from every angle. How can we make a complete, fair and objective study, otherwise?”

“Now I am glad I was ignorant at the time, of the identity and the mission of these people, whom I can recall as vividly as though I were still near the altar in the church at Garabandal.

“What were my thoughts at the time? The civilian from Santander who referred to a comedy: was he a doctor? And what of Dr. Ortiz? The peremptory and definitive judgment of the first priest: could that conceivably be anything other than prejudice and absurdity? The second priest: was he proud . . . or worse? The photographer: he certainly didn’t know his trade, nor did he love it.

“My conclusion: I disapprove and keep my personal opinions.

“I remained in church until 11:00 p.m. in front of the Blessed Sacrament. I prayed. I reflected. I also listened carefully, from where I was, to all that was being said. This was not difficult, for everything was said aloud, and nothing seemed to be secret. I was thus able to hear with perfect clarity when one of the two priests said,

‘We will close the church to those who believe in these

apparitions. We will give Fr. Valentin (the pastor) a month’s vacation. As he is presently very nervous, he will readily consent. We will order the Jesuit (Fr. Ramón María Andreu) to leave. We will forbid priests to come to the village.’

“All these decisions were made on the spot, without consulting the bishop.

“Really! I said to myself, what an example of administration and performance, especially at a time when a serious study should be made of these important events. Has Pilate been resurrected? In any case, there is a new praetorium and once again someone is washing his hands.

“During all this time, the Bishop of Santander thought his delegates were working at Garabandal like real churchmen, real doctors, or a real photographer would do—in all scientific and religious conscience. The various episcopal notes have all been predicated on questionable data, and I have no reason to believe that any more serious or sound measures were ever taken. Did not the visionaries tell me repeatedly, “The Commission only came here a few times; it has never bothered with us; it interrogated only certain persons in the village, chosen from among those who did not believe in the apparitions or were in doubt about them.’

“The next morning, Fr. Ramón Andreu (we did not know each other) was near me and I took advantage of this to tell him,

‘Father, I feel as if I should write immediately to the Apostolic Administrator, Bishop Doroteo.’

‘Why?’

‘To let him know about the very bad impression this Commission has made upon me.’

“Then he said to me,

‘I myself was in the church last night with five or six priests, strangers to this diocese. We saw and heard everything. We talked about the attitude of the Commission even while it was functioning, and after it left. You are right. Your idea is a good one. Follow through on it! . . .’

These testimonies are sufficiently eloquent to compel the competent authorities to draw the obvious conclusions: consider the work of the Commission as null and start from scratch.

Uncertainties rather than denials. As mentioned before, there

were other criteria influencing the bishops of Santander: that is, the retractions of the visionaries.

It would be more accurate to speak about doubts and uncertainties rather than denials. It seems that the visionaries, especially Conchita, went through a period of psychological darkness which plunged them into a state of profound anxiety, leaving them completely helpless and even causing them to suffer a memory lapse.

Regarding these blanks in the minds of the young girls, Dr. Ricardo Puncernau, psychiatrist, who has made an extensive study of the personality of each one of the visionaries, gives many possible scientific explanations. Among others . . .

“ . . . These amnesias, which we could call contradictions, are often met with when the capacity to recall is lost.

“ . . . And this type of *selective or intermittent amnesia, caused by the loss of the ability to recall*, is often seen in *cases of affective repression*, as in ‘twilight’ emotional states. There is a memory disorder. The true and the false are melded in the affirmative sense as well as in the negative. This psychological type of amnesia is often the brain’s defense against too much stress (as a short circuit prevents an overload).

“ . . . Confronted by this memory failure, however, *the subject tries to compensate for the deficiency by fabricating a logical, rational explanation* for that which he does not remember at all, or remembers only vaguely.”

Later on, Dr. Puncernau continues:

“ . . . Let us remember some of the arguments the visionaries advanced trying to rationalize the facts. For example:

- a. We recognized priests because their necks were whiter.
- b. We tried to get information about the people’s problems (beforehand).
- c. When we walked backwards we always went two by two, supporting each other by the arm.”

“But they could not find a logical explanation for the most important fact of all: their ecstatic trances . . .”

Along with the other girls, Conchita not only began to doubt the reality of her visions, but she reached the stage when she even doubted the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist, and stopped receiving Communion. Many factors caused this spiritual and psychological disorder: the devil himself must have had a hand in it; but there was also a subtle undermining performed by the young priests who were following the visionaries. One of them

worked in this manner close to Mari Loli and Jacinta, and to Conchita, when she was home on leave; he also worked this way among the villagers. It was Fr. Olano, sent there by Bishop Puchol to replace Fr. Valentin, with orders to destroy any concept of prodigy in Garabandal. (In the interim between Fr. Valentin and Fr. Olano, there was Fr. Amador Fernandez, but only for a very short time.)

The other one, Fr. Emiliano, was directing the spiritual exercises at the girls’ boarding school of the Discalced Carmelites in Pamplona, where Conchita was residing. He did not believe in the apparitions and was determined to make Conchita issue a retraction, *even going so far as to refuse her absolution!* . . . He forbade her to talk about her doubts to her family or to any person in favor of the visions. When she returned home, he pursued her with letters reminding her that as long as she would not publicly declare that everything was false, she could not consider herself as being absolved!

It is therefore easy to imagine the state of mind of that adolescent, still disappointed by Our Lord’s locution on February 13, 1966, in which He had told her that she would not become a nun; filled with anguish over her doubts concerning the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist; starting to ask herself if possibly she had not dreamt the whole thing; utterly crushed at the thought of being responsible for the crowds and controversies she had launched; feeling very guilty over the refusal of absolution (for her, if a priest—being a man of God—judged it necessary to make such a decision, it must be because *she* was wrong); reinforced in this feeling by each talk she had with her confessor who was telling her that in fact she *was* wrong; having no amicable or familial support to whom she could speak about her trouble, because her confessor forbade it; then, meeting Mari Loli who told her about her own doubts; and when finally, near despair, she tries to secure some help from the pastor at Garabandal, Fr. Olano, that priest aggravates her distress all the more, only too happy to force her to make a retraction.

This crisis led her to the interview with Bishop Puchol and his assessors, on August 30, 1966; an interview which left her without peace or joy, whereas, if the retractions had been true, she should have felt relieved.

Her three friends were summoned to Santander in the days following, and they felt no peace of mind either, after making their retractions.

But can affirmations of the following type seriously be con-

sidered as “retractions?”

“I did not see the Virgin, but the diary (in which I tell of the visions) is true . . .”

“I did not see the Virgin or the Angel, but the Message is true . . . but the miracle of the Visible Communion is true, . . . but the great Miracle will come . . .” etc.

Unfortunately, these reservations do not seem to have been noted on the signed document. Why?

The lack of coherency, even in the retractions, should have made Bishop Puchol suspicious. But perhaps he was only too happy to possess, at long last, a document signed by the four adolescents, admitting their uncertainties. We might ask ourselves if the following very essential question ever came into his mind: “What are their denials worth compared to all the signs that witnesses have seen and felt?”

To this question, there were two answers at the very time the visionaries had just signed their retractions. First, an answer from Aniceta, Conchita’s mother:

“Aniceta, you sign too.”

“What I saw, I saw. I do not sign!”

Then Jacinta, in front of the Bishop, tells her mother, Maria:

“Mother, you sign too.”

“All right, but under one condition: that you fall into ecstasy right here, this minute.”

“But Mother, you know very well this is impossible!”

“Then I do not sign.”

And finally, let us remind ourselves that as early as 1961, the Virgin had warned the visionaries, “. . . there will come a time when you will deny having seen me, and you will contradict one another . . .”

Thus is the fragile base upon which rested the various communiques from the Santander bishopric.

What is more, it should not be forgotten that these doubts and denials are not peculiar to the visionaries of Garabandal. In their book entitled, *Pontmain, Authentic History*, the authors, R. Laurentin and A. Durand, write in Chapter 8, page 85, concerning the retractions of Jeanne-Marie Lebosse:

“. . . Another hypothesis: The illusion of having lied.

“. . . An apparition is an experience out of the ordinary, an alter-state, a state of exception, hard to imagine after returning

to the normal state. Here, memory fails. It is a fact that even the most serious of visionaries have felt superficial lapses in their fundamental certainty, especially after long periods of exhausting interrogation and disturbing objections. Even Bernadette Soubirous, an exemplary witness, if there ever was one, experienced this trouble. She told Bishop Bourret, Bishop of Rodez, at the end of her life, on September 1, 1877:

‘. . . It is already far away . . . very far away . . . all these things: I do not remember them; I do not like to speak too much about them, in case, my God! I have been mistaken . . .’

“St. Teresa of the Child Jesus suffered a more vivid and radical crisis. At the age of ten at a critical point of her illness, she had a vision of the Blessed Virgin. It was for her a great enlightenment and the turning point toward her recovery. But the questions which were asked her on this subject—especially at the Carmelite convent—unleashed a crisis of doubts which she describes as follows:

‘. . . The Blessed Virgin appeared very fair to me . . . I was struck by her beauty. Then, seeing the Carmelites thought very differently, I imagined I must have lied . . . Humiliation became my lot. I could not look at myself without a profound sense of horror . . . Ah! how much I suffered. I will be able to describe it only in heaven . . .’ (*Autobiography of a Soul, St. Teresa of Lisieux*, 1957, page 73).

“The mere disbelief of her indescribable experience was enough to provoke the crisis in St. Teresa of the Child Jesus. In the case of Bernadette, the haziness concerning facts of primary importance was due to an accumulation of more complex factors: the progressive passage of time; the onset of maturity; the exhaustion caused by unceasing sufferings; the constant repetition of formulas which break down internal convictions; and finally the daily contradictions—or flatteries—of which the visionary becomes the object. It is difficult to maintain one’s stability; either one takes pleasure in it and becomes proud, or one feels the necessity to escape such an unbearable situation. So it was in the instances mentioned above, and they are only two of many such cases.

“These analogies invite us to examine a hypothesis, the scene of which is as follows: Jeanne Marie sees a vision similar to the other visionaries of Pontmain. She testifies happily and spontaneously. But with the passage of time, she becomes uncertain. Like Teresa of the Child Jesus, she convinces herself she has

lied. She tries to make these difficult confessions, but the confessors suspect her of having scruples. They do not dwell too much on her uncertain avowals, for fear of aggravating what they think is just a temporary aberration. But, in fact, it persists. Jeanne Marie's guilt complex worsens. It becomes intolerable. In the novitiate, she insists on the facts of her confession in order to find a solution through God's representative. He listens attentively; his decision creates a transfer of responsibility, and frees Jeanne Marie of her remorse and her role as a visionary. She finally finds peace in her 'obedience' in the absolute sense in which it was then regarded."

A Few More Reflections on These Communiques

Never, to the author's knowledge, have the entire contents of the Commission's report been published; and we still refuse to accept them as sufficient evidence to motivate the opinion of the four bishops concerned. These bishops have always affirmed that the phenomena at Garabandal has a natural explanation, but they have never said what that explanation was.

Thus the moment has arrived to speak plainly, for there can be no true love without truth.

Speaking with the marvelous candor of children of God, addressing our bishop, our eldest brother in Christ, let us tell him with all due respect, affectionately but firmly:

Understand this, your Excellency: your refusal to review the whole affair from the beginning, your refusal to give us the oft-alluded to natural explanation, your statement that the bishops of Santander resolved the case after becoming fully informed and that they had the authority to do so, leaves us with a difficult choice: either we ignore your decisions or we keep silent.

Ignore? Conscionable Christians, full members of the Catholic apostolic and Roman Church, having always considered bishops as direct spiritual descendants of the apostles, ignoring your edicts is extremely repugnant to us.

Keep silent? How can we, the eyewitnesses, recipients of physical and spiritual graces who have seen "what we have seen" (but which, pardon us, you yourselves have not seen), how can we in good conscience keep silent?

Is it you, bishops of Jesus Christ, whom we must remind of the words of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin: "... If it be just in the eyes of God to obey you instead of God, decide for yourselves. For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:19, 10) ... ?

So if by chance you have in your archives, a clear and precise explanation to prove the natural origin of the events, publish it. You will admit it is a question of simple common sense, justice and respect toward those from who you are asking obedience.

Finally, One Last Remark

It should be pointed out that despite the efforts made by different prelates, and especially by Bishop Cirarda, Santander has never had from Rome an outright condemnation of Garabandal. On the contrary, written in an elaborate and polite style and couched in diplomatic terms, a very clear position is evident that can be summarized as follows: "... For the time being we give you *carte blanche*, but do not involve Rome under any circumstances..." (See Position of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, page 341.)

Actual position of Mgr. del Val, Bishop of Santander: When the preceding was written for the first French edition of this book, little was known of Bishop del Val's position. Although he appeared very attentive to anything concerning Garabandal, he had never made a declaration since his nomination to Santander in 1972.

Today his position is a little better understood.

As canon at Santander, he had personally observed two or three ecstasies of the visionaries, and therefore was a direct witness.

He had participated for a short period of time in the activities of the Commission. He had listened to many witnesses; indeed, he is still receiving testimony. Since becoming Bishop of Santander in 1972 he has inherited the complete file, therefore he knows perfectly well the soundness of the case. Conscious of the expansion of ever-growing belief in these events throughout the world, he declared: "... Garabandal is becoming a thing of the world... this person [I] cannot stop it, this is taking on such great proportions that I do not know what is going to happen..." (Bishop del Val to Fr. Juan, parish priest of Garabandal... Placido Ruiloba Arias, August 17, 1979.)

Distressed at having to take such a responsibility, and this is understandable, he has tried repeatedly to shift the responsibility to Rome, and this is, for him, truly a cross. He has envisioned the institution of a new commission: "... He is going to recommend that the studies which have been made on these events be

reviewed concerning Garabandal.” (Statement made by Fr. Juan Gonzalez Gomez to Placido Ruiloba Arias.)

“The Bishop of Santander spoke to me very amiably on June 14, 1976, and on January 4, 1977, and informed me of his intention of resuming research and studies, but I was not able, until now, to reveal the topic of those conversations, or of the letters of private nature; nor of a letter of a *Consulteur* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, because of elementary discretion. . . .” (Extract of a letter circulated by Robert François, dated January 1, 1978, addressed to priests of Blois and vicinity.)

Contingently, this excited the camp of the adversaries of Garabandal to violent reactions: one segment of the local press asserted that the Bishop of Santander was going to be replaced, even going so far as to name his successor. We know that he had entrusted the parish of Garabandal to Fr. Juan Gonzalez, native of the village and himself a witness to many ecstasies at the time he was a seminarian. Finally, he has received paternally many visits from the visionaries, especially Jacinta.

For those who know Bishop del Val well and have followed this affair with him from the beginning as Placido Ruiloba from Santander and Ed Kelly from the U.S. have [Ed’s wife is from Santander and he has spent much time there], it appears that the Bishop is inclined to accept the supernatural nature of the apparitions, even if he doesn’t voice this opinion publicly.

Recently, during the summer of 1980, the British Broadcasting Corporation asked Conchita to participate in a thirty-minute film documentary on the apparitions of Garabandal. Conchita called Bishop del Val from the United States to ask his advice. He simply told her, “Do whatever you think is right.” Bishop del Val knew that this film was going to be shown on British television, and shown in many countries throughout the world, giving this affair a publicity such as it had never received until now. His authorization confirmed his attitude, for, since 1972, the date on which he was appointed Bishop of Santander, he has not spoken or written a single word against Garabandal.

If, as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declares, the sole authority to pronounce on the supernatural nature of the apparitions comes from the Bishop of Santander, it can be declared solemnly as of the end of 1980, that if the Church hasn’t officially recognized Garabandal, neither has she condemned it! Further elaboration of this essential point is at the end of this book after the communiqués from Rome.

Chapter 6

Signs of Credibility

Each time God wants to communicate something important to humanity, an old truth or a reminder of the truth, He authenticates His message by signs or miracles, which cannot be explained as freaks of nature.

The Old Testament abounds in prodigies, the very number of which prove that even the marvelous, the extraordinary, God gives us in abundance. The gospels are full of the miracles of Jesus, signs which were also acts of love.

At Garabandal, these signs have been given to men with prodigality.

A sign is performed to be seen. In the village, the humble mountaineers say: “*What we have seen, we have seen . . .*” They were ignorant; they were told so from the pulpit; but they have seen. They have seen and they have understood. They understood, either simply because they were there, or because they were humble. The others, doctors of theology, were not there. They were not ignorant; perhaps they were humble. They could have been there; they were notified many times. But they were not there and they did not see. They did not see the signs. They don’t believe.

We mention here some of these signs. It must be understood, however, that the following signs and other details are only apparent when the girls are in ecstasy.

The transfigured faces. The visionaries faces become more beautiful during an ecstasy: the change is lightening quick and very obvious.

The beauty of their attitudes. Whether individually or in a group, whether the girls are praying, walking or falling, the aesthetic



Jacinta, left, and Mari Cruz. In ecstasy, the visionaries' faces took on an entirely different quality.

quality of their attitude is very apparent and impresses all who witness it. The ecstatic falls, in unison, are astonishing in the beauty of the appearance they present.

The ease of movement. Whether they are kneeling, walking normally or backwards, slowly or rapidly, on level ground or climbing up to the pines, over stones, through bushes, in snow or mud, climbing stairs or descending them, even when they come downstairs lying on their backs, head first and all this in daylight or in the dark of night—they move around with astounding ease . . . *their eyes riveted to the sky the whole time.*

Ease and efficiency of their gestures. The holy pictures, wedding rings, rosaries, medals with chains, all tangled, get separated into proper order between their fingers, without groping or hesitation, without effort and *without looking.* They put tight wedding rings on fingers and effortlessly put on chains too small to go over the head, without opening the clasp *and always without looking.*

Beauty of voices and laughter. The harmony of their voices when they pray during an ecstasy enraptures the spectators.

Similarly, while playing hide-and-peek with the Blessed Virgin,

when they find one another, their laughter is enchanting—totally different from their usual laugh.

Beauty of their prayers. They pray slowly, in contrast to the Spanish habit of praying very rapidly. Their expressions show great respect and concentration. Their signs of the cross, sweeping and majestic, are very impressive.

Foreign languages and hymns. They sing charming improvised hymns though they hardly know how to write. They frequently express themselves in Greek, Latin or French.

Weight change. When not in ecstasy the girls each weigh between seventy-seven and eighty pounds. One man can easily lift any one of them singlehandedly. Yet, during an ecstasy, two or three strong young men (whose standard work load is a 220 pound bag) find it difficult to lift one of them off the ground. On the other hand, while in ecstasy, the girls easily lift one another without any sign of effort.

Abnormal strength. A person whose foot or hand gets caught in the girl's bended knee or elbow when the visionary falls into ecstasy, generally cannot release it except with great difficulty or without using all their strength. They are usually obliged to wait until the end of the ecstasy.

Dr. Piñal, left, from the Santander Commission, takes Conchita's pulse.



In the same manner, anyone touching, holding or caught beneath one of the girls when she falls into an ecstasy is unable to detach himself for the duration of the ecstasy.

Bodily changes. They become rigid and hard. No matter how much strength is employed, no one can force them to move.

To the touch, their bodies are hard like dead matter. Witnesses have compared it to cement, marble, iron, wood, etc.

Total physical insensibility. To shocks, cuts, climatic changes, inclement weather, stiff joints (some ecstasies last four to five hours), muscle cramps, pressure, pricks, burns, etc., the children do not feel *any pain*.

Insensibility of their eyes. The girls eyes are totally insensitive to lights such as violent flashes from cameramen's projection lamps and flashbulbs or strong electric lights placed a few inches from their eyes; to raindrops, snowflakes and even hailstones hitting the eyeballs directly. They walk with their heads thrown back, necks stretched, gazes fixed heavenward. Thus *their eyes have no protection, but they never blink*.

Absence of wounds. Total absence of any trace of wounds, stings, scratches, eruptions, etc. particularly on the knees and legs, in spite of the brutality of the crash to their knees—as if they were struck down—when they fall into ecstasy. They fall on stones, brick or cement floors of houses, debris of all sorts, and walk on their knees or stand on stones, or among thorny bushes. Examinations have been made on the spot, immediately after the ecstasy, by numerous doctors and many other witnesses.

On the contrary, the needle or pin pricks, the pinches or blows given by the doctors or other observers, never cause any pain, but sometimes leave only miniscule traces.

Absence of fatigue. There are a considerable number of nights during which they have long ecstasies, which would cause an intolerable lack of sleep for a normal person. However, they perform their usual chores during the day. In spite of this, their *health and emotional stability* have never been so good.

After lengthy races, at such speeds that no one can keep up with them, their faces show no sign of fatigue. There are no jitters, no perspiration, their faces are not flushed but rather fresh and composed and there is *not the least trace of shortness of breath. The cardiac rhythm is normal.*

After hours of immobility in difficult postures, no sign of

stiffness is apparent to the witnesses when the girls resume their movements.

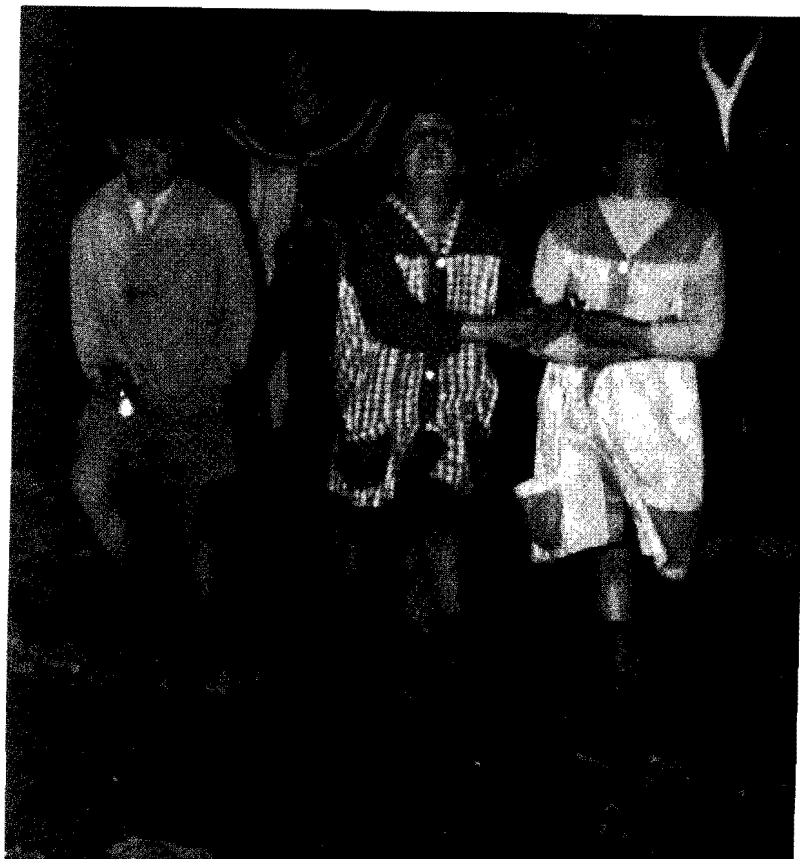
Rapid marches. To anyone watching, the girls' legs appear to be moving at a normal rate of speed, but they move around so rapidly that the strongest and youngest of the followers get tired from chasing them and cannot reach them until the visionaries stop. This causes some witnesses to say they are "flying."

When they do stop, they come to an abrupt, striking halt, without tripping or dragging, whereas those following are carried by the momentum, and find it difficult to stop.

Like all their other movements while in ecstasy, these races are made while their eyes are riveted to the sky, therefore *they are unable to see where they are going*.

Sureness of orientation. They move about without hesitation or groping, usually avoiding any obstacle: while walking, normally or backwards; kneeling down erect or bent over backwards,

Mari Loli, left, and Jacinta during an ecstatic march.



slowly or rapidly; in total darkness or in daylight; while jumping over obstacles of all sorts; in going in or out of houses; while climbing or descending staircases, etc. . . . *without ever looking where they are going—their eyes riveted to the sky.*

Absence of fear. At the time of the first apparitions, the young girls are eleven and twelve years old, though slightly younger mentally. They often go out in the middle of the night to pray peacefully in the cemetery: sometimes together, but more often individually; sometimes accompanied by a small group of people, but other times, all alone.

But whether alone or together, they go all over the village or climb to the pines in the middle of the night—even in storms with thunder and lightning, and mountain storms are particularly fearsome. But *they are never afraid.*

Imperviousness to weather or time of day. They go out not only in good weather, but during snowstorms, in hail or rainstorms, and at any hour. They leave the warmth of their beds to go out, for example, at three o'clock in the morning, in snow or hail, and then walk for many hours (completely oblivious to their surroundings) with expressions of utmost happiness.

Identification of persons. Without ever having seen them before, they name the persons present by their first or last names, their occupations or professions. They indicate the religious state of people dressed as civilians. To certain persons, they give details of their past life, which only those persons are aware of.

They give back objects (blessed by Mary) to their owners, most of whom are unknown to them, and this *without ever making a mistake or looking at the object or at the person to whom they give it.* The objects rendered in such a manner number into the thousands!

It has become a common practice to present objects for Mary's blessing. If, among these objects, there are some which, however long before, have already been blessed by the Virgin, said objects are unerringly refused.

Clairvoyancy. Without hesitation, they find lost objects or indicate the place where such objects can be located. In the houses, their eyes always fixed on their vision, they find religious objects, the existence of which is known only to the owners.

They go to bless certain persons from a group that has just arrived or has just come in from another room, and of whose presence they could have no knowledge.



Without looking, Mari Loli places a wedding ring on the finger of the rightful owner.

Mental telepathy. They give answers, either by words or gestures, to persons who, either in the crowd or completely apart from it, formulate a request mentally (that is, without articulating a word or uttering a sound). While in ecstasy, these answers are usually *immediate, the person's thought being barely formulated.* Sometimes, the answers are given after the ecstasy, with various details.¹

Levitation. Several creditable witnesses have sworn that they have seen the young girls in a state of levitation. Photographs were taken.

¹ Mindreading, and identification of persons seen at a distance, are equivocal manifestations. In fact, the children could not know or be aware of what the Virgin was telling them. This is clearly seen in various depositions and as Conchita herself tells Mother Maria des Nieves in 1966, at the college in Burgos:

"... Some people didn't want to come up to the village because they believed that I could read minds. This made me laugh. How could I read minds? Whatever I told them had been revealed to me by the Virgin..."

"... One day, the Virgin told me that as soon as I have finished talking with her, I should turn toward a couple who were right behind me and tell them, 'Your way of living is not good'. I did it, though it embarrassed me to do so. I know they were very impressed; they started to cry and went to confession that same day. The Blessed Mother ordered me to do things of this sort many times..."

Prophecies. It is known that many have already been fulfilled:
 Announcement of the miracle of the Visible Communion.
 Prediction of their retractions.
 Announcement, long beforehand, of the dates of certain ecstasies.

Synchronization. Isolated, each one in a different house, having no watch or clock, under the eye of the Civil Guard and other witnesses, they rendezvous at the same time, almost to the second, at some spot in the village (which can be a different place each time), and fall in ecstasy simultaneously. This is a common occurrence. They say they are notified by three interior calls—*llamadas*.

Clairvoyance at a distance. While in ecstasy, one of them, isolated from the others, can describe what these others are doing, no matter how far away they are. They can describe events happening at great distances.

Synchronized facial expressions. When the four of them are in ecstasy, their faces express a variety of emotions, depending on what they see or hear. *These changes are simultaneous*; they do not look at one another, or give themselves any signal; any such signal would surely be seen, considering the number and proximity of the observers surrounding them.

Inability to have ecstasies on command. In spite of their desire to see the Virgin more often, and notwithstanding the insistence of the people, they have never been able to provoke an ecstasy on command.

Other. To this list of proofs, we must also add the sudden conversions, the unexplainable cures, the cosmic phenomena, etc.

The reader will discover for himself other signs of credibility, humanly unexplainable, by reading the testimonies of the Garabandal villagers on the following pages.

Medical conclusions. This chapter of credibility signs is ended by listing the conclusions of several medical experts—conclusions which the adversaries of Garabandal systematically ignore.

Dr. Ricardo Puncernau is Neuropsychiatrist, Director of Neurological Services at the University Clinic for General Pathology at Barcelona, assistant professor of the medical faculty, and vice-president of the European Society for Sophrology and Psychosomatic Medicine.

After examining the visionaries for *twelve days*; after having performed a neuropsychological study of the young girls before, during and after the ecstasies; after having them perform psychological intelligence tests and personality tests; after having examined their sensibilities and muscular tones, etc.; after having taken into account that the *ensemble* of the Garabandal phenomena were not caused by conscious or unconscious simulation, hysteria, hallucination, profound hysteria with hysterical autohypnotic obfuscation, by personality problems or psychoses, or parapsychological factors, he concluded: “. . . In the case of Garabandal, even though we try to explain only part of these extraordinary phenomena, the truth is that we do not find any natural scientific explanation which would cover the affair as a whole.”

Dr. Celestino Ortiz Pérez is a pediatrician, living in Santander. After having spent fifty-two days in the village at the time of the ecstasies, he gives his conclusions:

“1. The four little girls, from a pediatric and psychiatric point of view, have always been and continue to be, normal.

2. The trances in which we have observed these young girls do not fit into the framework of any psychic or physiological pathology presently known.

3. Considering the length of time in which the phenomena were observed, had there been any pathological character of any type, we would have detected the indications very easily.

4. In child psychology, normal as well as pathological, I can find no explanation which could present as natural events, phenomena which, according to our present knowledge, escapes all natural reality. Our conceit falls apart when we are faced with this kind of dilemma, such as God bestows on us, to point out our own medical limitations. And all attempts to try and rationalize phenomena which are beyond the rational, are in themselves irrational and absurd.”

Dr. Honorio Sanjuan Nadal microbiologist and neuropsychiatrist, has devoted considerable scientific study to the events at Garabandal. He has shown his documentation to numerous colleagues, and presented his findings to various scientific societies and congresses (International Society of Sophrology and Psychosomatic Medicine, the sixth and seventh Poblet convention, Second International Congress of Psychodrama and Psychotherapy). After mutual consultations and exchanges of opinions in a

professional and objective atmosphere, the majority of judgments agree in not being able to find an explanation for the phenomena according to known natural laws. This point of view is shared by both believers and non-believers alike.

French doctors. At the study sessions organized by Fr. Laffineur in September, 1968, a group of French doctors, after studying these phenomena, concluded that the apparitions are the product of a power absolutely beyond human capabilities, power which is *sudden, unforeseeable, intense, and governing, gifted with knowledge unrelated to that of the receiver, and prophetic*; that many have tried to reproduce artificially an ecstasy, but have never been able to achieve a true ecstatic state or any such similar state (i.e., unforeseeable, sudden, precise, and accompanied by various mystic phenomena which, moreover, upon completion, leave intact the personality and health of the subject—such a state still remains to be realized by man). They affirm the incapacity of the imagination—even with the aid of modern hallucinogens such as LSD, or older ones such as peyote, opium or Indian hemp, or the practice of Yoga—to produce such an intensity, so much independence and freedom; they also recognize that even hypnosis cannot produce such phenomena, and that—in marked contrast to the ecstasies—all these various artifices are dangerous to the individual, with regard to his physical integrity and mental equilibrium.

Dr. Serge Fournier is a general practitioner at Uzerche, Correze, France.

“The phenomena at Garabandal, taken as a whole, constitute a domain which the doctor, general practitioner or specialist, cannot apprehend, except from without. He will go around it, examining and carefully analyzing all the aspects in a long and sometimes complicated procedure, but he will always come back to the starting point and putting aside all pride (and contrary to a certain public but imprudent declaration) shall be obliged to admit *there is no natural explanation for the events of Garabandal.*”

Dr. Apostolides is head physician in the pediatric service at the Hospital Center in Troyes, France. He has met the girls outside their ecstasies, and given his impression in the book, *Star on the Mountain*.

“. . . Fr. Luis Retenaga had told me that one or two physicians, appointed by the Bishop of Santander, had called these

children hysterical, and victims of hallucinations and imagination caused by the great poverty and isolation of any out-of-the-way village, far from the city.

“We pediatricians, sometimes have to deal with young girls (or young boys) whom we call “pithiatiques.”² And we enjoy detecting them within the first few seconds of contact. Their appearance and their gaze reveal to us what conclusions must be drawn.

“Well, I can state that my impression had been very much the contrary in the presence of the young girls. It is rather that of simplicity. There was no affectation, and it still is a wonder to me that, after having been the center of attention and sought after, these children—especially Conchita, who was the most exposed to attention—behaved very modestly and did not try drawing attention to themselves or playing a role, even though they were aware of being the focus of attention and that people travelled thousands of miles to see them.

“Truly, the sincerity of Conchita’s welcome, after what she has had to endure the past several years, is almost miraculous. We may add that even if the numerous trances *were* simulated, and more so if they resulted from natural nervous phenomena, it is still a greater miracle that these girls have remained unchanged!”

2. Pithiatism: A medical term meaning: curable by persuasion or suggestion in reference to a class of conversion hysterical symptoms which can be made to disappear or reappear by means of suggestion. (Stedman’s Medical Dictionary)

Chapter 7

How the Testimonies Were Gathered

Now is the time for the testimonies of the actual eyewitnesses. As is fitting and proper, the religious authorities were the first to receive them. Thus, on October 2, 1971, a list containing extracts of the recordings was addressed to His Excellency Gabino Diaz Merchan, Bishop of Oviedo. On March 10, 1972, the complete file, on tape, was sent to Rome, to the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. On August 18, 1975, in the Bishop's office, Bishop del Val Gallo being absent, Msgr. José Luis Ricondo, Vicar General, was directly handed a complete copy of these recordings. It is hoped that they have been listened to and understood.

Some preliminary remarks are necessary here to underline the strict methods used in gathering the testimonies of the witnesses.

Questioning Not Selective

The mode of questioning was not selective. There was no intention to search out those who were "for" or reject those who were "against." The inquiries began—without knowing any of the Garabandal residents—going door-to-door to gather even the smallest detail experienced.

Those Who Refused to Have Their Testimony Recorded

Only a few people were encountered who refused to have their testimony recorded. These are: Mari Cruz' mother; Mari Loli's parents; the former president of the Agricultural Association; a young lady, originally from the village, who was in Garabandal on vacation; two young girls living in Garabandal, whose names we do not know; the pastor, Fr. Valentin Marichalar.

In spite of all our efforts, which were very great, three per-

sons among the witnesses, who deny the supernatural origin of the events have categorically refused to have their declarations recorded. Their decision is deeply regretted.

Mari Cruz's mother talked for an hour, with an intense passion which seemed to be the outward expression of a great internal suffering. While her words were listened to sympathetically and with respect, she was not very convincing. The gist of her argument can be summarized as follows:

"Everything was a hoax. The children arranged everything and the witnesses in the village were deceived on account of their religious and intellectual ignorance."

But the total absence of precise details to support her declarations failed to arouse the slightest doubt. The pattern in her arguments was recognized as the same used by the young priests who succeeded one another in the village and who had been sent by Santander to eradicate all ideas of the supernatural from the minds of the Garabandal inhabitants.

The same arguments were found in the course of an interview with the former president of the Agricultural Association who does not deny the facts, but only their divine origin.

The young lady who was vacationing in the village—despite the fact that her mother saw the miracle of the Visible Communion—denies very strongly any celestial origin, but cannot give any natural explanation for these phenomena.

Of all the people we met, these are the only three who have denied, not the phenomena, but their supernatural origin.

The two young girls, previously mentioned, showed signs of great timidity which prevented them from making any declaration either for or against.

Mari Loli's parents do not deny in any way the facts or their divine origin, but they refuse to make any declaration. They said that, in the past, some words which they spoke in good faith in front of people who seemed to be trustworthy, were distorted, deliberately or not, and this has caused them some concern.

The former pastor of Garabandal. There remains the former pastor of Cosio, Fr. Valentin Marichalar, who was also in charge of San Sebastian de Garabandal. Through obedience to his Bishop, and after having hesitated for a long time, he preferred not to make any recorded declaration. But he talked at length. It is thought that he is the man best informed on everything that has happened in Garabandal. In fact, he baptized the four girls, gave them catechism lessons, prepared them for their first Holy Com-

munion, and was present at almost all their ecstasies up until 1962 when he was transferred. Very often, when the apparitions first began, as soon as the girls were out of their ecstasies, he would ask them to come into the church and would question them, one by one, without giving them time to consult one another. This is important to note, because if they had tried to prepare their answers prior to the ecstasy (and taking into account their young age, and the fact that they were ignorant as to the questions which were going to be asked) it would have been difficult for them not to have compromised themselves. Moreover, Fr. Marichalar heard the children's confessions and he was the first one to notify the Santander bishopric.

Fr. Marichalar admits all the events and does not find any explanation for them in the natural order of things.

On the fifth or sixth day after the first ecstasy, he went to the Santander bishopric, asking that they send him doctors and competent priests because he felt that the events occurring in his parish were beyond his capacities. The Bishop answered him:

"... All this is not very serious. You will see ... all this will soon die down. Do not pay too much attention to it ... keep an eye open, in any case, but above all, do not worry ..." And he came back from Santander "empty handed."

Fr. Marichalar insists quite firmly upon the fact that, contrary to what was said at the beginning, "... there was nobody, absolutely nobody, and above all certainly not I, who could have 'manipulated' the young girls during the course of the so-called apparitions ..."

He gives his assurances that should he die before the case of Garabandal is definitely clarified, his testimony would not be lost, for he has written a very detailed account and has deposited it for safekeeping.

As far as the Santander Commission is concerned, they did not bother with him very much, or as Fr. Marichalar says, "*Pin-taba yo menos que un cero a la izquierda ...*" (I had less importance than a zero to the left of a number.) One regrets, oh! so much! ... the silence of this priest. (Ed. Note: Since these lines were written, the situation has changed considerably. So much so, that now Fr. Valentin gives public testimony. It is known that he has also been received in Rome by high personages. In an interview granted to *Needles* magazine on June 15, 1976, Fr. Valentin declares: "[But] ... I have never been interrogated by the Bishop ...")

A Very Interesting Sampling

If it is taken into account the fact that in 1971, the population of Garabandal was about 300 inhabitants, including children, it could be claimed, according to the principle of modern techniques for estimating public opinion, that with a sampling of forty adults, the result of the inquiry would reflect the thought of the majority of the village population. Well, in this case, almost the entire adult population has agreed to speak. First of all, it should be emphasized that apart from a few details, their testimonies agree. These people have all actually "seen the same thing."

At the time of this inquiry, six years have elapsed since the last ecstasies. The witnesses have forgotten exact dates and mix up some of the details, which is to be expected of people who did not take down any written notes, and who, carried away by the course of such unusual events, did not think that one day they would be asked for some precise testimonies. Memories fade with the passage of time.

It's regrettable that the Santander Commission did not gather these testimonies on the spot; the details would have been more numerous and more precise. A diary, kept day by day, with a description of each ecstasy, summary of the words spoken by the visionaries, photographs, well classified proofs of credibility, names and addresses of witnesses and those who received special favors, etc., would be, today, a very precious document.

The Questionnaire

The inhabitants of the village, were met and questioned at random. But it would have been preferable to have conducted the same inquiries, had it been possible, with the thousands—yes, thousands—of people who came from the four corners of Spain and from other countries, and who have seen authentic signs.

The manner in which this inquiry has been conducted is surely very debatable and apologies are extended to those who would like to use this as a work document. The interviewers and reporters were not professionals, and pressed for time, were obliged to improvise a questionnaire which would have been much more effective had there been more time to work on it.

In fact, the first conversations recorded, seemed to be rather incomplete, and in order to ensure, in some way, that the witnesses not leave anything out, a questionnaire was devised which

would hopefully cover all the events which occurred at the village. The basic idea was as follows:

- a. Yes or no—did events out of the ordinary take place in Garabandal? If yes, which ones?
- b. The witnesses to these events—were they victims of collective hallucination, or of a fraud perpetrated by the young girls, either because said girls simulated, or because they were themselves victims of their own imagination?

It is with the existence and nature of these events (called here “signs of credibility”) that the inquiry is concerned. Of course it is left to the religious and scientific experts the responsibility of determining and proving whether these signs are of human, divine or satanic origin. However, the author’s convictions are unshakable, for the Lord having willed, in His mercy, to grant “clear and unmistakable” personal signs of His presence in the village, it cannot but be repeated: “Mary has really appeared in Garabandal.”

The Twenty Five Questions

1. *Name, age, profession, address.*

It seemed important that the witnesses take responsibility for their statements and that no deposition be given anonymously. Besides, it was necessary to be able to locate easily these people for subsequent follow-up.

2. *Do you know the young girls well? Prior to the ecstasies, how did they behave in the village? Like other girls, or differently?*

This question would reveal if these people, who were intimately acquainted with the visionaries, had noticed in them a tendency to simulation, mysticism, or behavior of a pathological nature, which could not have gone unnoticed in an isolated village where everyone knows everyone else’s business.

3. *In what circumstances did you first hear about these alleged apparitions, and when you heard about them, how did you react?*

The point of this question was to know if the villagers were in a state of mind and soul apt to accept or to create a collective hallucinatory phenomenon of some kind of mystical nature. Were they “conditioned”?

4. *Do you remember the first ecstasy you saw? Can you describe it? Where did it take place? In front of how many persons? Were the four girls there?*

5. *What did you feel at the time, while seeing them in ecstasy for the first time?*

6. *At the precise moment you witnessed the first ecstasy, did you have the sensation that the children were playing a game, that they were simulating, or that they were sick?*

If the witnesses were not “conditioned,” their initial reactions upon viewing the first ecstasy could have been very significant; this is the reason for questions 4, 5 and 6.

7. *Approximately how many ecstasies did you see after the first?*

8. *Did the ecstasies always last for the same length of time? Did they always happen at the same spot? At the same time? On the same day? On the same date? In the presence of the same people? In the presence of the same number of people? In the presence of the villagers only or of strangers also?*

9. *Describe the physical aspect of the faces of the four girls during an ecstasy.*

10. *After the ecstasies, did you notice shortness of breath or abnormal signs of fatigue, nervousness, stiffness, perspiration, flushing, etc. on the faces of the girls?*

The meaning of these last two questions was clear, for as Dr. Ortiz, pediatrician, stated: “. . . Due to the length of time during which the phenomena took place, if there had been a pathological nature of some sort, we would have easily been able to detect symptoms.”

11. *Did you ever touch or try to lift one of the girls while they were in ecstasy?*

The point of this question was to know, by cross-checking, whether the sensations pertaining to the change of weight and physical consistency agreed or not.

12. *Did you see them move around while in ecstasy?*

13. *When they did move around, did they do it fast? Could you follow them easily?*

14. *Did they ever go into your house while in ecstasy?*

15. *Did you participate in the tests which consisted in separating the four girls after their alleged ‘calls’ to see what was going to happen later?*

16. *Can you tell us anything about the objects which they handed to their vision to be kissed, and what happened afterwards?*

17. *Have you ever seen them in a state of levitation?*

18. *Around the middle of August, 1961, some people claimed*

to have seen some cosmic phenomena. Did you see anything? What about June 18, 1965?

19. About the middle of June, 1962, there were two memorable nights. Can you comment on that? Were you there?

20. On the next day, did you go to confession and Holy Communion?

21. Concerning the miracle of the Visible Communion, did you hear it announced beforehand? By whom, and when?

22. Were you present at the Visible Communion, called the miracle “de la forma” or “milagruco?”

23. Have you ever been called or interrogated by the Commission of Santander? The answers to this question held many surprises in store for the interviewers.

24. During the first year of the apparitions, some people claim to have heard the girls, while in ecstasy, answer their vision as follows: “. . . How could we say one day that we have not seen you, when we are seeing you now? . . .”—or words to that effect. Did you actually hear the children say that?

25. Do you have anything else to add?

In the depositions you are about to read on the following pages, the questions have been left out, leaving only the answers under small sub-headings, for easier reading.

Great importance is attached to Question No. 8, for it was necessary to show if there had to be uniformity of circumstances or *milieu* in order to create or encourage the ecstasies or phenomena or “collective hallucinations.” If it appeared that the visionaries could not enact their role, or the witnesses could not perceive the signs except under given circumstances, the whole thing would be suspect.

Inversely, if it were proven that they entered into ecstasy under any kind of conditions, that would be something to think about.

Let us examine some of the facts that emerged in answer to Question No. 8.

No one particular type of witness. They consist of peasants, doctors, professionals, businessmen, photographers, journalists, etc. . . . a very diversified socio-economic group; young men, old men, young ladies, old women, teenagers, children and young adults . . . thus varied ages.

No particular number of witnesses. We see the girls alone in ecstasy, without spectators; with two or three members of their

families; with a small group of villagers; foreigners; with considerable crowds—as many as a thousand or more at times; hence, a variable number of witnesses.

Different girls at different times. In some ecstasies there is only one visionary, and others there are two, three, or four. Other times, the four of them are there in ecstasy, but they are at a distance from one another, without any natural means of seeing or hearing one another. The most striking case is when Conchita (who is in Santander, thirty-five miles from Garabandal), has an ecstasy at the exact moment the other girls do, although they had been separated for many days.

Also, although the ecstasies began for all the children on the same day, at the same time, and at the same place (in the *calleja* on June 18, 1961, at 8:30 p.m.), they ceased for each girl at a different time. We will see that Mari Cruz is the first girl to stop having ecstasies, followed later by Jacinta and Mari Loli, with Conchita alone, continuing to have them until 1965.

There is marked autonomy for each girl.

No particular place within the village. Ecstasies occur at the *calleja*, at the pines, in the lanes, in all the houses, in the church, on the doorstep of the church, and in the cemetery . . . not to mention Conchita’s ecstasy in Santander.

No particular hour. Although most of the ecstasies occurred in the evening or during the night, ecstasies have occurred at almost every hour of the day.

No particular day, date or climate. Ecstasies take place on any day of the week, date of the year, in any season, under the sun, in the rain, in snow, wind or hail, in thunderstorms or in nice weather.

Different durations. Some ecstasies last only ten, twenty or thirty minutes, others from two to five hours, and one lasting seven hours, with only one interruption (for breakfast).

No pattern in the rhythm or frequency of the ecstasies. There are some days when three or four ecstasies take place, and others when there are none.

Taking the four years as a whole, there is a gradual progression in the frequency of apparitions, reaching a peak around the fourteenth or fifteenth month, followed by a rapid decline, especially for three of the visionaries, after which the ecstasies continued for Conchita, on an intermittent basis. Thus, a vari-



While in Garabandal during August, 1971 to conduct his interviews with the villagers, Ramon Pérez was pictured with Elaine Henry (left), an American visitor to the village and Conchita's mother, Aniceta.

Chapter 8

The Testimonies

able number of ecstasies take place during that time.

To these remarks concerning the absence of uniformity in circumstances or ambience favorable to the onset of an ecstasy, should be added also absence of a “ringleader” or manipulator intervening between the visionaries and the crowd. No one, not even the Commission, has accused anyone of having played that role. The pastor, Fr. Valentin Marichalar is firm on that point.

Also, the amazing number of ecstasies should not be overlooked. Each one of the witnesses in the village say they were present at more than 200 ecstasies. They were not all present at the same ones, some having gone to the pastures, some in bed, or elsewhere. None of them individually was able to see all of the four girls' ecstasies.

The ages of the witnesses given are the ages that they were when the interviews were conducted in 1971. Many of the photos are recent and each is marked with the date it was taken.



1971 PHOTO

Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva (44), pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows, Barro (Llanes), Asturias. Personally witnessed approximately 200 ecstasies in Garabandal which he tells of in his book, “Memoirs of a Spanish Country Pastor.”

The interview was conducted on August 5, 1971, in his office at Barro.

Concerning the latest developments relative to the apparitions at Garabandal, there is one detail which I think is very important in order to demonstrate that the Holy Office has not as yet taken a position, either for or against, regarding the events in that village. In fact, my own archbishop, Gabino Díaz Merchán, on May 21 of this year, 1971, in a private conversation lasting half an hour at Llanes, after having directed a spiritual retreat for

the priests in our archdiocese, told me that the Holy Office was asking him for certain information and particulars concerning Garabandal, of which he was ignorant, but that he knew I had published a book in English on the subject. I told him that the one which had been translated into French was much more important as it contained some significant documents.

This conversation, which we can consider as a direct and official intervention from the Holy Office, through the intermediary of the archbishop, in order to secure information, clearly shows the Holy See has not closed its file, as some people imagine and have even published, but rather that Rome continues to accept relevant documentation for and against which will one day permit the Holy Office to pronounce a definite judgment to which I, as a loyal son of our Holy Mother Church, will submit.¹

It is the first time that I have been officially (although privately) asked for some documents on what I have seen as an eyewitness. The Santander Commission has never acted that way with me.

I have a letter in which the Archbishop of Oviedo thanks me for the documentation supplied. This letter is dated June 11, 1971, on the letterhead of the archdiocese. You can read it below and you can see that he signed it himself.

Oviedo, June 11, 1971

Reverend Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva
Pastor of Barro
Llanes

Very esteemed José Ramón, in Our Lord,

I have received your amiable letter dated May 1, 1971, and the tape recording as well as two copies in French of your book on Garabandal. I sent one of these to the Apostolic Nuncio in Spain.

I am very grateful to you for having addressed this documentation to me and I highly appreciate your reiterated affirmation of filial submission to the Magisterium of the Church.

I recommend myself to your prayers and I pray to Our Lord and His Holy Mother for you.

Your affectionate and devoted servant in Jesus.

(signed) Gabino, Archbishop of Oviedo

1. In his official note, dated June 1970 (see page 65) Bishop Cirarda Lachiondo attempted to write "finis" to the discussions which have arisen concerning Garabandal. Scarcely one year after this note, the request from Bishop Gabino Diaz Merchan clearly indicates that the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith does not consider this affair closed.

I wish to emphasize the fact that by the above letter, the said archbishop informs me he has duly received the documents I addressed to him. But I sent these documents only after having talked with him on May 21, 1971, as I stated before and that was during a retreat at Llanes. On the day I saw him, although he does not mention it in his letter, I talked with him for half an hour and I thought it important to send him, besides the two books, a tape recording so as to give him some first hand information.

That tape contained:

- A recording of a conference by Rev. Fr. Ramón María Andreu, S.J. which he gave at Palma de Mallorca, in front of a very learned audience of priests, religious, nuns and laity.
- Direct testimony from Benjamin Gomez on the extraordinary event of the Visible Communion given Conchita on July 18, 1962, by the Archangel.
- One Our Father, one Act of Contrition, and three Hail Marys recited by Conchita while in ecstasy.

I think this is something the archbishop should possess, as he requests documentation. We also sent him a recording including extracts of the depositions you are about to read. He has acknowledged receipt of same by letter on November 2, 1971, and said that he had listened to the tapes with great interest.

Secondly, it was on July 2, 1962, that Conchita informed me regarding the *milagru* while she, her three companions and myself were all at the pines. Conchita had promised to tell me what the *milagru* would consist of. Although I was understandably tempted by curiosity, I told her that if it were a secret, she should not tell me. She then announced to the other girls: "We are going to tell him!" It is then that I separated the four girls, and the four of them told me the same thing: "We are going to see the Host!"

They did not give me the date of that future miracle because they were still ignorant of it, but they added that if I were still in Garabandal when the Angel informed them about it, they would let me know.

I left at 6 p.m. on July 5; they had given me the above information on July 2. Therefore, I left without knowing the date.

I have not been able to find out why Fr. Valentin prevented Conchita from writing any more letters to people informing them of the date of the miracle of the Visible Communion, while telling her: "We will all be informed in another manner."

As far as supposing that the children conspired to tell me what

the little miracle *el milagruco* would consist of, I can declare that I did not give them time to do so, unless they had pre-planned it long beforehand but that would not be normal for such young girls.

I mention this because in my book, *Memoirs*, I warned that they attempted to simulate some ecstasies. This was because of the pressure from the crowds eager to see an ecstasy when there was no real ecstasy forthcoming. However, these false ecstasies were easily detected. I became aware of them immediately, told the girls directly, and they didn't repeat it.

As to the possibility of an imaginative game by the four girls for the purpose of deceiving people and taking into account the number of people who came to Garabandal this is something that cannot even be seriously considered. It would have been too easy to discover the trick, as there were so many qualified people coming from all social, religious and cultural backgrounds. Sometimes there was an extraordinary number of people. On October 18, 1961, for instance, we counted more than 5,000.

It goes without saying that I confirm everything I have written in my book; they are my personal experiences in Garabandal. I had no other intention at the time but to record actual and totally historical facts. At the beginning, I didn't think they could interest anyone but myself, but I've been strongly encouraged to publish them.

I would like to finish by stating that I firmly believe the events to be authentic; however, the final judgment belongs to the Church to which I am submitting myself in advance: I want to make that clear.

We must accomplish the Message. This is the most important thing. The prophecies concerning the Warning and the great Miracle will be fulfilled the same way Conchita's previous prophecies were realized. I think the time of these events is getting near.

The young girls' opinion is of no importance concerning the events which have taken place in Garabandal and which have been studied by competent people. As we know, even in the first months of 1961, the children were declaring that, according to what the Virgin had announced, there would come a time when they would doubt, would contradict themselves and would deny. And that I can attest to, as I one day heard Conchita and Mari Loli in ecstasy, exclaim: "How could we say we did not see you, when we are seeing you now?"



1971 PHOTO

*Ciriaco Cosio (59), shepherd.
Conchita's uncle. Ciriaco died in 1972.*

First reactions. I don't remember the date, but one day just as I came home from work, my wife came in and said,

"Do you know what is happening in the village?"

"Well, no, I couldn't know it, because I was working in the woods at the top of the mountain."

She told me,

"They are saying that the Virgin is appearing to four young girls."

And I answered her,

"Listen, get away with you! Don't come and tell me these stories, because for me, that's all they are—stories! . . . You're always talking about saints, as if you wanted to multiply their number, so don't tell me any more about it."

After having said that, I didn't think any more about it, and she didn't bother me any more about the young girls. But days passed, and on the mountain where I was working with a few companions, we got to talking about all these things and we decided to speed up our work so as to finish it as quickly as possible and then be able to go see the young girls.²

At the time we decided to go down and see the children, maybe eight or ten days had passed since the first apparitions took place; I then came back home with my companions. I washed myself and then, because there were many people outside, instead of climbing by the *calleja*, I went up through the meadows and I tried to stand in a spot where I could see the young girls. It was a little distant, but I could distinguish them very well.

Seeing them in ecstasy . . . well, I was certainly very impressed . . . much impressed . . . it even made me cry. I was crying . . . I went back home and said to my wife,

"Well, for me, this is no good. It is not for me if it's going to make me suffer . . ."

Because this had made me grief-stricken! It was something I had never seen. Later on, Conchita came to our house. I talked with her and she told me,

"Don't worry. For me, it is the greatest happiness I can have, when I am seeing the Blessed Virgin."

2. Certain jobs necessitate the men being away for many days, either in the pastures or in the woods. They take shelter at night in the 'winter quarters' high above the village.

"Ah! well, if it is good for you, then it's good for me too."

After that, I followed the apparitions whenever I could, not that I am a curious man. I always tried to place myself where the girls would pass by or where they were in ecstasy; there, they were standing motionless . . . I did not care much to run behind them because of the number of people who were there. I did not want to dodge between all those people.

Number of ecstasies. After that, many days passed and I saw things which I can swear to, as true as my name is Ciriaco! . . . Things that neither I nor anybody else could be able to perform. Above all, certainly not young girls as they were. And not even an adult, whether it be a well educated person or not . . . they were moving backward or forward, as if they were not using their heads or their eyes to guide themselves; they were going backward better than I can go forward, and this even in the middle of the night, through very bad paths.

I would say that I have seen 70, 80, or 100 ecstasies. For sure, I can't remember the exact number. I followed the children every day whenever I could, although I was not among those who talked or ran with them. They were in ecstasy here and there . . . Sometimes we exchanged places with people who came from far away, because for us, we could see the young girls often, but for them, maybe they had made many sacrifices in order to be here.

Bodily changes. I only touched Conchita one time while she was in ecstasy . . . it gave me a funny sensation . . . like something which was . . . how can I say? . . . For me, it was like something dead which we take hold of . . . but without being able to move it. This is what I noted with Conchita. I never touched the others.

Cures. With Conchita, something happened to me, which I will explain, and which should interest you and other persons as well.

At that time, I was working at Lugo, in Galicia. I can't remember the day, but it was in July. And at the time I was about to come back to the village, I cut my leg quite deeply. All my companions were coming back home, and for me, in order not to have to stay there, in case that would displease my wife, I went to see a doctor, hoping that he could treat the wound so as to permit me to go back to the village. Then, he treated me and I was able to come back home within a few days. The wound didn't look too bad. Upon my arrival, Dr. Guñon examined me and the leg seemed well enough, but afterwards it started to

pain me again, for I had hit the bone when I hurt it, and that was very painful. Meanwhile, as I was going to the cafe one Sunday, I met Conchita who said to me,

“Don’t you know, uncle, that there is going to be a miracle?”³

“*Hombre!* (I answered) that would not be bad.”

She replied,

“To make you believe in the apparitions.”

“Well, who said I didn’t believe?”

But she continued,

“Yes, but you will believe more afterwards.”

So I retorted,

“Good, this is very well and the Virgin has authorized you to publicly announce it?”

“Yes, she did.”

“Well, this is all right.”

I didn’t question her any more or say anything else, and neither did she.

On July 18, 1962, when Conchita was to receive the visible Holy Communion, my leg was getting very bad, but for sure there was a large number of people waiting . . . waiting to see; and I was one of them. I couldn’t stay in bed, but I wasn’t able to go among the crowd or walk through the village . . . I was suffering too much. Well, the miracle happened and before I knew it, Conchita had already received Holy Communion, and me, I had not been able to see any part of it! All I know and all I can say is that on that day, I had unbearable pains in my leg and the next morning when I got up, the pains were all gone. Since then, I have never suffered from that wound. That’s all I can say; it was a very deep cut, right to the bone, but since the day following the miracle of the Visible Host, I have not suffered any more.

Nights of terror. I was not present at the nights of terror.

Cosmic phenomena. I never saw the celestial phenomena. I looked up when the people exclaimed about them, but I didn’t see anything.

Well acquainted with visionaries. For sure, I knew the young girls well . . . I am Conchita’s uncle.

I do not think they have ever simulated (an ecstasy), but I prefer not to go into this kind of discussion.

Crowds. Yes, I saw considerable crowds here: 8,000 to 10,000 persons; I can assure you there were many people. In my house alone, on certain days, there was no room, either upstairs or downstairs.

Facial aspects. As soon as the ecstasies were over, their faces would become as normal as mine, or even more normal. You would think by their behavior, that nothing had happened; it was a very natural facial expression . . . nothing strange upon their faces, even though, at the beginning, some ecstasies lasted fourteen or sixteen minutes.

All the villagers were witnesses. All the villagers have seen the young girls’ ecstasies, unless some persons were absent from the village during that period of time.

Santander Commission. No, I have never been interrogated by the Commission from Santander, no, never . . . not by anyone.

3. This confirms that the miracle had been announced.

The Santander Commission. No, I have never been interrogated by the Santander Commission, nor by anybody else.

Transfigured faces. At the beginning of the ecstasies, the faces of the young girls would become precious like fine marble . . . delicate, radiant, and very beautiful. After the ecstasy, there was no sign of fatigue; they were normal, much more refreshed than we, who had run behind them! Sometimes we could not even keep up with them, they ran so much . . . so much.

Visits in the homes. One night, Conchita and Jacinta came here, into my house; it must have been two o'clock in the morning, and as I was looking after my baby, I didn't go to the door. There was a knock.

"Who is knocking?"

No one answered, but they knocked again.

"Unless you answer, I will not open the door."

Someone said,

"Open! These are the young girls."

I opened the door, the girls made a sign of the cross on a religious engraving which I have, they gave me a holy picture, went to put another holy picture under the pillow of my little Maria Feliza and left without ever saying one word. It happened many times that they went into the houses; I believe that they went into all the houses in the village at one time or another.

Sentiment of respect. I never touched them during the ecstasies. We could have easily done so at the *calleja* where we first saw them thus, but we felt such an impression . . . like a presence, which commanded respect, and so strong, that we could not touch them, nor look straight at them.

Cosmic phenomena. I have never seen any phenomena in the sky.

Blessed objects. One day, one of the young girls was in ecstasy and I saw a person coming behind her and giving her, over the shoulder, a ring without the girl being able to see who was giving it. The girl handed it to her Vision, then I saw her giving back the object to the person, putting it on her finger, without making any mistake. And this sort of thing I witnessed many times.



1980 PHOTO

Aurelia Gonzalez Cosio (50), Ciriaco's wife and Conchita's aunt. Aurelia has never left the village.

Number of ecstasies. I have seen many ecstasies . . . many. I used to go often with the young girls. In the beginning, the ecstasies affected us very much, to such an extent that we used to cry and shout.

1976 PHOTO

Serafin Gonzalez (37), proprietor of a boarding house in Garabandal. Married and the father of a family, Serafin is Conchita's oldest brother.

Profession. Here, in order to make a living, one must do a little bit of everything. I have a boarding house which I have remodeled lately to accommodate nine guests. I started it a month and a half ago. I look after visitors, so that they may eat and have a place to sleep, and that enables me to earn a *douro* (about five Spanish pesetas). I also own pastures and cows.

First reactions. Well, you see, when the apparitions started, I was working in the forest, over the mountains in Leon and upon arriving at the train station, I met a young fellow, who had been in the service with me and we knew each other. He greeted me and said,

“Hey! Tell me what’s going on in your village?”

“I don’t know; I am only returning home this very moment.”

He answered,

“They say that the Virgin will appear. I think a lot of people are going there.”

“Oh, I don’t know. This is the first I’ve heard about it.”

And I started to laugh. I didn’t believe it. But right after, I went into an establishment in Torrelavega, where I knew the people very well, and the owner started to talk to me about the same subject, and I told him,

“Look, I don’t know anything about it; we just came down from the mountains at this very moment and are going back home.”

My family had not written me, or rather, it seems that they did write, but the letter did not reach me. This means that my family had never talked to me about it. Then the man in the cafe started to speak to me again about it and I replied,

“Listen, this is just a joke . . . it can’t be serious. But if there is something . . . what could it be?”



He told me also that there was a matter of four young girls, one of whom was the daughter of the inn keeper in the village; he didn't know the identity of the three others. Therefore he didn't give me the name of my sister. I left there and went to one of my uncles at Torrelavega, then to a festival at Cartes, which was near by, with my brother, because we were together. And there, at the festival, I learned that one of the girls was my sister and they gave me some details. After that, I became uneasy; I was anxious to get to the village and find out what was going on.

Early the next morning, we left for the village. We arrived at Cosio at nightfall. My brother and I started to climb toward Garabandal, but we couldn't make any headway because there were too many people all along the road . . . many, many people. We did not know what was going on, neither my brother Miguel (who is now in America), nor myself.

When we arrived home, Conchita and my mother told us everything. And I said,

“Well, we will see what is happening here . . .”

The next day, an ecstasy took place and I saw it. I must say that for me who was seeing an ecstasy for the first time in my life, when I saw it happen right in front of my own eyes and they were saying that it was the Virgin, that it was a thing from God . . . as soon as I saw it, I said,

“For sure, there is no doubt.”

I felt this way because of the way I was seeing my sister, I who knew her and the way we were in the village. When we were small, as soon as strangers arrived in the village, we would stare at them; we were not accustomed to seeing people. And here was Conchita not paying any attention to them! . . . For her, at that moment, the world did not exist. So I thought,

“There must surely be something because these young girls are not used to seeing so many people, and yet the world did not exist for them any more . . . Impossible! They do not pay any attention. As far as I was concerned, this was something impossible. It must be from God as they say. In truth, they must be seeing the Virgin.”

Days went by. We listened to what a man said, coming from somewhere else; also to what somebody else said; everyone gave his or her opinion; time passed and finally they took Conchita to Santander.



Serafin follows the ecstasy behind his sister, Conchita (center), and Jacinta. Mari Loli is on the left.

Conchita in Santander. The members of the Commission talked to her, questioned her; they even told her that all this was but a fable, that she should not pay any attention to it (they scolded her a bit), that if she came back to Garabandal, the people would be coming back in ever increasing numbers. They said that it was . . . something—I don't know how to say it— . . . collective, yes, that's it! . . . a collective hallucination, something of that sort. They also told her that if she came back here, she would have more and more ecstasies and there would also be many other people falling into ecstasy; but the contrary happened. She came back from Santander, and it was at that time that the ecstasies stopped for a month or two, with the exact dates the girls had given.

Prophecies. There was no doubt possible for me, that all this was from God. As the years went by, all the messages, all that they had predicted from 1961 to 1963 until today, in 1971, everything has come true to the letter. And they didn't know what things were going to be like today in 1971.

The young girls said, among other things (in 1961, 1962 and 1963) that priests would be on the road to perdition, taking many souls with them; that fashions would also drag souls to

the infernal fire; that we had to dress decently if we wanted to be saved.

Well, in the world today, we dress indecently. With regard to priests, it is easy to see that some of them are going in the wrong direction, although there are still some very good ones. Yes, that's the way it is now, but in 1961, '62 or '63 nobody could have guessed what was going to be happening today in 1971. I don't believe we could have foreseen it, and the visionaries even less so, because they were very naive! From where could they learn all that? Nobody taught them; we had not prepared them either. The intelligence my sister had when she was a child, would be about equal to mine. We had received the same amount of education. Today she is intelligent, she is quick, but at that time, she had the same intelligence I had; she had attended the same school, nothing more.

I am sure beyond all doubt, that all the prophecies from Conchita will be fulfilled.

The Commission. The Santander Commission has never summoned me; it is as if I didn't exist.

Stellar phenomena. Yes, one time I noticed something in the sky, one time only. I can't explain it. It was still a little bright, not quite dark yet; we were coming down from the pines. The young girls had just come out of an ecstasy. I don't remember if all four were there. All of a sudden, they fell into ecstasy a second time, while they continued to walk . . . I don't know how to explain it. It was like a light, like a globe which passed over the mountain and which I did not see again. Something very fast. That has intrigued me a lot, because I've often seen stars which leave a long tail behind them, but that, I had never seen. I was very astonished. I saw it, but it was very quick, it was as if it had been ignited with flames.

Number of ecstasies. I don't know how many ecstasies I've seen; I saw many . . . many; sometimes in the presence of a big crowd, sometimes alone . . . especially in winter. It was then that my mother and myself had to accompany Conchita in ecstasy, around two or three o'clock in the morning, while snow fell on very bad nights, to walk through all the village, to climb up to the pines, to come down, and when the ecstasy was over, to come back home, my mother, Conchita and myself . . . we alone.

Lack of wounds. And her face had a normal look, nothing ever abnormal. I have often accompanied my sister and her friends

during ecstasies when they were running or coming down from the pines, backwards, or on their knees. I remember one day I followed Conchita who was coming from the pines, backwards, and on her knees, and I was very worried and said to myself,

“She is going to destroy her knees and there is nothing I can do about it until it is over.”

Upon arriving home, I said to her,

“Show me your knees.”

Nothing! They were completely unmarked!

One day, some witnesses from the village and other parts of Spain, one of whom was the Duque de Infante and his wife, and another man who was an army captain and his wife (I don't remember the name), myself, and a few others, saw Conchita in ecstasy.

At that time, the three other girls were already starting to retract while my sister was coming down from the pines, backwards and on her knees, all the way down the lane and as far as here (Serafin's house is at the very beginning of the lane). I have seen many, many phenomena of that kind which are impossible to explain.

Never will the Bishop of Santander be able to make me believe that it was natural, because for me what is white, nobody can make me see as black. I can tell the whole world that, as far as I am concerned, this is something from God. Surely I believe and I am expecting what has been predicted. Now, if the Bishop comes and tells me that this does not come from God, I will tell him,

“It is possible, but it is not natural either. And, knowing it can't be natural, and knowing that God exists, as well as the Blessed Virgin, I will tell him always that this is something from God.”

For me there is no doubt.

1980 PHOTO

Rosa Cosio (52), widow with twelve children. Rosa works in the fields.

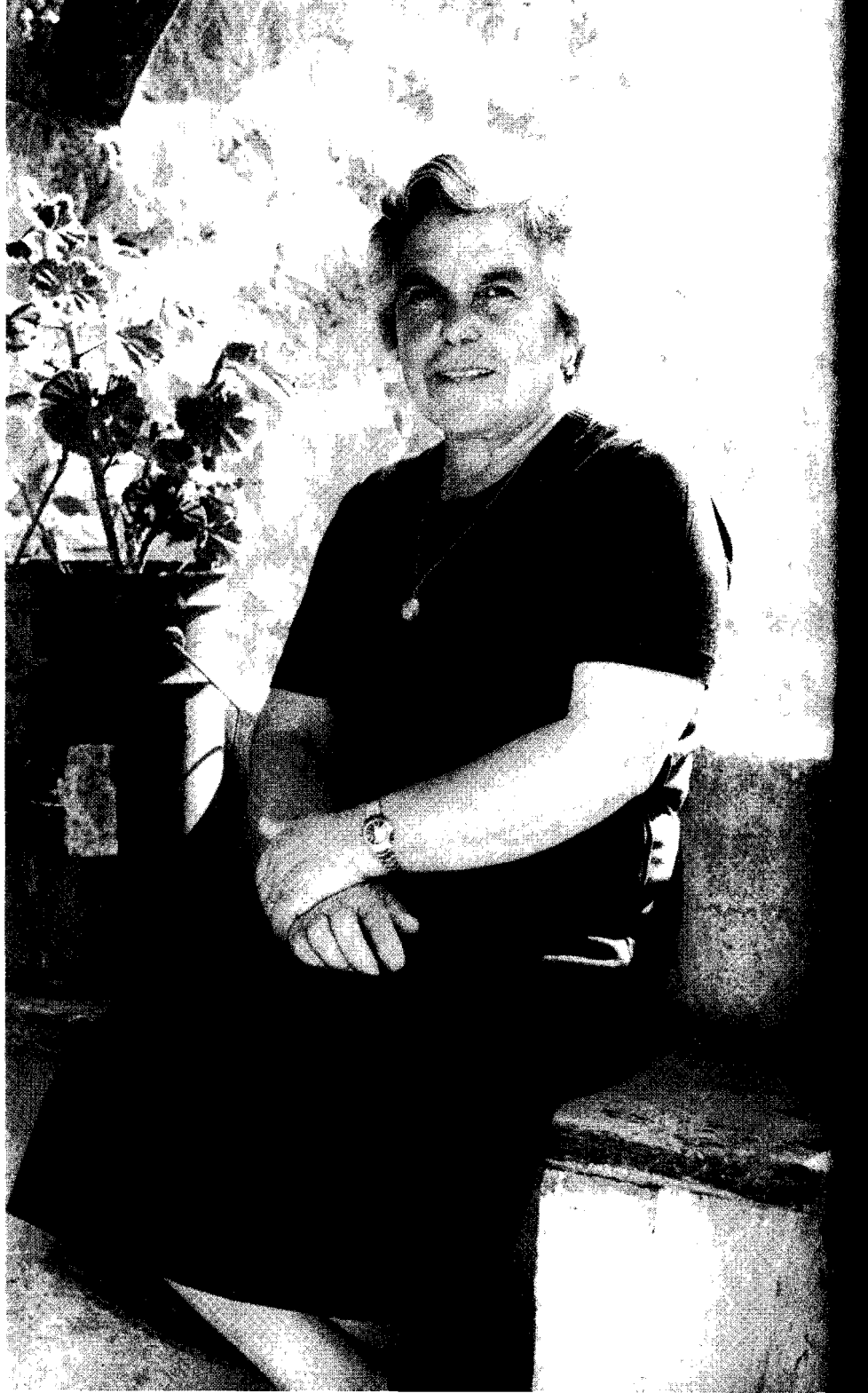
First reactions. I do not remember who first talked to me about this affair, but they were saying that while picking some apples, the young girls saw an angel.

I took this for a joke. For sure, I laughed; I laughed very much. I didn't even bother going to see what it was. I waited at least eight days before budging, and even at that, it was only because I saw other people running there, otherwise I wouldn't have moved. What finally decided me was that I own some sheep which were in a stable located near the place where the girls were having their ecstasies. I saw the men running, and there was nothing else for me to do but to run myself. And I did see some astonishing things! . . . but . . . as I have never seen the Virgin . . . (me, I think I would be more apt to see the devil!) But, in short, there were things which I had never seen before. I can't say whether these things came from the Virgin, from God or from the world . . . that, I can't say . . . but they were things which I had never seen, for sure. You understand, we had never left this village, we never tore ourselves away from these stones . . . how would I know?

Transfigured faces. I have seen them with their faces completely transformed (at least it looked that way; whether they really were, this I can't say). But, how beautiful they were! . . . After the ecstasies, they became very normal and seemed to feel better than I.

Stellar phenomena. I did not see any celestial phenomena.

The nights of terror. Yes, there were two such nights; I was only at the second one. I can say nothing more than this: the people were screaming and the young girls said that we needed to repent and to confess. Then we all went to confession on the following day. On that night, I didn't stay very long, but others stayed all night. The screams came from the people as well as the little girls. I saw them crying. I didn't hear them, I saw them . . . but the screams I heard were coming from the crowd. It was very strange, but I didn't feel any sensation of fear; I didn't see anything to worry about or make us afraid. Many people remained in the *calleja*. It's too bad I wasn't frightened—maybe I would have become better!





Rosa (arrow) was among the witnesses during this ecstasy when Conchita received invisible Communion from St. Michael the Archangel.

Santander Commission. No, I've never been questioned by the Commission from Santander, nor by anyone else.

Before the apparitions. Before the apparitions, we didn't notice anything unusual about the girls . . . nothing. They were just normal healthy girls.

As far as knowing whether this was just a game or whether they were simulating, I have no opinion in that respect . . . nothing. I have nothing to say. I can only say that I saw strange things, and now I see these girls strong, sound, enjoying good health . . . I see them normal.

El Milagru. I didn't see the miracle of the Host. I had heard a few days before that it was going to take place, but I didn't see it.



1971 PHOTO

Maximina Gonzalez (46), widow with two children, Conchita's aunt. Maximina works at home.

Before the ecstasies. Before the apparitions, nothing distinguished these little girls from others whom I well know. Like the other girls, they attended the village school and then they looked after their house chores.

First reactions. Until then, we had never seen an ecstasy, so we dashed down to the *calleja* and we saw the four girls in ecstasy. This moved me very much. To see them so rigid, and their faces so changed. I believed right away that the Blessed Virgin was there; I cried over it. No, we didn't see her, but I believed. Right away, we understood that those children, who were four normal little girls, like the other children, were incapable of inventing that sort of thing and that what they were saying was true, especially at that time.

Visits to the houses. They often came into the houses when they were in ecstasy. For instance, once a lady from Barcelona sent

me a stack of holy pictures and I put them in a corner of the chimney in the kitchen and I said to Conchita,

“Conchita, I have some holy pictures for you to give to the Virgin to kiss (but without telling her where the pictures were).”

And on that day, Conchita had an ecstasy. She came into my house, went straight to the kitchen, took the pictures, handed them over to be kissed one by one, gave me the crucifix to kiss and left.

Prophecy. I also would like to narrate the case of Pepé Luis, my son. He was five years old at that time and there were many people in my house because, like other families, I used to host the visitors, either to earn a few pennies, or to accommodate them; that depended on each case. As I had given up my beds, I put the children to sleep on a mat directly on the floor. I surrounded the mat with chairs and I covered everything with sheets, as I would have been embarrassed to have people come into my house and see my little ones sleeping on the floor. Conchita came into the house while in ecstasy. She made the sign of the cross over all the beds (she surely couldn't have known where I put the children), then she went to the door to leave. At the time she started to come down the stairs (it is a very difficult staircase), the head tilted backwards, the crucifix in one hand . . . she started to laugh—a kind of interior laugh—and at the same time she seemed to be talking to somebody. She descended the steps backwards and reached the children. She removed one chair, knelt down and without looking at the children (the head always tilted backwards, the neck stretched) uncovered the feet. She made the sign of the cross over them and said,

“Ah! this one will be a priest?”

. . . and she made another sign of the cross over him. She continued what seemed to be a conversation, but we could not hear it. And this was seen and heard by many people present. There was a young man from Bilbao who was a seminarian (he left the seminary and is now married), and he told me, “Well, Maximina, your son will be a priest.” And I was very embarrassed because all the people were looking at my young son sleeping on the floor.

Telepathy. Another time, Fr. José Ramón de la Riva, whom I think is a good priest, and a very humble man, was sleeping in

my house. He often came down to my house, as well as did other people. We were all asleep, when at two o'clock in the morning, someone knocked at the door and called me, “Get up, Maximina, Loli is here.” It was Loli who was accompanied only by her brother. She was carrying a crucifix which she gave me to kiss. She climbed upstairs, went to the door of Fr. José Ramón's room and tapped on the door with her knees. I then said,

“Fr. José Ramón, it is Loli.”

“Let her come in.”

In order to go into that room, there is one step going down and Loli threw herself from that step on which she was standing, and fell to her knees in the room. Anybody else in that same position would have been obliged to stretch his or her hands in front so as not to fall, but not her. Then, on her knees, she went toward a framed photograph of me and my late husband on our wedding day. She knelt there, near the frame long enough to recite an “Our Father”—surely for my husband—then she made a half turn, still kneeling, went to the priest, and without looking at him, gave him the crucifix to be kissed. I am not sure whether she made the sign of the cross over him or not. Then she came out.

Fr. José Ramón told me later on that he had interiorly asked for a proof by saying, “If it is truly something from God, let them come here and give me the crucifix, here in this very house.”

Identification. Another time, at the beginning of the apparitions, there were two priests at Conchita's door (the four visionaries were there). Conchita's family had gone to work in the fields. I happened to pass by while going to fetch some water at the fountain. These priests . . . one was from Oviedo or the Asturias, around that part of the country . . . his name was Fr. Alfonso, and the other was wearing a black cassock over a white habit. We called him “the white habit.” He was a Dominican. They were talking with the four girls.

A few minutes later, the children said they had had two calls (they used to tell us when they had calls), and all of a sudden it seemed that they received the third call. By that time, I think the parents were back from the fields, and the girls had their ecstasy. They started running, running, and on that day, there was a great crowd of people and among them many priests, which means that the girls were unable to get through the crowd and consequently they did not reach the *cuadro* and they stopped a

little lower, at the edge of the village; two of them in front, and the other two slightly behind.

The four girls were talking to their vision about that priest whom they called “the white habit.” We could easily hear Conchita who said,

“There was a priest with a white habit; he was very serious but very nice.”

Well now, this priest, who happened to be at the feet of the children heard them say,

“Oh! it is a Dominican? Well, I shall not call him ‘the white habit’ any more. Dominican? Well!”

Then this priest, who was sitting on the ground, lowered his head to his knees and did not raise it again and I saw him crying. Yes, he was crying, whereas a few days before he and a group of other priests were laughing so heartily at all these “alleged” apparitions, that a gentleman by the name of Don Emilio del Valle had to intervene and tell them, “Please be quiet, these are not things to laugh at.”

Variety of circumstances. I remember one night in November, about two o’clock in the morning, I was lying in bed and I heard someone knocking at the door. I went out and I found Conchita in ecstasy accompanied by her mother and her brother. It was rather a bad night, a stormy night, with thunder and lightning; some heavy hail was falling and much snow.

Conchita made the sign of the cross over me, gave me the crucifix to kiss and I left with them. That night there were only her mother, her brother, Conchita and myself. We climbed up to the pines and there was about a foot of snow. Conchita knelt down in the snow, went to the end of the village, then climbed up to the pines, always on her knees, while heavy hailstones were hitting her face. Her head was completely tilted backwards, the neck stretched. I don’t remember whether she came back kneeling down or standing up. Afterwards, we went to the cemetery, and then came back home . . . on such a terrible night . . . and Conchita was as happy and natural as if nothing had happened.

The ecstasies did not take place on the same dates, nor at the same time, no! And not always in front of the same people. All kinds of people came, in various numbers.

Blessed objects. I really believe the first wedding ring the girls

gave to be kissed was mine. One day, in Conchita’s house, Jacinta was in ecstasy and I don’t know how the idea struck me, but I said to Conchita,

“Our wedding rings are blessed. Maybe the Virgin would kiss them.”

I gave my ring to Conchita—at that time, we did not call them “alliances” . . . we had never heard the word—she got close to Jacinta, who was a little bit in front of us, and she told her,

“Take this ring and give it to the Virgin.”

And we could hear Jacinta say to her Vision,

“Here is this ring, please kiss it. Ah! It belongs to Maximina?”

But Jacinta certainly had no way of knowing it belonged to me. Jacinta held the ring toward her Vision and then she came to me, without looking at me, took my hand and put the ring on my finger.

Well, the same thing happened to a couple who were teachers. At least she was a teacher. I’m not sure about him. I was her pupil; her name is Maria Luisa Salazar; they are from Bilbao. I told her that the Virgin was kissing wedding rings. On that day, there were many people; we were following the young girls through the village roads. I was walking beside that couple and the gentleman told me,

“Let us go up ahead in order to give my ring.”

And I answered,

“When they are in ecstasy, they do not take any objects; you will have to put it in her pocket.”

Maria Luisa and her husband stayed in the back and I climbed up ahead of the long line of people and I slipped the ring into Conchita’s coat pocket, without her noticing it. Right away I heard Conchita say,

“I have a ring in my pocket. Who put it there? Ah! well, kiss it.”

She held out the ring to her Vision and stopping her forward walk, went backwards along the line of people who were climbing up in the opposite direction; she went as far as Maria Luisa’s spouse, put the wedding ring on his finger, and then the gentleman exclaimed,

“Ah! My God, what more proof do I need to believe?”

Another time I was in Conchita's house when a poorly dressed man arrived. It was in the beginning, when priests were in the habit of removing their cassocks before they came. Conchita fell into ecstasy; the man took a cross from an inside pocket and said to Aniceta, Conchita's mother,

"We are going to give this cross to Conchita to see if she will present it to the Virgin."

"But in ecstasy, she does not take any object!"

Then Aniceta managed to slip the cross between Conchita's fingers, though her hands were crossed, and we all heard Conchita say,

"I have a cross between my hands? . . . No, I do not see it . . . No, I don't have it."

. . . and while opening her hands to show the Virgin that she had nothing, the cross fell to the ground.

"Ah, it has fallen?"

Immediately, she bent over, picked it up and talked, talked to her Vision, and then presented the cross to the Virgin to be kissed, and we saw Conchita smiling. She got up, went to the man, made the sign of the cross over him, removed his glasses, put the cross around his neck, brought it to his lips, and while she did that, we noticed the cross was on the wrong side; she took it off, put it back on the right side, made him kiss it again, put his glasses back on him, and left the man there.

And she continued to be in ecstasy, standing or falling so abruptly on the tiles that the noise made us fear the worst for her knees. Once the ecstasy was over, she went to the man and said,

"Why don't you wear your cassock?"

"How is that?"

"Yes, the Virgin told me you were a Dominican." (It was true.)

"And how do you prefer me, with or without cassock?"

"With cassock."

"Well, wait a minute. I left my belongings in my camping tent."

You see, in the beginning, priests were prohibited from going near the children while wearing their cassocks. Afterwards, at

least for a time, they allowed them to come in their cassocks.

Change of consistency. One time in church, the four children fell into ecstasy and they were walking frontwards, backwards, frontwards, then backwards again; they fell but never hurt themselves and all of a sudden Conchita stumbled against me and her chest felt like a stone . . . like marble! . . . she was so hard . . . rigid, and very cold.

Abnormal strength. Another time, I saw Conchita going to the pines. She told me,

"Aunt, do you want to come to the pines with me? The Angel is going to give me Holy Communion."

I then accompanied her as far as the pines, and as soon as she arrived, she fell into ecstasy and she crossed her hands in that way . . . because in order to receive Holy Communion, she became very recollected. I was so close to her I could almost touch her and I wanted to touch her hands or arms, but . . . I felt such a feeling of respect . . . a funny sensation. Finally, I took her hands and tried to make them move; it had cost me much to conquer this feeling of respect, but since it was done, I wanted to be fully satisfied with my experience; so I took her hands very strongly, but it was totally impossible for me, in spite of all my efforts, to make them move, either one way or the other; there was something bizarre. In ecstasy, her hands were totally rigid.

Displacement. Sometimes they covered distances at an unbelievable speed. And, more often than not, Conchita had her head completely tilted backwards and the neck stretched, and it is not easy to run in that position, is it? I have tried many times, at that time during the night, when I was going to the rosary, in places where no one could see me; well, I'll say this. It's not easy. It's hard to keep from suffocating.

Clairvoyancy. I have often witnessed experiments which consisted of separating the visionaries before an ecstasy took place, particularly when the Chastisement was announced. Conchita was suffering from a sore leg and the doctor had prescribed that she rest in the house for a few days. When she did not want to remain shut in, the Virgin told her she had to obey her parents. She then stayed at home for a few days and two days before the feast of Corpus Christi, Loli and Jacinta had an ecstasy together, near the orchard, at the *cuadro* or somewhere slightly lower. (I

can't remember whether Mari Cruz was there or not.) I was in Conchita's house at that time and I witnessed Conchita's ecstasy. She took a pad of paper and a ballpoint pen. With one hand, she held the pad in the air (as if it were leaning against a rigid surface) and with the other hand, she wrote one or two letters; I don't know to whom they were addressed. Then she said,

"Ah! that's why Loli and Jacinta are crying at this present moment? Oh! how sad it is; I will not write that . . ."

I was not aware that the two children were in ecstasy up there and that they were crying very much. But Conchita, in her house, could see what the others were doing up there. Then those who had seen the other girls' ecstasies came in. There were a lot of them, and they told us,

"If you could hear how Loli and Jacinta were screaming! . . ."

We answered,

"We do know, for Conchita described the scene from here . . ."

So actually, Conchita, while in ecstasy, was telling us everything which was happening up there.

Second night of terror. The next night, the vigil of Corpus Christi, Conchita had gone to the *cuadro* as if she were carried by the wind, and the children met together at the same moment. Though Conchita was suffering from her leg, on that day she came out very rapidly, as if nothing was wrong with her.

Upon arriving at the *cuadro*, they started to scream! . . . but what screams! It was awful! There were the four,⁴ alone up there during the night, and we could hear them from a little below . . . close enough but we got closer. There was Julia, Loli's mother and Aniceta, Conchita's mother. I was near Conchita. There were many people, and the girls were screaming,

"Oh! don't let this happen, don't let it come! May everybody go to confession before! Forgive us! Don't let this happen! . . ."

There was a Franciscan priest there, now deceased, who was lodging at my house and each time the girls screamed, he would say,

"Ten 'Hail Marys' to the Virgin of Mount Carmel!"

4. Here Maximina is mistaken because Mari Cruz was not there.

. . . And as soon as we started to pray, the screams would diminish, but as soon as we stopped, the screams would resume all the stronger.

On that day, I was convinced that the heavens would fall upon the earth. For me, that would be the last day. I was about to confess publicly, because I had a feeling that this was the end of the world. I was thinking about my old father about whom I was reproaching myself and as soon as the ecstasy was over, I came running home to see him—he was in bed—and I told him,

"Father, forgive me, for this is the end of the world."

Then we returned to the *cuadro* and we remained there all night long with most of the inhabitants of the village. And on the following day, feast of Corpus Christi, the whole village went to Communion! All the village! Except perhaps for one or two people; but a Communion such as we have never seen before! Everything was orderly, with a marvelous devotion and magnificent processions.

Yes, I had the feeling of disaster, that the world was going to end, although I couldn't see anything and I was thinking the young girls were perhaps seeing the Chastisement. I really believed the sky was going to fall down upon the earth.

Santander Commission. I have never been questioned by the Commission . . . never . . . not even when they took Conchita to Santander. I went with her mother to get her and bring her back here.

Conchita at Santander. On this occasion, when we went to see Fr. Luis, pastor of *la Consolacion* in Santander, where Conchita was, he scolded us very, very much, because we were going to bring her back with us. Oh! my! he got very mad. He said the apparitions weren't true, that the girl was better at his place. Then we went to Dr. Piñal's house; the Doctor had somewhat threatened her; he told her,

"Listen, Conchita, if you don't deny all this, people are going to think you are crazy and they'll put you in an asylum. As far as your parents and your family are concerned, we will put them in jail . . ."

And Dr. Piñal kept repeating all this,

"On the other hand, if you retract yourself, you will be considered as a *señorita*; then, we could even have you admitted to a college . . ."

And a lot of things of that sort. So much so, that at the end, Conchita, either because she was frightened, or for other reasons, said,

“Well, perhaps my visions are not real, but the ones from the other girls are true.”

And then the pastor said,

“Very well, Conchita, very well . . . very well.”

And Dr. Piñal,

“Well then, you will sign this declaration, Conchita, won’t you?”

And then he gave her a paper—and truly, I don’t know how to say this, concerning this paper—I believe he gave her a blank paper to sign, but I’m not sure. As far as I could tell, there was nothing written on that paper. And the doctor was saying,

“Write your first and last name.”

“Yes.”

And she wrote: Conchita Gonzalez. Now, if they certify that paper was not blank, I would like to believe it, but I think it was blank. Conchita wrote only those two words: Conchita Gonzalez . . . her signature, nothing else. Yes, this happened in front of me. (Conchita was only twelve years old.)

Afterwards, we went to the chancery and we met Fr. Odrizola, who received us. I don’t remember everything. It would be hard for me to recognize the hall where we were . . . but I believe the bishop was Mgr. Doroteo Fernandez. He came in and, although Conchita had never seen him before, she said,

“It is him, the Bishop!”

And the Bishop very amiably told her,

“Well, well, Conchita, what would you rather do; stay here like a lady in a college, or go back to your village and tend sheep?”

“Stay here like a lady.”

Then it was agreed that Conchita would return to Santander, that she would be registered in a college . . . Afterwards, I don’t remember what was said and done.

When we got back to Cosio, we found many people waiting because they knew we were taking Conchita back, and at that time they believed in the apparitions. But Aniceta herself came

back convinced that everything was false, absolutely false. We came out of that interrogation feeling sure that everything was an error . . . not that the girls had lied, but that, although there was something, it did not come from God. Never did we think that the ecstasies themselves were false.

While coming up from Cosio, the crowd was getting bigger and bigger and they were accompanying Conchita. I remember that at one place, Aniceta told the people,

“Where are you going? Do you think there is a fair in Garabandal?”

And the girls (Mari Loli and Jacinta had come to meet Conchita on the road) lowered their heads, the poor things! None of them uttered a word and they continued to climb with Conchita. But Aniceta didn’t want them to accompany her daughter any more. She wanted to remove Conchita completely from the affair. When she arrived home with Conchita, Aniceta said that she was very happy because she had talked with the Bishop, that the affair was clarified, and that there was nothing to it at all. So they stayed at home while I went to the rosary.

Clairvoyancy at a distance. While coming out of church, Mari Loli and Jacinta fell into ecstasy and I followed them through various places, as far as the pines. That was a day when the ecstasies particularly pleased me, I don’t know why. After the ecstasies were over, I came directly to Conchita’s house where I found Aniceta and her daughter alone, locked in their home and upon my arrival, Aniceta was scolding her daughter,

“You naughty girl, now you can see that your ecstasies aren’t true! Why didn’t the Virgin call you today?”

So Conchita answered her,

“Do you want me to describe the ecstasies they just had?”

And I, getting all excited, told Conchita,

“Yes, tell us, because I have just seen them! . . .”

“Well, the ecstasy started on the doorstep of the church; the girls went back into the church; they came out backwards; they climbed to the pines; they came down . . .”

And without any mistake, Conchita described the ecstasy as I had just seen it. You can’t imagine the impression that made on me! . . . Listen, just talking about it gives me the same shivers,

the same emotion. I then exclaimed,

“That is exact! The ecstasy took place exactly like that!”

And her mother said,

“But we have been alone here, just the two of us, since our return!”

Then Conchita said,

“Yes, but the Virgin was speaking to me. I could hear her voice and she was describing the girls’ ecstasy. What’s more, she told me something which the girls do not know. She told me: ‘*Conchita, you will hear a voice and you will follow it and that voice will frighten you . . .*’ and so on.⁵”

Then her mother said,

“Oh my God, what will that voice be? God knows where it will lead you! . . .”

But Conchita reassured her,

“The Virgin would not take us into a bad place.”

Announcement of the retractions. Conchita added (I believe it was on the same day),

“Moreover, the Virgin told me that there will come a time when we will contradict one another, and we will even go so far as to deny having had visions.”

Yes, Conchita said all that in front of me and in the presence of her mother. She was then twelve years old; it was in July, 1961, I believe. At the time, she certainly had no malicious or bad sentiments.

The voice during the night. Sometime after, the seers heard that voice and at the same time everything became dark and obscure around them. I remember the most impressive thing was seeing Mari Cruz—the spectacle she presented was horrifying! . . . She was hiding her head in her crossed arms and screaming,

“What? . . . Tell me who you are, otherwise I am going back home. Tell me who you are! . . . And she was going forwards, backwards, here and there. They were frightened, and so were we. That night I was frightened for the girls because Mari Cruz did not stop saying,

“But tell me who you are . . . otherwise I am going home!”

Where could they have gone? They couldn’t go anywhere. I don’t know how long that lasted, but it seems that the light came back to them when the Virgin appeared, because then they said,

“Oh! thank God! We are seeing you!”

I have never learned what that voice was, but frankly, for Mari Cruz, that night was horrible!

Stellar phenomena. Truly, I did see celestial phenomena, but I suppose not as clearly as Dr. Ortiz.⁶ There was a group of us in front of Mari Loli’s house, near an electrical pole. Behind me were Dr. Ortiz and another man whom I believe was an engineer, I’m not sure; and it seems to me that Loli and Jacinta were inside the house; they were in ecstasy. You realize that they could not see what we were seeing outside. At one point they screamed, and we screamed also . . . but we were not seeing the same thing, although we all screamed together . . . it was a very big star which left a long, clear trail. Dr. Ortiz saw it more distinctly than I and relates it much better. The doctor was wearing a hat but what he was seeing made such an impression on him, he took it off and remained still. Then I said,

“Did you see that, Don Celestino?”

“How could I not see it? How could I not?”

We were so impressed that the doctor couldn’t utter a word . . . and the other women who were with us—they screamed at the same time, but today when I speak to them, they say they didn’t see anything! . . . At that moment, though, they saw as well as I. But the young girls who couldn’t possibly see with their natural eyes (they were inside) said they saw and that it was from that star, or that light, that the Virgin came. At least that’s who I think they said came . . . I don’t remember any more.

5. This is the mysterious voice which they heard on August 17, 1961, the significance of which is not known.

6. Dr. Celestino Ortiz Pérez—pediatrician, who has published a very forthright, scientific study of the events of Garabandal.



1971 PHOTO

Laura Gonzalez (74), resident of Garabandal during the time of the ecstasies, now lives in Torrelavega.

Before the apparitions. I was born, brought up, married and had always lived in Garabandal. I knew the little girls in question very well, and the others also. You see how it is, the village is a closely knit group and we couldn't help but know one another. At the time, these little girls were behaving exactly like all the other children in the village. No differently.

First reactions. What we must understand in these events is that the Virgin did not choose these four young girls because they were better than others. In fact, there should have been five, but the fifth one was called back by her sister. It is by pure chance that they were chosen.

When they first told us what had happened to them, I must admit that I didn't believe them. And very simply because they were alone and there was no adult with them. I thought the eldest, Conchita, had probably made it all up in order to astound the others. It was no use scolding them, or warning them not to tell such falsehoods or people would mock them; but they stuck to their story and asked that four or five adults accompany them.

A few women who lived in the upper village decided to go and there, sure enough, they saw how the youngsters would fall into ecstasy on to big stones, their heads tilted backwards, without hurting themselves, and their faces getting more and more beautiful.

Hours of the apparitions. No, they didn't always happen at the same hour, but very often after midnight, which caused strangers to say,

"It can't possibly be the Virgin, getting people out at such hours!"

And we ourselves asked the little girls,

"How come you are going out at such hours?"

Facial aspect. Marvelous! Marvelous! . . . We thought that they were putting on rouge. The little girls were there, but they did not visibly belong to this world. . . . We could not communicate with them. We would talk to them, but they could not hear us. On the other hand, they *could* hear any one of themselves who was not in ecstasy, and through this intermediary, we could talk to them.

Prediction of the negations. The little girls told us the Virgin warned them that before the great Miracle, there would be many people who would no longer believe in the apparitions, including themselves.

Visits in our houses. Yes, certainly, they came into my house and to my sister's place. We were on the balcony, the door opened, they came in, blessed my sister, gave her the cross to be kissed and left.

Abnormal strength. The funniest thing that happened, that made us laugh the most, was with the monk. It was at night, in the street, a little below Ceferino's house, facing a small white low house, in front of which there were benches to sit on. We were sitting there when we heard,

“There it is, the little girls are in ecstasy!”

Conchita fell into ecstasy, clinging to a monk and that poor monk was obliged to run as long as the ecstasy lasted that night! . . . We watched the poor monk; running here and there . . . totally exhausted . . . Oh! how it made us laugh! We were ashamed of ourselves, but we couldn't stop! That poor man was forced to go all the way, at all speeds, to follow the visionaries everywhere they went for the whole duration of the ecstasy! What do you say about that?

The next day I met my neighbor who was boarding the monk. She told me,

“Oh, you can imagine, he had to change all his clothes last night. They were soaked with perspiration . . .”

How come a man like that couldn't free himself from the grasp of such a small girl?

Conversions—cures. One day a businessman from Barcelona came to the village with his family. He became acquainted with one of my boys whom he hired and took back with him. These people, whose name was Subieta, I believe, are in the meat or provision business. They became converted at Garabandal. The lady confessed publicly one night in the middle of the village that she had not been going to church for a long time; that she only went to church for weddings or funerals; that they were living a very worldly life, spending as much as 10,000 pesetas in one evening; but that God had just performed a miracle for them and that their life was changed. The way in which she told all this was so touching that some religious who were there asked for their address.

This family had a little boy suffering from infantile paralysis. They brought him here once, twice and then the third time, the child was cured! As he had not made his First Communion, he received it in the village. I have his picture at home with four of our little girls whom this lady dressed at her own expense so they could accompany her son.

They have not come to the village for the last few years. I

don't know what has become of them, because my son is not working for them anymore. Yes, yes, they didn't believe at first, but they became converted after they came here.

Santander Commission. No, never, nothing.

The kissed objects. At the very beginning, I was present while the Vision was kissing the objects. It was at the pines. I don't know really how it all started. Before the ecstasy, each one of us would take one or two small pebbles which were handed over to the young seers. We said,

“May the Virgin bless this one for my son, for my daughter, or for another relative.”

The children would make a small pile of these pebbles and put them beside themselves and would hold them out to their Vision during the ecstasy. Then the girls would let them fall near themselves, without looking where they fell. Once the ecstasy was over, they would hand them out to each person as we indicated prior to the ecstasy, and the girls never made a mistake!

Fr. Luis Andreu, S.J. I was near him, at the pines, when he screamed very loudly,

“Miracle! Miracle! Miracle!”

The little girls were startled with joy; they were kissing one another and saying,

“The Virgin has spoken, the Virgin has spoken!”

Mary Cruz—negations. A few women from Cosio, friends of Mari Cruz' family have told me that at the time Mari Cruz no longer saw the Virgin, and when her mother was saying that the apparitions were not true, they had one day met Mari Cruz near the window at Ceferino's house and had asked her what she was doing there. The little girl then answered,

“They say that the Virgin has spoken at the pines and that they recorded her voice on a tape recorder and that now they will listen to the recording . . . so, as I know her voice so well . . .”

She meant that upon hearing the recorded voice, she, herself would recognize whether or not it really was the Virgin's voice, leading us to understand that Mari Cruz really had seen the Virgin.

THIS PHOTO

*José (Pepé) Diez (45), village mason,
married with five children.*

The children before the apparitions. I have known them since birth. I watched them grow up, and I know the families well, which permits me to say that they were behaving just like all the other youngsters in the village. They went to school or to work with their parents . . . until the apparitions.

But from that very moment they became very different during the whole time the apparitions lasted. It's not that they changed toward the people—they remained pleasant, attentive and normal from all points of view—but I believe they received a special grace or something of the sort, during that whole period.

After the apparitions. Today (in August 1971), Mari Cruz is married. She comes to the village once in a while. A month ago, she paid us a visit with her husband. Surely, those young ladies are very different from what they were as little girls. But I always see them with that memory of what they have seen, without forgetting the numerous doubts which they have experienced. They have their hesitations, their complications . . . finally they don't know what to do at their present age (in 1971). It's natural. They seem to want to remain in the world. They wish to get married like Mari Cruz, and I don't think it would be bad if a young man pleased them, and they got married. This doesn't seem bad to me at all. The problem seems to be that they don't know in which direction to go. Maybe they aren't as free as other young ladies, for surely we sense they have a problem.

Reaction upon hearing about the apparitions. Today I feel like laughing about my attitude at the time, because when they told me all this for the first time, I laughed very much, as if it were a farce. I thought they had seen a big bird, for instance, or something silly like that. They talked about the apparitions on the first day and the villagers became somewhat curious about the events.

“What is happening?”

“Nothing. These girls are saying . . .”

“Oh! It's nothing at all.”

I laughed when I heard that. The next day, I had a little job



to do in the house of Aniceta—that is Conchita’s mother. I went there in the morning, but I didn’t dare speak much either to Aniceta or her sons. One hour after my arrival, I was working with Aniceto, one of Conchita’s brothers, the one who is dead now, when all of a sudden three of the young girls met there, then Mari Cruz arrived a little later. The four of them were there talking about what they had seen. Just as a joke, I tried to scare them,

“So, girls, what did you see?”

“An angel.”

“You are going to be put in jail! We have notified the Civil Guard and your fathers and mothers will be sent to jail, too.”

And the children, very quietly, without fear, told me,

“All right, let them throw us in jail as well as our parents, because truly, we have seen the Angel!”

Then, Aniceto, Conchita’s brother, got mad, saying that he didn’t want us to talk about these things. I told him,

“Listen, don’t get upset. It seems that your sister and the other girls didn’t become afraid about what I told them; it doesn’t seem to bother them . . . or else they don’t understand what it means to go to jail.”⁷

I thought it was a joke. However, upon seeing them, I experienced an indefinable feeling . . . which led me to suspect that this affair might be important.

Three or four days later, there were about ten of us busy constructing a bridge about seven and one-half miles from Garabandal and Mari Loli came to bring us our lunch. We asked her,

“What is happening now? What did you see?”

She didn’t become frightened; she said very simply,

“We have seen an angel.”

She spoke very naturally, because the young girls in that village, at that particular time, were very . . . naive . . . inexperienced . . . (not like the children of today); very timid. So the child answered very peacefully, but insistently.

“It is true, we have seen an angel.”

7. Pepé’s observations are often very intuitive.

And I laughed,

“They have seen . . . they have seen . . . Bah! it’s surely nothing at all.”

However, I thought a lot about it, and one evening in June, I wanted to know for sure. Many people who thought the same way I did, didn’t dare get close to the girls, but only watched them from a distance. I wanted to be close to an ecstasy, as close to the seers as possible.⁸

Witnessing the first ecstasy. From the moment I saw them in ecstasy (I didn’t know what an ecstasy was, I had never heard anything about them before), I noticed an enormous difference in the young girls . . . their looking at the sky, a look so deep, so rapt, it was really something to see . . . I don’t know how to express it . . . for me, it was very supernatural.

All this was very different from their normal state, but I can’t explain how. Today, for sure, I can explain it a little better because I have seen so many of these ecstasies, but on the first day, it was the first time in my life I witnessed something out of the natural order.

When I arrived at the *calleja*, the girls had already been in ecstasy for a short time, and they were surrounded by many people, notably the pastor of the village, Fr. Valentin, who was very pale, unable to utter a word, he was so dumbfounded. It was the same with many women from the town, particularly Serafina and Alelia. . . .

I was about to experience a very rare moment . . . I backed away . . . and I was seized with an interior sentiment . . . I don’t know how to express it . . . and I cried out with a loud voice,

“Something very extraordinary is happening here!”

I drew back and I watched ’til the end of the ecstasy, but from a distance.⁹

I witnessed my second ecstasy on the following day. The news of this affair was being spread very rapidly, and hundreds of people were now coming, especially priests. In the beginning I counted as many as thirty, forty or fifty priests. They came from various villages and accompanied different groups. During

8. During the whole time of the apparitions Pepé would maintain this same persistent attitude, following the events closely, noticing every detail, and trying to understand, to analyze. His lucid testimony is invaluable.

9. This impressive sensation of respect was felt by the majority of people when witnessing an ecstasy for the first time.

these first days of the apparitions, I observed the priests closely and I was astonished to see that they did not all agree. They argued in public, in the streets, anywhere at all. They were not a bit shy when it came to discussing the apparitions! . . . I, on account of my faith, could not believe that the priests would not agree on these events, especially if the events came from God or the Blessed Virgin, and if they were in conformity with the Gospel.

Medical tests. On this subject, I will only tell you what I have personally seen; I do not dare repeat what someone else told me. During the first month of the apparitions, the doctors started to make experiments. I must point out that at the same time the priests were coming, there were also many doctors of various specialties.

One day, two of them started to perform some tests. The young girls were in ecstasy, kneeling down and surrounded by the crowd. One of the physicians, equipped with a very strong electric light, and other apparatus, was making experiments on the visionaries' eyes and upon their faces. Me, I thought it was quite proper, because we had to examine the question, did we not? But while this gentleman was performing these tests, the other doctor, who was behind the children, was pricking the calves of the young girls' legs with needles, and at the same time, the little girls, with smiling faces, were talking to their Vision, saying,

“What? they are pricking us? . . . But, we don't feel anything!”

I heard that phrase myself and others could tell you the same thing, because the children said these words in a loud voice and kept repeating,

“How is that? . . . But it doesn't hurt us . . .”

And they continued talking with their Vision and two minutes later, they said again,

“Oh! they are pricking us again?”

And among the crowd, there was a man who asked,

“But who is pricking them? Who is doing that?”

Then upon looking closer, he saw the doctor in question who was starting the same experiment on the other leg. Then some people grabbed the doctor. There was a scuffle and they wanted

to strike the doctor. In the scuffle, the needle was lost.

Number of ecstasies—schedule of apparitions. Oh! I saw many, . . . more than 200 for sure, but I didn't see them all because they went on for so many months! . . . What's more, some days they would have three, four or five apparitions and at very different hours; in the morning, the afternoon or in the middle of the night, which means that on some nights they didn't sleep much; nevertheless, no one ever saw them tired. But you might say, they slept during the daytime. Well, no. I know that they didn't because during the day there was a line of people who came to question the adolescents . . . without let-up . . . some apparitions lasted two, three and some even more than four hours.

During all these hours, while in ecstasy, the visionaries were in very awkward positions: the necks stretched back, the eyes looking toward the sky, but we couldn't notice any sign of fatigue!

Rapid movement. The onlookers didn't know at what speed the children were moving. A very extraordinary speed, though, because I don't think that an eleven or twelve year old child can compete with eighteen or twenty year old boys used to running and going to their work by the mountain roads, especially in the paths and lanes as they existed in Garabandal. Well, these young men could not compete with them when the girls were in ecstasy!

I noticed one thing in particular: the step of the visionaries was a normal step; however, they went three times as fast as anyone else. I have often tried to follow them, but it was impossible. I only caught up with them when their race was ended. I saw quite clearly that the rhythm of their legs was that of a normal running pace, but they were going forward at a tremendous speed. It was an extraordinary thing! I was about thirty-five years of age at that time, and there were not many people then who could beat me at racing . . . nor even today.

Backward walks. When the girls traveled backwards on their knees, it was not as rapid, although a middle aged person couldn't keep up with them; the youngsters, yes, but I can't explain that phenomenon. First, you have to know the Garabandal paths, especially while climbing up to the pines, or by the *calleja*, with all those stones. . . . Anyone traveling by that route is aware of those stony roads, and those paths and roads have always been

in that condition! . . . But the little girls always got over all the obstacles with great facility . . . better than if they had looked where they were going . . . and all this, backwards!

They ran with the same ease in the middle of the lanes in our village, and you should see how narrow and small these lanes are. Well, the girls also stayed in the middle, that is they never stumbled against the corner of a house while turning a street corner. They never deviated from the center of the path and they didn't bump themselves against a housefront . . . not at all. They found their way as easily as I do, when I look ahead of me.

During the night, these runs were even more impressive, because we had some very difficult nights . . . snowstorms and rainstorms with tremendous downpours when the water would stream down over the faces of the children while they looked toward heaven with a smile as if it were angels falling . . . and they kept going on with their walks, without any sign of discomfort. It was very difficult to understand, even when we were watching it.

Consistency to the touch and exterior appearance. Yes, I touched them many times, either through curiosity or to protect them from the crowd which, involuntarily, could have crushed them, for sometimes it was a real human avalanche which came down on them. Sometimes I would take them by the arms or the shoulders or another part of their body, and I must say that every time I did, I noticed something very extraordinary. It didn't seem to me that I was touching a human being.

It seemed to me, rather, that I was touching a block of stone . . . that is to say something rigid . . . I don't know, it's hard to explain. But at the same time, the four girls appeared beautified. However, they were normal, and that astonished me very much—that they appeared so natural while walking, while smiling, while talking, but not when touched. . . . That was completely different.

As far as their body temperature was concerned, nothing special, neither cold nor hot . . . what's more, no nervousness. No, upon touching them, when they were in ecstasy, I never felt the least nervousness, nothing, only that they were very rigid. Also I noticed that they were very heavy.

Weight change. Oh yes! I tried to lift them up and I would even say that this is a proof. Because I have seen many twenty to thirty-year-olds in the strength of their young manhood, who

could lift, let's say, 220 pounds, which is normal for a man around here. I could lift that much myself. In order to total 220 pounds, you would have needed all three of these girls, each weighing approximately seventy to eighty pounds, and I am sure that when they were not in ecstasy, I could very easily lift two of them at a time. Well, I saw these men, some of whom I knew, with great physical effort, strain to lift them from the ground . . . and then admit that they were defeated! . . . they were flabbergasted! How can that be possible? Take for instance, the time when a man by the name of Vincentín, who is presently living in Santander, but who, at that time, lived in a town about thirty-two miles from here, said,

"It doesn't look as if anyone can lift them off the ground, but I bet if I tried . . ."

Then Jacinta's father came up to him and said,

"Here, this one is my daughter. I give you permission to lift her up."

The fellow was standing between me and Jacinta's father and herself. Mari Loli and Conchita were facing us, so that we were forming a kind of circle. Jacinta was almost in the center. The fellow in question took hold of the young girl and made every kind of effort to move her, to change his hold, to pull her one way or push her another, but he never succeeded. He then turned to us (there were many spectators) and he said,

"Hey! I can't lift her. If I go back to Santander and tell them that, nobody will believe me!"

He was completely dumbfounded . . . and that happened at the church doorstep. Ten minutes later, the ecstasy was over. Jacinta's father then told Vincentín,

"Try now."

But the young man answered,

"No, no, I don't know . . . this thing scares me . . ."

"Don't be afraid! Go ahead and try now, and you, Jacinta, don't worry, this young man would just like to know your weight."

Jacinta remained quiet; the fellow took hold of her and lifted her up as if she were a doll! . . . then he was really upset. He admitted,

"My God! Now I am convinced that it is true, but I can

never say so, because no one would believe me!”

This scene took place in front of me and Jacinta’s father who could tell you the same story.

Announcement of the Visible Communion. But as far as proofs are concerned, the most important one that I ever had was that of the Visible Communion which Conchita received during an ecstasy.

The night when Conchita, while in ecstasy learned that there would be a miracle of the Visible Host,¹⁰ I was beside her along with a man from Catalonia and we were both listening very attentively because Conchita was talking in a very sweet but loud voice; many people were following us and the noise they made was disturbing me. Therefore, I could not quite hear what she was saying, but as she repeated the phrase I finally understood.

“Ah! You are going to perform a miracle? And I should tell people?”

As soon as the ecstasy was over, I asked the Catalan,

“Did you understand that the same way I did?”

“Yes, but I am not quite sure I caught it all.”

We began questioning one another, and the people began questioning the child. She was laughing and very happy. She told us she had seen the Angel, and that she, Conchita, had something very important to tell us. That was, that the Virgin was going to perform a miracle. She told us that the Host would be visible, but she didn’t say where or how.

That was in 1962. I don’t remember the exact date, but it was about fifteen days later, that the miracle took place, I believe.¹¹

El Milagruçu (The Small Miracle). The news spread throughout the whole region, so that on the expected day there was a huge crowd of about 5,000 or 6,000 people, maybe more; it was hard to know for sure. From Cosio all the way to the village, the road was lined with cars and everybody was waiting. I must confess I wanted to be in the first row, either because I was used to accompanying the children, or because I sensed that on this day

it would be different. Besides, Conchita’s mother had told me, “Please! Try to accompany my daughter.”

“Ah! that will be very hard with all these people and I don’t have any idea where she will be going or where it will happen.”

And she answered,

“But if you do not escort her, there is a good chance she could be crushed to death . . . or suffocated!”

So I replied,

“All right, trust me! I will be there from seven in the morning until the miracle takes place.”

For we didn’t know either the time or the place of the miracle. In fact, I only took half an hour for a bite to eat at home after which I quickly returned to wait with Conchita, but I was still thirsty and suffering from lack of nourishment. The wait was long and tiring, but I didn’t want to leave Conchita. It wasn’t until 2:30 in the morning that Conchita fell into an ecstasy in her home and that she came out into the street. I could see my mission would be difficult because some people were screaming, some were falling and others were tripping over them; everyone wanted to see. The most amazing thing of all is that no one got hurt in the scuffle.

You see, some people wanted to take my place and were grabbing at me, and they stripped me of my clothing and my belt. But they meant no harm. I was resisting with all my might but I tell you, it was becoming very difficult. I began to be afraid, not so much for Conchita as for myself. I seized her by the arm, and I thought, “Well, all right, I will not come out of this alive. If that is God’s will or the Virgin’s, then so be it. But if they are going to kill us, let them kill us together.”

Conchita’s brothers and cousins and some people from the village, who were trying to accompany her, were there also, but they were dispersed in the crowd. It was war . . . but a peaceable one.

When we came to a certain spot, Conchita fell to her knees which broke my grip on her arm. She began to speak, and I could not catch her words because of the uproar made by the crowd; but I never took my eyes off her face, and I shone a light on it with a strong flashlight, which I had brought with me, and which I only managed to keep with great difficulty.

10. On June 22, 1962, the Angel announced that there would be a Miracle.

11. On July 3, 1962, the Virgin set the date of the Miracle for July 18, 1962. (We do not know if the ecstasy Pepé speaks of here, is that of June 22 or that of July 3. Perhaps he confuses the two.)

At the moment Conchita fell to her knees all the people present tried to do the same, some on top of the others, some kneeling down on the ground; others bowed very profoundly, and everyone was showing great humility. In spite of the mob, everyone was trying to be considerate of their neighbor, which was not easy. That's why I say that, all in all, the people did not behave too badly up there.

But I did not take my eyes off the girl. She started to speak, to pray, and then she smiled and while smiling she opened her mouth and put out her tongue very naturally. She extended her tongue, not just a little bit, but quite a lot, and as I saw that tongue so perfectly bare, I had a terrible feeling of disaster. In my naiveté, I had thought that at the precise moment Conchita put out her tongue we would see the Host, or that the Host would appear instantaneously, or who knows what?

Still, there was nothing. The tongue was bare. I was all the more disappointed as I had followed the scene with extremely close attention and I was sure that I had not missed anything. What's more, I was scarcely eighteen inches away from her face. The sight of her tongue, protruding and bare, gave me a terrible feeling of failure. I, who was hoping for so much! Conchita kept her tongue out like that for about a minute. And as I stood there, my eyes riveted on that tongue, so hopelessly bare, something incredible happened; without moving my eyes for a fraction of a second, suddenly a neat, precise and well formed Host appeared miraculously on Conchita's tongue. I can attest to the fact that from the moment Conchita put out her tongue, she did not make a single move, either with her mouth or with her tongue; not one single muscle in her face moved. And what I am telling you, many others around Conchita at the time can tell you also, for I am sure of what I saw. The tongue was well out, dry and bare, and all of a sudden the Host was there! I did not see how it came. It was instantaneous! I can't even say it arrived in a split second. It was just . . . there! This is what I call the most significant part of the miracle. This cannot be anything else but a miracle; otherwise it would have taken at least a fraction of a second. But here, we cannot speak of even split seconds! . . . And I was so eager to see what was going to happen that I never took my eyes from her mouth.

Once the Host became visible on her tongue, it remained there for about three minutes. Some people say two or two and a half minutes; I say three minutes minimum.

The Host was there in full view, set on the tongue as on a platter, and this detail strikes me because it would have been natural for Conchita to swallow it right away, as everyone does after receiving Holy Communion, but she did not do that. She waited, the Host remaining plainly visible for at least three minutes.

At first it had the appearance of a normal Host, similar to the ones which the priest gives us, but during those three minutes, that Host grew noticeably in volume. Furthermore, it was a living thing—something that is very difficult for me to explain—because I saw in that Host, a live force which reminded me of sea waves, sparkling and moving under the sun, when we see them from a distance. This is what I could see at the center of the Host; a living thing, radiant from within. What's more, the measurements changed in thickness and circumference; I have often demonstrated this with coins. This increase in measurements was very distinct. But what impressed me most was the awareness that something was moving inside that little white disc.

After about three minutes, Conchita swallowed the Host with great satisfaction and you should have seen her smile, and the way she made the sign of the cross, and the way she was talking to her Vision! She got up and followed her apparition as far as the church doorstep. Then, going through many streets in the village, she came back to the *calleja*, the main site of the first apparitions (all this lasted well over an hour); she then returned home by the same route, and so her ecstasy ended.

The young girl was very satisfied and asked if everyone else was satisfied also. Of course, the people were answering yes, that they had seen the miracle. But soon afterward, some people were already changing their opinions, following questions asked by a group of gentlemen. I was not able to find out who these men were, being obliged to return home in order to get dressed since the crowd had left me half naked.

It seems that these men I just mentioned belonged to a certain commission or something of the sort. Unfortunately, they did not question me for I would have been only too happy to have answered their questions. In fact, from the time of the miracle until now (August 1971) no officials from the archbishopric or elsewhere have bothered to ask for my testimony, although my narration has been published many, many times.

Once I was dressed again, I immediately went back among

the crowd for I wanted to make sure of what I had seen and question the people to find out if they had seen the same thing as I. But I must say that most people were in a state of extreme emotion and excitability and it was not easy to obtain clear answers.

This was the case with one of my brothers-in-law, who now lives in Germany. I met him in a lane and he said to me,

“Pepé! I have seen the miracle!”

“Oh! that’s good, Manolo. I would like to know what you have seen?”

Then—and I permit myself to imitate him with some teasing, as he was very excited, and stuttering—he answered me,

“P-p-pepé . . . I I I h-have s-s-seen th-th-the m- m-miracle!
 . . . I have s-s-seen a ch-ch-chalice! . . . I I I ha-have s-s-seen
 a ha-ha-hand c-c-coming d-d-down from-from heaven . . .
 I I have s-s-seen a l-l-li-light! . . . I h-have . . .”

“Listen, Manolo, you are sure you have seen all that?”

And then he blurted out,

“Listen, P-p-pepé, I d-d-don’t know what I have s-s-seen!”

Some other people were saying the same thing, that they had seen a ray of light, a kind of chalice, something dark. My answer to them was,

“Gentlemen, I did not see anything of the sort. All I saw was the young girl who had fallen to her knees, the tongue out, neat and clean; the spectacular appearance of the Host and the impression that this Host was alive, and that’s all.”

In my opinion many people saw a lot of things in their minds. The case of my brother-in-law is typical. Within a few seconds, he tells me he has seen a lot of things, when in reality he doesn’t know what he has seen! The worst of it is that it seems he was questioned by the Santander commission, for he told me a group of men asked him many questions; but, of course I don’t know for sure that it was the Santander Commission. What is sure is that it is stories of this sort which have subsequently thrown some doubt on the reality of the miracle of the Visible Communion.

The priests, witnesses of the Visible Communion. When Conchita had consumed the Host, I finally took my eyes off her face, and looking around, I saw four or five priests whom I knew and who

were wearing their cassocks, as well as the Civil Guard who seemed to have followed the scene very attentively. I do not want to give the names of these priests (for we must have some respect in that regard, and I don’t want to embarrass them) because they did not give their testimony, whether through fear or through obedience to the hierarchy. Not only did they not give their testimony, but worse still, they have avoided the issue, saying,

“This is something most unusual, most curious . . . but not very important for us.”

I find that attitude incomprehensible because, as we expect a policeman to make an investigation, or a qualified laborer to accomplish a difficult task, the priests present at that time were the most competent persons to pass judgment on that affair. If they considered it to be a fraud, the least they should have done was to seize the Host. Afterwards, it is true, I heard many opinions: that it was false; that it had been staged; that Conchita had the Host in her mouth beforehand; that it was nothing, etc. . . . But for me, what I saw convinces me that these priests were afraid. They gave proof of their cowardice! . . . And if, by saying this, I embarrass them, may they forgive me, but I say the truth. For it was up to them to settle this point—so important to the world—and to prove whether or not it was false. As priests, they could have seized the Host, had it analyzed and tried to establish its origin. But they were afraid.

One last thing: my own two eyes could have deceived me, but I know there were many others who saw what I did. With so many people watching so closely, it seems hard to believe that the little girl could have played a conjuring trick on us.

Simulated ecstasies. Yes, I was present at a few simulated ecstasies, but it must be said right away that they were extremely rare and of short duration. The young girls should be forgiven for they were pressured by a large number of people who came from far away and they were very tired, very disappointed that the ecstasies were over and these people never stopped asking the young girls to place themselves in a prayerful attitude to see if the ecstasy would come. It was, on the part of the little girls, a kind of compliance toward these people. But as I had myself seen so many real ecstasies, I could easily and very quickly recognize the false ones. In fact, when the ecstasies were false, the girls had to move along flat roads where they could walk easily,



Pepé watches as Mari Loli, in ecstasy, blesses herself.

whereas in real ecstasies, they would go over all kinds of terrain without stumbling over any objects frontwards or backwards, in very difficult positions, with an ease and an extraordinary charm. Besides, when they simulated the ecstasies, they went on very short trips, a few steps in their houses, or a short part of their street. Moreover, the false ecstasy never lasted more than five minutes, maybe ten at the most if they were making a special effort—but the girls were so closely observed by the people that it was difficult for them to prolong that game and we would very quickly detect it. On the other hand, the real ecstasies lasted sometimes four to five hours at a time, on very difficult roads, such as the climb to the pines, and always with that extraordinary ease, without any sign of fatigue.

Moreover, the girls would admit their simulation right away, for the people told them they were not deceived and I scolded them.

“Children, what you did last night didn’t please me at all. Why did you do that?”

They knew right away that they hadn’t fooled us and they didn’t do it again.

the nights of terror. I am not very sure about the dates, but it seems that they happened during the nights of the eighteenth and nineteenth of June, 1962. During an ecstasy previous to these nights, the children declared that they had to return to the *calleja*, but they didn’t know why the Virgin asked that. This announcement surprised all the village and when they came out we followed them. Upon arriving at a certain spot, they told us on behalf of the Virgin, that no one was to go beyond that boundary—no fathers, no mothers, no friends—that they were to be alone, at the very spot where they had had the first apparitions. Everyone of us respected that command and we remained about 500 feet away.

There was a great number of people, many hundreds for sure, and then in the darkness—it was nighttime—we heard some screams . . . like those of a person crying for help. We all became frightened, asking ourselves what could be happening. At that distance, and in the dark, we could not distinguish the shapes very well, nor understand what they were screaming out, other than it was something frightening them very much as if something were happening right there. We were tempted to go higher up the path and see, but none of us dared disobey the order they had given us: “Let no one go beyond those bounds.”

About fifteen minutes later, the young girls came down and they stopped perhaps thirty feet from us, their eyes fixed on the spot where they came from. And when they got closer to us, we noticed that one of the girls was thrusting her arms forward as if she wanted to push away something which was about to fall on her. It was the first time we saw her doing such a thing. It was very strange . . . as if it were something very dangerous. They remained like that for some time, in ecstasy, their cries of protest changing to smiles, talking to their Vision. Then the ecstasy was over. That was on the first day.

When we questioned them, they simply answered,

“We must return tomorrow at the same time.”

The next day arrived, and it was worse. The first night, there were only Mari Loli and Jacinta; on the second night, Conchita was there also. They gave us the same instructions as the night before, that we were not to trespass beyond that boundary; that they had to remain alone; . . . and they climbed to the *calleja*. But that night was to be a terrible night for everyone present.

A monk was with us and as soon as he heard those pitiful cries, he started to pray and the people told him,

“Pray, Father, pray! . . .”

Taking into account the distance, about 500 feet, the young girls could not hear that phrase, but as soon as the monk began to pray, the screams would diminish. However, as soon as we and the priest stopped praying, the children would resume their screaming, even louder than before . . . and that lasted, I would say a good twenty or thirty minutes. When at last the young visionaries started to pray, like they had the night before, and were at the same spot, I never felt so much fear as at that very moment. I have had many difficulties in my life, I’ve often been in dangerous situations, but never like that night did I feel so much danger. Many of the people who were there could tell you, for we all felt the same fear. Everyone was experiencing what everyone else was interiorly suffering. I could feel my legs shaking and collapsing under me and I was thinking,

“Why . . . my legs are not supporting me . . . why, that’s it! I’m afraid! . . .”

I took a quick look at my neighbors and I saw it was the same thing with them; nobody was expressing his fright, but we could feel it present inside of everyone of us. During that time, the children were continuing their cries or screams. I remember Loli crying,

“Wait, wait, take the little children first. Give everyone a chance to confess! . . .”

And believe me, upon hearing that, we were terrorized. It was a fear we couldn’t put into words, but kept inside ourselves . . . We could feel the danger, without seeing anything. It’s hard to explain. Everybody was looking up to heaven, trying to see what was threatening us; the children seemed to be trying to hold something back with their arms. As soon as the ecstasy was over, we questioned them and they told us,

“We have seen the Chastisement; we have seen something

worse than if we were being burned. It is going to be something horrible . . . horrible!”

It is necessary to do penance, to accomplish the messages they have transmitted to us. My personal belief is that, unfortunately, even with all the messages, we do not pay much attention to them and that the world is going from bad to worse. We don’t want to listen to the truth, at least not to what the Virgin has told us and I don’t know how much longer this can go on . . . or how much worse things can get. I believe it’s possible that what the visionaries have seen, is just what’s going to happen.

The next day, the whole village went to confession to the monk mentioned before, and then to Communion. This monk must have been there with the consent of Fr. Valentin who was asking other priests to replace him whenever possible.

Stellar phenomena. I know some reliable, level-headed people who have told me they saw stellar phenomena. Personally, I did not see anything.

The blessed objects. Oh, that happened almost daily. There were so many cases that I would like to mention a few. Take for instance, a very curious thing which happened to an old woman of this village. She was one of these very aged persons and, let us say, a woman of faith—a good person. One day she said to Conchita, something like,

“Tell me, Conchita! As you are giving some prayer beads to be kissed by the Virgin, could I give you mine?”

“Yes, why not? Give me your rosary and at the next apparition I will hand it to the Virgin for her to kiss.”

The child took the rosary and at the next apparition, she handed it among many other objects to her Vision. After the ecstasy, Conchita gave it back to the old lady and told her,

“Here, Ma’am, your rosary has been kissed by the Virgin.”

However, the old lady wasn’t satisfied. She brought her beads to Jacinta. Then . . . and this is the curious case which I witnessed—Jacinta, while in ecstasy presents to the Virgin, together with a large number of beads, medals, chains, and holy pictures, the old woman’s rosary. I must mention that on some days the children had so many various objects that they were weighed down with them. When the time came to present the rosary, we heard Jacinta say,

“Ah! you won’t kiss it? . . . It has already been done? Oh! I didn’t know that! Conchita has already given it to you? Oh! I see, it belongs to Mrs. . . .?” (here she mentioned the lady’s name, which I don’t remember.)

I think this was very strange because apart from the old lady, nobody knew that the rosary had already been presented to the Virgin. This episode, which I witnessed personally, impressed me very much.

I will tell you another one which was very spectacular. One day in my presence, a man handed to Mari Loli between twenty and thirty articles, all mixed up together and told her,

“We come from far away, and rather than come one by one to give you these objects, I have been charged to hand them over to you all together so that you may have the Virgin kiss them. Some of us would like you to give them back yourself to each owner; they are here right now, but don’t want to make themselves known.”

The young girl answered,

“Well, I shall ask the Virgin.”

After hearing the above, I became very attentive to the ecstasy on that day and I observed the way in which the little girl gave each article to be kissed. That being done, she started to distribute them to their owners, whom she did not know, and we could hear the recipients exclaim to themselves, while they examined the articles very carefully,

“Let me see if it’s really my own rosary . . . Let me see if it’s truly my ring . . .”

And each person showed the article received and every one was correct without a single mistake! . . . That was rather difficult, because I must tell you that these articles were only some among many others which Mari Loli had received. I would think there were about 100 or 200 pieces and all mixed up: chains, beads, wedding rings, medals, etc. . . . Nobody could have disentangled all that, but the girls! It was marvelous to see them! They took each piece with the greatest of ease, and their eyes always lifted toward their Vision, without ever looking at the person to whom they were returning the article, they would push away (playfully) here a man, there a woman, and somewhere else a young lady, to arrive at the owner of the kissed object. Then the girls would put it either over the head, on the finger, or in

the hand, with such ease! It was a common occurrence—I would say daily.

The calls. I was going out almost every night since my desire not to miss any ecstasy was so strong. However, on certain evenings in the wintertime, when the weather was truly very nasty, very bad, and after a hard day’s work, I would think: “Tonight, I will go to bed.” But it was stronger than I was; in spite of bad weather and fatigue, I would get out and go around to each girl’s house. At that time, their doors were always opened to everybody. I would ask them,

“So, are you going to have an ecstasy tonight?”

According to the case, they would answer “yes” or “no.” They knew in advance, you see, because they told us that they were receiving interior calls. If they didn’t have any call, they would answer negatively, but with sadness.

On the other hand, if they had had a call, they would answer with a big smile,

“Yes, I’ve already had one (or two or three) calls. When they said they had had three calls, they were almost dancing with joy, because after the third call, the apparitions would start almost immediately. I saw this myself, many times. It was supernatural . . . after a while, it was enough for me to see their sorrow or their smile to know the answer.”

Places visited. Very often, while in ecstasy, they would go to see the old people in the village, or the sick who could not get out. They would give them the crucifix to be kissed. They would usually stay a long time with them and when they left, they would go either into the streets or toward the pines or the cemetery. They went to the cemetery quite often. At first, they would go inside the graveyard and would stop in front of certain tombs . . . mostly at night. But on those walks, not many people would follow them—they preferred to stay outside the burial place. The young girls would go inside the cemetery as if it were their home. I never noticed the least sign of fear, although they were only about twelve years of age. I am sure that, at that time, if I had wanted to send them during the night, in their normal state (that is, while not in ecstasy)—even today—wild horses wouldn’t get them past the cemetery gate! What’s more, we ourselves who were accompanying them, didn’t care very much to go inside that place. Some did, but not many. The girls went in, no

matter what the weather; snow, rain or nice weather. Once they arrived at the spot, either inside or out, they fell to their knees and began praying as if they were asking for something for the deceased or their family. And they prayed so well . . . so well! . . .

Pepé's conclusions. I believe the Virgin performed many marvelous things here, but it seems it will require much more for the people to believe.

I am convinced it is all a reality; the events which took place here right before my eyes. As for the prophecies which Conchita has announced, prophecies which the Blessed Virgin has revealed to her, I believe in them and I would advise every person who understands the events of Garabandal to believe in them and to have confidence. This is a very personal opinion which I am giving, but I am saying it because I believe it is the truth and I also wish to give it to all those who, while ignoring what has happened at Garabandal, are now listening to my story: let them know for a fact, that I believe completely and wholeheartedly in everything which has happened here.



1976 PHOTO

Benjamin Gomez (68), farm laborer. Throughout the village, Benjamin was a man respected and admired for his seriousness and wisdom. He died in 1978 at the age of 75.

I won't talk about the miracle of the Visible Communion. I have described it many times and my narration of that event has been recorded and published. What I will tell you now should be added to my previous accounts of the facts.

Falls—absence of wounds. It has often been said that the young girls had been manipulated. So I will ask you this: how could we direct them for the sixteen or eighteen months during which the ecstasies occurred almost daily and were so numerous? I won't say thousands, but at least hundreds of times. How could we have caused them to fall so often to their knees, with such force that one would think they were triggered by a switch; and

this without the girls ever being wounded, in spite of the stones in the roads. How could that be possible in front of so many witnesses? These facts speak for themselves.

Change of facial aspect. Now, let us look at another aspect. The girls' faces, while in ecstasy, changed; a transformation took place. I remember especially, Mari Loli. When we saw her in ecstasy, and afterwards in her normal state, the difference was very great and very striking. The girls' faces always changed and became more beautiful during an ecstasy. Why and how did they change in physical aspect? What was happening? By what methods in this world can we do that? I know I am ignorant of many things, but I believe that it is not so easy to have a face change instantaneously into such a beautiful thing, while falling into ecstasy. And that happened at every ecstasy I ever witnessed.

The walks. We all know that sometimes, they walked with a regular step, and other times very rapidly. At those times, none of us could follow them or if we did succeed, it was because we were running, whereas they seemed to move leisurely, with no more effort than if they were sitting down, or even, as if they were asleep! And what's more, they didn't suffer from any physical changes; neither their breathing nor anything else indicated that they had been running!

No shortness of breath. We, who were following them, were suffocating, but not the girls. And anyone here can confirm this if he wants to tell the truth, for we must examine the facts calmly and without passion. And if the facts I have just pointed out are not from God, I would be very grateful to whoever could give me a natural explanation.

Walking backwards. I will now tell you about another fact, and a great many people saw it on that day. The girls climbed to the pines, in ecstasy; we stayed there, I don't remember for how long. To tell the truth, as I have already pointed out, I never thought at the time, that one day I would have to relate all this. Anyway, they left the pines, walking backwards. They reached the end of a small path which leads to the pines and then goes toward the village with a severe slope. Whoever has seen it will tell you it is not only a severe slope, but a *very* severe slope—at least for someone of my age. And there were the children coming down backwards from the pines. There were two of them, but I don't remember which ones they were. The young girls came down at such a speed over these stones, that it was impos-

sible to follow them. There were youngsters there of all ages, some the same age as the visionaries, but we all stood still watching them run. They came very quickly to the edge of the village. Now I ask you this: how could they come down with such speed that nobody could follow them? And above all, on such difficult paths? We were all witnesses and I didn't see them stumble once.

What happened there? What was it? I would be very grateful if someone would explain it to me. I repeat, I would be very happy if those who do not believe, or say there is a human explanation, would demonstrate. Until then, I'll keep my judgment and I am obliged to believe that this comes from God and from the Virgin.

Abnormal strength. Again another thing: One time Conchita went to the *cuadro* while in ecstasy. She was coming from the village; this is where I met her. She stayed a moment in prayer—at least that's what I supposed, because she made the sign of the cross—and then she went backwards to the village. One of her brothers, whom God has since called back to Himself, the one called Aniceto, whom everyone here knew, said to me,

“Take her by the arm and tell me what you think.”

So I took her by the left arm, which was almost touching her chest, and it was a very thin arm, a little twelve-year-old girl's arm. I took it with my two hands and found it impossible to move! I could not even bend it. I don't know what was the matter with that arm; what I am sure of is, that her arm was folded and I was unable to straighten it. That's exactly what happened and again I leave it to those who feel able, to give me an explanation.

Change of weight. Upon another occasion, I was at Torrelavega, talking about this whole affair. We did not lack people to laugh at us, although the aspect of my own face does not cause people to laugh. I have a very stern face and it has always been like that, I can't deny it. What's more, why should I deny it? I can't help it, I was born that way. We were talking then about how impossible it was for people to lift the young girls while they were in ecstasy. Among the group, some were laughing but others were taking the thing seriously. So I told them,

“All right, I want to be sure once and for all; the first thing tomorrow morning, I will go to the village and I'll see if I can prove it.”

I arrived at the village and got in touch with a friend, related to a woman who had worked at my house, and I asked him if he could contact the parents of one of the visionaries, so that I could perform my experiment. A little while later, Mari Loli fell into ecstasy. The man talked to her father who said,

“Well, I believe you are here to test the children’s weight? Here is my daughter—try and see.”

I placed myself behind her; I took her under the arms and exerted all my strength. I pushed and I pulled, and at that time I was no weakling. I could easily lift up to 220 pounds from the ground, whereas, I couldn’t even budge that little girl.

When the ecstasy was over, her father called,

“Come over here and you too, Benjamin . . . follow us.

We went, the three of us, higher up and the father told his daughter to kneel down. Then he said to me, “You, try now!”

The little girl knelt down, and I took her and I lifted her up and I said,

“She must weigh about sixty-five or seventy-five pounds.”

And he answered,

“She weighed sixty-five pounds a few days ago.”

So I was not far wrong, and reflecting over what had happened, I was thinking to myself:

“Either my strength is deserting me, or that young girl weighed more than 220 pounds.”

I must add one detail. My efforts in lifting her up while she was in ecstasy, had raised her shoulders. As everybody could see, she remained that way, the eyes looking straight toward heaven and her shoulders raised up. Then one of my cousins who was there said to me,

“Look how you left her.”

“I see, but what can I do now?”

Then one of the other visionaries, who was not in ecstasy but was standing beside Mari Loli, touched her clothes at the shoulder level, and the shoulders resumed their normal position.

Levitation. Now let us examine another phenomenon. Conchita, who was in ecstasy, went toward the main door of the church. It was closed so she went to the women’s entrance (for there were two entrances, and the women generally used the other one).

When Conchita arrived near the doorway, she knelt down and as usual, she made the sign of the cross and started to pray. She got up (and here is another point on which I would like to have someone enlighten me, and I would like, above all, to have an explanation on behalf of all those who say that everything which happened here was false), anyway, the girl stood up, turned her back to the door of the church, advanced a bit, stopped and let herself fall backwards—rigid—without the least bending of the legs or of the trunk, stiff as if she had been struck down by lightning. And truly, the shock was so violent that the women who were there cried out in alarm,

“Oh! my God! Conchita has killed herself! . . . Conchita has killed herself!”

Some screamed, some cried—women’s stuff, right? For me, it did not surprise me, although it was serious. I had to tell them,

“Here, stop that! If she killed herself, we will bury her tomorrow.”

But I knew very well that nothing would happen to her, having seen so much already, and something told me she was not in any danger. The young girl remained on the ground, on her back, without moving for a few minutes and then, suddenly, without changing her position, she starts to move forward while leaning on her heels. She thus comes back as far as the door of the church and leaves again going forward. Then I look and remark,

“Well, this is curious: when she comes back toward the entrance, her clothes do not move, which is normal. But when she goes toward the front, her dress should ride up, but it doesn’t move either!”

The young girl kept going like that four or five times, then she rose up. It seems only logical to me, that even though she was quick, her body should have bent at least a little, either at the knees or at the waist. But no, she got up in one smooth motion without bending, and with an extreme rapidity. How could her body get up without supporting itself in some way on the ground?

Good Lord! I almost forgot something else. While she made one of those returns toward the doorway, a man who was standing there put his hand between the stretched body of the young girl and the ground. Her body was suspended in the air because his hand went all the way and did not touch the ground.

That I saw myself. What I have seen, I have seen, and I say it. And I do not add nor subtract anything to what I have seen.

Unfortunately, I didn't ask the name of that gentleman for we were all busy looking and nobody worried who was who. But this man did that in my presence.

The calls. One night we were in Mari Loli's house, waiting for the ecstasy, because the girl had told us she was going to have an ecstasy at a given hour. I do not remember which hour because this happened quite some years ago, and my head is no longer young. The girl was tired and she lay down near the fireplace and fell asleep for some time. Since I don't remember exactly what hour she had announced, let us suppose she said midnight. The time was getting close and we were very attentive. There still remained five minutes, three minutes, and then it was midnight, midnight plus one minute by the clock. At that very moment, still asleep, she got up as if she were turned on by a switch! It was lightning-quick! She went toward the table where there was a heap of rosary beads and holy pictures, climbed onto the table and knelt down. I suppose between the time she left the fireplace and the time she climbed onto the table she woke up but I don't know.

There she started handing the Virgin (at least by what she was saying) some rosaries, medals, rings, pictures; there were many. Well, there surely must have been something or someone up above, otherwise, why did Mari Loli act that way? I do believe she must have been seeing something, or else it made no sense.

Stellar phenomena. I have not seen any stellar phenomena, and as I have not seen anything, I can't speak about them.

Nights of terror. I was not present.

The Commission. I have never been summoned by the Commission.

* * *

Here, from *Conchita's Diary*, is the testimony of Benjamin Gomez, concerning the miracle of the Visible Communion.

Question Did you see the child clearly.

Gomez Perfectly. She was right beside me.

Question You say you were about three feet from her. Is that correct?

Gomez No, not at all! The distance was much less; hardly the width of a hand.

Question Were you there when Conchita put out her tongue to receive the Communion.

Gomez Yes. I was even there when the little girl arrived. I saw her kneeling down, the arms at the sides of the body, then opening her mouth and presenting a bare tongue. I was very surprised and I looked. I saw very well, because as I said, I was so close, less than the distance of my hand from her face. I looked in her mouth very easily, taking my time; I looked up, nothing. I looked down, nothing. At that moment, one of my cousins who was behind me touched me on the shoulder so I let him look. I turned my head for one instant, what am I saying? for a second! And when I looked back, the Host was on her tongue.

Question What was the Host like?

Gomez That's difficult to say. It was white, but of a white color out of this world. Sometimes I search for a comparison, and I can find only one—although very far from reality. We would have said something like snow—a snowflake upon which the sun's rays were striking. But in that case, the white hurts the eyes, whereas the Host did not strain one's eyesight.

Question What dimension did it have?

Gomez I will make a comparison: it is as if we had put two twenty-five peseta pieces atop one another.

Question Do you think Conchita could have put it there with her hand?

Gomez Impossible! I would have seen it, but the child didn't move.

Question Perhaps she was holding it hidden in the mouth, cleverly placed underneath the tongue, for example?

Gomez She could not have done it, for I examined her mouth attentively and I looked, and I can assure you nothing was there.

1980 PHOTO

Pilar Cuenca Mazon (58), shepherdess. Pilar was born and lives in Garabandal. She has left the village only once to see her daughter who lives in France.

Before the apparitions. Before the apparitions, the little girls were like the others; mountain children, ignorant of the ways of the world because our village did not exist for the people outside, as we were so isolated. We barely knew our right hand from our left, at least as far as I am concerned.

Insensitiveness—change of weight. During the apparitions I followed them as many other people did and I remember how they had shone bright lights in their eyes, and how they pricked them, but the youngsters never winced. People also tried to lift them up. As for myself, I will simply tell you that I didn't dare touch them, as they inspired me with so much respect. Certain bystanders tried to lift them up, many tried together, but they couldn't succeed, they were unable to do it. The youngsters, while in ecstasy, were like—how can I say—like a block of wood that we couldn't move, like something dead.

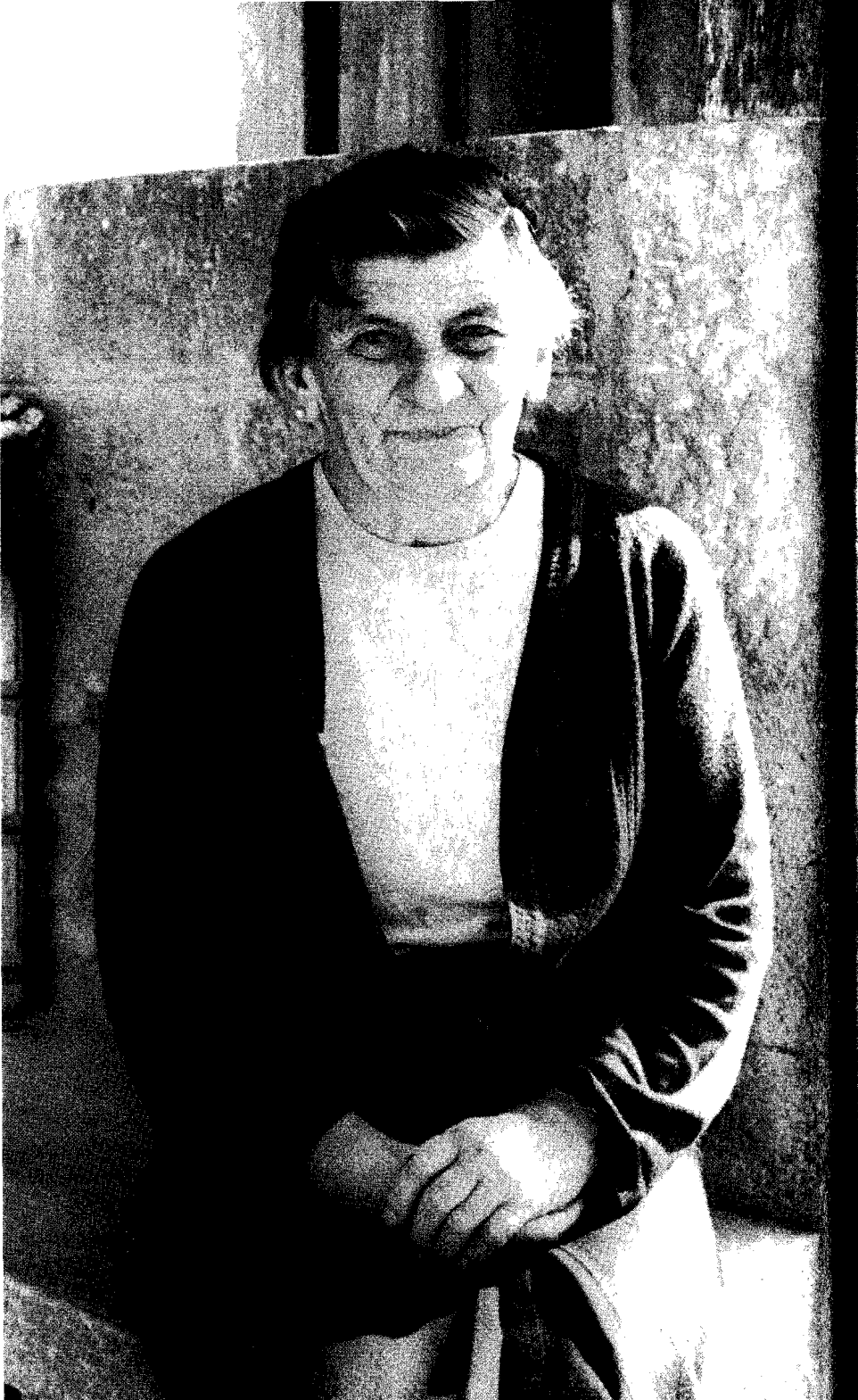
Most of the time, I used to accompany Conchita, but in some cases, I accompanied the other girls as well. As Conchita was passing by, I asked her,

“When you go to recite the rosary, call me.”

One day I saw her reciting the rosary with one knee on the ground and the other one up in the air and she remained in that position during the whole recitation of the rosary. And I must say that she recited it very well. Oh! it was in a manner which was worth watching. It was very impressive to pray with them.

The young girls would start, “Holy Mary, Mother of God” slowly, with great peace. It was very touching. Everything they taught us was good. It was marvelous to see them make the sign of the cross.

Nocturnal ecstasies during winter. During the ecstasies we never saw any sign of fatigue on their faces. I remember when they were up there and nobody could make them move—the poor girls! Their eyes wouldn't blink! Not at all!



One time, late at night, while my daughter and myself were in bed, we heard someone praying in the street. It was Aniceta and her daughter. It was a very bad night. It was snowing and there was lightning and thunder. We got out of bed and accompanied them. A little while later, some neighbors joined us—not very many. We went to the cemetery with them as they continued to pray, and as we did so, we removed the snow falling on Conchita's face. I gave her a few pious objects and she told me the Virgin had kissed them (I don't remember what date that was). But I particularly remember this night. It was really a terrible night, enough to scare anybody because thunder commands respect, does it not? And here in the mountains, it echoes loudly. In fact, it resounds on the *Peña Sagra* even more than in the village, but even here, it is very loud, you know. Yes, there was lightning and it was snowing, and with Aniceta and Conchita, there were also Matilde, my daughter and myself. My daughter's name is the same as mine, but we call her Pili.

The ecstasy lasted a long time and all the while Conchita was praying. We went all over the village, to the doorway of the church, and back to the cemetery—that's a long way.

El Milagruco. On that night I even caught a cold, because people were saying that the miracle of the Host would take place up there, on the side of the hermitage and with many people, we were waiting on that spot and that's where I caught my cold. After all that, the miracle didn't even occur there. It happened down below. My two daughters saw it. They didn't see the arrival of the Host, but they saw It when It was already on Conchita's tongue. They came home crying, especially the oldest one—the one who was talking with Conchita's brother who has since died. She couldn't stop crying; she really did see the Host on Conchita's tongue. My two other daughters are called Maria Asucion and Serafina.

The Santander Commission. No, nobody has bothered with me until today.

The Infant Jesus' crown. I also witnessed the ecstasy when the children were handing the Child Jesus to one another. It was in front of the church entrance. Then, they also exchanged the crown between themselves and they were putting it on their heads. They would lift up one another. That was something to see! . . . I saw one of the girls lifting another one up as if she were a feather. I heard that one of the girls lifted the two others,



Pilar (arrow) is a firsthand observer of this ecstasy as Conchita holds up a crucifix with Jacinta behind her.

but I never saw that. However, in front of the entrance to the village church, I did see one of the girls lifting up the other very high. I remember also, some people used to prick the visionaries' feet while they were in ecstasy in the *cuadro* . . . that I saw! Also, some other people were shining electric lights and flashlights in the girls' eyes, and they never blinked. On the contrary, their eyes remained wide open as they always did during an ecstasy.

Conversations with the deceased Fr. Luis Andreu. One day when we were going to Mass, Mari Loli fell backwards in ecstasy, near a church pillar. There was a lady called Carmen and her husband, Rafael. They were from Aguilar del Campo—I don't remember their last name (Pilar is referring here to Rafael Fontenada, Aguilar del Campo, Palencia, well known biscuit manufacturer). These people knelt down in order to place their ears close to Mari Loli's mouth and they were crying when they told us that Mari Loli was talking with Fr. Luis Andreu—the one who was dead. This couple was crying while listening to the conversation. We remained standing up so we didn't hear anything. Afterwards, still in ecstasy, the young girls went out for a walk in the village.

1980 PHOTO

Maria Gonzalez (63), Jacinta's mother.

First ecstasy noted. The first time I heard about it was when Jacinta said to me, in the kitchen,

“You know, Mama, we were in the *calleja*, taking some apples, and all of a sudden Conchita screamed while looking up to the sky. We were about to go and get Aniceta as we didn't know what was happening to her. Then we looked up too and we saw an angel surrounded by a wonderful light . . . and we remained like Conchita.”

The first person therefore who spoke to me about the affair was Jacinta herself, but I didn't believe her then, and I didn't talk to my family about it. Now, when I think about it, I say to myself,

“How is it possible that our four families behaved that way with our little girls at that time?”

Well, it didn't occur to me to speak about this to anyone since I saw it only as a simple child's story; it went in one ear and out the other. I didn't pay any attention. Moreover, the mothers of the other girls didn't talk to me about it, and I didn't talk to them. We didn't get together in order to discuss these things. No, no discussion took place between the four families—nothing.

Eight days afterwards, as we were going to the garden, the little girls called one of us, Clementina, and they said to her,

“Come with us, because they don't believe us. You will see!”

So, a few followed, and were upset at seeing the young girls in ecstasy. They told the rest of us and some started to go and see for themselves.

What I felt when I attended the first ecstasy, I believe I shall remember until my death. I thought I was going crazy. It was in the *calleja*, the young girls were there, the four of them. Simon, my husband, didn't come. He thought it was nonsense; he leaned against the transformer pole and from there he watched the scene and said,

“If I find out that this is just a bad joke, and if they do something bad, I won't be responsible for what I'll do to them.”



Because he is rather quick tempered, he viewed that ecstasy from a distance but later he regretted having remained there because everyone behaved very nicely and he found it interesting.

I don't remember now if the girls were already in ecstasy by the time we arrived. All I know is that upon seeing my daughter in such a state, I screamed so much that people put their hands over my mouth to stifle the screams, while holding me by force. I struggled fiercely to free myself and I screamed so much that ever since then my throat bothers me. I shall bear this memory in my mind all my life.

That was because I had never seen anything of the sort before and I was asking myself what could it be, although for the last eight days Jacinta had been describing to me what she was seeing at each ecstasy. But at home, nobody would believe her, although she gave us many details,

"Today we saw a great light. . . . Today we have seen a big sign with letters unknown to us . . ."

The girls were coming back crying—they were going to church sobbing.

One day, either the pastor or the school teacher must have told them to ask for the name of the person they were seeing and what she wanted. Jacinta told me that the girls asked the question. That day, she also told me she had seen some kind of a personage "like a new born . . ." I then started to laugh and cry at the same time—it was nerves. Jacinta was describing,

"Today, His hair reached to His shoulders. His complexion was like chick-peas . . ."

I was starting to feel so disturbed, for she was telling me so many things, to such an extent that I felt the need to go to the store and see Lena, one of my cousins, and I told her,

"Oh Lena! What a story! Every day Jacinta tells me some extraordinary things and today again, she tells me she has seen this and that thing . . ."

And I was crying and laughing at the same time.

Starting at that very moment, and although I didn't believe my child, I was beginning to ask myself some questions. One day, my daughter told me it was an angel—it had wings! To which my son, Miguel Angelo, who was very good natured, answered,

"Ah, it was probably just a big bird, with wings!"

That was the way it was until the day we made up our minds

to go and see, and then I felt such a violent emotion.

Afterwards, I had much respect for the apparitions, and I could not bear to hear the spectators gossip. But I couldn't understand. Who could that be? My God! how is that possible? Sometimes I was convinced; I would say, "There is something there." Then the doubts would start all over again and I kept asking myself the same question, "Who could that be? My God! who could that be? So many different ideas would go through my mind. The young girls had never been outside the village and they didn't have much education. I didn't send Jacinta to school too often. She knew how to read, but just barely.

A bizarre fact. One day I said to Mari Loli and Jacinta,

"Children, do you know what we're going to do? I will put here a small bottle of holy water and when you see the apparition, you will sprinkle it with the holy water, and if this is the devil, he will go away."

It was astonishing. They had an apparition and they took the small bottle. On that day, there was a lady called Chon from Burgos and another girl, whom people said was a Jewess, Catalina. They were sitting over there and the girls, here, where you are. The visionaries threw the water toward the apparition and it all fell back on the Jewess who later became a convert. Many times since, a lot of people have come to make the experiment with ordinary water. They throw the water in a similar manner and it falls naturally, in front of them. Whereas, on that particular day, the holy water left from here and fell back on the Jewess—that is, in the opposite direction to the one from where it was thrown. The young lady was very much impressed and received Baptism after she became of age because her parents were Jews.

I have seen many ecstasies. Their duration was varied. They happened anywhere. Sometimes when the children were at home, the ecstasies took place in our house.

While these things were happening, they would go out at night, while in ecstasy, the four of them. One time, we left one girl in each of our four houses, without any alarm clock or anything of the sort, to see if they would get out at the same time. Yes, yes, we made that experiment, to see, without any watch or alarm clock, and they did get out together. That experiment we performed many, many times afterwards, and Simon would say,

"What can it be? . . . What can they see?"

Synchronization of gestures. Take for instance, the fact that two of the girls would fall into ecstasy here and the two others, further away and behind them, would do the same. Well, when the girls who were behind started to pray, the two who were in front would do the same. The two in front would make the sign of the cross, the two behind would do it at the same time. They would perform exactly the same gestures, at exactly the same time, without being able to see one another.

Signs of fatigue. They came out of their ecstasies in better condition than the people following them. My oldest son, who was nineteen (Jacinta was then twelve) and who is strong, was running behind them, and the girls in ecstasy, with their hands outstretched, could stop themselves immediately, in an instant, whereas my son and the others would stop farther away as they were pulled by gravity [Maria obviously means carried by momentum]. The girls themselves were as fresh as if they had not run. "But we did not move from over there," they would say. No, not any sign of fatigue.

In spite of the lack of sleep, the next day they would go about their work without any apparent aftereffects. They would relate, in detail, the activities of their day to their Apparition. This is why we cannot say that all the ecstasies were similar.

Sensitivity tests. One time, the children were already in ecstasy, at a little lower level than the *cuadro*, when we arrived. I got close to Jacinta, and on that day, I think I would have gladly beaten the doctors who were there. One of them had got hold of my daughter's leg at the time she fell to her knees in ecstasy. This caused the leg to be folded under her. She was then leaning on one knee, the folded leg not touching the ground, in the position in which she was when the doctor let her go. It was always like that when the children fell into ecstasy: they remained in the position in which the ecstasy started. Afterwards, of course, the children would start moving around. Jacinta remained in that position for more than an hour, with only one knee touching the stones, the hands way up in the air. It pained me to see her in that position, but not her. Then the doctors started to prick her leg (they were pricking the girls' legs at the time) but it did not bleed. When the ecstasy was over, Jacinta said,

"Mama, the Virgin told me they were pricking my leg."

We then looked at her leg and could see the marks of the pricking, but it was not bleeding.

Very often, I have tried to assume Jacinta's position, on only one knee. I have never been able to do it.

Another time, some men were touching her eyes with sticks to see her reaction.

Normally, when people take her picture with flashbulbs, she cries, "Oh, I'm blinded!" whereas when in ecstasy, the flashes went on without stopping, and she didn't even blink.

What happened here, we do not know. No one can explain it.

Physical strength. I remember one time, Jacinta had an attack of the croup, so she was confined to bed. It was in the old house. It was raining, and on that day, Jacinta got up. I didn't think she would have an apparition. At the moment we least expected it, she fell to her knees in ecstasy. I stayed by the door, determined not to let her go out on account of the weather and her croup. I didn't tell her about my intentions, but I said to myself, "You will not go outside the house!" While I was thinking this, I was watching her, and she continued to hold up various objects for her Vision to kiss. Suddenly, very delicately, very quietly, she came toward me, took me by the arm, and went out, very sweetly. I couldn't offer any resistance! I don't even know how she got hold of me! She was only twelve years of age. But when she took me by the arm, I felt a physical contact with something stiff, very rigid, not hot or cold, but—very rigid.

I ran after her to get her to put on a sweater. In spite of my putting it on her shoulders many times, it always fell; it would not stay. Then I hurried and ran to Mari Loli as she was not in ecstasy, and asked her to come and put the sweater on Jacinta. These were things they could do between themselves, even if one of them was not in ecstasy. Then again, one day Mari Loli fell into ecstasy at the precise moment when she was disconnecting an electric light bulb and no one could remove the bulb from her hands. Jacinta had to do it.

The nights of horror. Yes, I saw them. Jacinta and Mari Loli were there. Conchita must not have been feeling well. During the day, they had already had an ecstasy and told us they would have another one during the evening, at ten o'clock, and that we were not to go beyond the limit indicated by a stable which was there. The little girls told that to me as well as to the other people of the village and everyone else who was there. So we left them alone while we waited to see what was going to happen.

They started to scream so loudly that my legs collapsed under

me and somebody had to hold me up. We were sure we would never see the feast of Corpus Christi, which was on the day after the morrow.

There was a priest present who came to Garabandal by mistake. He had taken the wrong road. This monk started to pray when the girls were screaming or crying—then they would stop! But as soon as the Father ceased praying, the girls started to scream again, as well as the people.

The young girls finally came slightly lower, which permitted me to get close to them. They stopped at the place in the *calleja* where they had first seen the Angel, and they were crying, crying. I asked myself,

“My God, what is the matter? What do they see?”

They didn’t say anything, but once they reached Ceferino’s house, they wrote a little note—I don’t know exactly what—saying that everybody was to go to confession, because a Chastisement was going to happen.

Yes, everybody went to confession under the shock of that awful fright; we thought then that something was going to happen to us, I don’t know what.

We went to confession and Holy Communion as if we were about to die. It was a good, a very good, confession.

The next night Conchita was there, and the cries of horror started again. The young girls had told us to stay there in the *calleja*. That is what we did, all night, so as not to leave them alone. There were quite a lot of us. Holy Mary! how those people were crying!

Santander Commission. One night the Commission came here and got Simon out of bed at midnight. I don’t remember how many there were. They also went to Ceferino. They came to get Jacinta and the others, to remove them from the village. They wanted to bring them somewhere else in order to distract them and to make them forget their visions.

That’s the only time the Commission bothered with us, as far as I can remember.

On that night, Simon told them,

“Listen to me well! Nothing you tell me makes any difference—it goes in one ear and out the other. If you force me to take my daughter out of the village, I will take her up to winter quarters; she won’t go down (to Santander); she is a minor and nobody will take her away from me.”

They were coming to take her away from us! They were able to get away with that with Conchita because her father was dead—otherwise she would surely not have left. They tried first with Jacinta.

No, no. The Commission never came back here to interrogate us again.

Prediction of the negations. I was not near them on the day when, during an ecstasy, and for the first time, they predicted in a loud voice, their future negations and retractions. But I knew it. I had heard them saying there would be many contradictions, that the families would get mad at one another, and other stories of that kind had been prophesied. All this has come about. At the time, I didn’t think such things could happen to us. I didn’t believe it.

For me, I couldn’t understand what was happening and I couldn’t stop asking myself the question,

“What can this be? Everything they predict comes true. Who can be telling them these things?”

Voice in the night. The Blessed Mother had told them that a voice would call them and that they should follow it. So when I heard Jacinta say during that night, “What! We must follow you?” I was afraid, because I thought to myself, “And if that voice orders them to jump from the top of the cliff. . .?”

Mari Cruz was screaming,

“If you don’t tell us who you are, we are going back home!”

Afterwards, the little girls never spoke to us again about that voice. It happened near the church.

1980 PHOTO

Aniceta Gonzalez y Gonzalez (62), widow, Conchita's mother. A housekeeper, Aniceta also works in the fields.

Before the apparitions. I can't speak about the other children. I will speak only of what concerns my own child. A very good girl, not at all envious, very obedient. She used to accompany me to church and remain sitting near me, very quietly, as I asked her to, not because she liked it, but through obedience to me.

First reactions. I have always told Conchita,

"I want you to be back home before dark."

Well, on that day, I was preparing dinner. It was in June, at about nine o'clock in the evening. Although it was still bright, I had the impression it was late and was thinking about Conchita, "If you come home a little late tonight, tomorrow will be later still--so you must be on time . . ."

While I was thinking this, Conchita arrived, with red eyes, as if she had been crying. She crossed the doorsill, leaned to the left of the entrance and said,

"Mama, I saw an angel."

"An angel? Not only do you come home late, but you tell me this nonsense? Don't speak to me about any angel!"

I don't know why I told her not to speak to me about that. At the time, we didn't speak much about apparitions. I simply thought she was telling me stories in order to avoid a good scolding. She came in so, and leaned on the wall. I didn't say anything else, but I felt a kind of chill going over my body which gave me a funny feeling. I asked myself what it could be, but I didn't ask Conchita any more questions and I didn't speak to anyone else about it.

Here, when a woman is sick or gives birth to a child, we have the habit of going in groups to do her work. The next morning there were about fifteen women, young and old, busy working in a cornfield and the others were talking about what had happened the day before.

"At any rate, surely *something* happened to them, because they were pale, especially some of them, and it was a pity to see them."



I didn't say anything. I didn't want them to know that one of the girls was my own daughter, because I would have been very embarrassed. I don't know why.

According to what these women were saying, the children, after seeing the apparition of the Angel, met the school teacher with whom they had then recited a "Station"¹² in the church, and they crossed through the festival which was taking place on that Sunday and where people had seen them. This is what Conchita was to tell me later on. And when the women kept saying that surely something had happened to the girls, I said,

"You are more naive than the girls. You know very well that when they scamper over there, they come back telling us they have seen a ghost, or something frightening. That must be what happened. You shouldn't believe such nonsense."

But even as I said this, I was secretly very disturbed.

I delayed a few days before going to see the children in ecstasy. I had a pig in a stable near Serafino's house, and I was going to take it some food. You know that the first apparition took place next to the apple tree, near the house of some people from Seville. Conchita came with me, and when we got to the stable, she said,

"Mama, look at the people over there!"

There were some people from the next village and I felt embarrassed as we got closer to them.

"Close your mouth and be quiet!"

Then Conchita left and went to join the three other girls, but she coaxed me,

"Come, Mama, come, there are lots of people . . ."

But me, I hid myself, and got home without them seeing me.

Afterwards, there were so many people who had attended the ecstasies and who were talking to me about them, that I made up my mind, and when I saw my daughter in ecstasy, I said,

"There, that is true."

For sure, I didn't know what it was. We didn't know what an ecstasy was, not even that it could exist—at least as far as I'm

12. The Station is a typical Spanish prayer which is recited in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. It consists of six Our Fathers, six Hail Marys, six Glory be's to the Father, one Creed, and often the Salve Regina (Hail Holy Queen).

concerned—but upon seeing my daughter in that state, I said to myself,

"There is something there."

And right then, I began thinking about what happened at Lourdes and at Fatima, and saying to myself that after all, that could very well happen here. I thought that we would see some phenomena for a few days and then everything would be over. But they continued for another year and a half.¹³

In a general way, I never asked Conchita any questions, but she used to let some very interesting details escape.

For instance, one day when kneeling in my kitchen, I was reciting a prayer from a book which was being passed around to a different house every day, and that day was my turn. When Conchita got close to me and saw a picture of a small child in the book, she exclaimed,

"Here, Mama! The Child Jesus whom we are seeing is the same as the one in the picture."

And I, not wanting to put too much importance in what she had just said, answered,

"Ah, but this is a miniature. He is very small!"

"Yes, Jesus is a little taller, but of the same complexion."

The child in the picture was a little angel, very pretty. When the book came back to me, the picture was gone.

Number of ecstasies. I believe I have seen all of Conchita's ecstasies. No! I missed one on account of a lady who said she was not feeling well. But it was not very serious, for after she drank a cup of tea in my house, she felt better than I did.

Ah! There was another one which took place at the pines, on the day a truck fell into the ravine.

Apart from that, I followed all the apparitions and we have seen hundreds of them. Nothing could have stopped me from following them for I believed the Blessed Virgin was there and I said to myself,

"She has followed the Passion, so I can very well follow her apparitions."

Why not? After all, it didn't require any effort on my part.

13. In fact, it was much longer than that. But actually it was during the first sixteen months that there were the greatest number of ecstasies.



In the 'cuadro,' Aniceta closely observes her daughter, Conchita, in ecstasy with the other visionaries, from left to right, Mari Loli, Jacinta and Mari Cruz.

Different locations. No, they didn't always happen at the same place. Most of the time Conchita would receive her calls in the house and fall into ecstasy before going out. Then we would follow her to the pines, to the cemetery, to church, or through the village streets.

Different times. The ecstasies would take place very often anywhere from two to five o'clock in the morning. After the Message of October 18, 1961, Conchita didn't have more than three or four ecstasies a week, mostly on Tuesdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Facial aspect. The children's faces became very beautiful, very sweet, without any sign of fatigue.

The ecstasy would leave them with a visible joy. In the same manner, after they made these long and rapid marches, Conchita would become normal, laughing gaily, with a normal pulse; whereas my sons who were strong, came back home dripping with perspiration. You would think they were coming out of a pool.

When I tried to follow Conchita, I was always way behind her.

The three other girls often came to my house while in ecstasy, especially in the beginning.

Experiment. One day my daughter was here in my house and the other ones were at their homes. They were thus separated. Conchita went running to meet the others who were arriving. They all met together at the same moment. This experience took place in my presence. Moreover I can give other details of that particular ecstasy because I remember Conchita was talking about me to her Vision, saying,

"My mother is plain, with dark complexion and white hair."

She was exaggerating a bit, because I had a few white hairs but not that many!

I also heard her say,

"But you only just came! What! An hour already?"

Some priests who were attending the scene looked at one another and said, "That's right, exactly one hour!" And they discussed it among themselves, but I don't remember now just what they said. I didn't pay much attention at the time.

Synchronization of reaction. Conchita was coming down the path in the lead, the two others were behind, and Mari Cruz was bringing up the rear. They couldn't hear what each other was saying because each one was talking very low- murmuring--and the three others made the same exclamation at the same time as Conchita,

"What! an hour already?"

The ecstatic falls. I have seen Conchita fall a thousand times! For example, from the fireplace of the chimney (about two feet off the floor). She would be sitting there and the ecstasy would seize her. She would crash to her knees . . . but no harm ever befell her, although it would make such a noise! Like a dry bone smashing on stone. We could hear it so clearly. When the ecstasy was over, she would be back to normal as though nothing happened.

Kissed objects. I have often seen Conchita giving back the objects kissed by the Blessed Virgin without ever looking at the people to whom she was giving them.

One time, we were following the ecstasy on the side of the Marina's houses. While walking, one lady stuffed a wedding ring in Conchita's pocket and the girl, a little further on, exclaimed,

"I have a wedding ring? No, no, I don't have a ring."

Probably the Virgin was insisting. Then my daughter put her hand in her pocket, pulled out the ring, which she handed to the Virgin to be kissed, then turned back and gave it to a man who was a professor in the Bilbao area, I believe.

Another time, a young couple arrived here whom I thought were engaged. It was pouring rain and the village was crowded with people. While in ecstasy, Conchita came into the house. My sister was there with many other people and the young man said to her,

“Give this cross to the little girl.”

“There is no use trying to give it to her. She doesn’t take anything while she is in ecstasy.”

“Then give it to her mother. She could hand it over to the girl herself.”

My sister gave me the cross and told me what the young man wanted. But although Conchita would not take anything while in ecstasy, I got an idea. This cross was hanging from a cord. I hooked it onto Conchita’s fingers by the cord; Conchita’s hands were joined. We all heard my daughter’s answers to her Vision who was apparently insisting that she had the cross.

“But no, I am not carrying anything; I am not carrying anything.”

Although she was talking low, we could hear her words distinctly, especially I, who was right at her side.

“I am not carrying anything. Then take it if I have something.”

While saying this, she took one step forward, letting her arms fall, which caused the cross to fall off. At the same time, because she was advancing, she stepped on the cross.

“Oh! I am stepping on it!”

She bent down, picked up the crucifix which she handed to her Vision to be kissed, turned around toward the young man, made the sign of the cross over him, applied the cross to his lips and again handed the cross to the Virgin, saying,

“What a shame! While the Dominican habit is so nice . . . what a shame that he dresses like that.”

She turned again toward the young man, removed his glasses and put them in his hands. I could see he was afraid she was going to break them, so I assured him,

“Don’t worry, she won’t break them.”

After closing his hands over the glasses, the crucifix still in her hand, Conchita made the sign of the cross over him again. Then she passed the cord over his head and put the cross around his neck.

But the cross was wrong side out.

“Oh! I put it wrong side out?”

She removed the cord and put the cross on correctly. After that, she opened his hands, took the glasses, put them on him and again we heard her say,

“What a shame that they come like that, in that manner.”

We learned later that he was a Dominican dressed as a civilian and that the young lady was his sister. They had pitched a tent a little away from the village.

Levitation. I personally don’t know if that’s what it’s called, a “levitation,” but one day I saw Conchita stretched out in my kitchen, raise herself from the floor, while remaining stretched out. I believe that this is a levitation case, because the Brigadier of the Civil Guard, Juan Seco, Fr. José Ramon, Dr. Ortiz and a few priests who were there, spoke at length about it and said it was a case of levitation.¹⁴

Stellar phenomena. I didn’t see anything of that sort; maybe because I was not good enough.

Nights of terror. Conchita was not present on the first night because she was not feeling well. She had an ecstasy, but she did not come out. I remember she wrote a letter without looking at what she was writing. I don’t know to whom it was addressed. She was holding the paper like this, in empty space, without resting it on anything, and with the other hand, she was writing normally. Many people who were there saw it.

The Visible Communion. I did not see it.

Conchita had announced it to the other people in the village, but not to me. I didn’t want to know about anything before anybody else because it seemed to me to be something so important that I wanted to wait like everybody else. I have never asked

14. Mrs. Mercedes Salisachs, Spanish writer, who was present at this conversation with Aniceta, interrupted to say, “I did not succeed in seeing that levitation on account of the crowd which prevented me from getting closer, but I heard the exclamations of the people ‘She is raising herself!’ But I was not able to see it. On the other hand, I saw Mari Loli in levitation. That was a common thing.”

her anything, never. Well, after everyone knew there was going to be a miracle, she said to me,

“Mother, if you want, I will tell you what the miracle will consist of.”

My sister was with me and urged me to ask her but I answered Conchita,

“I don’t want you to tell me; don’t tell me anything; I shall see it.”

But she said,

“Mother, the Virgin told me to tell you.”

“Oh, if the Virgin told you, do what you want, but I am not curious as I want to be treated like everybody else. When the others see it, I will see it too.”

“This is what it will be: the Host will be visible at the moment I receive It!”

“Oh! And you call this a little miracle? It is the greatest miracle in the world! For what is the most important thing? The Eucharist!”

“Then after this miracle, you will believe, Mama?”

“Yes, yes, totally. After this, even if the Holy Father himself tells me it is false, that it is some kind of a phenomenon, I would obey him, but in my innermost heart I would remain convinced that you have received Holy Communion from the hand of the Angel.”

That’s how I answered her, but as it turned out, I didn’t see the miracle after all.

I thought a lot about what I would do at the time of the miracle of the Visible Communion. I had decided to go to church and pray. It was not that I didn’t want to see the miracle, but I wanted to make a sacrifice.

On the appointed day, two of my sons were at home, looking after the cows. Two others were abroad. Serafino didn’t come home because he had only recently left and he didn’t dare ask for leave.

I didn’t think it necessary to run and see the miracle. I remained firm in my decision. I heard the screaming from my house. There were a lot of people and so much screaming that I said to myself,

“That’s it, they’ve killed her!”

I was thinking they were either killing her or they were beating my boys. There were some Civil Guards to keep order, but with such a crowd . . .

Suddenly, a lady grabbed me by the arm and shouted,

“I saw It! I saw It!”

And she was pulling me so strongly that she almost dragged me to the floor.

“What did you see?”

“I saw the Host!”

“Ah, good! If you have seen the Host, God be praised, all is accomplished.”

I felt reassured. I experienced such a serenity of spirit, that for me everything was decided.

Santander Commission. No, I have never been summoned by this Commission, but I accompanied Conchita when they took her to Santander to have her take some tests.

Conchita at Santander. I can’t say much about our stay there. Each time they tried to make her take a test in my presence, nothing came of it. I went along with these people, very innocently, believing that nobody had any wickedness.

We came with a priest. I stayed in Santander six days and Conchita, eight. By the eighth day, the atmosphere back in the village was literally poisonous. I was being accused of having removed the Blessed Virgin from the village and I was being harassed in an unbelievable way. I was a widow; my sons were at home, and we were living in peace, in a spirit of mutual understanding. If they earned one *duro* (five pesetas) they would bring it to me. And now, it was a war, because the other villagers said I chased Conchita out of the house. They said I had suppressed everything in Garabandal. My boys found themselves alone, against the village and alone at work in the pastures.

On the day we arrived in Santander, July 27, 1961, Conchita had an ecstasy. The other girls also had one at the same hour. People later told me that they (the other girls) said,

“Oh! At this very moment Conchita is seeing you?”

I was told this, because at the time, I was in Santander. In Santander, I felt lost and abandoned on that day. The armed police intervened. I found myself alone with Conchita, at the door of the *Consolacion* church. I felt completely isolated and

far from my family.

Later, some men, among whom were some doctors, got hold of Conchita in ecstasy, and were literally distorting her in their efforts to carry her away, because she was kneeling down, her head completely tilted backwards, almost touching her heels. I was screaming, for sure,

“Leave her alone, for mercy’s sake . . . let me have my daughter!”

“Shut up, Madam, nothing will happen to her.”

They took her, in her kneeling position, into an office (the church sacristy). They locked us up, the two of us and Conchita remained in ecstasy the whole time.

When they lowered her to the floor, her attitude corrected itself. She stretched herself, leaning only on one elbow, the rest of her body was in the air, and I said to these men,

“Look how she is holding herself! What a pose!”

It was a very beautiful attitude, very modest. None of her clothes had moved and she remained thus in a horizontal position, practically unsupported, with an angelic face, her eyes turned upwards. It was something very precious to see. I wonder what more these men could have wished to see.

When the ecstasy was over, I don’t know how much later, Conchita asked,

“Mama, where am I?”

“Here, in the office. Are you all right?”

I was frightened. I had never been away from home before. I felt alone and ill at ease among these people. I kept repeating to my daughter,

“You are in the office.”

“But where am I, Mama?”

“In the office. Come let us go.”

“Oh no! I must first recite the rosary.”

I called out to them,

“Look, she is awake, but she wants to recite her beads.”

“Good, let her recite them.”

We recited the rosary. When we went out, these men took Conchita, and a priest took me to the sacristy. He spoke to me but I don’t remember at all what he said. Then he took me



The church of “la Consolacion” in Santander.

into the room where my daughter was. I saw her among all those men; she was serious, sad, sombre and timid. They were sitting around her and she was leaning on the table, very sad. The priest who accompanied me said something to Conchita who answered him very politely. Then a doctor asked her,

“Why don’t you answer me?”

But she didn’t answer him. She continued her conversation with the priest, smiling very amicably. Now it would be up to her to tell you what they told her over there, because I’m in ignorance of it. That is what I saw at the *Consolacion*.

That priest must have belonged to the Bishop’s house, because on the eighth day, when I came to take my daughter home, he

came with us to the Bishopric with Fr. Odriozola, and Bishop Doroteo questioned me,

“So then, you are taking your daughter back?”

“Yes, I am taking her back with me because at home there is no peace while she is here. So I must bring peace back to the village.”

Then I gave him all my reasons, and he said,

“Good! That sounds very good to me.”

Then he asked Conchita,

“Which would you prefer: to be a *Señorita* or to go back tending your sheep?”

She was not in fact *tending* sheep. She answered,

“I’d rather be a *Señorita*.”

The bishop behaved very nicely toward us. Upon leaving, he presented his ring to us so we could kiss it. Fr. Odriozola was showing all the photos he had in his albums and the Bishop said,

“Yes, yes, I see that you brought many.”

I must tell you that Fr. Odriozola often came to our home, repeating,

“Don’t worry, Aniceta, don’t worry, because your daughter is a real saint.”

In fact he was attending all the ecstasies and everything which was happening, and I suppose he must have been saying to himself that during all his career, he had never seen anything like it, that a real sanctity was emanating from all this, that it was self-evident. He continued to show us the photos while coming down the stairs from the Bishop’s house, and during the short time he stayed with us in the car.

After he left us, Conchita, who was sitting in the front, told a priest in the car,

“A day will come when we will deny all that—absolutely all—and we will contradict one another.”

She said that in my presence, in front of the priest and in the presence of my sister, Maximina.

Prophecies. Yes, I believe in the prophecies Conchita has predicted, because I believe Our Lord Jesus Christ will not forsake us.

Interrogation at Pamplona. I took her to Pamplona (on February

7, 1966) because I couldn’t keep her at the house any longer. I had to go to work, but the visitors never stopped coming.

I had specifically requested the Superior to refuse any person desiring to see Conchita, because I had heard that the Bishop had summoned the three other girls to his office—all but Conchita—and I was taking precautions, in case he should send for her. I said to the Mother Superior,

“If you let anyone in to see Conchita and I hear about it, I will come to get my daughter the very next day.”

She answered me,

“Do not worry.”

But three or four days later, the Bishop went there with Fr. José Olano, the pastor here, and some others; I believe there were five, I don’t know for sure. But the priest who was with the Bishop on the day the Bishop died¹⁵ was there and they interrogated Conchita for seven hours. She was then seventeen years old. My daughter told me that she recited the whole of her diary to them in detail, from memory, and that they wrote everything down.

I don’t know what they wrote—probably her answers. But, after she related the diary, her memory went completely blank, and she couldn’t remember the least detail of what she had told them. But she insisted very strongly that it was not the seven-hour interrogation which was the cause of the blank in her memory, but that she felt something mysterious which left her memory empty.

Conchita told me something else about that interview. She was wearing a ring, like mine, and the Bishop asked her,

“Was this the ring kissed by the Virgin?”

“I don’t know. I gave it to her, but I don’t know whether or not she kissed it.”

Bishop Vicente Puchol brought the ring to his lips, then gave it back to Conchita.

“In case the Blessed Virgin has kissed it,” he said.

A short while later, I was called to Santander. I saw that the Bishop had a big register in which was recorded everything that the other girls had declared, as well as what Conchita had said at

15. Bishop Vicente Puchol died on May 8, 1967, in a car accident. The priest who was accompanying him was Don Agapito Amieva.

Pamplona. I knew that Conchita had denied everything, completely. I told the Bishop,

“I am not interested at all whether Conchita denies or not, here in your presence, for in her present state of mind, she is in a trance and an oblivious person does not know what has happened to her. As far as I’m concerned, I maintain my position. Tell Rome what you will. Me, I believe what I have seen.”

Then the Bishop said,

“Then explain it to me.”

“What do you want me to explain to you, Your Excellency? You have only to call in the witnesses. Not those who believe in the apparitions, but those who tell the truth. Let them tell you what they saw. Let them come. Let this Fr. Andreu come, let this Marquis de Santa Maria come, let this Fr. Rodrigo come.¹⁶ No, Father, it is not necessary that you call these witnesses. Call rather the people who do not believe, but who will tell you the truth.”

I continued,

“Understand, Your Excellency, the dogs go where they are called. I came because you called me, otherwise I would not have come.”

That is what I told the Bishop. He was very agreeable. Then Conchita told me,

“Mama, read what I have declared to the Bishop. Read it.”

“Listen, Conchita, I have no need to read it.”

Anyway, I couldn’t have read it as I didn’t have my glasses with me. Although I could have asked a lady (Mrs. Mercedes Salisachs) who was present at the conversation to read Conchita’s declaration for me. That lady moreover served as my witness. Without her, I don’t know what would have happened to me over there. Nothing went right for me. She was a valuable witness because they tried to tell me afterwards that on that day I was so very excited that I was about to strike the Bishop. Well, that is not true. I was very calm and serene. So I answered,

16. This refers to the Jesuit theologian, Fr. Lucio Rodrigo, former Dean of the Canonical faculty of the Pontifical University of Comillas. He was a witness to many ecstasies.

“What’s the use of reading it? Send it to whomever you wish. It’s unimportant to me. Conchita is oblivious at this moment (for Conchita was continuing to deny, in my presence and that of the Bishop). I know she denied everything, but me, I know what I have seen!”

The negations. Conchita was denying in front of me and in front of everybody. She was denying, but it was not very convincing, and while listening to her I asked myself how could she have deceived us, for it would have been extremely difficult to do so while she was doing the things we saw her do!

One day I pushed her against this kitchen wall and I said,

“Well now, you are going to explain it to me. You are going to tell me how you did it. Tell me how you performed the trick of the Visible Communion?”

“Oh! Mamacita! I didn’t do anything! Everything is false, perhaps, but I didn’t do anything at the time of the Visible Communion. What must have happened to you is that you were ‘autosuggested’ by the people who thought they were seeing but there was nothing.”¹⁷

I didn’t answer her, but I thought to myself,

“The people could have been the victims of autosuggestion, but not the camera, for I knew the man who used the camera, and I could trust him. He did not understand how to operate it and was not a professional photographer. It was a Mr. Damians.”

Right away I thought,

“The people could have been autosuggested, but not the camera.”

Conchita has always denied having deceived the people. Take for instance about two or three months ago [in 1971] I went to Bilbao, to the clinic where Conchita was working. I took advantage of the fact that I was alone with the chaplain, to tell him everything that had happened here and who Conchita really was, for he didn’t know she was a visionary. I took advantage of being alone with him, because when my daughter is near me, I

17. The villagers would not ordinarily know the meaning of the term “autosuggestion,” but the doctors and psychiatrists used this and other clinical terms, and the villagers soon became familiar with them.

can't say anything—she doesn't like to hear about those events. So I said to the chaplain,

“It doesn't matter to me what Conchita says. No, because having seen what I have seen, she can say what she wants.”

Following this conversation, that priest talked with Conchita and asked her one question,

“Do you believe you deceived the people?”

“No, there has never been any deceit, Father. Absolutely no; we have not simulated anything.”

“And you believe the [great] Miracle will come?”

“Yes, I believe it. When God will decide, He will perform it, but I have not deceived anyone. I have only one desire; that is, to be a good girl, but like the others.”

“That's good,” answered the chaplain.

He continued,

“Why should you be less than the others? Why shouldn't you have the right to divert yourself?”

“That's exactly what I desire; to be like the others, but I wish to assure you that I have never deceived anyone.”

This conversation between the chaplain and Conchita took place in June 1971.

In July, she left for Barcelona.

Pepé Diez. I had asked Pepé to be kind enough to protect Conchita against the crowd in the village, for I was short of a boy and the youngest one had to stay at work. This meant that Pepé saw much of what happened here. He accompanied Conchita many times, especially on days when there were a lot of people around.

Pepé saw the miracle of the Communion and I asked him to give me a report on it. Benjamin [Gomez] was there also, but I didn't know him at the time.

Weight change. One day, one of my boys (the one who is dead now) told me,

“Mother, there is a man who would like to lift up Conchita, (she was then walking, in ecstasy, toward the heights) but I wouldn't let him do it. I told him to ask your permission. Mother, that's the man.”

He pointed someone out to me. So I answered,

“You can try right now.”

Conchita was kneeling down in the *calleja*. I don't know why I authorized him right away, for I didn't like how they made experiments on her, but that man made a good impression on me by his appearance. He was tall and straightforward looking. He tried to lift her from the ground without success. After the ecstasy, he came with us here into the kitchen and I said to him,

“Sir, you can try now.”

“No, for me, the experiment has been conclusive. That is sufficient.”

One night, a few boys of bad reputation were hanging about the village and Serafino, through prudence, wanted to protect Conchita who was in ecstasy. He took hold of his sister, but never in all his life, he told me, did he carry such a weight. And Conchita was only twelve years old. He succeeded in lifting her only as far as this step, but it was tremendous weight, according to him.

While he was trying to carry her as far as the entrance, we heard Conchita say,

“Oh, they want to lock me up? But don't you see, I'm going with you, I'm going with you.”

Then Serafin, upon hearing this, exclaimed,

“Go then, my sister, and may God protect you!”

THIRD PHOTO

Antonia Gonzalez y Gonzalez (55), farmer, near Cabezón de la Sal. She was born in Garabandal and lived there for thirty-one years. Antonia is Conchita's aunt.

Before the apparitions. Yes, I know the other visionaries and I kept Conchita with me for five months when her father died—before the apparitions started.

She lived here with my daughter and she went to school at Cabezón. She was not hard to please, always satisfied with her lot and very brave. One time, I gave her a little spanking, because she had filled the house with some noisy girls. She didn't cry. Another time, while playing, she got a big splinter in her leg and I had quite some trouble getting it out. Well, she didn't complain that time, either. At her mother's place, she worked hard. Aside from this, I don't see what could distinguish her from the other children of her age. A little bit more serious maybe, like my own daughter.

A short while before the apparitions, curiously enough, I was thinking about the story of a young visionary whom I had read about in my youth and I was saying to myself that it was rather strange that in the old days there were many apparitions and that nowadays there were none. I spoke of this reflection to Dr. Don Antonio, who is presently living in Santander.

The absence of apparitions in our time made me think that perhaps they never really existed and that if I believed in them in the past, it must have been on account of my youth. Eight days afterwards, the apparitions began at Garabandal.

First reactions. I was on my way to Cabezón and about half way there, a young lady said to me,

“Don't you know what's happening at Garabandal?”

“No, what?”

“Well, there are apparitions!”

As soon as I heard this, I believed but I didn't show it. I simply said,

“Oh! You don't say!”



Interiorly, I felt something which made me believe it was true.

“And you don’t know who it is?” she asked.

“No.”

“Oh yes. You know.”

“No, really.”

“Your niece!”

“That’s impossible!”

I continued on my way, but I felt very nervous and I didn’t want to hear anymore; because at that time, I didn’t go to confession very much. I used to go once every other month, but about that time I was undergoing a period of doubts regarding faith, which caused me to take some liberties, like eating meat on Friday. I was having a crisis of faith. So, the announcement of these apparitions reaffirmed me in the faith.

I thanked the Lord, but I didn’t feel the desire to climb to Garabandal to see the ecstasies, in spite of the number of people who were going. All around, friends and neighbors were surprised that I, Conchita’s aunt, wouldn’t go to see the apparitions. To tell you the truth, I was afraid of the confrontation. Conchita sent me a letter, telling me that at that particular time, there were no apparitions taking place, and asking me why I would not go and visit them as I used to. They would come and meet me at Cosio. I then decided to go and I took my daughter with me.

Actually, at the time of my arrival, the apparitions had temporarily ceased and I was very happy about that for I was apprehensive about seeing an ecstasy. I was looking at one person and another, and I noticed many strange faces. In particular, there was a certain professor and a few people were saying he might have been the author of all that was happening.

I stayed there fifteen days. Toward the end of my stay, someone told me the girls were just praying at the *cuadro*. I decided to go and see them and I tried to get a few neighbors to accompany me, but nobody wanted to come because there had been no apparitions for some time. In the end, a few seminarians who were staying at the village followed me and another lady as well. I sat down in the hollow of a rock, all curled up, and not very reassured. At that moment we heard the church bells announcing the recitation of the rosary. (At the village, the rosary is recited every night at seven-thirty in the church.) I said to the girls,

“Since you are praying so much here, let us pray for the ecstasy to arrive, otherwise I will leave without having seen it.”

But even as I said this, I was hoping nothing would happen. I had hardly finished speaking, when the girls were seized with an ecstasy, bent down backwards. I could have touched their legs, I was so close to them. I felt a kind of—I don’t know how to say it—a ‘thrill’ of fear. I didn’t know what was happening to me . . . I wasn’t able to touch them. I felt a very unusual sensation—strange—an overwhelming sensation which caused me to regret having committed so many sins during my life. I believe that if God had called me at that moment, heaven’s gates would have opened wide for I was feeling tremendously spiritual from the bottom of my heart. I left with a great interior peace.

Facial aspects. What struck me most in the first ecstasy I saw was a sort of transparency which emanated from the little girls, as if they were a source of fluorescent light; not like the light which electric bulbs give off, or lanterns, but . . . it is unexplainable . . . a clear light, a light like the one I have in my kitchen, but very, very bright. I took careful note of their faces. They were very luminous, transfigured, completely changed.

There was no trace of flushing or anything of that sort; they were very beautiful. They were talking very low and we could not hear them.

That was the first ecstasy that I ever witnessed. Afterwards, I saw a great many of them, because in 1961, I remained at Conchita’s house for a whole month.

The duration of the ecstasies varied greatly and I can hardly give precise facts. I noticed some at almost every place in the village at one time or another, all at different hours, and with different people around or even when the children were alone. One time we were just having supper in the kitchen. Conchita was falling asleep in the corner, and suddenly, she started to run. She opened the door and flew like an arrow, following her Vision because she had had a “call.”

I have never noticed any sign or trace of nervousness or fatigue, although I was often very close to her.

Weight change. I don’t remember ever having tried to lift one of the other girls but one time, at Ceferino’s, I believe, I wanted to lift Mari Loli’s hand. I was not able to move it. While touching it, I felt something hard, very hard. There was a man there who

they said was Baudoin, Fabiola's husband.¹⁸ Conchita, in ecstasy, stepped on his foot and this gentleman told us afterwards,

"She can't weigh that much; however I was unable to remove my foot while it was underneath hers."

Nobody could lift them up, but among themselves they could do it with astonishing ease. I saw it many, many times. Even if the one who was lifting the other was not in ecstasy, they could do it with unbelievable ease.

The calls. Many times I have seen the three girls in ecstasy come into Conchita's house, where I was staying. But it was not because of that, that Conchita would automatically fall into ecstasy. It would happen, in the middle of a meal, when Conchita would receive a call. She would tell us then, and she would begin to get impatient. Her face would color; that I saw very well. We used to continue eating. She would look at me, smiling, and say, "Ah, here is the second call," and when the third one came, she would disappear like being carried away by the wind, leaving her meal there. She would run toward the church or the pines or elsewhere. Sometimes, between the first and the second call, there was a long lapse of time. For example, on the day of the Visible Communion, the second call took a long time in coming. Everybody was getting impatient and her brother Miguel was saying,

"She is fooling us. Let's go, it's just a game."

The young girl told him that it was not so,

"Wait a bit."

She was near the chimney and she asked a religious who was there,

"Can I drink some water?"

"Yes, yes, you can take some," he answered.

She asked that because she wanted to know if she could have water before receiving Holy Communion. And again she told her brother,

"Be quiet! Just wait!"

But the boy went to bed, mad and indignant, convinced that Conchita was deceiving us. Soon afterwards, she said,

"This is it! I have the second call!"

Her brother came right away, everybody started moving, and out we went! We followed Conchita, who had already forged her way through the crowd.

El Milagru. I followed, but I didn't see the Visible Communion. My son, Manolin, saw the apparition of the Host on his cousin's tongue, in spite of a push which almost knocked him down. I didn't dare look, for I was sure that the Host would descend from heaven. There was an enormous crowd.

Divination of thoughts. It so happened that I asked for a proof. One day, while I was looking at Conchita in ecstasy, I asked for this favor, in thought only, consequently nobody could know but me,

"If it is true that all this is coming from the Virgin, let Conchita give me the crucifix to be kissed."

And right away, I heard Conchita say,

"Oh, she is asking that I present her with the crucifix?"

Immediately, she came to me and put the crucifix to my lips. This happened in front of my sister Aniceta's house.

Lack of wounds. I was often beside the young girls and I never saw the least cut or bruise on their legs, in spite of the brutality of the shock when their knees hit the ground in ecstasy. I noticed it many times, especially at my sister's house, so much so, that one day I suggested,

"Why don't you put a little woolen cushion under her so she won't bang herself like that?"

But there was never the least hurt. If I had let myself fall like that, I am sure I would have broken both my knees!

Predictions of the negations and of the great Miracle. I personally heard Conchita predicting their common retractions. She was home. I don't remember whether we were alone or with her mother and the close members of the family. She said, and I heard this with my own ears,

"We ourselves will one day deny. We will contradict ourselves and it is then that the great Miracle will take place."

What else did she say? Ah! Yes, I like to repeat it. I don't know if Nati [a villager] was alone or not, I don't remember anymore, but the following phrase, I have always told myself is one that I'll never forget,

18. This would seem to be the King of Belgium whom Mrs. Gonzalez names so familiarly.

“And when all the people stop coming to the village . . . when nobody believes anymore . . . then you will perform the Miracle?”

Evidently I could only hear the answers that Conchita was making to her Vision.

“Then the Miracle will come?” she repeated. “When everybody ceases to believe, the priests will not believe, nobody will believe, then the Miracle will come?”

Then I heard these words very clearly,

“. . . and there will come a time when we will contradict ourselves; the families will be divided . . .”

This I heard in Conchita’s house for sure. Perhaps I do not report the words exactly, but as near as I can remember, this is as I heard them.

Visits to the cemetery. We accompanied Conchita many times to the cemetery in the middle of the night. One time, the gate was closed and she remained in front of it, praying. Most of the time there were just a few persons following her. But I remember another night when there was a big crowd.

Prophecies. One night, at Ceferino’s place, the little girls were in ecstasy, and judging by their answers, they seemed to be talking with the deceased Fr. Luis Andreu. I was there and I remember they were saying,

“. . . the churches will reunite . . . the churches will reunite.”

Yes, it seems to me they were saying that the churches would finally unite themselves. I have also heard them say that if we do not amend our lives, Russia will rule the world. Yes, they said all that, in front of me, during their ecstasy. And also that some big Chastisement would come.

Conchita has often repeated it. She also talked about the cardinals—that they would go against the Pope. All this is coming true, little by little.

All I can say is this: I don’t know whether this comes from God or from the devil, but one way or another, there has been something.

Personally, I obtained some favors through the intercession of Garabandal, but alas, I have not paid back the Virgin in return for all these graces!



1980 PHOTO

Lucia (Luciuca) Fernandez (22), secretary. Now lives in Polanca. She is the daughter of Antonia and first cousin to Conchita.

Before the apparitions. Oh sure! I know Conchita very well. Every time I went up there, I stayed with her. Besides when Conchita was a little girl, she lived here with us for about five months.

I have always found her normal, like other girls, and nothing special has ever struck me. For me, she was just like the others.

First reactions. Yes, I was present at some ecstasies. It was through my mother that I first heard about them.

“Don’t you know there are apparitions?”

“Did you say apparitions?”

“Yes, yes, don’t you know who is seeing them?”

“Well, no, I don’t.”

“It’s your cousin, Conchita!”

“No! I don’t believe it.”

Frankly, in the beginning, I didn’t believe it. It seemed impossible to me, over there at Garabandal. I told myself it was unbelievable. Afterwards, of course . . .

The first ecstasy I witnessed took place in the *calleja*. The four visionaries were reciting the rosary when, without any warning, an ecstasy seized them. I felt a great emotion, but nothing happened. The ecstasy ended and we went home.

But during the night I felt a curious sensation. I wanted to see the Virgin, and I started to cry. At that time I was the same age as they were, eleven or twelve. So I said to my mother,

“I would like to go to the *calleja*.”

“How do you expect us to go? Can’t you see it’s pitch dark? It’s the middle of the night!”

It must have been around one o’clock in the morning. But I kept saying,

“I want to go. I want to go.”

“Well, answered my mother, let’s call another woman to go with us.”

“All right, but don’t tell anyone else.”

Then we went to the *calleja* and started to recite some rosaries. We went back many times, but not a trace of the Virgin! I have not seen her, although I was convinced I would.

Yes, yes, I was absolutely sure I would see her, and Conchita knew about my immense desire to see the Virgin.

So, on the day the Virgin asked Conchita to bring a witness, she said to me,

“You are the one selected.”

And one night, around four o’clock in the morning, Mari Cruz, Conchita and myself got up and went to the pines. My cousin warned us that we were to go alone, that no one was to accompany us. We arrived at the *calleja* and continued to the pines. There had not been any apparitions at that spot before. Then I asked Conchita,

“What am I supposed to do?”

“You must do like us.”

“But how can I do like you if I don’t see anything?”

“You must do like us.”

Now it happened that a lady was coming our way; she was taking some food to her husband who was in a ‘winter house’.¹⁹ She saw us, and saw the two girls fall into an ecstasy, but not I. This lady started to call and people began coming. Among them was Mari Cruz’ mother and I remember she got very angry at those who came up and especially at me. I didn’t have the nerve to tell them we were supposed to be alone at that spot!

Afterwards, my cousin and her friend told me that we had to go back another day. We then came back and a lot of people came with us. My friends placed a few boxes of flowers at the foot of the pines, which caused some people to say that one of the visionaries was going to die . . . or some such story.

In fact my friends simply wanted to decorate the spot with flowers. I then said to my cousin,

“Don’t you see that the people don’t know me and although I’m not having ecstasies, they are going to believe that I, too, am a visionary?”

All the people were going up there to take pictures, and me, I was observing the ecstasies. But nothing happened. They took me to the pines as a witness, but I didn’t see anything.

It was at the Virgin’s request that they took a witness.

Number of ecstasies. I don’t know how many ecstasies I saw. At that time I was spending whole months with Conchita. We were living like two sisters, and we got along like two sisters; even now, that’s true.

19. A hut built high on the mountain. In winter it is used to store hay for the animals and later it is used for a shelter by the men.

Outside the ecstasies. Outside the ecstasies, Conchita behaved normally. For instance, we would go up to the pastures. We were very happy, the two of us, and we would say among ourselves, "Let's make a sacrifice so that your sister may be accepted as a nun," or we would run barefoot in the grass. But nothing unusual, you understand; only childish pastimes.

After the ecstasies, there was no trace of fatigue on the face of the visionaries.

Stellar phenomena. I have not seen anything extraordinary in the sky.

The Commission. I do not know whether they were members of the Commission, but Dr. Celestino Ortiz and Don Felix called me often at Roquejada to question me about the miracle of the Visible Communion. Dr. Ortiz tried to frighten me by telling me,

"We are going to brainwash you!"

"Well! let them do it," I answered.

They were convinced that Conchita and I had, together, schemed the whole affair of the Visible Communion, because on that day I had been with her. They questioned me about the miracle, and about the "famous" affair of the powder which you may have heard about? It must be said that my cousin was very mischievous and had a droll sense of humor. When it came to playing jokes, we were two of a kind. One day, in order to have a good laugh, Conchita said to Jacinta, and to the second victim, who was Mari Cruz, I think,

"Say, do you know that my cousin absorbed some powder and she raised herself up from the ground this far?"

"Really?"

And I agreed, "Yes, yes!" We encouraged them.

"You swallow some too, and you'll be able to raise yourself from the ground and everybody will believe at last that it is true, you will see."

For us, of course, it was only a game but the children believed us. Actually, it was a Profiden powder, a dental paste, which had dried out and which we had crushed to a powder. But a few people heard about our little joke and it went all around the village. Some people then started to say that all the ecstasies could be explained by that "famous" powder, and other nonsense of that kind. Dr. Ortiz questioned me about that story. But it was



Lucia and Conchita in 1965.

only a practical joke played by Conchita and myself.

El Milagruco. I don't remember now how Conchita announced that there would be a miracle of the Visible Communion—the miracle of the *Forma*.

When the day arrived, I was with her. That is to say, a few of us were with her: her brother, her uncle, the Fontenadas and myself. There was a *fête* going on in the village. We were all gathered in the hall, and at one point Conchita said,

"Come in the room with me."

The room, which had just been done over, was kind of dark and Conchita said, "Let's look out the window." So we sat down by the window in order to see the celebration. Afterwards, we were accused of having prepared the Host at that time. Actually, all we did was what I have just described.

A little while before falling into ecstasy, I remember my cousin looking for a crucifix which she could not find.

"Where could it be? Where did I put it?"

And while she was looking for it in a small hallway, she fell

into ecstasy. As soon as the ecstasy started, she found the crucifix which was in another room near by.

Due to the importance of this passage, we are transcribing the questions we put to Lucia.

Question Can you therefore certify that on the evening in question, before falling into ecstasy, Conchita, in your presence, did not take any Host, that you did not see her put something in her pocket, in her hand or in her mouth, or hide something upon herself.

Lucia Nothing, nothing, nothing. She was not carrying anything, that's for sure. That's true, because we only talked about insignificant matters. As I told you, we sat ourselves near the window in order to watch the celebration.

Question You remained with her all that afternoon?

Lucia I was with her all the time. She left me for a very short moment to go and drink some water in the kitchen. That's the only time I was separated from her. She then fell into ecstasy while she was looking for her crucifix in the small corridor and then she came downstairs. I followed her as far as the door downstairs, but there was such a crowd of people that we became separated. But as far as that door, I was with her the whole time.

Question Then you did not see the miracle of the *Forma*?

Lucia I wasn't able to see it, no.

Thought transference. I also remember, because I was present, what happened to Mercedes Salisachs . . . the story of her son who had died . . .

It was during a procession. We were walking in the streets while praying. Mercedes was holding Mari Loli by the arm and when Mari Loli told Mercedes that her son was in heaven, that lady felt such an emotion that she screamed. I remember that well. I was right behind the two of them.²⁰

20. Mercedes Salisachs, Spanish writer, lost one of her sons, Miguel, twenty-one years of age, in a car accident on October 31, 1958. Very attached to this child, she did not accept the death, which left her completely desolate. This suffering was compounded by serious doubts regarding her faith. She arrived in Garabandal on Holy Thursday, 1962, and through Mari Loli, asked the Virgin if her son was in heaven. While Mari Loli hadn't been told the name of the young boy, she gave Mercedes the following answer from the Virgin,

Marches. During the visionaries' marches, I followed slightly behind them. I always followed Conchita. That is, I had to run, much more than the girls, you can bet. They were moving without any effort. What's more, they moved about while looking at the sky. Very often, if they were going fast, I could not succeed in following them, although I was of the same age as they. I was dead tired. I remember one time, in front of the church entrance, they had an ecstasy which lasted many hours. I fell asleep against the door and when I realized that everybody was leaving, the ecstasy was over.

I believe Conchita's prophecies will come true, because everything she has said so far seems to have materialized.

It's true they did simulate a few apparitions. I remember that when we were in the hall and my brother was coming in, I said to my cousin,

"Here comes my brother! Pretend you are in ecstasy."

Then I would hold onto her as I used to because if by chance we were holding hands at the moment she would fall into ecstasy, I was not able to free my hand. One time she was holding onto me by my blouse and I could free myself only at the moment she removed her hand to make the sign of the cross. If she was holding something in her hand, nobody could take it away from her.

Change of consistency. It often happened that I had physical contact with her during her ecstasies. For example, she often had ecstasies while lying in bed, and as we were sleeping in the same bed, I was consequently touching her. I then had the impression of touching some rigid matter, she was neither cold, nor hot, rather normal I think, but very rigid, like something which we are unable to move.

I touched her many times, since we were always together.

"Do not forget to tell that lady that while I am talking with you at this moment, Miguel sees her. He is enjoying the greatest of happiness—he is very, very happy."

Mrs. Salisachs attended many ecstasies after that and now spends part of the year at the village. Through respect for the hierarchical authority of Santander and due to the fact that her name is well known in Spain, she prefers not to make any declaration at the present time.

1981 PHOTO

Miguel Angel Gonzalez (23), Jacinta's brother. This 1971 interview was conducted in the presence of Jacinta when Miguel was still living with his parents in the village. He is now the proprietor of a restaurant in New York.

First reactions. The first time I heard about these events was on the day itself, June 18, 1961, when the young girls were saying that they had seen something. I heard them talking about it. I was in the village. It seems that while coming down from the *calleja*, they met the school teacher; and some local girls who, no doubt, were present at their conversation, spread it all over the village. On that day, I thought it was a farce. When Jacinta told me she had seen someone resembling an angel, I answered her,

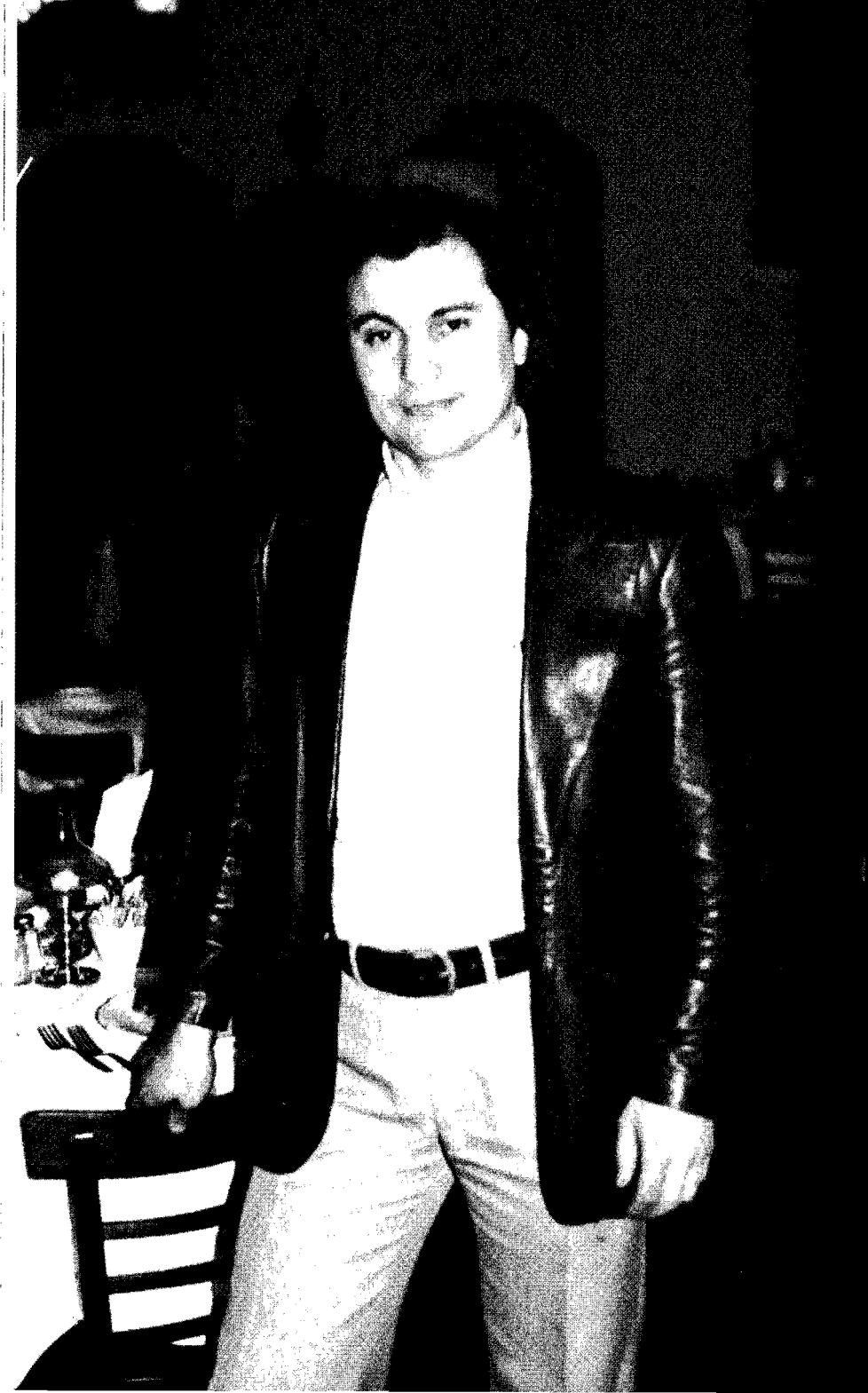
“Nonsense! It must have been a bird!”

I didn't see the second ecstasy as I had no desire to go then. I went later on when crowds were starting to go, but I had waited four or five days. The day before I went, some women had seen the ecstasy. They talked about it, so the next day an important group from the village went to see the ecstasies and I went also.

When we arrived at the *calleja*, the four girls were praying. At the end of the rosary, they instantly fell into an ecstasy. I knew right away that something abnormal was happening there, but I didn't believe the Blessed Virgin was appearing to them. The ecstasy lasted half an hour, or maybe an hour, I don't remember.

In the first days, my parents were skeptical, as I was, and they did not want all that to become known. But as Jacinta insisted on returning to the lane—*calleja*—my parents let her go, but without attracting attention. Each one of the girls would go by a different road and they would meet one another over there, until the days when people started to follow them.

Facial aspect. I must have seen at least two hundred ecstasies, and each time the faces of the children remained fresh and smiling, although it was a complete change from their normal expression. I don't know how to explain it: they became very beauti-



ful, like pictures. There was never a sign of fatigue and no flushing. They came out of an ecstasy refreshed and rested.

Marches. At the start of the apparitions, I was thirteen years old and I could run very fast. When the girls were marching at high speed, I couldn't follow them very easily because I then had to run so fast and at the end of the run I was sweating a lot, whereas the girls would be as fresh as when they woke up in the morning.

Abnormal strength. Yes, many times I touched Jacinta and her friends during an ecstasy. Their arms and their bodies were rigid and hard. Nothing struck me concerning their body temperature; just that severe rigidity.

Weight change. Yes, I tried many times to lift Jacinta. Sometimes I could, sometimes I couldn't. I have often seen two or three people together trying to lift them and they couldn't. But I could, and I would lift Jacinta by myself, whereas just before, two or three people had not been able to do it. But at other times, it was impossible, even for me. When I was making that experiment, I would lift her up forcefully and a little roughly; whereas the other groups consisting of two or three men together would do it with much precaution, and feeling such an extraordinary weight, they would not dare apply any force. On the other hand, exerting all my strength, I would snatch her up and with a violent pull would try to lift her from the ground. Sometimes I succeeded, but when I put her down, she would stay in the position she was in at the moment I put her back on the ground.

Duration and place of the ecstasies. The duration was very variable. The shortest may have been ten minutes. But there was one which lasted for seven hours—that is, with a short interruption of a few minutes—but over all, a good seven hours. I was there.

I must add that the ecstasies took place anywhere in the village and in the presence of anybody, whether the children were alone or with other people.

I remember one ecstasy, here in the house. One night, I was sleeping in a very dark room, as there was no lighting system. Three of the girls came in. They came to give me the crucifix to kiss. Me, fully awake, I did not want to kiss it. But they kept insisting, putting it obstinately back on my lips and I kept refusing. Due to the fact that it was so dark, they could not see where my mouth was. Neither could they see whether or not I had kissed

the crucifix. We kept that up for about fifteen minutes. We couldn't see a thing and they could not know for sure at what moment I finally applied my lips to the crucifix in order to kiss it. But as soon as I did, they left.

Synchronized meetings. The parents made some experiments in order to discover whether the girls were telling the truth. For example, upon hearing they were going to have an ecstasy during the day, but not knowing the exact hour, they would separate the girls by placing them in different houses and the waiting would last for an hour or more. When the ecstasy seized the children, it would be at exactly the same hour, even though each one was in her own house.

The nights of terror. Yes, I was there on the nights of terror. The first one was the worst. I don't know what they could have seen to make them cry out in such a way. It was in the *calleja*, and there were many people from the village on that day. The girls were crying and talking, but I couldn't understand very well what they were saying. On that night I believe there were only Jacinta and Mari Loli.

Conchita was with them on the second night. At the start of the ecstasy, we were rather far from them, but upon hearing them so distressed, we got closer and at the end we were about six feet from them. [Miguel is mistaken here: it is the girls who came down toward the people as they themselves were not supposed to trespass beyond certain limits which the visionaries had imposed.] The people were crying. Everybody believed it was the end of the world that night. It was the cries and the expressions of the visionaries which provoked the fright and the cries of the crowd. We could hear the girls begging the Virgin not to do it that night,

“Let it not be this night, not this night! *Aie*, do not do it this night. Let them have a few more days to see if the people will go to confession.”

So, for sure, we all believed the end of the world was at hand. The day after the second night, which was similar to the first one, everybody went to confession—even myself. There wasn't anyone who didn't go. The little girls were visibly frightened and I could clearly feel it, too.

El Milagru. I didn't see the miracle of the Visible Communion. Tired of waiting, I went to bed for it was getting late. But I dis-

tinctly remember hearing it announced eight days in advance. They were saying, Conchita as well as the others, that there would be a *milagruco*—small miracle. They would draw a little circle in the air with their hands when we asked them the nature of the miracle. But we could not understand the meaning of the “O”—of course it was referring to the Host. I still remember the way they drew the letter “O” in the air.

The Commission. I have never been called nor questioned by the Santander Commission.

Announcement of the negations. Yes, I do remember the announcement of the negations. They had told me that a day would come when they would deny everything. They asked their Vision,

“How can we deny that we saw you, since we are seeing you now? How could it be possible that a time will come when we will deny?”

Yes, I heard that myself.

Visits to the cemetery. One night I was accompanying Jacinta and Mari Loli, but when I saw them going toward the cemetery, which they did quite often, I abandoned them, shaking with fear. I left them alone. There was no way I was going up there with them—I admit it. True, I was a year older than they were but I did not dare go as far as the cemetery. I stayed back and watched them. They went alone, but little by little other people arrived, so I rejoined the visionaries.

I never noticed them being scared at that place. What struck me most about those visits to the cemetery, is that upon coming to the iron gate, they would put their arms through the bars and present the crucifix which they held, as if they were giving it to be kissed by the hundred or so persons who were buried there: up, down, moving their hands incessantly as if there were a crowd standing close to the bars on the other side of the gate. They were making the same gestures they did when they presented the crucifix to be kissed amidst a crowd of people in the village!

Visits to the sick. They often went, in ecstasy, to some very old people in order to present the crucifix to be kissed, or they would go to someone who was about to die, or to a sick person. They would go during the night and they would recite two or three rosaries with them.

The voice in the night. No, Jacinta has never given us any en-

lightenment on that mysterious voice which called them during a certain night. . . . They were in ecstasy and we could hear them screaming,

“But who are you? Tell us who you are or we will go home, because we are frightened!”

I don’t know for sure if they were all there—the four of them. There were Jacinta and Mari Loli . . . Mari Cruz? I don’t remember.

Here Jacinta intervened,

“Yes, Mari Cruz was there because it was she who was saying, ‘Tell us who you are, otherwise I am going home.’ Yes, yes, I was there too. The four of us were there.”

Miguel said,

“We never questioned Jacinta about that voice.”

When Jacinta was asked the question,

“Could you not tell us what it meant?”

She smiled and gave a negative shake of her head.

Felicidad Gonzalez (47), works in the fields and looks after her house.

Before the apparitions. I was born and brought up in Garabandal, which means that I knew the four young girls very well. Before the apparitions, they were just like all the other children in the village. Nothing exceptional about them.

Number of ecstasies. I must have seen nearly 300 ecstasies. I don't really know, but surely more than 200. So many years have passed since then!

I have no exact idea about the duration of the ecstasies. Some of them were very long. They rarely had the same duration. When we were watching them, we never looked at our watch, and time was flying without us realizing it.

Yes, in the beginning, the ecstasies always took place at the same spot, the *cuadro*—square—but afterwards it was everywhere in the village. In the same manner, at the start they took place at about the same time, but not afterwards. People began coming in greater and greater numbers.

Facial aspect. When I saw the children in ecstasy, it seemed to me that they had a different face, more angelic. After the ecstasies, they would come back to normal as if nothing had happened.

I never touched them during an ecstasy for I felt a sense of respect when they were in that state. I am wondering if I might have done it the first time, as I was so close to Mari Cruz, but I can't remember.

Announcement of the negations. I did hear the prediction of the negations, but not directly from the girls. Some people told me.

El Milagru. The miracle of the *Forma* . . . yes, I heard it announced but I didn't believe it. I had doubts. I knew that we were expecting a miracle but as they were saying so many things, I didn't believe it.

I had some friends in Reinosa who had asked me to write to them any time something new happened in the village. So great was my doubt that I didn't write to tell them about the announcement of that miracle, for fear it would not materialize and that my friends would come here for nothing.

Well, on that day I had lots of work in the house. I had twenty people for breakfast, lunch and supper. Some were invited guests, others I didn't know. They came from Madrid, Toledo, etc., and I wasn't able to leave the house all day. Finally in the evening, without even washing the dinner dishes, I got out around eleven o'clock. I waited and as nothing was happening, I thought,

“Ah! A good thing I did not write to Reinosa, as nothing is happening. They would have come for nothing.”

I was waiting almost alone, sitting against a door, half asleep. Many neighbors had gone to bed, convinced that the miracle would not take place. I was then close to Conchita's house, very tired and beginning to fall asleep. At that moment, I heard someone exclaim,

“This is it! Conchita is coming out! Conchita is leaving her house.”

The people started to run. They were passing in front of me—a huge crowd of people—really an unbelievable crowd! I told myself, “I must join the group formed around Conchita.”

I started running too, without looking backward, because if I had turned the least bit, somebody would have taken my place. At a certain angle in the street I was able to place myself in front of Conchita. I heard someone say,

“Conchita is kneeling down!”

I turned and saw her kneeling in ecstasy with her tongue out, but not as bare as someone said. No, I saw a light, white shadow, in the shape of a circle—a white thing, very light, more precise than a shadow; something like when our tongue is covered with a white coating when we are sick. You could say that at the start it was a round shadow, somewhat white, which increased in size. I saw it taking shape and it became a round and very brilliant thing—the Host was there! A thick and sparkling Host. I was very moved. I saw the Host raising itself up slightly to the thickness of a fingernail. This movement made me think,

“Oh, how exciting! The Angel is lifting it up to show it to us in order that everybody can see it.”

For a minute I thought the Angel would remove the Host from the child's tongue and elevate It in order to offer It to the sight of all and that that would be the miracle.

At that precise moment, I was standing in front of Conchita. It was as if we were glued together, there being nobody between

her and me. I sat down on the damp ground so that people behind me could see. I remember that upon feeling my skirt all wet, I thought to myself, "What does it matter? The others must see too."

Afterwards, I left with a few people and during all the next day, I remained very recollected. I don't know how the scene ended. Sitting down, crushed by the crowd, I don't know if Conchita got up with the Host and continued on her way, or what. I didn't see her retract her tongue. There was an enormous crowd of people looking on.

At the time it happened, I did not have the impression that Conchita could have had the Host in her mouth when she fell into ecstasy or that she put it on the tongue herself with her hand. No, nothing of the sort. For me it was a mystery. If there had been a trick, I would like someone to explain it to me because as far as I am concerned, I really don't know how she could have done it.

Santander Commission. I have never been summoned or questioned by the Santander Commission.

In conclusion. One last thing: one day when everyone had climbed up to the winter quarters, I remained at the house to do the wash and in the afternoon, accompanied by my sister, I went to Jacinta who had a sore throat. She said,

"Come tonight, for I will have an apparition."

We went that night. She was already in ecstasy. Conchita came in, also in ecstasy, the crucifix in her hand. She started to give it to be kissed by everybody—except me! I thought that if she did not give it to me, it was because I was not supposed to have it.

I remarked to my sister,

"Oh! she did not give it to me!"

"Yes, I noticed that."

In spite of everything, I asked myself what could be the reason.

Two or three days later, as night was falling, I was going to get some milk when I saw Conchita who was walking through the village in ecstasy. She came straight toward me and applied the crucifix right to my lips. That's very curious, is it not? For, during those few days, I had never stopped asking myself why I had been deprived of this favor.

I will end by saying that if all which has happened is nothing, will you please explain to me how those things happened?



1971 PHOTO

Andrea Gonzalez (82), Jacinta's aunt. Andrea never left Garabandal during her lifetime. She died in 1978 at the age of 89.

Before the apparitions. I knew the four little girls very well. Before the events, they were like the others. I never noticed anything different about them.

First reactions. I heard about the apparitions on the day they started and the next day I tried to get more information. I questioned Jacinta who told me it was true. Then I advised her,

“Good! Then go and keep quiet and the apparition will come back.”

And that’s what happened.

I believed in them right away because the girls were very innocent and as I had already read some stories of that kind, particularly about Bernadette, I told myself that surely something similar was happening here. I had confidence in the young girls and I never thought they were lying. I said to myself,

“This is not coming from the world, nor from the devil.

Even if they want to break my neck, I will maintain it comes from God.”

I started to think that way very early—as soon as the people started to come to the events.

The first time I saw the children in ecstasy, I didn’t know what to think as they became like angels. It was in the lane and the four of them were there. I got there before them because I have difficulty walking, so I started way ahead of the others in order to be present when the little girls arrived. Therefore, that first time, I saw them arrive and fall into ecstasy. Their faces became very lovely, like angels’ faces. No sign of nervousness or anything of that sort, only stiffness of their bodies, rigid on the spot, but I could not hear them. After the ecstasy there was no trace of fatigue—nothing. They were perfectly normal.

Reading of thoughts. They came into my house many times while in ecstasy. One night, for example, when I was suffering from a violent headache, Loli arrived in ecstasy. Upon seeing her, I thought to myself,

“Ah! Holy Virgin! If only Loli would place the cross over my head, maybe the pain would go away.”

I insist that I simply thought that, without uttering a word to anybody. Then Loli came toward me, offering me the crucifix. I straightened myself up in order to put my lips over the body of Christ nailed to the crucifix, as we always do when one of them offers it to be kissed, but Loli, instead of applying it to my mouth, put it over my head and kept it there for some time, although I had not said anything to her and what’s more I had moved my lips toward the crucifix. She then held the crucifix over my head as long as she wanted, and then she left, and with her went my headache!

Another time, Jacinta came into my room where there were

two beds. She went toward the first one and blessed it where the pillow was, as the children were told by the Virgin to bless the head of the bed. Then she went to the second bed, and, I don’t know why, but I had removed the pillow on that day. A stranger could not possibly know which end was the head. Jacinta seemed to hesitate a bit, she seemed to be asking the Virgin where she was supposed to make the sign of the cross and finally she blessed the end of the bed where the pillow was usually placed.

The kissed objects. I can tell you about another incident which happened to me with Jacinta. When I heard the girls were giving objects to the Virgin and that she was blessing them by bringing them to her lips, I wanted to give my medal. But the children tried to dissuade me from doing so,

“Your medal is liable to get out of your hands and you will lose it. Besides, it is so late and so dark.”

But I wanted to have my medal kissed by the Virgin. So I went out and stopped at the entrance of the village. Jacinta, in ecstasy, was a little lower in the first house. I remember my daughter saying,

“Come mother, let’s give the medal to Jacinta.”

But me, a little in fun, and a little to make an experiment, answered,

“No, no, I shall not go. Let her search for me! Let her find me!”

And that’s what happened! Jacinta came to me, took the medal from my hands and gave it to her Vision. Then she presented it in front of my mouth, but took it away before I could apply my lips to it, and went away laughing. She did this over and over again, the same trick, six, maybe seven, times.

Maria, Jacinta’s mother said to me,

“You have not kissed the medal as yet!”

It was true. Each time I would get ready to kiss it, Jacinta would take it away, laughing. I was so upset, I almost despaired. I thought the Blessed Virgin was mad at me and I thought,

“Oh, this is awful! . . . Oh my God, I must be very bad for the Virgin to do such a thing to me!”

But no sooner had that thought entered my mind, than Jacinta came to me and put the medal to my lips as many times as

she had removed it. Everybody was stunned! They were saying,

“Ah! Have you seen how Jacinta was teasing her aunt?”

I was so upset that I didn’t know what to do. Simon was right behind me. I went into the house and my daughter asked,

“What happened to you, mother?”

“Leave me alone. I don’t know what happened to me with the Blessed Virgin. Leave me alone. I can’t talk.”

After a few minutes, I said to her,

“Let’s go to Simon’s house. I will scold Jacinta. Oh, how I will scold her!”

But as soon as Jacinta caught sight of me, she started to imitate me,

“Oh! this is awful! . . . Oh my God, I must be very bad for the Virgin to do such a thing to me!”

Upon hearing her pronounce my own words—but words that I had only formulated in my mind—I became more upset.

“But, what are you saying, Jacinta?”

“‘Oh! this is awful! . . . Oh my God, I must be very bad for the Virgin to do such a thing to me!’ . . . Is that what you thought, Aunt?”

“How did I know what to think or what to say while you were acting that way?”

“That was because the Virgin had ordered me, ‘Play with your aunt; tease her a bit.’ And when you thought, ‘Oh my God, I must be very bad for the Virgin to do such a thing to me,’ she told me, ‘Now you give it to her right away.’”

I shall never forget that scene; not after the emotion I felt at that place! I said to myself, “Then the Virgin is not mad at me!” I had a few other medals with me and I said to Jacinta,

“Well now, when you have your next ecstasy, I want you to give them to the Virgin so that she may bless them.”

“They have never been blessed?”

“They have already been given to you during an ecstasy at the pines, but I don’t know if the Virgin kissed them.”

“But if she already kissed them, she will not do it again.”

A little later on, Jacinta had another ecstasy. She handed my medals to the Blessed Mother, one by one. My niece afterwards

assured me that the Virgin had kissed each one, even though they had already been blessed.

“But, Jacinta, didn’t you tell me that the Blessed Mother would not kiss them if they were already blessed?” (Because the Virgin had revealed to her that this had already been done.)

However, Jacinta answered,

“On account of the teasing this afternoon, I asked the Virgin to bless these medals again and the Virgin agreed.” That is what happened to me.

1980 PHOTO

Piedad Gonzalez (60) and her husband, Antonio. Piedad works in the fields.

Before the apparitions. Yes I did know the little girls well. Before the apparitions I had never heard anything concerning them which did not appear similar to the other children in the village.

First reactions. I was sick at the time of the first ecstasies, so I was not able to go until eight days later. At that time, the children were in ecstasy in the *calleja* and there were already eight or ten people there. When I saw them there, in ecstasy, I was so shocked that the children thought I was ill.

Antonio She was suffering from a nervous condition.

Piedad I felt such a strong emotion that the people thought I had fallen into ecstasy like the young girls.

Antonio She is hard of hearing, and her nerves are fragile. . .

Piedad I cried very much . . . very much . . .

Number of ecstasies.

Antonio Oh! We have seen many of them!

Piedad An enormous amount! Beyond measure! An extraordinary number!

Antonio Even during the nights of hail and snow.

Piedad In the beginning, Antonio would not believe in them. Tell the truth, Antonio. In the beginning you did not want to believe.

Antonio No, I didn't believe it, that's true. Afterwards, yes. We still doubted, but finally we believed. What finally convinced us was when we saw them for two hours up there in the *cuadro*, without blinking or anything. Up there, everybody was convinced; the ones from our village and the people from other villages.

Exterior aspect.

Antonio and Piedad: No, nothing, nothing. Not a trace of fatigue.

Piedad Sometimes people would stick their fingers in the girls' eyes, but that didn't hurt them. It was as if they were corpses! . . .

Antonio And they even pricked them! Yes, we have seen this ourselves, in the *cuadro*, and the girls did not even react!



Piedad I have seen—and so did many others who were there—Jacinta kneeling down for two hours on one knee only, in the lane. Two hours! And they were pricking the other leg with pins! I was lucky to be right behind her which meant I could see her perfectly well. I saw her as clearly as I see you right now.

Antonio And the little girl did not react! She did not say anything!

Piedad I couldn't see her face because I was behind her; I could only see her from the back. I don't know whether or not she cried out, as I couldn't hear her, but she was not twitching.

Visits to the houses.

Piedad and Antonio: Here? Oh! yes, very often!

Antonio One time, when I was lying down, not even shaved! There was a young fellow from Reinosa who was taking notes.

Piedad Yes, he stayed three weeks in our house, taking notes. His name was José Antonio Julián.

Antonio Another time, while we were having supper, Mari Loli came to the house, walking backwards. She gave the crucifix to everyone there.

The kissed objects.

Antonio Sometimes the little girls would arrive for the apparition carrying thirty or forty rosaries . . .

Piedad One day about thirty ladies from Segovia came to our house. They brought about two pounds of prayer beads, all mixed up in a big ball. Two pounds! . . . and those ladies couldn't untangle them. So I advised them, "Give them to Mari Loli tonight. You will see." That night, Mari Loli, during an ecstasy in her house, handed to each lady, separately, her rosary. One of the women was so moved, she started to cry. She cried so much that she had to leave. Today she is a religious.

El Milagru.

Piedad Ah! no, about that I do not know anything. We stayed here.

Antonio Yes, but tell him the story of the man who was lodging with us and who saw it. Don't tell me "no," I bet you anything 'over my head and against my

body' that that man saw it!

Piedad There were two people who had lodged for a few days here in our house, and one of them said, "Don't let anyone contradict me and say that I did not see that miracle—I am liable to punch him in the nose!"

Antonio That's exactly what he said! But we don't know his name. They were both from Reinosa.

Stellar phenomena. No, we have not seen anything.

Marches. When the girls were in ecstasy and going fast, we could not follow them, so we didn't try. Even those strong young men would get tired and give up. No, it wasn't possible. One of our boys—*Jesús*—told us one night that he would not run after them anymore, that he would not try again.

Finding 'hidden' people.

Piedad About my son, *Jesús*. One night, as we were having supper, like tonight, he said, "Well, tonight I am going to try an experiment. If the result is the one I am hoping for, then I believe. Otherwise, no."

I did not witness the scene, but *Jesús* told us about it and one of my relatives who did not see *Jesús*, but who had seen what Conchita did, confirmed the facts. On that night, Conchita came out in ecstasy, and perhaps you have noticed that in my garden there are some beehives on the wall. Right now the garden is well kept, but at that time, it was overgrown with bushes. *Jesús* said to himself, "I am going to hide tonight among the beehives. If it is true that everything comes from the Blessed Virgin, may the young girl climb and reach my hiding place." It was a very dark night, very obscure. There were no lights in the garden which was overgrown with brambles. People were standing around in groups in front of Conchita's house, waiting for her. She came out, in ecstasy, and the crowd made way in front of her. She started climbing the wall among the beehives, until she reached the corner where *Jesús* was hiding. Now, she could not see him, she couldn't have known he was there! Who told her? I will tell you another phenomenon. One afternoon, a man came from Cabezón in order to see the apparitions. It was pouring rain. He knocked at my door and I went to see who it was.

He asked me if, for pity's sake, I couldn't find him a little corner in the house, for he was exhausted. I told him that the house was already full, but he persisted, saying that even the floor would be good enough for him. My son came up to me at that moment and suggested, "Mother, let him have the attic."

The attic was such a mess, I was embarrassed to have him go up there, but he begged, "Yes, let me use the attic!" "All right, let's go up to the attic," I said. When he reached the top step, he sat down and my son said, "Give him that bag full of leaves which I have over there, then he can lean his back against it."

We fixed him up like that and left him. After a while, I went up to see if maybe he was sick for he was not making any sound. He was asleep. At supper time, *Jesús* went to ask him if he wanted anything to eat—perhaps some bouillon. He took some broth and told us he felt better. I was afraid he would get sick. Finally we left him alone in the attic. Suddenly, around three o'clock in the morning, the little girls in ecstasy came to the door and entered the house. Conchita climbed the steps to the attic, gave the cross to the man for him to kiss. After that, I never saw that man again! He left with the girls, without even saying "good-bye," as he was so overcome with emotion. We have never seen him again!

Antonio Nobody could have known that man was in the attic. Nobody!

Piedad He had arrived about five in the afternoon, and it was pouring rain! And really, the poor man was very tired, and soaking wet, which meant that we were not able to talk with him or find out who he was. We only know that he was from Cabezón.

Visits to the cemetery.

Antonio No, we never followed the young girls there.

Mysterious strength.

Piedad We never touched the girls during an ecstasy, but one day, my daughter Trinidad, upon coming out from Mass, put her fingers in the holy water font to make the sign of the cross. But before making the sign, she gave her moist hand to Conchita so that she

could have some water too. Their fingers met, and at that exact moment, Conchita fell into ecstasy. Well, let me tell you, it was as if they were welded together by the fingertips! My daughter was unable to separate her fingers from those of Conchita. Trinidad was obliged to follow Conchita through the village for the duration of the ecstasy! . . . They were joined to one another solely by the tips of the fingers! Impossible to be separated! I didn't see this happen, but my daughter told us about it upon her return. I also saw Conchita catching a sheep.

Antonio Yes, tell what an affair that was!
Piedad

At that time, Conchita owned some sheep. One day, as she was bringing back her flock, at the very moment she was giving a slap to one of them to make it go in the right direction, she fell into ecstasy and her hand remained clutched to the sheep's wool. A few men came and tried to loosen her hold, but they were unable to do it. So, every time Conchita moved, the sheep had to follow! Conchita was dragging it along as if it were a dead leaf! . . . People were unable to loosen her hand. Finally, someone brought a pair of shears and they cut the wool. Thus the animal was freed. Conchita and her sheep on that day made many turns around that house which has a terrace, and which we call the *Casona*—large house—near the fountain. But, for Conchita in ecstasy, the sheep was no heavier to pull along than a piece of straw.

The nights of terror.

Antonio Tell him about the nights of fright when we all went to confession.

Piedad Yes, but I was there only on the second night. That night, there were not so many people. There was a monk—one of those who wear a rust colored habit and some knots on the cord which forms their belt [a Franciscan]. This happened a little bit lower in the lane than the apple tree, and there were very few strangers in the village that day. I couldn't hear what the children were saying, but the people were repeating it to me. I saw the visionaries raising up their tiny hands toward heaven, like this, as if something

were going to fall from up there. According to what the people were telling me, they were imploring, “Oh! don’t let it come—don’t let it happen!” And they were crying. They were shedding many tears! There were not many men, but even so, they urged the monk, “Pray, Father, pray!”

And everybody was crying, and what cries! The visionaries were imploring (according to what people told me, as I couldn’t understand), “Oh! don’t let this come . . . don’t let this come . . . let them go to confession first. Let them go to confession! . . .”

Just seeing their little hands pushing something away from above them, we could feel the fright. It was on the eve of Corpus Christi. On that day, there must not have been one single person in the village who didn’t go to confession. Antonio didn’t go to confession then, for we had lost a calf and he had gone to search for it.

Antonio I didn’t go to confession because I came back too late after having run to catch my calf. Therefore we were the only two who did not go to confession that day, if it hadn’t been for that calf, I would have gone, too. And I said to myself, “Well, a fine fix I’m in. All the village has gone to confession except me. What is going to happen to me? And all because of that calf!”

Piedad You know, we could tell you so many more stories. We have seen so many ecstasies! . . .

Antonio Tell him about the time when they came down backwards from the pines to the church.

Piedad Yes, that’s true, they rushed down the slopes from the pines to the church—and going backwards the whole way! I saw them doing that many times.

Walks in the snow. One night it had snowed very hard. There was about one and a half feet of snow. Loli came out in ecstasy accompanied only by her father and mother. She came here to our house. She opened that door, and we saw she was arriving on her knees, backwards in the snow! She came as far as we were. There were five of us around the fireplace. Still on her knees, she gave us the crucifix to be kissed. She was unable to reach one of the men. He had to get up to put his lips on the

cross, as she knelt facing him, without moving, holding the crucifix stretched out to him. Afterwards, she left with her father.

Another night, it was thundering very loudly and snowing. I looked out the window to see what kind of weather we were having, and I saw Aniceta coming with Conchita in ecstasy. A mixture of snow and hail was falling. Conchita was walking, her arms outstretched, her face looking up to the sky. She was holding a cross in her hand. The hail was hitting her directly on the face. Seeing her like that upset me so much I started to cry—that poor child! I used a blanket as a hooded coat, and went downstairs. It was between eleven o’clock and midnight; there were only the two of them, Conchita and her mother. We went as far as the church, then we came back to where Pepé lives and back again as far as the *cuadro*, while it continued to hail and snow. The way the hailstones were hitting the child made me cry, but I also pitied her poor mother accompanying her daughter alone on such a bad night. I went out because they were alone, the two of them, otherwise I would have stayed at home.

Conchita, however, didn’t seem to be affected. With her arms wide open and her face lifted up to heaven, she didn’t seem to feel the hail. From the *cuadro* we came back to her house and Aniceta said to me,

“If you care to come in, my friend, do come.”

“No, I am going. I was so sorry for you tonight, Aniceta.”

And I went home.

The Santander Commission.

Piedad and Antonio. No, we have never been questioned.

Piedad Today, people say all sorts of things but I don’t believe them. What I don’t see, I don’t believe.

Synchronized meetings.

Piedad Here is another anecdote. One day they had placed two Civil Guards at each of the four houses where the little girls were, to see if they would be able to meet at the same hour, at the *cuadro*, because it was there that they were to meet at a specified time. Well, there wasn’t even a five minute difference between them; at the exact time, they all met at the *cuadro*. I heard that there were guards everywhere, but I saw only the two policemen who were watching Loli’s house. But I saw the four little girls together, running toward the *calleja*.



1980 PHOTO

Avelina Gonzalez (74) has always worked in the fields.

Before the apparitions. I have lived all my life in the village. I left only once in order to go and see my daughter who was living in the Asturias. When I came back, the apparitions had been going on for over a month.

Yes, I knew the little girls well. Before the apparitions, they were more or less like other youngsters, but all the girls here are good little girls, rather simple. The other girls were also good children.

First reactions. On July 17, 1961—ten years ago—I witnessed an ecstasy for the first time. Believe me, it was a real shock for me! It took place at the *cuadro* and the four young girls were there.

We heard that they had had their “calls” so right away we went to gather at the *cuadro*. There was already a great number of people there; some from the village, some strangers, and many persons from Cosio, too. They told me that it was like that everyday; that there were more and more people coming all the time. Nobody could find an explanation for what we were witnessing. My daughter, Margarita, kept saying,

“This cannot be explained.”

I felt a profound emotion upon seeing the little girls in ecstasy for the first time. Mari Loli, most of all, was marvelous. They were all so beautiful and so different from their normal appearance. They were reciting the rosary in such a different manner from the way they normally did. They were reciting it much more piously.

Visits to the houses. One night I was home—not here where I am living now, but in another house where I was living at the time. I was in bed, asleep. What time would that have been? . . . midnight or one in the morning. Mari Loli came directly into the room where I was sleeping. How could she know I was in that room?

She came to my bed and gave me the cross—at that time of night! . . . Her father was with her but the other people remained outside.

I was so moved that I couldn’t sleep for the rest of the night. Can you imagine? The Blessed Mother in *my* house! The cross which the little girl applied to my lips! In the middle of the night! Don’t tell me that wasn’t touching! I was very moved.

I experienced another unforgettable adventure with Mari Loli. Tina [Avelina’s daughter] is well aware of that as she and Mari Loli’s father were the only ones accompanying her.

My husband had passed away two years before. He was a first cousin of Mari Loli’s father. He died in that bed which you see over there. Mari Loli arrived in ecstasy and went straight to that bed. She laid the cross down on the pillow and then on the bed, and then she started to talk at great length for a long time.

We tried to catch what she was saying, but we were too caught up with emotion. We started to cry—completely upset. Through her tears my daughter managed to ask me,

“Mother, what can this mean? Why is she staying there at the very spot where my daddy died? What can she know about his death, when she was only a little girl at that time?”

And that was true. What could she know or remember about the death of my husband because at that time she was only ten years old? Did she even remember him?

But she remained there, talking . . . talking . . .

We never did find out what she could have been saying, even though we would have been so anxious to find out, my daughter as much as I.

Weight change. I once had the occasion of touching Conchita during an ecstasy. This happened during one of the Communions which the Angel was giving them in front of the church door.

We had recited the rosary in the lane—*calleja*—and we were coming down behind Conchita. We arrived at the church door and there she fell to her knees as if she were struck down by lightning. When she crashed to her knees, it made quite a noise and one of my feet was caught under her knee. I tried to remove my foot, but it was impossible. During the whole time she remained there, reciting the Confiteor, (the prayer we recite before receiving Communion), and during the Communion, and finally during the thanksgiving, which had taken a very long time, I remained imprisoned under her knee. She then got up to go into church, and I was able to remove my foot which felt very sore, but nothing serious. These kind of surprises happened quite frequently.

The blessed objects. We were at Mari Loli’s. A lady from Cosio arrived and told us about her conviction that all the events of Garabandal were true, and that she wished to obtain proof. She removed her ring and, in Mari Loli’s absence, she handed the ring to another lady, begging her to give the ring to Mari Loli as soon as she came. The owner of the ring even hid herself behind some people and those who saw these precautions said, “What nonsense!”

Mari Loli arrived in ecstasy and handed the ring up to be kissed. (People said that crosses and wedding rings were the objects which the Virgin enjoyed the most to kiss.) Then Loli came toward me. I was sitting alone in a corner, half asleep because I was very tired. It was about two o’clock in the morning. The young girl stopped in front of me, in ecstasy of course, and I

was completely in a panic because I didn’t know what she wanted. Then I heard her say,

“It is not this one? Then tell me whose it is. Take me to her. Lead me!”

It was easy to tell Mari Loli was saying that to her Vision. She then passed in front of everyone present, who pulled themselves aside in order to let her go by, and she finally came to the owner of the ring who, hidden behind everyone, was sitting on Ceferino’s staircase.

Mari Loli picked up the lady’s right hand and put the ring on a finger which apparently was not the correct one, as we heard Loli say,

“Oh, that’s not the right one? Which one then?”

Having undoubtedly received an answer, she then put the ring on the correct finger! Can you imagine? The poor lady was in a terrible state. What an experience!

This happened right in front of me. If I had not seen it with my own eyes I could not have been able to describe it to you. What I did not see for myself, I do not narrate.

Stellar phenomena. I did not see many because I was often busy with the children. At that time we had had many births. I was therefore forced to stay at home which displeased me very much.

One night we were following the little girls in ecstasy. I had made a purchase for Maria, Jacinta’s mother, and she owed me a few *pesetas*. She wanted to reimburse me, but I told her,

“Listen, don’t bother me with these pennies. For the moment, I am following the apparition.”

So she put the pennies into my pocket, and just then I exclaimed,

“Oh! *Madre!* What do I see? Maria, don’t you see?”

“What do you see?”

“A star going over Ceferino’s roof—a star which is grazing the rooftop. *Aie! Madre!* it is so strange! But it’s a star, that’s for sure. There is no doubt about it. Where is it going like that?”

It was, in fact, a star. It went over the belfry and I didn’t see it anymore. But on that night, I saw it very clearly.

Of course it made a deep impression on me. How could it be otherwise? I had never seen anything like it in my whole life,

and I have lived a long time.

At that moment, we came up to a small group of people, one of whom was Fr. Valentin. He was the parish priest. They were listening to a young boy who was telling them that he had just seen a curious star. According to the way the child described it, it was exactly the same thing I had just witnessed. The people began saying that the little boy was telling fairytales, but I interrupted,

“What is the matter?”

“Nothing, nothing,” said the pastor, who was talking very fast. “Nothing, it’s nothing. The boy says he has seen a star.”

“It’s true, because I saw it myself with my own eyes. I saw it!”

Then everyone started to say,

“If that lady says she has seen it, it must be true, because at her age she would not start telling lies.”

The poor little boy, knowing what he had seen, was trying very hard to convince them, but as he was only a small boy, nobody believed him. But when I confirmed it, they believed me.

I don’t know where that star came from, but it passed close to the roof tiles, extremely low, and over the church belfry. Then I didn’t see it again. I have no explanation. The child was not from the village. I believe that was during the first year of the apparitions—1961. It could have been 1962, perhaps, but I rather think it was in 1961.

The Santander Commission. No, I have never been questioned by that Commission.

Cure. One day I brought Mari Loli my crucifix, the one you see hanging over there. She gave it to be kissed by the Virgin and kept it in her hand for the duration of the ecstasy which lasted all afternoon. At that time, I had been suffering for three months with a lip disease which would not clear up. My lips were so sore that I had to keep them half-opened all the time; contact with a glass was unbearable, so I had to drink by pouring the liquid down my throat without touching my lips to the glass. In fact I have a photo here where you can clearly see my lips are all black.

One night while I was saying the rosary, which I was in the habit of doing because I was often alone, I took the crucifix

which Loli had held during her ecstasy and I applied it ever so gently to my lips. I did this with all my faith. I then went to bed and the next morning, upon awakening, my lips had become as well as you see them now! . . . This sickness never came back. The only thing I did was apply the crucifix to my lips and the next day, all traces of the disease had disappeared.

Fr. Luis Andreu. I was there the day he cried out, “Miracle! . . . Miracle! . . .”

That poor priest had celebrated two Masses here and on that day he celebrated another one, the last one. We women had come from that Mass commenting on the manner in which the padre had offered the Holy Sacrifice. It seemed as if he were in ecstasy during the whole Mass. A saint! It was so obvious, that it struck us all. There were only a few of us because most of the people were in the fields, you know. We were saying,

“What a Mass Fr. Luis said today!”

We had never seen a Mass celebrated in such a manner, although his brother, Fr. Ramon also celebrated it very well.

Yes, Fr. Ramon celebrated his Masses very devoutly, but not like the one in which we had just participated. That had moved us greatly.

That morning, apart from his extraordinary recollection, there was nothing particularly noticeable about Fr. Luis Andreu which would attract our attention. He seemed to be in perfect health, although he died the next morning.

The good father climbed up to the pines that day. I must say that he did not believe in the apparitions of Garabandal, absolutely not. He was sure they were false.

But as he was coming back from the pines, I heard him say,

“A miracle! A miracle! What a miracle the Virgin has performed for me! . . .”

Yes, I heard him say that. For me, it proves without a doubt that he must have seen the Virgin. Otherwise why would he have repeated, “Miracle!”? We who were there saw nothing, but he certainly did.

The next morning, when they announced his death, we were all upset. What a Mass he had celebrated! A saint! . . . he seemed to be a saint!

One night there was a large group of us at Conchita’s, among whom were the people who had brought Fr. Luis, the Fontan-

eros, I don't remember their exact name, anyway, they were manufacturers of dry fodder. [Avelina is referring to the Fontaneda family—Mrs. Carmen Fontaneda and her husband, Rafaelo who were with Fr. Luis Andreu at the time of his death.] They were living in Aguilar or Reinosa. Conchita was telling them that a day would come when they themselves (the Fontanedas) would doubt the authenticity of the apparitions. Carmen Fontaneda then asked what she could do so they would continue to believe and Conchita answered her,

“I don't know what we can do, but it is certain that a time will come when no one will believe in the truth of the apparitions. No one, or almost no one. Very few people, at any rate, will still believe.”

Then Conchita continued,

“For us also, there will come a time when we will deny everything and when the great majority of people cease believing, then the Miracle will occur.”

That evening, when Conchita was telling us those things, she was not in ecstasy.

Other facts. One day, I was coming back from a stroll with my daughter Clementina, whom we call Tina. At the entrance of the village, we met three old men, one of whom was even older than the others, and he asked me,

“What do you say about all these events, Señora? Is it true or is it not?”

“Well, have you seen any of them?”

“No, Señora, we have not as yet seen a single ecstasy.”

“Then listen, observe one first and we will discuss it afterwards. You will then tell me if, in your opinion, this is true or not, for until you have seen an ecstasy yourself, you can't have anything to say. It seems to me that you are older than I am. At your age, you did not come all the way to this village for nothing.”

A little while later, some neighbors told us that the young girls had just received their last call and were going toward the church.

All the women who were left in the village started to run and we went to the church. We left the front seats for the strangers, so they could see better and if possible hear what the children

were saying. But even from where I was, I could see very well.

My attention was soon drawn to the three old men to whom I had talked a little earlier. Holy Mother! you should have seen the face of the man I had spoken with! He was sitting, his head between his hands, unable to stand up as he was so upset. I thought, “That man must be crying.” I got close to him. I tapped him on the shoulder and asked,

“So Señor, what do you think now?”

“Oh! Madam, it's you! Please leave me alone. I am not able to say one word. We will talk later.”

And I saw he was crying like a child—uncontrollably. He just sat there, shedding tears, unable to stop.

After the ecstasy, the old man calmed down gradually.

“Ah! Señora, now I believe. How could I doubt? Who could not believe that this comes from heaven? If you knew the emotion I felt. These children had faces like angels, like angels.”

That man's feelings were then stronger than mine.

Many people, upon seeing the visionaries in ecstasy for the first time, experienced a kind of shock which left them very upset. That was what happened to two gentlemen who arrived one day, one from Madrid, and the other from the Asturias. One of them was shouting,

“These young girls are there for our sins, and for evil men! These are *angelots* from God! They are suffering for us!”

He was really very upset. So much so, that Fr. Valentin had to make him sit down on the bench in order to quiet him.

Beauty of the prayers. We enjoyed to a great extent, reciting the rosaries with the visionaries when they were in ecstasy. Everyone who had some free time would recite the prayers with them. The girls recited the rosary very well while in ecstasy, with much calm and poise. It was a real joy to hear them. We used to tape them on the tape recorders and then listen to them again at home. But when not in ecstasy, they did not recite the prayers as well. They went very fast like the children which they were, and like their little friends did. Whereas, while in ecstasy—what a joy it was to hear them. What charm!

1980 PHOTO

Angelina Gonzalez (45), domestic.

Before the apparitions. Yes, I knew the visionaries very well. Before the apparitions, I thought they were like other children; nothing unusual about them, no.

Marches. Often they would move very quickly, while running. I still remember their backward walks. They would cross their feet, like in dancing. I also remember that when we had a huge amount of snow and they were climbing up toward the pines by these awful roads, they would sometimes hold on to one another's arm.

When they were going fast, my God! who on earth could have followed them? . . . Personally it was very difficult for me but they appeared very refreshed after those races.

One day, in Aniceta's house, Mari Loli, coming out of her ecstasy, exclaimed,

"Oh! Mama! It was so bright, and everything here is so dark!"

And one woman added,

"I heard her say the same thing one day in the *calleja*, also while coming out of ecstasy."

Physical insensitivity. What bothered me very much was when they used to jump from the top of the stairs in Ceferino's house. They would be kneeling down up there and then they would let themselves fall, still kneeling, on to the cement floor. It was terrible! It was such a shock, the noise used to echo!

Lack of wounds. After the ecstasy, their legs and knees were smooth. There was not a single mark! It was the same with their runs across the village. There was never the least trace of bruises nothing at all.

On the other hand, their clothing would get dirty, because they were also going through puddles and mud.

Physical contact. I touched them sometimes, but I never tried to lift them up. When I say "touch" I want to explain that it happened when I stumbled over them, but touching them voluntarily, no. I always had too much respect for them.

One time, I saw the local doctor, Dr. Guñon, take one of the visionaries, with his two hands trying to twist her neck. He was unable to do so. He managed to lift her up a tiny bit, but he



quickly let her fall down, because he couldn't hold her.

After the ecstasy, I asked the visionary,

"What happened to you when he was doing that?"

"Oh, I couldn't see the Vision."

He was thereby preventing her from seeing her apparition.

One day, another doctor, Dr. Morales, was pricking the visionaries' legs with pins, and Simon objected. Then the doctor said,

"Why, don't you want me to do that? Are you afraid that I'll destroy your daughter's little act?"

The young men jumped on him! I was there, I remember that affair very well.

Visits to the sick. One day my brother was sitting by the chimney corner, feeling sick. Mari Loli came. She knelt down beside him. She stayed for a little while in that position, then she left, still in ecstasy.

Visits to the cemetery. That was something which used to move me very much. I remember Conchita, especially. I saw her pass her arm through the bars of the gate and stretch her crucifix as if she were giving it to be kissed by people on the other side. What a fright I had! I saw that many times.

Phenomena in the sky. No, I didn't notice anything. Oh sure, on the feast of St. James, people said that the clouds were pulling St. James' horse, but as it was in the afternoon and very windy at that, and there were also big clouds passing, that surely had no significance at all. It made us laugh.

The nights of terror. What a terrifying thing! I don't even want to remember it! I had a horrible fright!

We were in the *calleja*. A monk was there and he would not let us go by. He had ended up in Garabandal by mistake, as he had been on his way to Lebeña. Almost all the village was present. We had made a fire with branches in order to spend the night. The young girls began to utter such terrible screams and the poor monk was mixing up his prayers. He wanted us to pray in order to distract us from the girls' cries. They were screaming and crying and I was shaking with fear. Above all I did not want to get close to them. Other people were afraid also, oh yes!—a few of them were imploring, "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in Thee," or "Our Lady of Mt. Carmel . . ."

There were Marieja, Maximina and my mother. My mother almost got sick. She was uttering such cries . . .

This happened for two nights.

I remember what the *mozos*—young men—were saying,

"Surely the first thing tomorrow morning, I am going to confession."

For me, I was so terrified that I didn't dare go back to the house by myself; luckily my brother arrived.

The next day I went to confession like everybody else. There wasn't a single person in the village who didn't go. We received Holy Communion as if we were about to die; it was a very good Communion and a very good confession!

El Milagrucu. I didn't see it, but my brother saw it very distinctly and he then told me about it. According to him, the Host resembled a coin, a *duro*—five pesetas—which became brighter and more brilliant, like the light of a carbide lamp, and of great whiteness.

I had heard the prophecy concerning this miracle. The visionaries had announced very quietly that there was going to be a miracle.

The kissed objects. I have witnessed these benedictions many times. I, myself, have given rosaries to be kissed by the Virgin; I also had a small pebble. Another time, I had bought a small chain with a medal for Paquita, and I had it presented to the Virgin—I don't remember when. Finally, I decided to give it to Marcelino, so I handed it to Jacinta who presented it to her Vision and we heard her say,

"You have already done it? It is destined for another person?"

The calls. I remember seeing Loli, running with all her strength, like a rocket, getting ahead of the people who were walking in front of her, but she was not as yet in ecstasy. It was because she had received the last call and she was going toward the place where her Vision was calling her. Other times, she would walk very slowly, and abruptly she would fall into ecstasy.

A lady interrupted,

"There was a time when they would confine the visionaries in four different houses, to see if they would all gather at exactly the same time at the place of the apparition. They did."



1971 PHOTO

Daniela Cuenca (38), domestic.

Mary and the Child Jesus. I remember that on the anniversary of the first apparition, Mari Loli was in ecstasy and seemed, by her words and gestures, to be seeing the Virgin and the Child Jesus, both of whom were wearing crowns. Loli was asking her Vision to hand her the Infant so that she might hold Him in her arms and that she would take good care of Him. I remember some of her remarks,

“But why doesn’t He talk?”

Very likely the Virgin must have told her He was too small, because Loli answered,

“But He must be a year old! May I have Him?”

“Well then, let me have the crown. Oh! how small it is. It doesn’t fit me. Let me have yours.”

And Loli went through the motions of putting a crown on her head. Judging by her movements, the first crown didn’t fit her, but the second one did. But she was not given the Child to hold, although Loli kept insisting,

“Let me have Him! I won’t let Him fall. Doesn’t He speak? Give me the Child.”

When I went back to Torrelavega, I told my employer [a doctor] all that I had seen, but he said,

“Don’t pay any attention to that; it’s nothing. People believe many things are supernatural, but it is nothing at all.”

“Yes, but such and such a thing has happened.”

“Don’t believe it; don’t pay any attention to it; it’s nothing.”

That doctor is dead now.

But I kept my convictions until October 18, 1961. I had complete faith that on that date, I would see a miracle, because they had announced that something was going to take place on that date, but in fact I saw nothing. We were waiting, saying to one another, “It is to be at such and such an hour.” Finally the night came and nothing happened, which means that I suffered a great deception. After that, I always doubted. [Note: The crowd was expecting a prodigy as the girls had announced something important for that date. The “something important” turned out to be the Blessed Virgin’s Message which was to be rendered public on that day, October 18, 1961: “One must make many sacrifices. . . .” The crowd, expecting a miracle, dispersed, very disappointed.]

El Milagru. I was in the village, but I didn’t see it. However, my husband saw it. He didn’t see the Host coming, but he saw the Host on Conchita’s tongue. But not, as some said, that it was descending. He did not see the tongue first, and then the Host. No, when he saw the Host, it was already there. He says that no one can know how the Host appeared there. But at that moment, when he saw the Host, he believed. What can he know? Some say Conchita brought it in her mouth, as they say a lot of other things. My husband, Emiliano, can’t know anything for sure.

The Santander Commission. No, I have never been summoned or questioned by it.

Stellar phenomena. An interjection from Camina Gonzalez. One night we were coming down from the pines to go to the rosary, when we saw a great light which passed over the mountain, not very high in the sky. It was not a star, it was similar to a light. It was not normal. I have often seen shooting stars, but that had nothing in common with them. We were all astonished. The four visionaries were there and one of them said,

“The Virgin is there. She is going in that star.”

1976 PHOTO

Simon Gonzalez Gonzalez (74), breeder, Jacinta's father. Simon died on February 14, 1980 at the age of 83.

(Deposition given in the presence of Jacinta)

Before the apparitions. Jacinta was exactly like the others. I couldn't see any difference. She never caused us any difficulty in raising her.

First reactions. It was Jacinta who first told me about the apparitions. She told us the very first night she saw the Angel. I didn't believe her. What's more, we didn't talk to anyone else about it until it became common knowledge.

When my son, Miguel Angel, heard about it, he first said, "Ah, it's just a big bird. Sometimes they stop that way."

But right away I understood that there was something more to it, and I said,

"Keep quiet!"

What made me think there was something else was the manner in which Jacinta explained it, because I knew my daughter very well. She returned the next day to the *cuadro*—and nothing. The day after—and again nothing. At last, the following day, the young girls said they saw something with a head, moving, and Jacinta demonstrated by tilting her head. When the people in the village went to see for the first time, I didn't follow. I went to the transformer because the people in the village were saying,

"Let's go and see the show."

I was convinced there was something real. If the *mozos*—young men between eighteen and twenty-five—had caused a nuisance near the girls, I wouldn't have been able to keep quiet, because I am rather quick-tempered. So I remained as an observer from the transformer, and from there I could see the people who remained motionless up there. When they came down and told me what had happened, I said,

"Now I'm sorry I didn't go. Had I known that everything would have been so calm . . ."

A few days later, I saw an ecstasy for the first time.



The visionaries had their eyes turned upwards, their heads tilted back. In fact, I didn't know what an ecstasy was. The little bit of reading I had done on apparitions hadn't prepared me for that! Reading and seeing are not the same thing. I was extremely moved, and that emotion was to be the first one of a long series.

They were taking place in the *calleja*, and my God! what a crowd there was! There were people from the village and those from outside, because the news had spread all over the province and throughout all the villages surrounding Garabandal.

I forget now if, when I arrived, the little girls were already in ecstasy. So many years have passed since then.

Number of ecstasies. Yes, I saw many ecstasies. It was then at the beginning of summer, but afterwards, I couldn't accompany Jacinta every time. We would let her follow her Vision throughout the village. During winter, the number of ecstasies increased.

The Angel gives them Holy Communion. I was very moved when we heard and saw that the little girls were receiving Holy Communion. Jacinta had told us one day that the Angel gave them Communion. We could see for ourselves through their motions and their attitude—joined hands, the tongue out, movement of the throat—that they seemed to be receiving and swallowing the Host.

One day, we noticed that the other visionaries had received Communion, but not Jacinta. The Angel had passed her by. On the evening before, her mother had had some unpleasantness with her. The next day we were in the meadows, and I was arriving with a load of hay. I asked,

“Where is Jacinta?”

“Jacinta's gone.”

She had just heard the church bells announcing Mass and she had run away to go to confession. When she got to the church, Fr. Valentin was celebrating Mass. She had to wait until the end in order to go to confession.

In the afternoon my wife and I said to one another,

“We'll see if the Angel gives her Communion today.”

There was no doubt in our minds she had not received Communion because she had been disagreeable to her mother, so she had gone to confession. We then watched very closely, and we noticed that she received Holy Communion.

Before Jacinta informed us of this privilege of Communion from the Angel, we had noticed all the gestures, but were unaware of their meaning. And on that day, we had proof that Jacinta was telling the truth.

Some people were saying behind our backs that the visionaries were sick children or that they were putting on an act. I often observed Jacinta while she was sleeping and I said to myself,

“I can't see any signs of her being sick. Besides, as soon as she comes out of ecstasy, she starts drinking water and eating bread and anything else she can get her hands on. She has a healthy appetite.”

I also noticed other disturbing facts. For example, when she started to recite the rosary with her friends I was greatly astonished because we had never taught Jacinta like the boys. I never taught her anything; the boys, yes, but the girls, nothing. Therefore, she never knew the mysteries—none of them. When we heard them reciting the rosary with the mysteries and without counting on their fingers or having any beads, we couldn't get over it!

Judging by the answers they were making to the Virgin, we understood that she was the one who was teaching them. Very soon, too, Jacinta learned the modern litanies, the mysteries, and everything. She learned very quickly and we didn't know what to make of it.

Beauty of their prayers. Anyway, when the four of them were praying in ecstasy, for example, at the foot of the altar in church, they recited the beads in such a steady and calm voice, and none of them had any prayer beads in their hands! But they were reciting it so well, so well! That was very different from their normal way of saying it; their hands, for example, were always moving then.

Respect toward the Eucharist. I also noticed another thing: While in ecstasy, each time they left the main altar to go to another altar or to leave the church, they always moved backwards as far as the church door. Never, while in ecstasy, did they turn their backs to the Blessed Sacrament, never. When you think about it, their behavior was meant to be a lesson to us, but they never made an issue of it.

Facial aspect. We said that they had angelic faces; their faces were no longer theirs but angels' faces. It would have been very

difficult to be more beautiful! It was the same thing at each ecstasy I witnessed.

After the ecstasy, their faces would return to normal.

Rapid marches. Oh yes! Of course! I often saw them moving at great speed. At the start, they would put out their arms open wide, their feet slightly forward and zip! out they would go! . . . fast, very fast . . . and they would stop in a flash! So much so, that the people following them would find themselves suddenly in front of them! The crowd was like a speeding car which has trouble stopping even when the brakes are applied. And the girls, after this abrupt stop, would be unaffected.

Backward marches. They came down the staircase backwards, or moved about in the same way and never did anything happen to them, nor did they ever fall. Well, they did fall a few times.²¹

I saw Jacinta falling once while coming down from the pines. That's the time I caught her and she felt like something as hard as cement. The people who had already touched them were saying the same thing. But I had never done it before as I had some respect for her.

Therefore, that was the first time I had touched my daughter during an ecstasy and I experienced a great emotion. I didn't think she could be as hard as that; truly, she was like cement.

Her body temperature? No, nothing special about it, she was neither hot nor cold.

I never tried to lift her up or touch her. As I said, I felt a great respect toward her.

Duration and conditions of the ecstasies. Their duration was very variable. One day, the ecstasy lasted four hours, during which time they went without a meal. One night, their ecstasy lasted for seven hours, except for a short intermission for a small meal. It was very long. Other times, the ecstasies would last from a quarter of an hour to an hour—it varied greatly.

They fell into ecstasy in all kinds of positions, during any kind of occupation. The times were also varied: at noon, in the after-

21. In this narration, as in many others, here is an apparent contradiction. All the witnesses agree that the girls moved about with astonishing ease and safety, covering unbelievable distances and passing over obstacles without ever falling. It seems then, that the eyewitnesses wish to say that, due to the difficulties of the roads, etc., the girls should have broken their bones thousands of times. But the falls or shocks against the obstacles are few and always very spectacular, as if the Power who was guiding them wanted to make a demonstration. In both cases, marches without falls or with falls, there was a significance.

noon, at night. As far as places are concerned, it could just as well be under the pines as in the lane, in the church as in the house, anywhere, in fact. And always, they had calls. That we learned later.

Question addressed to Jacinta. Could we perhaps ask Jacinta if they received calls right from the start of the apparitions, or later on? (Jacinta smiles, but does not say.)

Here, in this very house, Jacinta often fell into ecstasy. Then she would run across the whole village. Other times it was here that the ecstasy would end. But most often, it would end while Jacinta was going through the village.

Visits to the cemetery. Yes, I accompanied them when the occasion presented itself. I didn't see them going into the cemetery; they stayed at the gate. They weren't afraid and would walk around that piece of land without fear.

Intervention of the Commission. One night—it had already been some time since they had had an apparition—the Santander Commission came to take away Loli and Jacinta. I was lying down, asleep. It must have been midnight when they came to wake me up. They had come from Santander. I called on Ceferino and we went into a room, the two members of the Commission, Ceferino and myself. As I am a little deaf, I couldn't follow the conversation very well and they talked more with Ceferino. They wanted to take the children away from here, under the pretext that they were sick, and that they had this or that wrong with them. In short, according to them, they had to be taken away.

It was not the first time they had come here, they had already come to interrogate Jacinta. Finally, they addressed themselves to me and said,

“And you, what do you say about this?”

“Well, I will tell you. We never asked anyone to come, we don't ask anyone to pay for anything, the children are not giving a bad example. If my daughter has to be taken away, I will take her myself, higher up the mountain, but down below? Nothing doing!”

Then they told us that the longer the girls remained here, the more people would come and that other people in the village would start having visions, apparitions. I told them,

“I don't know if what you say is true, but what I can

tell you is that I am the father of one of the young girls. If you insist, you come with me, and I will have a doctor examine me to see if I am healthy, since you seem to think we are all sick.”

When I said that, they kept quiet.

Here is a question I often asked certain educated people whom I met,

“You who have received instruction, tell me: what does all this mean?”

And they would answer,

“We don’t understand any more about this than you do.”

I would especially question doctors and other professional people in this manner, all cultured people, and I always received the same answer. Nobody could explain it.

Announcement of the date of a coming apparition. A few days after meeting with the members of the Commission, Jacinta had an apparition and the Virgin told her,

“In a month’s time, I will come back.”

That would bring us to the month of December, during the first year. And in fact, Jacinta stopped having apparitions for that length of time. I was asking myself whether the apparitions would come back or not. During that time, at our house, crucifixes, rosaries, and medals were accumulating, for the people continued to bring them.

Exactly one month after that last apparition, that is to say about the fourteenth or fifteenth of December, I had gone to take care of my cows, after telling my wife I would be back around five o’clock in the afternoon, or before, because at that time the apparitions took place in the afternoons.

I came back at five o’clock and there were many people at the house. I asked where Jacinta was and they told me she was at school and would be home soon.

Jacinta arrived and there was a lady from Cosio who offered her some apples, but Jacinta didn’t want to accept them. She went into her room and then Mari Cruz arrived. Afterwards, we learned that Jacinta had had the first call at school, but she didn’t tell us.

The calls. The two girls only stayed in the room a short time, then they came running out. I said to my daughter,

“Well! You know that I don’t like that, Jacinta. You are running too fast.”

We noticed that she became very agitated just before the apparitions and that she could not sit still after the second call. As soon as she announced, “I will have an apparition in a short while (or tonight)” we noticed signs of impatience and, in fact, the ecstasy would come.

She went off like the wind and a man from Valladolid and myself were the last ones to get out.

Outside, we met Fr. Amador, who had replaced Fr. Valentin who was being accused of instigating the whole affair. Fr. Amador came to the village without believing at all in the apparitions. I must admit, though, that he was a good priest the whole time he was here.

Fr. Amador was coming out of the school when we met him. He was going toward the church. I said,

“Fr. Amador, we are going to see what Jacinta is doing.”

“I can’t come with you because I have a catechism class right now, but if anything happens, call me.”

He had not as yet witnessed an ecstasy.

We then went to the lane and there were already some people gathered in the *cuadro*. As soon as we arrived, Jacinta fell into ecstasy. I immediately said,

“Somebody go and get Fr. Amador.”

He came. Darkness was already falling, for in December, days are short. He started to write, without stopping, by the light of a lamp he had brought. As he wrote, he was moving his lips, as if he wanted to say something, touching Jacinta’s temples. I never found out what he had been writing.

Ease of gestures. After a while, Jacinta started off from the *cuadro*, and went to the church door. There, she remained a few moments, then she came toward our house. She went into her bedroom, took the rosaries and all the objects which had been piling up for the last month. While picking them up, some fell to the floor. She picked them up without looking at the floor, and disentangled the bunch with amazing ease, her eyes always riveted on her Vision. Soon, she came out again in the street. Conchita, who was in her normal state, said,

“Come to the house, Jacinta, for I also have objects to be kissed.”

During their ecstasies, Jacinta as well as the other girls, would not answer anyone. They would only communicate with each other, whether they were in ecstasy or not.

Jacinta then went to Conchita's, where there were still more objects. Jacinta took everything and gave the whole bunch to her Vision to be kissed. This being done, she came out and returned to the *cuadro*, where she remained for a short time and then the ecstasy ended. Soon afterwards, the whole village, which was following her, arrived.

Seers unaware of their marches. Fr. Amador then called to Jacinta,

“Whew! Did you make us run!”

“I? No!”

“Yes, you! It's you who made us run.”

“I? But I didn't move from here. I came here and I stayed here.”

“Listen, you went to church, then to your home and to Conchita's house, then . . .”

“I am telling you that I came here, and here I am still.”

Fr. Amador was never able to convince her that she had made a very long trip. He left soon afterwards and was replaced before Christmas time and I have never seen him back here.

The Blessed Mother had told Jacinta that she would come back in a month's time, and that's exactly what happened.

Nights of terror. Oh! those nights! Yes, I was there; it was very awesome. But I think most everybody told you about them. The little girls were crying, crying, and we didn't know what had happened to them. They moved toward us and we were all overcome with fear, but we couldn't understand what it was all about. They were crying, screaming, but we didn't know what they were saying. No, I stayed lower down in the lane, without moving.

Improvised hymns. What also impressed me very much is what took place during the night of the Feast of the Incarnation (Annunciation). I had said to myself,

“If this is coming from God, then surely something remarkable will happen on the Feast of the Incarnation.”

On March 24, 1962, around midnight, Jacinta fell into ecstasy

in the house where we were all gathered. She went out into the street and we all followed her. She went to the door of the church where she remained for some time, then she went to Ceferino's where some people had gathered. It was then about one o'clock in the morning.

Mari Loli, in her turn, was seized in ecstasy and we went out with the two of them. In the lane, we found Conchita passing by, also in ecstasy, and her family was with her. The three girls got together and went toward the church as far as the door. They remained there awhile, then started to recite the rosary.

Next they started to sing the rosary, something which they had never done before! And with such angelic voices! Then they surprised us by saying,

“The Virgin asks that everyone sing aloud.”

You should have heard me! I was singing like a nightingale! I who never sang before! I experienced a very deep emotion.

Those who managed to get out of bed arrived at the end of the rosary. Almost the entire village was there, since the visionaries had passed back and forth through the various lanes, and a sung rosary is rather long. But, truly, the whole village participated and everyone was overwhelmed.

After the rosary, I began to think,

“The Incarnation is an important feast. They should sing some hymns, now.”

You would have thought they read my mind, because, right then, they began to sing. They sang three new hymns, which no one around here knew. Not even the girls, themselves! Unfortunately, I wasn't able to memorize the words or the music. It was all the more impressive, since at one point, they stopped walking and it seems that the Virgin asked them to sing one of the hymns again, because we heard them say,

“Oh, but if you don't repeat the words, we won't be able to sing them, as we have already forgotten them.”

El Milagru. I didn't see anything. I went to bed that night. Since there were so many people [in the village], I thought, “What are we all going to do there?” So I went to bed. Jacinta had never spoken about this coming miracle, but Conchita had announced it.

Jacinta (interjecting): It was predicted by Conchita but we all knew about it . . .

Simon (to his daughter): Wasn't it Conchita who told you about it?

Jacinta: Yes

Interviewer: Or was it the Virgin who . . .

Jacinta: No, it was Conchita who told us about it.

Simon: Ah! It was Conchita. Of course I knew about it like everybody else because it had been announced a long time before, six months I think.

One of Jacinta's brothers: No, only eight days before.

Simon: Eight days? Nonsense! The miracle of the *Forma* was announced much earlier.

Jacinta: Six months, I believe . . .

Simon: Yes! Oh, yes! At least a half a year before . . .

[*Note:* Simon, Jacinta, and her brother are all mistaken. See the chronology of events at the beginning of this book.]

Santander Commission. Yes, they called me to the sacristy, and it was there that I made my declarations. They might have come to my home to summon me, but I was away much of the time.

Telepathy. One day a man from the Odanero region became short of breath trying to keep up with the little girls in ecstasy. He was so preoccupied with this effort that when he came into this room, he hit his head violently against the beam, as he was very tall. After the ecstasy ended, he told us that he had thought a lot about the meaning of what was happening here and that, looking for proof, he had thought,

"I shall believe if the girl walking in the middle of the others would make a half-turn to come and give me the crucifix to be kissed and would then return to her place. Then, yes, I shall believe."

He had hardly formulated this thought when the visionary walking in the middle came up to him, made the sign of the cross over him and applied the crucifix to his lips!

He told us he had been stunned! Afterwards, the young girl returned to her place. This incident took place near the church door. When the ecstasy ended, the man sat down over there and gathered many of us around him in order to relate what had happened to him. He concluded by saying,

"For me, I have seen enough for one night!"

Blessed objects. Another man, named Jacinto, from San Vicente de la Barquera, had, two months earlier, given his rosary to be kissed. Afterwards, he heard that the blessed objects were not kissed a second time. He found this rather intriguing and decided to try an experiment. He came to the village without telling anyone his intention. Furthermore, he was unknown in the village. He was with us at Ceferino's and no one paid him the slightest attention. Fr. Valentin was there and many others. It must have been about midnight when Jacinta fell into ecstasy, and this man told Loli,

"Here, give this rosary to Jacinta for the Virgin to kiss."

Loli gave it to Jacinta who was prone on the floor. She pushed it away with her arm, saying,

"It has already been done."

Loli gave it back to the man. Then Fr. Valentin came up to him and asked,

"Are you sure the Virgin has already kissed it?"

"Yes, Father."

"Absolutely sure?"

"I'm absolutely certain. I came here two months ago and I gave it to the same little girl over there, in the *calleja*. I came back here today only to make this experiment."

A little later during the night, Conchita in turn had an apparition. The man had his rosary given to Conchita; Conchita took it and apparently she talked to her Vision about this man. Unfortunately, we didn't hear what she said.

Another time, a man came (from I don't know what part of the province) bringing some rosaries, a few of which had already been blessed by the Virgin a long time before. He entrusted them to one of the girls who, during the ecstasy, removed two or three, which meant they had already been blessed.

We saw cases like this many, many times.

Levitation. Yes, I did witness what you call a levitation. It happened to Conchita in her home in the presence of Dr. Ortiz from Santander. This doctor passed his hand between the floor and the body of the girl. A moment later, the body of the visionary rested itself again on the floor. One of Jacinta's brothers interrupted, "But perhaps she was resting on her head, or her feet." "Yes, perhaps she was resting solely on the head and the feet,



Simon Gonzalez (right) observes the ecstasy of his daughter, Jacinta, with Conchita.

and the doctor passed his hands between them,” said Simon.

Fr. Luis Andreu. No, I wasn't there, but I believe what they have told me about Fr. Luis.

Abnormal strength. Yes, it happened sometimes, that we could not make the children let go of whatever they were holding in their hand at the time they fell into ecstasy. So it was that one day Conchita was looking for one of her sheep which was rather stubborn and wouldn't come back to the pen. She had just grabbed hold of it when she fell into ecstasy. And she remained that way with her sheep. No matter how hard we tried, we couldn't free the animal, although the poor beast was kicking as much as it could! But, nothing doing; Conchita wouldn't let go. Serafin, her brother arrived. He's a strong boy, but he too was unable to open Conchita's hand. Finally, Loli came. She didn't try anything, but merely said,

“Conchita, why don't you let go of this sheep?”

Right away, Conchita let it go.

No doubt, some people have already told you about this incident? The one where we had to cut the wool with shears to free the animal? Well, no, no! In the story I have just told, Conchita

let go of the sheep when Loli asked her to do so. I was there. They didn't cut the wool . . . not that time, at any rate. Maybe there was another time . . .

Jacinta was also in ecstasy a little farther away.

A mother and her little girls. In ecstasy, the girls talked about many things with the Virgin. One time we heard them say,

“They call us the four ‘silly’ little girls, but we forgive them.”

One cousin had given Jacinta a few prunes and we heard her tell the Virgin,

“My cousin gave me some prunes, but there are so few I could put them in the hollow of my hand! . . .”

This made us laugh very much. Another of the young girls was talking with the Virgin about her cow which had a very large, clear spot on top of the head. Jacinta also told her,

“I went to make hay.”

They spoke of childish things. Often at the end of the ecstasy, they would exclaim,

“Has it been an hour already since you've been with us? Oh! no, it has only been one minute!”

And many times, the people would check their watches and see that, in fact, it *had* lasted one hour.

According to what the children told us, the Virgin often laughed while the children said these things. She was like a mother who had been away for a few days, and to whom the children relate everything that has happened during her absence. The Virgin acted like that with the young girls.

The visionaries frequently played hide-and-seek while in ecstasy! One would count while the other three hid themselves and then the first one would go seeking them. Then they would laugh! Oh! they would laugh so hard! [The previous year, when telling about that scene, Simon had observed, “They were playing at their mother's feet and the Virgin was laughing with them. Ah! the laugh of the Blessed Mother; that must be something to hear!”]

It also happened that while in ecstasy, they would perform these extraordinary jumps. Once, a man from Cabrajo asked his niece to try to copy the jumps and leaps of the visionaries. His niece was trained in gymnastics, very supple and very agile, but

she couldn't do it. While playing in ecstasy, the young girls would make these jumps and leaps anywhere, in the street, even in the church. One day they were jumping in the choir loft of the church and one plank was missing in the balustrade. I was there with Ceferino, watching them and we heard the girls asking their Vision,

“Can we jump? Can we jump right down to the bottom?”

Ceferino and I were not afraid so we decided not to do anything to prevent them. We were confident since we had already seen so many things!

“Oh, no? You don't want us to jump? Are you sure you don't want us to jump?”

They didn't jump after all. But they were making these great leaps from one seat to another!

Stellar phenomena. I didn't see any. One day I was in the center of the village, like the others, but I didn't notice anything. I heard some shouting, but I saw nothing. Dr. Ortiz, who was next to me, noted many phenomena in the sky. I don't know what he could have seen.

Blessed objects (other incidents). One day a group of about forty people came to the village from Cordova or Segovia, I don't remember exactly. We were unaware of their presence. It was in February. It was dark and I came out with a lantern to accompany Jacinta who was going to pray in the *calleja*. She was not in ecstasy.

While passing by Piedad's house, Piedad came out with a lot of rosaries and medals for Jacinta,

“Here, this is for when the Blessed Virgin appears.”

“I don't know when that will be.”

“Take them anyway. Keep them.”

Well, Jacinta took the bundle and we continued climbing. Loli met us; she wanted to go with Jacinta to pray.

We noticed a crowd beginning to form. When they got to the *calleja*, the two little girls began to recite the rosary. During that time, many ladies continued to arrive. They set themselves a little higher up the lane than where we were, which gave them a much better view of the two girls' faces. But the girls wouldn't stay still, as they were uncomfortable on the stones in the road.

As soon as the rosary was over, Loli and Jacinta fell into ec-

stasy. You should have seen it! What a commotion it caused among the people who had never seen an ecstasy before! . . . Everyone started taking crucifixes, prayer beads, medals from their pockets. Everyone looked in the direction toward which the visionaries were gazing, in hopes of perceiving something. The crowd was all upset. Some women cried seeing the children in such a state.

After a while, the visionaries started off and went toward the church door, after which they went half way to the well near Ceferino's house. And there was a lady, alone, leaning against the door. Jacinta went toward her, holding in her hand a very huge crucifix which she had been carrying since the beginning of the ecstasy and which she offered to be kissed to the people along the road.

Jacinta went up to this lady, made the sign of the cross on her and then gave her the big crucifix so that the lady could take it. But the lady tried to push the crucifix away, making a sign that she couldn't speak. I then told her,

“If you please, Miss, please take it, the little girl is offering it to you.”

She then took it and noticed that it was her own! She almost collapsed. Her face became like that of a tiny baby when it cries. She was so shocked that we had to take her to the house so she could regain her composure. The day was dawning.

After leaving Garabandal, that lady wrote to Jacinta many times and that's how we learned that she was the only daughter in her family and she wanted to become a nun and asked Jacinta to obtain a favor from the Virgin. She sent Jacinta the clothes she was wearing on that particular day.

But you should have seen her emotion when she recognized her crucifix! You see, she had not given it to Jacinta. It was in the bundle which Piedad had given to my daughter. But Piedad didn't know that anymore than we did, and that's a fact.

Another night a woman came to the house, bringing a large crucifix. She gave it to Jacinta and told her,

“Take this crucifix, give it to the Virgin to be kissed, and then give it back to its owner.”

Sometime later, my daughter came out one day, while in ecstasy, went into various houses with her crucifix in her hand, and ended up at Josefa, the baker's place, to whom the crucifix belonged. Josefa had wanted to obtain a proof.

A great many cases similar to this occurred during the time of these events.

One month without seeing the Virgin. One night we were going home to bed, after an ecstasy which had lasted until two o'clock in the morning. As she was going to bed, Jacinta requested,

“Papa, please wake me up at four o'clock, for I shall have an apparition at that hour.”

“Go to bed and sleep soundly. I'll call you.”

But in fact I didn't call her until six. The first thing she asked upon awakening was,

“What time is it, Papa?”

“It's six o'clock. Did you think I was going to wake you up at four? You would have been out all night!”

“But why didn't you wake me up at four?”

“Your Vision should have called you!”

She got up, struggling to keep the tears back, and we went to recite the rosary.

Afterwards, she went a whole month without seeing the Virgin. I began to feel remorse. I felt guilty, because Jacinta started to lose weight, to become sad, and to suffer visibly.²² Whenever she saw the others, she would say,

“Ask the Virgin when she will come to see me.”

She was talking to the Virgin and praying to her, but she wasn't receiving an answer. She wrote to Don Maximo, the young German fellow who became converted here at Garabandal, to ask him to pray to Our Lady for her, to ask the Virgin to come back to see her. Toward the end of the month, while Jacinta remained deprived of an ecstasy, Maximo came to the village for three days. He went to the church to implore the Virgin to reappear to Jacinta while he was there in Garabandal. He prayed with all his heart.

One afternoon we were in the house when Loli arrived in ecstasy. Right away, Jacinta implored her,

“Ask the Virgin when she is coming to see me.”

“When are you coming to see Jacinta?”

It seems she received an immediate answer, for she said,

22. From this it is clearly ascertained that the visionaries could not have an ecstasy at will.

“Oh! You are coming to see her in a little while? Oh! how happy she'll be!”

And bursting out laughing, Loli continued,

“How happy Jacinta will be!”

A few minutes later, Jacinta also fell into ecstasy. It had been exactly one month that she had been deprived of an apparition.

At that time, certain people, including some doctors, were declaring that the visionaries could fall into ecstasy at will. If this had been true, Jacinta would have done it many times during that month, for she was affected very deeply—even to the point of declining in health. And I was suffering great remorse, for I said to myself,

“It is all my fault! It's my fault that this is happening to my daughter.”

*Simon's sufferings.*²³ We have had some difficult times. For example, I suffered much when they announced that one of the little girls was going to die and that it would be Jacinta. It was the photographer who told me. I pointed out that I was unaware of that, although I was her father. Then he said,

“I'm sorry I said that in your presence.”

He told me he had just repeated what everyone else was saying. I never knew how that rumor got started, because I had never noticed any sign of sickness in my daughter at that time.

Yes, I suffered a lot during that period, and afterwards. It was during the summer. The boys weren't at home because they had to stay in the pastures. Therefore, I was obliged to accompany my daughter, because we couldn't leave her alone. And that was a funny thing . . . After a long day's work, my legs would be sore, but as soon as Jacinta's ecstasy started, my legs would feel fine!

Jacinta's health. When Jacinta had ecstasies during the night, I would let her sleep in the morning when I went to work. But in any case she used to come out of the ecstasies without any apparent sign of fatigue. She was a sound sleeper. The only time

23. The year before, Simon had declared, “At the beginning, I suffered so much that I would go up to the mountain and hide myself so the people would not see me crying. I especially did not want to worry my wife, Maria. The doctors were saying my daughter was sick and the Bishop was pretending it did not come from God. I knew that she was in perfect health and that she wasn't lying, but in the face of these contradictions, I thought I would go out of my mind.”

she had trouble sleeping was during the month she was deprived of apparitions. Then, yes, she could not manage to sleep, and I could clearly see she was suffering—she lost weight.

But apart from that, during all those years of ecstasies, my Lord! she was healthy! . . . You could see she was feeling well, that's for sure! When the ecstasy ended, she would be ravenously hungry. It was a pleasure to see her eat. Honestly, these children were very refreshed after an ecstasy, and were sound sleepers, believe me.

Some said we were taking better care of her than our boys. That's a big lie! We treated them all the same. Oh sure, we'd let her sleep in the morning, for very often she would have walked, in ecstasy, all night long, through the whole village; and after all, she was only twelve years old. Nonsense! We surely weren't going to drag her out of bed.

But except for that, we treated her just as we did our sons. We loved her in the same way. I felt a little bit more compassionate toward her on account of what she was going through.

Identification of people. One day we were at Ceferino's. Fr. Valentin, who was kind of friendly with him, was there also. We had Jacinta and Loli with us, too. They had experienced a peculiar pattern of ecstasies. They both started the ecstasy at the same time, but then one would come out of it within ten minutes, whereas the other remained in it. The first one would fall back into ecstasy just as the other would come to the end of hers. That went on for quite a while. Apart from Fr. Valentin, there were only our families.

And we never knew when this man, dressed in a heavy fur-trimmed parka, came in. He began touching Jacinta during her ecstasy, which right away caught my attention. I asked him to stop. If he had asked my permission, I would have granted it. He said to me,

"I'm wearing a cassock."

"That makes no difference."

The man became embarrassed. Then, he got out a crucifix and gave it to Loli, who was now out of ecstasy.

"Here, give it to the little girl and ask her to whom it belongs."

Loli obeyed, and Jacinta answered,

"It belongs to a priest."

"But where is that priest? said Loli.

"Here."

"Here? But I don't see any priest. Nobody is wearing a cassock."

"He's wearing it folded up under his jacket."

The man then said to Loli,

"Ask her who gave him this cross?"

"Who gave it to him?"

"The Bishop," answered Jacinta immediately.

"Who gave it to the Bishop?"

"The Pope did," answered Jacinta, again very quickly.

I then asked this priest if it were true. He said, yes. The Pope had sent a few crucifixes to some priests upon finishing their studies, and among them was the future Bishop.

I don't remember the name of that priest. I only know that he came from the province of the Asturias.

When this scene was reported to the chancery, they replied that it was mere coincidence—pure chance!

A few moments after this three-way conversation with the Vision, we heard the two little girls proposing,

"Let us go outside now, so the people can see us. Go in front, and we'll go behind you."

They were kneeling down in the room at the time, whereas outside, the place was teeming with people.

They started leaving, and as they passed through the door at the end of the corridor, they said,

"Bend down a bit, otherwise you are going to bump your wings. Lower yourself a little more. There, that's it, it will go through, now."

Judging by these few phrases, we understood that on that day, their apparition was the Angel.

While they continued to talk to him, they went outside, walking on their knees. I was very intrigued. I asked myself,

"What is the meaning of all this?"

We could clearly hear the answers of the young girls to their apparition.

Outside, the little game of see-saw ecstasies began again in the presence of the packed crowd. We were perplexed.

As far as that man was concerned, I don't know whether he was a priest or not, but there, at that spot, he directed a recitation of the rosary in a marvelous manner.

The benedictions. Regarding prayers, while the girls were in ecstasy they prayed in a very impressive manner.

They blessed all the cars of the visitors who came, by tracing the sign of the cross over them.

They also went into all the houses and would go directly to the heads of the beds. If they traced one sign of the cross, that was because only one person was sleeping there. If they traced two, that meant that two people were sleeping there, either a couple, or two brothers or two sisters. If somebody was sleeping at the foot, they would trace the sign of the cross at the foot of the bed, whether there was a pillow or not. We questioned the people living in this or that house, to check whether or not the little girls were making mistakes, but every time, it was exact!

One day it so happened they went in to bless Tiva's house. There were two cousins sleeping in the same room but in one bed. They traced one sign of the cross at the head of the bed and another at the foot. The cousins later told us they were sleeping head to toe but there was only one pillow placed at the head of the bed.

Yes, all the houses in the village have been visited by the young girls and the Blessed Virgin.

One night, my wife, Maria, was here in this house which we have remodeled, but we also owned another where the boys slept. Maria had a bad cold, so she had gone to sleep in the second house in order to have quiet, as we were often disturbed by the visionaries and the crowds. Our nights were often disturbed. At the time, I was the only one who knew where Maria was sleeping. In the middle of the night, when Maria was alone, she heard a knock on the door. She got up and found herself face to face with Jacinta in ecstasy!

Blessing of the sick and the departed. When someone died in the village, the young girls would go in ecstasy, recite some prayers near the body, and leave.

They would also go into sick people's houses, but there they would not pray. They would only trace the sign of the cross on their foreheads.

Blessing withheld. Many times it happened that they would not give the crucifix to be kissed, nor make the sign of the cross

over some person who desired it.

One day a Mexican couple came to the village. The woman was a hussy, which the man himself admitted. Well, he left completely disgusted because fourteen times he had positioned himself in full view of all the people, in order to kiss the crucifix. But the young girls never gave it to him, whereas they gave it to everyone around him. The girls were conspicuously avoiding him; they didn't want to give him the crucifix to kiss. Finally he said,

“The woman I am travelling with is wicked.”

Well! you know the proverb: Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you what kind of person *you* are.

Finding hidden persons. Many times people would make this experiment: some people would hide in various places, but the girls would find them each time. Some one would say, for example,

“I will hide myself back in the corner to see if the girls will come to offer me the crucifix.”

And the visionaries would always find that person, even though they never knew where such and such a person was hiding.

Sometimes, in a place where many people were gathered, the girls would give the crucifix to some people twice in succession, but the ones who had not received it, would only receive it at the very end.

All these events were very strange, these events which I still do not understand.

1980 PHOTO

Paquita Cuenca (35), wife of Conchita's brother, Serafin. Paquita helps to operate the boarding house owned by Serafin and also works in the fields.

First reactions. When it all started, I was working for an American family [Spanish people from America—probably the Etaquio family] who were taking their vacation here. The affair started on a Sunday, but I didn't hear about it until the next day. Right away, I became frightened, or rather I had this obsession; I thought I was going to see something! I didn't ask myself whether or not that was possible. I was obsessed with the idea that I would have an apparition myself.²⁴

I remember well the first ecstasy I witnessed. The young girls had such expressions! Everyone was impressed. It happened in the *calleja*. It seems to me that only the people from the village were present. They all seemed stunned and very uneasy . . . even the men. We were all astonished.

Yes, I saw almost all of the first ecstasies.

Facial aspect. Their faces would become transformed. Everyone who saw them was very impressed. They became very beautiful. We would say, "like the face of an angel."

When the ecstasy was over, there would be no trace of nervousness or fatigue, either. Nothing! Not ever! They were always calm and refreshed afterwards. They would come out of an ecstasy with a little smile and would return to normal.

The mysterious voice. Speaking of frights, another night we heard them asking,

"Who are you? Who are you?"

I was there. They were screaming that question with terror.

Stellar phenomena. No, I didn't notice anything.

El Milagru. I saw it, but the Host was already there on the tongue. We were just alongside Conchita's house, and as soon as she came out, we tried to follow her, but there were too many people. We held on to a Civil Guard's belt and he led us through

24. Here is yet another case of a person strongly desirous of seeing "the apparition," and who sees nothing. The theory of hypnotic or autosuggestion has no basis in fact.



the crowd, but the crowd was so thick that when I finally was able to see, the Host was already on Conchita's tongue.

That Host seemed to me to be somewhat larger than the Ones we usually see, as well as more spongy—very white. It appeared to me to be a little larger than the normal size, but I was not very close. I saw It from a small distance.

Yes, I heard the miracle announced! One day, Conchita told one of her cousins, who no longer lives here in the village,

“The Virgin will perform a miracle on the eighteenth, but me, I think that it's rather a small miracle, as I see the Host every time the Angel gives me Communion. I don't consider that much of a miracle; I think that's a very small miracle!”

She meant that even if the people saw the Host on the day of the miracle, for her, who saw It every day, it would not be very extraordinary.

Abnormal strength, insensitivity to pain. My sister Teré (short for Teresa) who lives in Las Corrales, left two days ago. She was here on vacation. It's too bad you didn't meet her. She would have told you that one day, while walking around with Mari Cruz, the visionary fell into ecstasy. At the time it happened, the two girls were holding each other by one finger. Teré screamed, but she was unable to disengage her finger from Mari Cruz's, although Teré was much taller and older than Mari Cruz. She is two months older than Conchita. But nothing doing! I don't remember now if she remained a prisoner like that until the end of the ecstasy, but what I know for sure is that poor Teré was perspiring from the effort she made trying to remove her finger. The Civil Guard was pushing back the people. The poor girl was sweating “blood and water” but was unable to do anything.

Another time, a girl from the village whose name is Trini (short for Trinidad) who has since left the village to find work, had put her hand in the holy water font to take some water. Her fingers touched those of Mari Loli who was doing the same.²⁵ Loli fell into ecstasy at that precise moment. Their fingers had done nothing but touch one another. Well! Trini was never able to free herself. She was obliged to follow Loli on all her walks throughout the village! . . .

All the villagers have seen the doctors making tests on the

young girls; those men examined the girls and touched them during ecstasy. One day, Conchita fell from the hands of a doctor who had managed to lift her slightly from the ground. That fall made a loud noise, and we were frightened. But as it turned out, Conchita didn't feel a thing; no sensation at all!

I didn't see the doctors pricking the visionaries with pins, but I was told about it. I was there when they managed to lift Conchita. I also saw Dr. José Luis Guñon, who was a general practitioner at Puentenansa try to make Conchita turn her head. He was never able to succeed, in fact, he could hardly lift her up.

Another time, Mari Cruz, in normal state, could not get through the crowd, so she was unable to reach the spot where the visionaries used to kneel down. The ecstasy seized her a little bit before she reached that spot, and she remained like that, one knee on the ground and the other suspended in the air. She was forced to remain like that for the duration of the ecstasy. That happened in my presence.

Agreement between the visionaries. Very often, at the end of an ecstasy, Fr. Valentin would isolate the girls from one another in order to question them separately on what they had just seen, heard and said. Their answers would always coincide, perfectly.

Accusations. You know, with everything we were seeing, if you didn't believe, it was because you didn't want to believe. Some have searched for explanations. It so happened that they accused a teacher who was working with Taquio's children. His name was Manin. They accused him of giving drugs to the visionaries, because after the ecstasies, he would take them to question them. Some people made him out to be the culprit. So much so that one day while I was at Taquio's place, the house was filled with Civil Guards who surrounded Manin. The poor man was so frightened, and was showing his identification papers to the Guards!

Others accused Fr. Valentin of drugging the little girls by putting something in the Hosts which he gave them when they received Communion at Mass! Yes, I actually heard that. They were dreaming up all kinds of things; some people didn't know what to think.

Walk in the night. I sometimes say that the greatest miracle which I saw was the one performed by Conchita one night. That night, I saw her start from the pines, backwards, alone in the middle of the night, and come down that way as far as the door

25. Piedad Gonzalez says it was Conchita, not Mari Loli.

to her house! When the girls did it in pairs, as sometimes happened, it was somewhat easier for they could help one another a little. But alone, on a dark night, backwards, her head tilted far back, coming down from the pines and going around the village before going home! . . . it was really difficult! And that I saw myself. I would like these clever people, who deny the apparitions, to do the same thing. Yes, let me see one of them do what Conchita did that night!

Visits to the cemetery. They often went to the cemetery, but I don't recall ever accompanying them there.

Divination of thoughts. Sometimes I had my doubts, and on October 17, 1961, there was a crowd and I was lost in a sea of humanity. I surprised myself by thinking,

“If they should bring me the cross to be kissed right now, I think that my doubts would disappear forever.”

I hardly think three minutes had elapsed when one of the visionaries—Conchita—came up to me and applied the cross to my lips! . . . even though I was lost in the crowd and had only *thought* my wish! I swear this is true, and that it happened that way.

Santander Commission. No, no never.

One day, when I was going to see a person who had just been operated on, I met Fr. Agapito who was said to be Secretary to the Bishop of Santander. He also knew the sick person, and by chance we met at the invalid's bedside. When he heard that I was from Garabandal, he said,

“Did you see the picture of the chapel in the newspaper?”

That chapel had been there for some time, but it was the first time we saw a photograph of it in a newspaper. In the photo, we could also see the fountain and the meadow with camper's tents.

“Yes, I saw it.”

“It looks like a stable! Exactly like a stable!”

“Nonsense, Father! A stable? I think you're exaggerating a bit.”

“If you say so. Let's just say it resembles a dwelling place.”

“Well, at least don't call it a stable!”

He started again his attacks on the authenticity of what was

happening in the village. Finally I told him,

“Father, if you had seen what we have seen, you would speak differently. Besides, just think about the honesty of the little girls. In the beginning, no one could make them deny, but today they are persuaded that they saw nothing; they say so with the same sincerity. What more proof do you need than that?”

1971 PHOTO

Matilde Gonzalez (51), works in the fields and at home. Matilde saw the miracle of the Visible Communion from the top of her staircase.

Before the apparitions. I knew the little girls very well, and before the apparitions they were like all other girls. There was never anything special about them.

First reactions. It took me a long time before I could believe. When somebody spoke to me about this affair, I said,

“This is nothing at all. I don’t believe in it.”

I felt the same way after seeing an ecstasy. But upon seeing a second ecstasy, I said to myself,

“No, they cannot simulate all that by themselves.”

I had been struck by the change which came over their faces; they became so beautiful . . . superb! I didn’t notice the least sign of fatigue or nervousness, or anything like that. Absolutely nothing. Also, after an ecstasy, they were very normal, very natural.

El Milagrucu. Conchita was walking in the street, in ecstasy, with the crucifix in her hands, and by the noise of the crowd following her, I could tell she was getting near and I went outside. I went down the steps and at that very moment she appeared at the corner of my house. She came to where I was and there, in front of me, she knelt down. She had her hands joined over the crucifix which was extended before her.

When I saw her, her tongue was already out and the Host was on it. Therefore I did not see her putting her tongue out. The Host was about the size of a five peseta coin or slightly larger, rather thick and very, very white and sparkling.

I had time to see it very clearly. I was very moved and I went up to get my husband. When I came back, Conchita had already gone. There was a huge crowd, an enormous crowd!

Telepathy. These four youngsters came to see me very often when in ecstasy, but during a certain period, they didn’t come at all. On this particular Sunday, I was thinking to myself,

“I hope they don’t come today . . .”



For there were so many people following them and they were always coming into my house, which made me ashamed because my house was in poor shape. Following this line of thought, I said to myself,

“Whereas tomorrow, yes, I would like them to come and give me the cross to be kissed.”

On Monday, when I was doing the dishes, Conchita climbed up to my apartment, the crucifix in her hand, and applied it to my lips. I was overwhelmed! I can’t describe what I felt!

I had not expressed my wish to anyone—the thought had been completely interior. This same thing happened several other times. For example, when I felt that it had been too long since they had come to visit me, I would merely ask for it in my mind and they would come at once. And each time I was deeply moved.

I have related this to many persons who claim it was merely a case of thought transference, but I believe it was more than that.

The Santander Commission. No, never was I called or questioned. Sometimes I would meet someone on the street who would ask my opinion. I would tell them what I had seen, and that’s all.



1971 PHOTO

*Domingo Cuenca (60), animal breeder.
Domingo died in 1974 at the age of 63.*

Before the apparitions. I was born in Garabandal which I left periodically in order to go to work in the neighboring forests.

I knew the four little girls well. To me, they were normal, just like the others. They led the same kind of life as the other girls.

First reactions. I was with a neighbor when I first heard someone talking about these events. My neighbor started to laugh and, later on, he explained that he had laughed, not to mock, but only because this seemed to him hard to believe.

A few days later, a friend of mine from here named Antonio and I were going up to the high country to look after my cows. I told him what people were saying. We usually agreed on everything, but this time he got mad and said to me,

“Don’t bother me with these fairy tales!”

Two days later, when we went to the scene of the apparitions, Antonio believed very strongly, just as I and everyone else present did.

I must admit that the life we led that summer was rather astonishing. I don’t know whether it was caused by nerves or what, but instead of sleeping up there in the winter quarters, as we used to do in previous summers, now when the day’s work was done, we’d head straight back to the village. When we got there we would start walking behind the young girls and would walk until early the next morning when we had to return to cut grass. Well, we went on that way the whole summer without becoming exhausted . . . and nobody collapsed! . . . Was that due to our own strength or were we receiving a special strength from elsewhere?

Facial aspect. What I can tell you is that the faces of the visionaries would become superb! That is to say, the contour was really theirs, but the color, the expression, the eyes . . . all these became extraordinary.

Signs of fatigue? If they were there ten minutes or half an hour, looking upwards, looking at the sky, once it was over they would lower their heads and become perfectly normal.

I asked this question of a carpenter (a trade I practiced a bit),

“When you have been busily driving nails into the ceiling, with your head tilted back, when you lower your head again, don’t you feel a certain uneasiness?”

This is like a mason also, when he spends a long time coating

something above his head. But the girls? They were as natural as if nothing had happened.

The rapid marches. Sometimes they went very fast. Some people even claimed they were flying. Flying? I would say no, but it is a fact that they were running very fast. It was all the more difficult for them as they kept their heads tilted backwards, their eyes toward heaven, their arms rigid and crossed; arms which they kept still, which they did not use for balance, which ordinarily should have slowed them down—but they were “flying” at an extraordinary speed. Who gave them that ability?

Unusual strength. I don’t remember now if it was during Conchita’s last or next to last ecstasy; we were in the kitchen here at home with some neighbors and a professor from Cabezón de la Sal. Conchita was sitting on the hearth and—I admit I am very talkative—preoccupied with what I was saying. I was not paying any attention to her. Then, at a certain moment, she threw herself to the floor on her knees. Me, like an idiot, I let my foot be caught under one of her knees.

Some people claimed that wherever the visionaries fell in ecstasy, they could not be lifted. I don’t agree with this. Others say that if the girls knelt on tiles while in ecstasy, it would be easier to remove the tiles than to try to lift them from the ground. That’s not true, either. What I affirm is that Conchita hit my foot very hard; it was as if I had received a blow from a hammer. But I was able to remove my foot, and I didn’t leave my toes behind, either! But I must add that where her knee had hit my foot, it remained off the ground, immobile in the air. Between her knee and the ground, there was the thickness of my foot!

She remained there like a statue. I often talked about proofs, but that one was given to me without my request.

And so, I have two remarks to make: First of all, a normal person, leaning very heavily like that on both knees, one on the tiles, the other on my foot, should have been unbalanced, or at least unsteady at the time I removed my foot.

Secondly, the blow I received on my foot must have been the same as she received on her knee when it hit the tiles. My foot felt as if a cow had stepped on it, and I removed it with all my strength, because it was intolerable. But Conchita showed no sign of pain.

Absence of wounds. The young girls would fall to their knees

anywhere, as if they wanted to break their kneecaps, without ever looking to see whether or not there were stones, pieces of glass, or other rubbish. They would be walking very quietly on the street or elsewhere, when suddenly they would throw themselves to their knees as if they really wanted to fracture them!

However, I never saw the slightest trace of wounds, cuts, bruises, etc. Nothing at all!

The nights of terror. Yes, I was there. A huge crowd was present. The young girls asked us to stop somewhere this side of the *cuadro*. We could see them crying, we could hear them screaming and protesting. Then they came closer to us, or we went toward them, and we heard them say something about a Chastisement.

Domingo's wife, Avelina, interrupting. Yes, they were looking toward heaven and also behind them, as if the danger were coming from there.

Domingo Yes, I thought that it was coming from behind, and I expected to suddenly see some planes or something of that sort, or who knows?

The girls were saying, "Let the people have time to go to confession . . ." Some of the people were trembling, not me. I kept looking all around, as much as possible, like on a battlefield, to find out where the danger was coming from, or in other words, the enemy.

There was a monk there, a Franciscan or a Capuchin—they wear the same habit [the Capuchins are a branch of the Franciscan Order]. He started to pray, the poor monk. To pray . . . to pray . . . but he was so confused!

He kept getting the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary" mixed up, or reciting one after the other. It resulted in a prayer that was neither a "station" (a Spanish prayer) nor one of the Mysteries. I had never heard praying like that! . . . Afterwards, the poor monk told us he was so upset, that he didn't know where he was.

Avelina Some little boys kept urging him, "Pray, Father, Pray!"

Domingo Yes, for fear of the Chastisement which was coming. It was the eve of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Avelina Maybe. What is sure is that everyone went to confession the next day and took Holy Communion. We, too, because we thought the Chastisement was near at hand.

Domingo Everyone, yes, but not by mutual agreement. It was just that everyone had a strong desire to go to confession.

Visits to the houses. We were rather distressed because during all those years the young girls never entered our house, and we wondered why we were excluded. We saw them blessing all the houses in the village except ours and that was causing us some grief.

But as though to make up for all that, Conchita's last ecstasy took place in our house. It was that famous night when she caught my foot under her knee. It was surely the *adiós* from the Virgin. It was, in fact, Conchita's last public ecstasy in Garabandal.

"It was the last ecstasy, but perhaps our house was not the last one Conchita blessed during that apparition," said Avelina.

The Santander Commission. (Neither Domingo nor his wife has ever been questioned by the Commission.)

I already mentioned what my trade was and I am neither very smart nor very stupid; I am an average person. One day, while we were watching the little girls in ecstasy, I stayed behind a little with Fr. Valentin. We had seen the children so many times, we did not feel the urge to be up in the front row. Fr. Valentin and I were good friends. I asked him,

"Father, how come you don't ask some well educated or learned people or someone of superior intelligence to come up here and settle this affair once and for all. Then they might leave us in peace. If it is nothing, it's a pity, but if it's authentic, well, so much the better and let them tell us."

And Fr. Valentin answered,

"Well, you understand more than anyone. What explanation do you find?"

He meant to say that everybody was like me. Science or no science, nobody could find an explanation.

I remember other discussions. One day, after following an ecstasy, we found ourselves at Ceferino's cafe. There were many strangers in the village and Dr. Ortiz was there also. We were talking about these events and as there were so many people, little by little, two groups formed. In ours a priest was directing the conversation which centered on the question of whether or not these events had a supernatural origin. I asked permission to speak and made the following remark,

"To my mind, this is of supernatural origin. I have observed these great doctors and theologians who come here. Everyone has seen them and we've found that they have no better explanation than we do. So I think that if this is of a supernatural origin, human science will not be able to explain it, and that very fact, to me, is the strongest proof in favor of the supernatural."

Then the priest, who was not from here, answered,

"That is the most profound idea which has been expressed on this subject, and it is you who said it. What is your occupation?"

"I am an animal breeder."

Then, turning to the group, he asked for silence and stated,

"Listen gentlemen, this man will repeat what he just said to me."

I did so, and Dr. Ortiz assured me that he would not forget that scene. He said he was transcribing my words into a book which he intended to write.

The Communion. I forgot to tell you that when the four young girls were saying goodbye to the Virgin, one of them would lift one of the others high in the air, as if she were a toy. It was as if I would lift one of the little girls up in the air so that she might kiss that light bulb hanging over my head. We saw this done many, many times.

In the same manner, we saw them performing all the gestures of a person receiving Holy Communion—even the movement in the throat as if they were swallowing something. They told us the Angel was giving them Communion.

El Milagru. I didn't have the chance to see it. I had gone to the *cuadro*, with most of the people, believing it would take place there, when actually, the miracle took place lower down.



1980 PHOTO

Clementina Gonzalez y Gonzalez (45), wife of Pepé Diez. Clementina is a housekeeper.

First reactions. Four days after the first apparition, the children came to get me at the house and asked me to go with them so the villagers would believe them. I said it was impossible, that the people would say I was as crazy as the girls themselves, because the villagers had no faith in the visionaries.

I trusted the girls; they knew it and that is why they came to get me. I told them to call the schoolmaster, Don Francisco and his wife, Mrs. Condesa.

Upon arriving at the *calleja*, Mrs. Condesa and myself found Aurelia, Ciriaco's wife, who told us that she was joining us to observe the young girls and in that way, there would be more witnesses.

The four girls were reciting the rosary; they stopped praying for a short while and I said to the other ladies,

"They're not praying! They're not praying!"

One of them answered,

"Be quiet!"

The girls had a rather short ecstasy. We questioned them about what they saw. They described a large frame, but they could not make out what was inside. As they remained in a prayerful attitude, I told them,

"Finish reciting the rosary."

"No, we are going to recite a 'station.'"

As they finished reciting the station, they had another ecstasy.

When we arrived at the *calleja*, it was about 8:30 p.m. That's when the apparition started and it lasted until 10:00 p.m. While watching them toward the end of the ecstasy, I started to call to them. I called Mari Loli in a very loud voice, but she didn't answer me. I was very moved. I also called Mari Cruz very loudly, but she didn't answer me, either. The other women were laughing. There were four of us: Oliva, Aurelia, Mrs. Condesa and myself. Although I wanted to call Jacinta, I don't know what came over me. I remained voiceless—the emotion, no doubt—then I said to Aurelia,

"You call her, Aurelia. I can't do it."

So Aurelia said,

"Jacinta, get up! A big herd of goats is coming and they will stampede us all."

That wasn't true. It was only to make them move, but they remained in ecstasy. At last I was able to recover my voice and I called Conchita very loudly. Upon hearing me, my oldest son, Manolin, ran toward me. He was then about ten years old. He came with Angelita and another girl whose name was Serafina, and I said to Conchita,

"Conchita, call Our Lady of Mount Carmel; call upon the Sacred Heart of Jesus; tell Him something! Ask Him what He wants of us."

Upon hearing these words, the other people laughed at me and said,

"Tina, don't jump to conclusions; maybe it's something from the devil!"

Then I became very nervous and I said,

"I shall go and get the pastor. I shall go and get everybody, for if you don't believe in this, you don't believe in God!"

Frankly, I was very impressed. As I was saying all this, we heard Conchita saying,

"Holy Virgin, they do not believe us!"

Then I replied,

"Yes, Conchita, we do believe you; everybody believes you."

They remained like that until 10:00 p.m. We were standing behind the children and Angelita wanted to pass in front of them to see the expression on their faces during the ecstasy, but a kind of peculiar force—I don't know exactly what it was—held her back, to such an extent that Angelita said,

"Oh! I cannot pass!"

Thus, we remained, continuing to observe the young girls. Their attitude commanded respect.

The ecstasy ended and we asked the girls what they had seen. They told us they had seen the Angel, but that he did not speak to them. We asked if he was sad. They answered that when they said "Holy Virgin . . ." the Angel smiled and bowed his head. Afterwards, we went to the house. Each one of us related what we saw and the next day many people from nearby villages came to Garabandal. Thus the ecstasy was seen publicly for the first time.

Divination of thoughts. Something else happened to me another time with Conchita. The children were reciting the rosary separately each morning, at the *calleja*. They were doing this because the Blessed Virgin had asked for it. Conchita was going there around 8:00 a.m. but it was an hour that was not convenient for me and I could not accompany her. One day, after the rosary, her mother told me that according to her daughter, something was going to happen at the pines. Upon arriving at the house, I told my mother who, in turn, broadcast it

in the village. Then Conchita began telling everyone that what Aniceta had told me was not true. Conchita and Mari Loli came to see me to blame me for saying such things.

“But look here, it was your mother who told me that!”

“How can you say that?”

“Conchita, you tell me that you are seeing the Virgin. I am the first person you came to get because you had confidence in me. How can you contradict me to such an extent? Conchita, what you are seeing is the devil, otherwise you would not be telling lies! I will not accompany you any more in your ecstasies.”

I felt so bad over their behavior that I got sick, physically sick. That morning, as a matter of fact, the two girls did not go to school, as they were so sorry for having admonished me. Frankly, Conchita had remorse for having made such unjustified reproaches. Mari Loli had nothing to do with that.

That afternoon they had an ecstasy and from my balcony I was looking at the pines, and also at the people who were climbing up there, following the three young girls. And I asked myself,

“How could I tell them they were seeing the devil instead of the Virgin?”

I felt very guilty.

I leaned out of my kitchen window and I could hear the noise of the crowd following the fourth visionary (who was in ecstasy) through the village streets. The other girls were at the pines. I could hear the noise but I could not see and I didn't know which one of the four was in the village. While leaning out the window I said to myself

“Holy Mary, if it is really you who is appearing to them, please come to my house with the young girls.”

I had hardly finished formulating that prayer when someone knocked at my door. I opened it and Mari Loli, in ecstasy, came in followed by Ceferino and many other people. Some of them could not get in and they remained downstairs. Then, seeing Mari Loli, I started to cry and Ceferino asked me why I was crying. I mentioned what had happened and what I had said to the children and the prayer which I had just formulated, and I realized then, that it was truly the Blessed Virgin who was appearing.

Immediately Mari Loli, still in ecstasy, fell on her knees in

front of me and the more I cried, the more she pressed the crucifix upon my lips, and before leaving she blessed me with the crucifix.

Before the ecstasies. They were very normal, just like the other girls; absolutely no difference. They were running, playing, and leading the same kind of lives as their companions.

Synchronized meetings. Yes, I saw it once. The Civil Guards took the girls and placed each one in a different house and each of them arrived at the *calleja* at exactly the same moment. Yes, I saw that with my own eyes.

The blessed objects. One time, in Ceferino's house, Mari Loli had a table full of rings, medals, prayer beads, and everything all mixed up. She fell into ecstasy and after having given all that to be kissed by the Virgin, she handed each object back to its proper owner without making one single mistake. This took place in front of me. The visionary was totally ignorant as to the ownership of each object.

Stellar Phenomena. I did not see anything.

The nights of terror. I was there, but the emotion, the fright, and the people had put me into such a state that I can't give any precise details. The girls' screams were really terrifying. I remember the monk whom the people were asking to pray. The screams would stop as soon as he started praying, but as soon as he stopped they would become louder and more horrible. Then the girls came down and we moved up in order to be near them.

I remember that Mari Loli was screaming, with her arms outstretched toward heaven,

“No, no! Wait until the people go to confession. Give the people time to confess! Take the little babies and children first.”

I heard that very clearly. And the next day, being the feast of Corpus Christi, everyone went to confession and received Holy Communion.

After that ecstasy, the children cried for a long time because they did not dare tell us what was going to happen. They told us about something which would be worse than if we were set afire; that it was the Chastisement, which was more severe than being burned.

El Milagru. Not knowing beforehand where it was going to take place, I was not standing in the proper spot and I was too

far away, so I didn't see anything. Conchita herself announced to me that there would be a small miracle.

The Santander Commission. I have never been summoned or questioned by the Commission.

Announcement of the great Miracle. One time, at the *calleja*, Mari Loli and Jacinta, while in ecstasy, asked their Vision to perform a miracle so everyone would believe. They then repeated exactly what their Vision (i.e. the Virgin) was saying so we could hear,

“Ah! When nobody will believe in it anymore . . . when no one believes that we saw you . . . then the Miracle will take place?”

I heard these phrases many times because the girls kept repeating,

“Perform a miracle so that everyone might believe.”

The Child Jesus. One night, after the recitation of the rosary, my mother, a lady friend by the name of Aurelia, Mari Cruz, her parents, and I, all went to the *calleja*. Mari Cruz fell into ecstasy on the spot and she asked her Vision to place a kiss on the pine branch which she was handing to her, or at least that she touch it, because that branch was for a lady who asked for it.

And it seemed that the Virgin was carrying the Infant Jesus because Mari Cruz added,

“Let me have Him for a little while, just a little while? Don't think because my arm is brown that it is dirty; let me have Him.”

And it seemed as though the young girl took Him in her arms because she was kissing Him and was performing all the gestures of someone who is really kissing and she was saying,

“Listen, tomorrow I shall bring You some caramels and some cakes.”

. . . and she stayed like that, rocking Him. At times we could hear her murmuring.

That ecstasy did not last very long. Once it was over, we talked with her and we could see she was in a very normal condition, as if nothing had happened. But I must say that Mari Cruz cried a lot.

She cried almost every time she had an ecstasy. I don't know what was happening to make her cry.



1971 PHOTO

Daniela Cuenca Gonzalez (61).

I live in Los Corrales de Buelna, about seven miles from Torrelavega. I was born in Garabandal and remained there until I was twenty-nine years old. When I still had my mother—it is now nine years since she left the village—I used to visit her every month and during the apparitions we used to come more often to see the four girls whom I knew very well.

Before the apparitions. They used to be very ordinary girls. All in all, youngsters similar to others of their age; no different before the events. Conchita was very bright. Afterwards we noticed

their faces showed more humility and sweetness—one would think they were educated children. We used to see them all the time, and before the apparitions there was absolutely nothing exceptional about them.

First reactions. I reacted by laughing. You will see. One of my brothers asked me one day if I would be going to the village. I told him I thought I'd be going very soon.

“Go then, for I believe the Blessed Virgin is appearing there.”

I started to laugh, but my brother told me,

“No, do not laugh, dear sister; something is happening there. We don't know what it is, but there is something.”

It was the first I'd heard of these events, and I didn't pay much attention. I came here, but I didn't see anything much. It didn't make any particular impression on me because I could see the girls only from afar. They were kneeling down. But afterwards, I came back and then no power on earth would have been strong enough to keep me from returning. I spent whole nights following the little girls.

I experienced a deep feeling of emotion the day I saw them kneeling down—as if they had been frozen—on these stones, looking toward heaven. We could not even kneel down on those stones and rocks. I saw how people were shining strong lights into their eyes, and on their faces, without making them blink. That struck me as something quite extraordinary. Something else also impressed me: it was to see them running and running then ending their races so fresh and calm, whereas some twenty-year-old boys were sweating and could not even keep up with them.

Blessed objects. But what stirred me the most was what happened to me with a medal, one of which my mother had given to each of her children. Look, this is the one, hanging from my chain. I arrived one day with my medal, went to Mari Loli and said,

“Listen, Mari Loli, you give it to the Blessed Virgin tonight.”

“But you are not leaving tonight?”

“No, I am staying for two or three days.”

“Good! Because there are so many articles.”

Upon seeing that, I went to see Jacinta who gave me the same answer. But she fell into ecstasy right in front of me. Then my daughter said to me,

“Put it there, Mama.”

So I took the medal and I put it here, on the table, along with a large pile of others. Jacinta did not see me doing that. She took the medals, handed them over to the Blessed Virgin to be kissed, and put them back. When she came to my medal, she started to talk and laugh, without us being able to understand what she was saying or make out why she was laughing.

Before leaving, I took my medal from the table. I put it around my neck and it felt no different. But I used to have a lot of devotion to that medal; I was in the habit of bringing it to my lips on all occasions.

After a month's time, I said to myself that the Virgin wouldn't mind if I gave it again to be kissed. So, without saying a single word to Mari Loli, I put my medal among the others she already had—all this without any ill intention on my part. God forgive me, but I really meant no wrong.

There was a large number of people in the kitchen. Mari Loli took the medals, handed them to her Vision and as she came to one of them we heard her say,

“Ah! it has already been kissed? I have to put it around her neck? She is over there?”

She passed through the crowd in order to come to me. She gave it to me to be kissed on both sides and then placed the chain around my neck. For me, this was an unforgettable event. I felt such emotion!

Medical examination. One night, I was not feeling well and they didn't want me to go out, so I told them,

“While I am here, I have to see the apparitions.”

And I headed for Mari Loli's. There was an Army doctor at her house whose name I've forgotten, but I know that his surname was Favello. He made a joke and I almost showed him my fist, for I am quick tempered.

That man declared to Mari Loli's father that he wanted to examine his child.

“No, you shall not touch the young girl.”

Then the fellow showed him his papers to prove that he was really a medical doctor.

“Ah! if you are a doctor, then examine her.”

I went home for lunch at that time and told my mother,

“Mother, there is a doctor over there who looks more like a farmer than a well educated man.”

I was horrified at his behavior. I went back to Mari Loli’s home, but the conduct of that man had completely changed. Mari Loli’s mother told me,

“Look, he has changed his opinion; he took Mari Loli’s pulse; he examined her and looked into her eyes. While he was performing that examination, Jacinta arrived in ecstasy and I told him, ‘Look, here is one of the visionaries who is passing by. Go and see her.’ When he came back, he was totally changed and he was not joking any more.”

At that very moment Mari Loli fell into ecstasy. He rushed toward her, took her pulse, and with a flashlight examined her eyes. Then Mari Loli took the crucifix and made the sign of the cross upon him many times. We were all hoping she would give us the cross, because we were feeling great emotion, but she would not always give it to us.

Finally she began to move about and she went through the streets. We followed her; there weren’t many of us on that night, maybe six or seven. It was one of those nights when there were only a few people around. Upon returning to the house, Mari Loli again gave the crucifix to the doctor to be kissed. After the ecstasy was over, he again took the child’s pulse and said,

“Her pulse is exactly the same, although I am sure that ours would be faster.”

Then I told him,

“But this evening the child didn’t do anything extraordinary.”

“The energy she expended during the walk should have been sufficient to increase her pulse.”

He said that because the girl had performed her walk with her head tilted backward and her neck stretched. Moreover, in spite of the darkness throughout the village, and while we were tripping everywhere, she, Mari Loli, had moved along with complete assurance, as if she weren’t even touching the ground. She was moving backward as well as forward. Then the doctor, instead of going away, spent the rest of the night walking through the village in profound meditation.

Seeing at a distance. Now I shall tell you about another incident. I had a brother, Etaquio, who was an Indian,²⁶ and people were saying that he was hypnotizing the girls. The house where we are now is his. My brother had formally forbidden our children and their tutor, Manin, to get close to the visionaries. He used to tell them,

“Whether I believe or not, I don’t wish to discuss it; I don’t want you going near them.”

I used to answer him,

“The trouble with you is that you don’t like what people are saying about you. As far as I’m concerned, that is not important, because the ecstasies started before you came here. You were not here on the first day.”

So one day our mother told him,

“Listen Taquio, if you do not climb to the pines then I shall go.”

She was very sick. So my brother asked a friend,

“Can you harness the horse? I will go and see the young girls in ecstasy.”

No doubt that episode has been reported to you by many people. I don’t remember now if my brother’s horse was black or white, but the friend was from Cabuerniga and his horse’s color was the opposite of my brother’s. That man instead of bringing my brother’s horse, brought his own. The girls were in ecstasy at the pines and the onlookers heard them exclaim,

“Taquio is coming to see us? But he never comes! He is coming on a white horse? That’s strange because his horse is black . . .”

A few members of the Civil Guard, who had heard that, turned around and from the top of the hill they looked down and saw my brother arriving on a white horse.

I didn’t witness that myself, but someone in the house told me about it. Everybody started to cry; they were so upset at that scene.

Identification of persons. When my brother arrived from Mexico, he had a small fresh scar on his chest and he didn’t want to wear

26. The people in Garabandal call Indians (Indianos) those amongst them who emigrate, especially to South America or Mexico, and who come back to spend their vacations in the village.

his medal around his neck. His wife was very devout but my brother had become negligent. One must tell things as they are. But afterwards he became a rather good Catholic, thanks be to God, and that, at least, we owe to the Virgin. So at the time he boarded the plane in Mexico to come to Garabandal his wife wanted him to carry his medal of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, but he said to her,

“Do not insist! I won’t wear it. It would rub against my scar and irritate me.”

However, while he was staying here, and before his wife came, he consented to carry a medal which our mother had obtained for him, as well as one for each of us. My sister-in-law came two or three months later and one day he told her,

“See here? I am wearing a medal which mother gave me.”

She didn’t answer him but she thought to herself,

“Since you are already wearing one, I shall take yours—the one you did not want to wear when you were leaving Mexico—Our Lady of Mount Carmel—which is smaller; I shall wear it.”

So without saying anything, my sister-in-law took all the medals she had in her possession, plus the ones from my nephews and the one of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and went to Mari Loli who was in ecstasy. There were three or four Mexican women at Mari Loli’s house at the time. The young girls started to give her medals to be kissed but when she came to the one of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, she went abruptly downstairs and outside. Then my sister-in-law said to the Mexican women,

“Where can she be going? That’s my medal!”

Everyone followed Mari Loli. Do you know where she went? To join my brother who was playing cards with some friends in the dining room. She came up to him and put the chain around his neck. When she started to do that, my brother told the other players,

“No, not me, I have mine. She is making a mistake.”

At the same moment, he recognized the small medal of Our Lady of Pilar (affectionately called Pilarita); that Virgin is very popular in all Aragon. It seems that she had appeared, standing on a pillar to the Apostle St. James. That medal belonged to his wife who comes from Zaragoza. And at the same time he saw

the medal of Our Lady of Mount Carmel which he thought he’d left in Mexico.

“But . . . that’s the medal I left in Mexico!”

He told us afterwards that in the confusion of the moment, he thought that the medal had been miraculously “transported.”

There still remains on that table the cross they designed in memory of such an extraordinary event.

One day I was following the young girls in ecstasy in the *calleja*. I heard one of them saying to her Vision,

“They say that someone is hypnotizing us. But that’s false, is it not? They say that Taquico is doing that; isn’t he a good man?”

They meant my brother. I was struck with emotion when I heard them say that.

At that time, neither the episode with the horse nor the one with the medal had yet taken place.

Weight change. I have witnessed many ecstasies; probably more than the villagers, because they had to go and gather hay; consequently many of the ecstasies happened while they were away, whereas we were constantly following the girls.

The day Carmina’s mother died (Carmina was an aunt of Loli’s mother) I saw Mari Loli coming out of her home on her knees in ecstasy, “walk” to the house of Carmina’s mother, climb up the staircase and there give the crucifix to be kissed to all the relatives of the deceased, but to no one else; solely to the members of the family and suddenly she exclaimed,

“Ah, good! Conchita is coming?”

Right away she came downstairs and, in fact, found Conchita arriving at the door. They kissed each other; Conchita came up and Loli left.

I don’t remember if it was on that same day that while following Mari Loli in the street in front of her house (you have no doubt noticed how many puddles there are and it is really a very bad road) I saw Mari Loli kneeling down and bending backwards. I could see that her head would fall into a mud puddle. So, in order to prevent her from getting all dirty, and also because I was a bit curious, I slipped my hand between her head and the ground—just in time. Well, believe me, I was unable to remove it! My hand remained caught there until the end of the

ecstasy; it was impossible for me to move my arm, the weight was tremendous.

The crowds. Yes, at that time there were lots of people; we couldn't get close to the young girls. I remember one time, a gentleman asked that we allow them to arrange some order among the crowd so that everyone could see, because, as he said, it was most unfortunate that so many people took the trouble to come here and they could see nothing. He managed to organize the spectators so that people would pass two at a time in front of the young girls in ecstasy, so they could get a close look at the visionaries. I shall never forget the expression on that man's face at the end of the ecstasy,

"Well, if this is all an act, then the actors and actresses had better start looking for other work."

The miracle of the Visible Communion. No, I did not see it; it happened while I was trying to climb a staircase so I could see better. But my daughter, Mary Stella, who was then eleven years old, saw it. I asked her,

"What did you see?"

"I saw Conchita put out her tongue; it was bare. I don't know how it happened, but suddenly the Host was there!"

Someone told me that was a conjuring trick. Now I ask you; how, with her head tilted back as she had it, could the Host appear on her tongue? For if she had it sticking to the palate, it would have fallen to the back of her throat and not upon the tongue, which everybody saw clean and bare.

My daughter was accompanied by a young friend called Celine. She herself could see the Host on Conchita's tongue very clearly, but she had not seen the tongue empty before. Very much impressed, they both cried.

I had heard that miracle announced beforehand; that's why I came here, especially for that.

Stellar phenomena. I did not see any phenomena in the sky.

Nights of terror. I was not there during the nights of fright. But I heard about them.

The Commission. I have never been summoned nor interrogated by the Santander Commission.

Comments. You know, we really have seen extraordinary events here. Take, for instance, the day after reading in a newspaper an

article against Garabandal, a group of us were talking to a friendly priest who was passing through the village. I told him,

"If the newspaper says it is false, that's its privilege. If it says this is a child's hoax, that is ridiculous! If it says we are mistaken, it might be possible because in the village, we have the reputation of being ignorant. But what about the learned people, like the psychiatrist from Barcelona and the other one from Madrid, so well known throughout all of Spain. How could they have been deceived? That doesn't make any sense."

One of the ladies who was listening to us said,

"Let those who say it is false try to get themselves into ecstasy. I would like to see a bishop try to do what the young girls did!"

Fragrances. Here is a rosary which belonged to my mother. Something happened to me with this rosary. One night we were in a house where many people used to come, because the houses in the village, at the time of the apparitions, were in bad shape. Now they are a bit improved; but at the time I don't think you could find any worse houses in the whole world. Anyway, that night we were in this house and a Marquess from Madrid said,

"I have rather strange prayer beads. Sometimes a fragrance emanates from them. Let us see if tonight someone amongst you will be favored with that perfume. Let no one have anything in their hands."

The rosary was passed from hand to hand. When it reached me everybody saw me turn pale . . . I smelled the fragrance!

"What do you smell?"

"A deep delicate fragrance which I can't identify."

"Well, that's really the mystery . . ."

Sometime after the death of my poor mother, I asked myself whether her own rosary would not emanate such a perfume. I got up, went to where her coat was, put my hand in the pocket and got her prayer beads out. A whiff of fragrance came up to my face! I had such a nervous shock that I didn't know what to do. It was as before, a very fine, delicate fragrance, unknown to me but I could detect it very precisely.

A little later on I picked it up again, but there was no aroma anymore. I then said to myself that it would be better not to

mention anything about it or else people might think I was a visionary. I went off to work in the fields and when I came back smelled the rosary again, and again I experienced the wonderful fragrance. Then I thought I had better tell my family. So everyone smelled it and each one tried to identify that special perfume; because each one of us, at one time or another, smelled the scent. One of my boys, the most disbelieving, would say laughingly,

“Do you know what the smell of your rosary is? It smells of cows!”

One day I left the rosary on top of the sewing machine. And that boy, smelling it, said,

“Mama, why did you spray your prayer beads with perfume?”

“No, my son, I did not spray it. I would not deceive you about anything so sacred. You didn’t want to believe in it before, but now you are forced to admit that it is true!”



1971 PHOTO

Servando Mazon (87), lived in the village. Servando died in 1972.

Before the apparitions. Before the ecstasies, they were four young girls like the ones running through the village. I never noticed any difference between them and the others, not in any way.

First reactions. It was through my nephew that I first heard about these apparitions. He was coming with a load of grass by that path over there and he found the four girls in ecstasy in the middle of the path. No matter how much he asked them to move out of the way, they would not move and so it was he who had to go around them. They remained in the position in which he found them. He came to the village and told me what had happened to him. But at that time, we did not believe the children and thought it was a childish game.

The calls. My goodness! I remember one day we went to pick up some hazelnuts on a slope about a mile from here. Mari

Cruz was with us. All of a sudden she started to run toward the village saying, "I'm coming, I'm coming." She went off like a flash; she cut through the meadow, then she came to the village where she met the others and they all fell into ecstasy together. They told us that they were having three calls. I don't know what they consisted of, but obviously they were feeling something interiorly.

Absence of wounds. When they fell to their knees on stones it made such a noise—like hitting the ground with a bowling ball! They would never look where they were falling even if there were thorns or sharp stones and never did they injure themselves, never, although their knees made an echoing sound like that of a club hitting a rock. There were never any wounds or anything like that. Yes, they fell into ecstasy anywhere: in the middle of the village or farther up; at midnight or at four o'clock in the morning.

Transfigured faces. While in ecstasy, you would have thought they were four angels. Their faces then had such a beautiful complexion. Good Lord! how could anyone think that they could perform like that by their own willpower?

Rapid marches. Not a trace of fatigue, nothing. Take for instance one night, one of my sons who is presently in the Asturias, was following one of the visionaries with a whole group, and at the end of the ecstasy, rather than coming home as usual, like everyone else, he accompanied one of the young girls and said to her,

"Aie! what a run you had us make; I am all sweaty!"

"Why is that?"

"Well, I was trying to keep up with you."

"Ah! I didn't know."

They were not aware of anything. My son's clothes were soaked, yes, soaking wet, from running so fast. She said to him, "Look, my clothes are perfectly dry," whereas my son was dripping wet! The girls, while in ecstasy did not get out of breath, either, absolutely not.

Sometimes, while the girls were following the apparition, one would think they were flying! Oh! yes. Some people were saying,

"*Sapristi!* they are flying!"

It was not true that they were actually flying, but it would seem like it. And the people were drenched in perspiration try-

ing to follow them. But, for the girls, it was as though they had never run.

The nights of terror. I was not there.

The Commission. I have never been summoned or interrogated by the Santander Commission.

Prediction of denials. I heard that some denials had been predicted, but not through the visionaries. I have also heard that the young girls' families would one day quarrel amongst themselves. People were also saying that the visionaries would remain normal, as they had been until then. For me, all the denials, etc., came from God.

Abnormal strength. Another time—this I did not see myself but I heard about it and moreover I believed it—there were some sheep here. There are always sheep here when they are coming from the pastures high above. Some of these animals belonged to Conchita and one evening she noticed one was missing. She went out to look for it and she finally found the lost sheep in the middle of the village. She was just grabbing it when an ecstasy overtook her. The sheep started to kick without stopping, but nobody could manage to make Conchita let go, as she was holding on to it so firmly. But one of the other three visionaries arrived and she asked Conchita to let the beast go and she did. I heard that story many times, and I believe it is true.

Weight change. No, I never touched the young visionaries while they were in ecstasy as I had too much respect for them.

One day in the *calleja*, I saw one of the doctors lift up one of the girls, but not very high, because just as he started to lift her she went into ecstasy, and he was obliged to let her go. She fell back kneeling down in the position which she had been in when he first took hold of her, but with this difference—only one of her knees was touching the ground and the other leg was folded too, but upwards.

1980 PHOTO

Angelita Cosio (44), works in the fields. Angelita was born and lives in Garabandal.

Before the apparitions. I knew the young girls very well. Before the apparitions they were exactly like the other girls. I never noticed anything different or particular about them.

First reactions. I heard about their visions from the beginning. It was on a Sunday. They were saying that they had seen something: they came back from the direction of the apple tree and they were frightened.

They kept telling that to people who did not believe them; some rough boys even threw some stones at them. But, in spite of it all, the four girls continued going to the same spot for eight days.

I didn't pay any attention to these stories. I didn't think it could be true. But after eight days I went to see my cousin Serafina, who lives over there right in front, and she said,

"Let's go see the girls in the *calleja*, the ones who saw an angel."

"Oh for goodness sake, what nonsense! Are they still there?"

"Yes, yes, let's go."

"No, I'm not going." . . .

But my cousin was very agitated and she had her heart set on going. I leaned out the window and said,

"O.K., let's go. I see that Augustine and the fellow from Cosio are there already."

So we went: she was somewhat nervous, a little wary, but laughing nonetheless. We met Clementina there who said,

"Whoever does not believe in this, does not believe in God!"

"Oh my God! what extravagance! How can you say such a thing?"

When we arrived, the four girls were there in the *calleja*, kneeling down, bending backwards, quiet, with a strange expression



on their faces. Tina said to me,

“Here, you will see. Come around in front of them.”

I was behind them. I started to go around, but I was unable to go any further. It was as though someone had cut off my legs; I couldn't move.

When the ecstasy was over the children started to cry, the poor girls . . . they sat down at the same place and cried because we would not believe them. We were arguing; some would say yes, others, no. Some were also saying that we should declare it while others disagreed, because we had not seen anything other than their bizarre attitude, without any apparent explanation. At that time, we had never heard of an ecstasy, but someone suggested,

“We could say they saw an angel.”

“But we didn't see anything ourselves. How can we say that if we didn't see anything?”

I then demanded of the young visionaries,

“Where did you see this angel?”

And showing them a branch protruding from a small tree a little higher up the lane, I asked,

“Over there, in that small tree?”

“No, right here, face to face.”

“Well, you will recite a ‘station’ and we shall see if your apparition comes back.”

So we remained there with the girls and they recited their station, but the angel did not reappear. However, I thought to myself: these youngsters are not lying. I didn't have the impression that they were play acting or simulating; not at all; far from it. On the contrary, I had the impression that they were seeing something extraordinary. I felt a strange sensation, which I can't describe. They had such an expression—they really looked like angels!

Facial aspect. No, no, no trace of fatigue, nervousness, shortness of breath, or perspiration, nothing. They were perfectly normal, but radiant! Afterwards they remained there, quiet, but crying softly because they could see us debating the truth of what they were saying. Except for that, their faces showed nothing abnormal.

Number of ecstasies. I witnessed a large number. I didn't miss many. I was going every night. More than anything else I was anxious to recite the rosary with them. I enjoyed praying with them very much, for they recited the rosary in such an edifying manner. While in ecstasy, they prayed perfectly well—very beautifully. At each ecstasy their faces would become so beautiful, so radiant, no sign of fatigue or anything of that sort.

Rapid marches. When they were moving around in ecstasy, one would think they were little birds, they moved with such lightness. I was unable to follow them; My Lord! It was impossible! Though they moved very naturally, there was something strange about it. I don't know how to put it because for me, there is no explanation. Even their youth could not account for the easiness of their walks. One night my brother, who now lives in Mexico, wanted to follow Conchita. At that time he was only thirty-one years old and very strong—a real mountaineer from our village. Well, he had to stop his chase and remove his shirt which was soaked with perspiration.

Duration of the ecstasies. It varied greatly. I remember an occasion when one of the visionaries was saying to her Apparition, which was the Blessed Mother at that time,

“But you're not staying very long! . . . One hour? But you have only been here a short minute!”

Obviously the Blessed Mother was telling her that she had already been there an hour.

The ecstasies would take place in the morning or the afternoon, as well as in the evening; in front of young people from the village, or from elsewhere. The number of people varied but this was not something to which I paid much attention.

Change of weight. It so happened that I got to touch Jacinta during an ecstasy. One evening we were with her in her father's house along with one of my boys, Pasco, who is presently in Mexico, Miguel Angel, two young girls a little older than Jacinta (Pili and Josefina), and one of Jacinta's sisters, Marcelina, who is now married. We said,

“Tonight, when Jacinta goes into ecstasy, we will lift her up from the ground.”

The ecstasy began. “Let's go,” said Jacinta's sister. We tried, each one of us; nothing doing; impossible! She was such a weight! I don't know whether it was through respect or what, because

El Milagru. I was there but I didn't see anything. I was in the middle of the village; but because of the avalanche of people, I was not able to get close. Conchita had informed me there would be a miracle, that we would see the Host, but that it would be only a small miracle—*milagru*—that it was too bad it would not be a bigger miracle than that. She was saying, concerning the miracle of the Visible Communion, that it was nothing at all.

We have often discussed that occurrence since. For us who lived it, we were never able to find a natural explanation. My brother Inocencio, who is also living in Mexico, was reading everything that was being written at that time trying to explain what was happening here. He would say,

“They can write anything they wish trying to explain what we have lived through here. There is no explanation whatsoever! This cannot be explained by natural means.”

Inocencio had followed the little girls in ecstasy very closely and had witnessed many things. So everything they were writing in order to explain away the events irritated him very much.

Medical experiments. Yes, I saw some. One day the doctor who lives at the corner, Dr. José Luis Guñon (at least I think it was him) tried to lift Conchita up. She was there with Mari Loli, Mari Cruz and Jacinta. Serefino was near his sister. The doctor took hold of Conchita and tried to lift her up off the ground. He could not do it, although he was obviously applying all his strength with a violent effort. Finally he succeeded in making her move, but either she was too heavy or she got away from him so he let her fall. She fell back on the ground with such a noise that we all felt bad about it . . . like an empty pumpkin falling to the ground—*poum!* The poor girl! Afterwards, while she was still stiff, he took her head between his two hands and tried violently to make her twist it sideways, while telling her,

“Turn around, turn around toward your companions.”

He succeeded in making her twist it a bit, the poor creature. This scene made me cry. I believe that was the only time I did cry.

Another time, the doctors from the Commission—I believe it was them—started to pinch Conchita on the calves and the thighs—everywhere they could on her legs while she was kneeling down, but without result. The girls never felt anything. After-

the ecstasies, we examined the legs and could not find any trace of what they had just done to them. Yes, all this I have seen myself; yes, I saw it!

Insensitivity to pain. Take for instance the time I accompanied Conchita to the *cuadro*. She started reciting the rosary and immediately fell, backwards, into ecstasy. She went like that—still in ecstasy and still backwards, as far as the village, to the place where there is an amusement hall nowadays, but at that time, there was only a small garden. She stumbled on a big stone and fell brutally backwards. Her head struck the ground with such force, I thought she had killed herself. Well apparently, she did not feel anything, for she continued her ecstatic walk as if nothing had happened! I saw that happen and I can ascertain that she did not have the least trace of shock or aftereffects. And that was a common occurrence. Never did one of them ever have any wound or trace of shock, and I saw all of them at one time or another, fall or roll down while coming down slopes from the pines, going through thorns and bushes (while in trance, of course), especially Mari Loli, Conchita and Jacinta. That struck me all the more as I was much older than they and I could not pass through the paths they followed. While watching them walk, one had the impression they were stepping on perfectly even ground; people used to say they were walking as if on mattresses.

I must make one thing clear: they did not come down from the pines by the path and you saw for yourself that even there it is not easy, but they always went far from that path, outside of any traced passage—and at night! At night backwards! So I, who could not even walk forward, as it was so hazardous, how could I do it backwards?

The doctors also made some tests with flashlights and floodlights. They would shine the light directly on or near their eyes, but that was as nothing for the children; they kept their eyes wide open. During those experiments Mari Loli had eyes which seemed to come from heaven! I may add that they never blinked or closed their eyes although these were very strong lights I can assure you! It is even difficult, at night, to look straight at a car's headlights, but the floodlights they were using were much more powerful. *Madre!* that was something worth seeing! But no, they never blinked!

Modesty in their postures. I have often seen the visionaries in

extraordinary attitudes. Quite often, for example, Mari Loli would come down a staircase stretched out on her back, head first but her clothes never rolled up . . . she was always decently covered. Moreover, you have undoubtedly seen the photos which show the ecstatic falls, or the girls lying on the ground, and noticed that the clothes are always correctly placed.

I have seen Mari Loli more often than the others as we spent more nights in her father's shop. We would wait there until one or two o'clock in the morning to see if the apparition would take place as we never knew at what time the rapture would start.

And this brings out another interesting point. If the children were able to produce an ecstasy at will, they would have been able to tell us in advance at what time it would take place.



1971 PHOTO

Virginia Cuenca (20), worked in the fields and in her home while living in Garabandal. Virginia has since left the village.

Before the apparitions. Conchita and I are the same age; we went to school together. I had not noticed anything special about her, either in class or elsewhere. We were brought up in the same manner, almost exactly the same. We were children not very advanced for our age. You can see for yourself that this is a backward village, and at that time it was even more so.

Yes, Mari Loli, Conchita, Mari Cruz and Jacinta were all at school with me. We often played together. Actually, on the day the Angel first appeared to them, I was going with them to snatch some apples. We had left, the five of us, but on the way, someone called me and I was obliged to leave them and go back. Which means I didn't steal any apples, but I didn't see the Angel, either!

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First reactions. They came back and told the rest of us girls what they had seen but we just laughed. On the following day, though, we went with them and we didn't laugh anymore.

During the first ecstasies we were very touched; we believed in them completely. But people did things to them that astonished us. Some people would try to make them move, but neither the doctors nor anybody else could succeed. They became rigid. It was extraordinary.

Number of ecstasies. I have no idea how many ecstasies I saw, but more than fifty, I believe.

Facial aspect. Very normal; but in ecstasy they would become very beautiful—better than in their normal state. They looked like angels. I don't know how to describe it. It was the same at every apparition.

Visits in the houses. My sister told me that one night, when I was asleep, the girls, in ecstasy, climbed up into our house; they came to my bed and applied the crucifix to my lips. But as I was sound asleep, I never knew it.

Nights of horror. I was not present.

Phenomena in the sky. No, I have not seen anything.

Insensitivity to pain. When they were seized by an ecstasy and when they would abruptly fall to their knees, they wouldn't hurt themselves, although they cracked as if their bones and tendons were breaking.

Abnormal strength. One day, my sister, Mary Teresa, who was very fond of Conchita, was playing with her and some other girls. They were playing some childish game. Suddenly, Conchita fell into ecstasy. Mary Teresa was never able to remove her hand from Conchita's. I don't remember now how the whole thing ended.

Carmina interjecting,

“No, remember? The Civil Guard interfered. The Guards pulled the two girls from one side to another, but they couldn't separate them.”

“Ah, yes! that's right,” replied Virginia.

Synchronization. I also witnessed the experiment which consisted of keeping each girl in a different house, without any clock or watch. They would all arrive together, at exactly the same time, at the place of the ecstasy—at the same instant! I saw that my-

self, and others have too, because we were all watching the experiment.

Blessed objects. The girls would arrive with fifty or a hundred prayer beads, chains, or medals around their necks, which they would give back afterwards to each owner, without once making a mistake. We would give them rosaries through a third party; that was a common practice. When you think of all they were carrying!

I remember one event in particular. A lady from Cosio, by the name of Genoveva, arrived wearing a medal which her mother had given her in order to have it blessed by the Virgin. Genoveva gave it to another lady, who, in turn, gave it to one of the girls. During the ecstasy, the young girl showed it her Vision and then she came and put it around Genoveva's neck, while saying,

“Ah, it belongs to your mother?”

Levitation. I have never seen them levitate, but there are many things which I have forgotten: I was rather young. For example, I cannot remember if I went to Communion the day after the nights of terror. I know my parents did, but did I?

The Santander Commission. No, never.

Announcement of the denials. Yes, I remember the girls speaking about that. I remember that perfectly well, and it came to pass . . .

1978 PHOTO

Juan Alvarez Seco, former Chief Brigadier of the Civil Guard, Puentenansa sector. He was responsible for maintaining order in Garabandal during the time of the events.

(Note from the author: We were not able to question Juan Alvarez Seco who is now retired and living in Barcelona. What we are publishing here are large segments from a mimeographed brochure which he has drafted and which he distributes in his region in order to make known the events which took place in the village. Mr. Alvarez Seco was kind enough to send us said brochure through the intermediary of mutual friends.)

On April 1, 1961, the Brigadier was appointed in charge of the Puentenansa sector.

Don Alvarez' Testimony

I had been there less than two months, scarcely time enough to learn the territory. The events which I propose to narrate started on June 18, 1961. A marvelous thing had happened in my sector. I learned about it on the twentieth of said month while I was visiting with Dr. José Luis. He himself was surprised by the news just given him by two women from San Sebastian de Garabandal. They claimed that St. Michael the Archangel had appeared to four little girls.

I immediately went to the barracks in order to inform Cpl. José Fernandez Codesio regarding these facts and I ordered him to go as soon as possible to San Sebastian de Garabandal to obtain information regarding the four little girls in question.

The Corporal, in turn, confirmed to me the fact that the little girls all agreed upon the apparition of St. Michael. They were: Conchita Gonzalez Gonzalez, twelve years old, fatherless; Mary Dolores (Mari Loli) Mazon Gonzalez, twelve years of age, daughter of Ceferino, president of the "Municipal Council" of San Sebastian; Jacinta Gonzalez Gonzalez, also twelve years old, who has both her parents, and brothers and sisters; and Mari Cruz Gonzalez Barrido, the youngest of the group, eleven years of age.



Each of the so-called visionaries had related separately to Cpl. Fernandez that one day they were playing marbles at the beginning of the lane called "*la Ventuca*," near a kitchen garden belonging to the teacher, a garden in which there was an apple tree. The tree attracted the attention of the children, and (they were only little girls) they snatched some apples to eat. I paid no attention to this detail, that was only childish pranks. But concerning the apparitions, I thought it best to send a report to my superiors, but upon the recommendation of the pastor, Fr. Valentin Marichalar, I delayed sending the report for a few days in order to await further developments.

On June 21, I decided to pay a visit to the pastor of the parish, whom I met on the way as he was being driven to Santander to have an interview with the Bishop. That obliged me to return immediately to the barracks and to transmit, through a Civil Guard, a report to my superior, relative to the Garabandal events.

The next day, that is the twenty-second, I decided to go up again to the village, with my aide, to investigate personally the events taking place there.

Garabandal is a small mountain village comprising about seventy houses. It is known for the innate cordiality of its inhabitants. Situated in the foothills of the Cantabrian mountains and close to the Peña Sagra, this zone is bounded by the provinces of Asturias, Palencia and Santander. To arrive at Garabandal, one must climb a difficult road which starts at Cosio and winds up through the mountains for some four and a half miles before reaching the village. During the climb toward the small locality, I enjoyed a most beautiful view which reminded me of the marvelous crib scenes called *belenes* which they make in Catalonia at Christmas time. In the village, water was streaming in the streets, as well as hens, small pigs, sheep and goats. The cows were there also, with their bells.

The villagers' lives are governed by religious traditions. The inhabitants never neglect, under any pretext, to recite the Angelus as soon as the clock strikes twelve. In the afternoon, they recite the holy rosary with the pastor or, in his absence, the teacher or the widow Maximina. At nightfall, Simon's wife (Jacinta's mother), goes through the village with a lantern and a little bell, to remind all the inhabitants of the last prayers of the day.

On Sunday, after attending holy Mass in the humble old church, everybody relaxes a bit. In the evening, the youths gath-

er under one of the porches and sing and amuse themselves to the sound of a basque tambourine. Respect and honesty are very apparent in their voices and in their gestures.

Once installed in the village, my aide, Celemin, introduced me to a neighbor called Valentina. Very amiable, her face reflected kindness and affection; she treated me as if she had known me forever. Without being pressed, she told me that the first apparition had taken place on Sunday, the eighteenth, after the girls had finished reciting the rosary and had attended catechism at the church. Once free, they decided to go and play in the lane called "*la Ventuca*." One of the girls who was with them, left, and they called upon another girl to climb up the *calleja* and play marbles. It was then that they ate some apples from the teacher's apple tree. The teacher, upon seeing the tree moving, asked his wife to go and check on what was happening, thinking it was the bees which were in the apple tree. Upon hearing this, the girls laughed and nothing more happened. Once the girls had eaten their full and stuffed their pockets, they started having guilt pangs. Their reaction was to accuse the devil of having tempted them and with fury they picked up some stones and threw them with all their might at a spot where they thought the devil stood, laughing at them.

Once they calmed down, they prepared to leave the garden and return to their game. It was then that Conchita saw, appearing all of a sudden, a beautiful creature—small, with very brilliant wings. Pointing to it, she cried, "There . . . there . . ." The other girls seeing Conchita in that position, tried to run to notify her family, thinking Conchita was feeling sick. At that moment, they fell into ecstasy, seeing the Angel. They all screamed, "An Angel!" A few boys who were playing in the lane threw some stones at them. But the Angel took the girls further up the lane, about 150 feet away. Once there, while kneeling down, they saw and listened to the Angel. A neighbor who was coming down from the mountain, with a cloth for honey, wanted to pass between them, and seeing they did not make way, he protested, unaware of what was happening. Afterwards, while coming down to the village, he was astonished to see the young girls still in the same position. He talked to his wife about it and she told him that it was just children's games.

During this first apparition, the Angel instructed the four little ones to come back every day to the same place, to recite the rosary. He would be with them. The girls, frightened and

crying, went to church to pray, and later on they told their families all that had happened. The parents' reaction—they suspected their daughters were lying—was to forbid the girls to go to the lane the next day. But many women were watching the children and vouched for the truth of what the children were saying. This caused quite a stir in the village. The people became convinced and, without anyone ridiculing, they converged on the lane to witness the events as described by the young girls.

As of that day, I was satisfied and I ordered two guards to be placed to watch over Garabandal. The news about the apparitions went from village to village and throughout the surrounding villages, and each day more and more people came which necessitated increased vigilance.

After the third or fourth visit from the Angel, eight or nine days passed without any new apparition, which made the people lose confidence. But afterwards, the Angel reappeared, and each day following, from five hundred to three thousand pilgrims were there to view the ecstasies. I remember the visionaries told us that they were receiving three calls—*llamadas*. At the first call, they said they had a feeling of joy from the chest to the throat; and the same thing at the second call. But after two calls, we noticed they became very nervous.

After many apparitions of the Angel, a tutor arrived in Garabandal to instruct Etaquio's son on the subjects in which he had failed. This tutor, at the request of Fr. Valentin, was supposed to hold himself at the disposal of the visionaries: to accompany them during their apparitions, to listen to their conversations with the Angel, and to take notes.

The people who were going up to see the apparitions were wondering if the children were being hypnotized or being given drugs or other such things. After one apparition, a fellow sergeant of the Civil Guard, told me that at the end of Conchita's ecstasy, the professor had taken her to the American's (Etaquio's) house and that what the crowd was saying might be true. The people were suggesting that it was the professor who was giving the girls drugs. I immediately went to Etaquio's place and I actually saw that the teacher was in a room with Conchita. I asked him why and he answered me that at the request of Fr. Valentin, he was questioning the visionary about her conversation with the Angel; so he was doing that in order to give a report of sorts to Fr. Valentin. The pastor needed such a report for the audience he had requested with the Bishop.

There were many people saying that Conchita was in control of the other girls and that if they went at the same hour to the place of the apparitions, it was because Conchita was influencing her companions. They kept saying she was sick and upon the suggestion of Mari Loli's father, they requested the presence of Dr. José Luis, the incumbent physician for the region. Dr. Luis came accompanied by the major and a hospital attendant. They locked up the girls in Ceferino's cafe in the room where they kept the bread, and there the doctor examined them. I remember that as soon as they came out, one by one, they quickly went to the lane, to see the Angel.

The doctor declared that the little ones were epileptic and sick and that everything which was happening was due to that. But I could see very well that the girls were in fine shape and that every day they appeared healthier and more beautiful, whereas their families looked tired as if they were physically exhausted due to a lack of sleep.

The pastor and some other people demanded that the children be separated, to verify if they would all come at the same time to the place of the apparitions. And in fact, at the last apparition, they came from different places, at the same precise hour.

The girls came out of ecstasy with the same ease they went into it. They were very happy and absolutely normal. Those who observed these scenes were much impressed. They all wanted to touch the visionaries' hair and the women wanted to kiss them. Fortunately, two guards protected the children until the crowd dispersed.

On Saturday, June 24, people who had come from different places were strolling through the village. At the place of the apparitions, we built a wooden barrier (*cuadro*) to prevent the children from being mauled by people who wanted to touch them and to have them surrounded only by priests. Furthermore, it was to prevent a stampede of the crowd toward the visionaries. At the end of the ecstasy, they went to the sacristy to explain to Fr. Valentin and other observers what they had seen.

On June 24 and 25 there were many more people than on the preceding days including many priests and doctors. During the ecstasy, one of the doctors wanted to stand Conchita up, but on account of the excessive weight which manifested itself when she was in that state, he let her fall on her knees from a certain height to the ground, which made a loud peculiar cracking noise.

At the end of the ecstasy, upon examining the little girls, we could clearly see the marks resulting from Conchita's fall and the pinches, blows and scratches which some people had inflicted upon the visionaries as a way of testing them. None of these caused the girls to react in any way or feel any pain. They never noticed anything, not from the exterior world. After the ecstasy, they felt no pain either! Only the marks remained.

Saturday, July 1, there was a huge crowd of people of all classes, and many doctors. About seven o'clock in the evening, the apparition took place. It lasted almost two hours. The young girls said afterwards that it had been very short—only two or three minutes. At that time, the Angel announced to them that they would see the Blessed Virgin on the next day.

Then Conchita, on the following day, with her mouth opened and slightly distorted, showed the Virgin that she had a cavity in one of her teeth. We also understood that the Virgin was asking them how the pastor was. They answered that Fr. Valentin was very homely but very amiable! Many people, including Fr. Valentin himself, heard these words spoken. The children said the Virgin asked that the Civil Guards take good care of the visionaries so as to protect them from curious people and prevent them from being harmed.

It was at this time also, that the children asked the Virgin to let them have her crown and the Virgin finally agreed to it. We could see the visionaries receiving the crown and passing it to one another. Conchita also begged the Virgin to give her one of the stars from the crown to wear on her head, so she could show it to the people in order that they might see it and believe in the apparitions. But the Virgin answered that we would believe anyway.

The visionaries describe the Virgin in this manner: white robe, blue mantle, crown with golden stars, opened hands with brown beads (in reality, it was a brown scapular—the Scapular of Mount Carmel), long hair, dark chestnut in color, parted in the middle and a very beautiful face. She appears to be seventeen or eighteen years of age and is rather tall. The four girls also claim that the Virgin's voice cannot be compared to any other and that it is very melodious.

From that time on, I witnessed many apparitions and besides the ecstasies themselves, I saw hundreds of ecstatic walks and rapid marches, some of them backwards, through the streets of the village, while in that state. And when the girls were running

to meet one another, some in ecstasy and others in their natural state, no one could keep up with those who were in ecstasy, not even the other visionaries in their normal state.

I myself witnessed many times the way in which, while in full rapture, and after having had the objects kissed by the Virgin, the young girls would give such objects back to their proper owners, without ever making a mistake. Some people, although their medals had already been kissed by the Virgin, would give these objects to other people who in turn would give them to the visionaries to be kissed again by the Virgin. However, we could hear the little girls saying that it had already been done and that the Virgin would not do it twice. Someone once brought some signet rings, but the Virgin said she would kiss only wedding rings so the signet rings were given back to their owners, again, as I said, without mistake.

When the children were in ecstasy, they had beautiful and angelic faces. I saw them fall and hit their heads on the stones, making loud noises. This caused me to suffer more than the girls, for apparently the visionaries did not feel anything.

These phenomena took place over such a long period of time and with such frequency (during a single day, they might have two or three ecstasies), that it is almost impossible to list them and to relate them all. This obliges me to relate only a few of those I witnessed myself, while there remain in my mind numerous other memories which, God willing, I shall never forget.

At the time of the first Message, the visionaries, at the *cuadro*, were very serious and very attentive to what the Virgin was telling them. One of them was crying big tears. Many of those present felt the same emotion. In the deep silence that followed the end of the ecstasies, Fr. Valentin announced,

“The Virgin has given the visionaries a Message which they cannot divulge; neither to the pastor, to their parents, nor to the Bishop.”

We were told furthermore, that upon the request of the Virgin, the visionaries must climb alone to the pines on the following day, accompanied only by two little girls, aged three. I remember Mari Loli telling me,

“Brigadier, you and my father can come quite close (about 300 feet) but the rest of the people should stay behind.”

This we did and we observed the moment the ecstasy seized

them. They cried a lot, which made the two tiny children utter plaintive cries. We learned afterwards the Virgin had asked that the visionaries be alone in order to be able to speak to them and show them how the chalice was becoming filled with sins, so that, in turn, the visionaries could relay the Message on October 18, 1961.

With some fruit packing crates, the little girls made a small altar which they decorated with field flowers and this they set at the foot of the pine trees. They worked at that for a whole morning and the result was very pretty.

Conchita is taken to Santander. One day, some doctors who had come only once to the village, agreed to take Conchita to Santander at the Bishop's request. By chance I was there myself on that day, but I couldn't see her. The day before, knowing that I had to be away, I ordered the guards to closely observe whatever happened, so as to be able to give me a report upon my return.

On July 27, they took Conchita to Santander to place her in a convent. They asked the residents to distract her, to take her for some drives around town, so as to cure the disease which the doctors believed she was suffering from.

Upon arriving at Puentenansa I phoned my guards so as to be informed as to what had happened during my absence. They told me that at one o'clock in the afternoon, St. Michael the Archangel had appeared to the three visionaries: Mari Loli, Jacinta and Mari Cruz; that they had told the Angel they were very sad because Conchita was not able to see the Virgin who was supposed to appear to them on that day. The Angel told them that Conchita would see the Holy Virgin at Santander, at exactly the same hour they would see her in Garabandal. The next day, around eight o'clock in the morning, at Puentenansa, I got a phone call from Brigadier Crecencio, who asked me,

"What happened in Garabandal yesterday?"

"At one o'clock in the afternoon the Angel appeared to Mari Cruz, Jacinta and Mari Loli and told them that Conchita would see the Blessed Virgin in Santander at the same hour as they would."

My colleague, Crecencio, then confirmed to me that, in fact, Conchita had had an apparition of the Blessed Virgin that afternoon near the convent in Santander.

A young man whom I had met in Garabandal and who knew the four visionaries very well, assured me that he had seen, from

one of the streets which cross over the tunnel and leads to the train station, Conchita, accompanied by many young girls going toward the convent and falling into ecstasy right in the middle of the street.

When Conchita's mother returned to Garabandal, she said that her daughter was sick, that she had been told so by I don't know what priest, and that this was the reason why Conchita was having these visions. While I was near the fountain (donated to the village by Etaquio), two neighbors were telling Mari Cruz's mother that everything was false. My presence prevented a brawl. Fortunately, nothing happened.

Serafino, who was working as a lumberman in Navarra, arrived in Garabandal and asked where Conchita was. His mother answered, "In Santander," and Serafino begged his mother to bring her back home. Upon her return, Conchita was playing in her house with a young neighbor, niece of Mrs. Primitiva, when she heard the voice of the Virgin, which she recognized right away. Not seeing her, she looked under the bed, thinking she might be there. The Virgin asked Conchita to go the following day with her little friends, to the place of the apparitions. When the four visionaries were reunited, Conchita told them to refuse to leave Garabandal if anyone wanted to take them elsewhere.

Conchita's haircut. They took Conchita to a hairdresser and two employees and the owner were there. One of the employees started to cut her hair, but was unable to, perhaps because she was too nervous. In the end, it was the owner, who, with much difficulty, cut it. Conchita, instead of having remorse, smiled and said,

"Now I am prettier!"

I was made to understand that Conchita had kept the promise she made one day to the Virgin, to offer her these tresses as a sacrifice.

One day, a certain personage of authority came to Garabandal accompanied by Emilio Valle and his daughters. They gave me many medals to be transmitted to Mari Loli to be given to the Virgin to be kissed. This I did. Mari Loli, in ecstasy, was stretched out on the ground, facing upward. She was talking to the Angel, saying,

"If you don't help me, I won't be able to get up."

I then saw Mari Loli stretch out her arm and gradually rise

until she was in a sitting position, exactly as if someone had pulled her by the arm.

July 25, 1961, Feast of St. James the Apostle. On that day, I had placed two guards on duty in the *calleja*, and two others at Conchita's house. The four visionaries were playing in the meadow and it was approximately seven thirty in the evening. There was not a cloud in the sky. Then suddenly a very black cloud formed itself over Piedra Sagra and at the same time we saw lightning flash across the sky, from heaven to earth. The visionaries fell to their knees in fright. The thunderbolt sounded with a terrible, loud noise. The young girls remained rooted to the spot in ecstasy, their eyes turned toward the sky. I had to calm Mari Cruz's mother who began screaming, then we all kept silent. Someone told me, in all seriousness, but without making an issue out of it, of having seen a silhouette on the moon, representing the Heavenly Father.

Priests in lay clothes. When His Excellency, Bishop Doroteo Fernandez y Fernandez published the first note from the Bishopric, recommending that priests abstain from going up to Garabandal, these priests would come dressed as civilians. I remember one day I heard Conchita say to the Virgin,

“There are three priests today in the village? No, there is only one! . . . Three priests? Ah, good!”

While talking, she moved toward two men who were standing there, observing the scene and who, afterwards, admitted being priests. They had dressed as civilians on account of the Bishop's interdiction. We never saw them again in the village.

Another time, two Air Force officers arrived. I recognized them, but did not say anything to them. The visionaries learned from the Virgin that they were chaplains.

On October 17, 1961, I arrived in the village with a detachment of twenty-eight Civil Guards under my command so as to maintain order starting on the eve of October 18. Conchita, in ecstasy, came toward me and gave me the cross to kiss. She gave it to me alone and I interpreted this gesture as a sign that all would be well. A tremendous crowd of people came up to the village that day (October 18) in a torrential downpour which did not let up all day. Actually, not the least incident occurred, although I calculated that there must have been in Garabandal between twelve to fifteen thousand people and eight hundred to

one thousand cars. Everything went as smoothly as possible, which surprised me, considering the circumstances.

I was near the visionaries, when one of them took a letter from her bodice which Fr. Valentin opened and read. We clearly heard the four visionaries recite the text together, at the same time as the reader, without making one single mistake. The people asked that it be read in a louder voice, and this was done by a volunteer.

Those who came up to the village on that day had hoped to see the sun in the middle of the night, such as had happened at Fatima.²⁷ In actual fact, the text of the above letter was a grave Message which, today, takes on a considerable importance. That's the way I understood it.

On March 18, 1962, I was going toward Cosio when I met my friend, Fidelin, who offered me a lift. In his car there were already Fr. Jesús Silva, founder of The City for Adolescents at Orense, another younger priest and a young man with a heart condition. The three of them arrived in Garabandal about 11:45 p.m., and met Mari Loli in ecstasy. It was the first time they had seen one of the girls.

A few minutes after midnight—that is, on March 19—Mari Loli still in ecstasy in the cafe, got close to the counter, took a pencil from a drawer, placed a holy picture against the kitchen wall, and wrote on it, on behalf of her Vision:

“The Virgin congratulates Fr. José.”

But according to that priest, he had not told anyone his name. He told us that he received this proof of authenticity of the visions with great emotion. Furthermore, we saw how pale he became upon reading the phrase written by the young girl.

Another very curious case. One afternoon, a friendly couple arrived in Garabandal; the husband was an artist. They had already viewed an ecstasy during which one of their medals might have been kissed by the Virgin, but they were not sure. We were in Ceferino's cafe. The painter gave three medals to Loli. Two were classic representations of the Virgin, whereas the third one, oval shaped, bore the name “Alicia” on one side and a cross on the other. Loli was puzzled by the third medal. She couldn't understand the relationship of the word “Alicia” to the Virgin but

27. The Brigadier is mistaken. The Fatima miracle (the dance of the sun) occurred between one thirty and two o'clock in the afternoon in broad daylight on October 13, 1917.

she finally accepted it.

When Loli fell into ecstasy, she showed the medal to her Vision and we heard her say,

“*Aie!* we think that they represented you very ugly on this medal, whereas you are so beautiful!”

[then . . .]

“Ah! You have already kissed it!”

Upon hearing that, my friend turned pale, visibly moved. It was an added proof for all of us present—a marvelous moment and so impressive, especially for my friend’s wife who almost didn’t make it because she had wanted to remain at the house and rest.

Levitation. One of the apparitions which moved me most took place in Conchita’s kitchen. I was there in the company of my good friend, Dr. Ortiz (Who can describe the numerous ecstasies he has witnessed?), a priest, Fr. José Ramon Vasquez, a seminarian from Reinosa and a few other people. Conchita fell into ecstasy. At one point, she wanted to give some medals to be kissed by her Vision, but it seemed she was unable to reach her, as if Our Lady was too high. We heard her say,

“I can’t reach you! . . . I can’t reach you!”

Then, addressing Jacinta who was present also but in her normal state she said,

“You jump, because I cannot reach.”

So some witnesses tried to lift Conchita. They used all their strength but to no avail. They couldn’t make her move, or even lift her feet from the ground. It seemed as though she weighed more than a ton! On the other hand Jacinta, unaided, and with very little effort, lifted Conchita. This scene left me perplexed but I was about to see something still more surprising, which I will never forget.

I was at the entrance to the kitchen, with Dr. Ortiz at my right. Conchita, still in ecstasy, had just reclined on the floor on her back. Suddenly I saw her whole body in a horizontal position, completely separated from the floor. I wanted to make sure I was not dreaming, by putting my hand between her body and the floor. Unfortunately I could not do it as it lasted only a few seconds. I wish to declare that, for me, there is no doubt. I shall never forget that scene as long as I live.

One day, Conchita was telling the Virgin,

“The priest who is to replace Fr. Valentin has arrived.”

After saying this, she removed the eyeglasses from that priest in order to make the sign of the cross on him. For his first day in Garabandal he could not have received better proof. Besides, someone told me that the Bishop, a short time afterwards, made a remark to him,

“I sent you to de-mystify the affair (or a similar phrase) and the result is that you come back more convinced of the reality of the apparitions than the girls themselves.”

On Conchita’s birthday, which is also a feast of the Blessed Virgin, the four girls offered their best wishes to Our Lady, and a little later we saw them, while still in ecstasy, playing hide-and-seek. At one point, Jacinta appeared with a long dress or nightgown. We understood the Virgin had made the remark that her skirt was too short. I could see Jacinta all taken by her Vision, and lifting up her hem at the same time so it would not drag on the ground. Today (the late sixties) the wearing of the “mini-skirt” is a scandal!

The flu epidemic. In those days Mari Loli also had a touch of the flu. I went to see her. She told me that prior to having the apparitions she had been very scared of the Civil Guard. I asked why. She told me that one day Jacinta and she had stolen a hammer. They sold it for one peseta (a few pennies) with which they had bought a chocolate bar which they ate. Thus, every time they would see the Guards in the village, they thought it was for them.

“That’s it! They are coming to get us,” they thought.

They had also gone into a garden to take some turnips. Surprised by the owner, they tried to hide behind a barrow, but the lady recognized them and shouted at them,

“It’s no use hiding! I recognized you. When the Civil Guards come, they will take you away.”

But now, as the Guards were escorting them and protecting them, they were not afraid anymore. I asked Mari Loli if she and her friends had confessed those sins and made restitution and she told me,

“Yes, we did that a long time ago.”

One day, Mari Loli climbed up to the first floor where the ap-



Juan Alvarez is pictured in 1962 with Spanish author Mercedes Salisachs and the four visionaries from left to right, Conchita, Mari Cruz, Mari Loli and Jacinta.

partitions often took place. Her father, Ceferino, had asked her, as she was coming down to the cafe, to turn off the light by loosening the bulb, because the switch wasn't working. At the moment Loli touched the bulb, she fell into ecstasy and kept holding the bulb. Those of us watching thought that by holding the bulb for a long time, she would burn herself. Her mother exclaimed,

"My God! She is going to burn her hand!"

We tried to make her drop the bulb, but we couldn't do it without breaking the glass and that would have cut the child. Then someone called Mari Cruz who was not in ecstasy. She came and very easily made Mari Loli release the bulb. After that, Mari Loli came down to the cafe.

One day I saw Jacinta in ecstasy near the fountain. She kept asking the Blessed Virgin to let her have the Infant Jesus. Apparently, the Virgin must have been saying something like,

"No, you might drop Him."

This was probably because Jacinta insisted,

"No, no, I won't let Him fall."

Finally the Virgin must have consented because we watched Jacinta who, with hands open, palms upward, seemed to be carrying a very small baby through the streets of Garabandal. I remember she carried Him very carefully, as she had promised the

Virgin, in order not to let Him fall. Just before the ecstasy was over, Jacinta said,

"See, I didn't let Him fall."

Then she raised her arms, exactly as if she were giving back a child to another person.

I, and the people following Conchita, recited the holy rosary with the visionaries and the Virgin. During one of the mysteries, we went toward the cemetery on a road full of mud and water into which we kept sinking. What a rosary! How well it was recited by the visionaries and with what devotion we recited it ourselves! But the strangest thing was yet to happen. Upon arriving at the cemetery, Conchita put one hand holding the crucifix, between the bars of the gate and gave it to be kissed, apparently by the departed souls. Her hand moved back and forth at various heights, as if people were gathered there, behind the grilled door, exactly as in the village when the crowd gathered around the visionaries.

When it was over, and having walked back about fifty yards, Conchita turned and went back to the cemetery. She again passed her hand between the bars, as if the first time one of the deceased had not kissed the crucifix, or as if he had refrained at the time from doing so.

Etaquio's Surprise. The story is as follows. Etaquio's very old mother was living in Garabandal. He had come to spend some time with her. He had left his wife and daughter in Mexico to look after his business. When his daughter had finished the school term, both of them came to rejoin him. His wife, knowing what was happening in her husband's village, was prompted to bring a medal which Etaquio had left in Mexico. One day, without telling him anything, she gave four medals with their chains to Loli, telling her,

"When you are with the Virgin, give her these medals and then give them back to their rightful owners."

Well, Loli fell into ecstasy on the floor above the cafe. I climbed up and I saw the scene. She gave the medals to be kissed, then she put one around the neck of Etaquio's wife. The wife, seeing that, indeed, it was her medal, was completely upset and started to cry. Loli took another one and put it around his daughter's neck. She returned the third one to his wife which belonged to her son who was not present. There remained the fourth one

with which Loli went down to the cafe where, among a large group of strangers, Etaquio was. Still in ecstasy, Loli went toward him to pass the medal around his neck. He drew back and said,

“This child must be mistaken because I didn’t give her any medal.”

But his surprise was great when he set eyes on the medal and exclaimed.

“Good Lord! But, this is the medal I left in Mexico!”

It was his wife who had wished to secure this proof. For us who had witnessed the event, it was only one of many marvels which took place in Garabandal.

I would also like to attest to the fact that Loli came down the staircase mentioned above many times while in ecstasy, slowly, the body in a horizontal position, only the back of her heels resting on the steps.²⁸

Another “Indian,” nephew of one Joseito de Cosio, had given medals to Loli. I remember that while she was in ecstasy, she extracted one of the medals from the bunch, saying in front of us all.

“This medal has been kissed by Pope Pius X” (or XI, I don’t quite remember which).

At any rate, the Indian confirmed what Loli had said.

One day, my friend and colleague, Brigadier Crecencio, of the Civil Guard of Santander, nephew of Fr. Valentin, gave me a medal to be handed over to one of the visionaries when I went to the village. I don’t remember to which girl I gave it, but I believe it was Loli. The medal being blessed by the Virgin, I returned to Santander and gave it back to its owner. Sometime later, another nephew of Fr. Valentin, cousin to the Brigadier, was obliged to go to the hospital in Valdecilla, suffering from an inflammation of the abdomen. According to what they told me, only a miracle could save him. We applied the medal in question to the sick man and immediately, through the urinary tract, he passed a quantity of toxic fluid. He was then miraculously cured.

Other interesting facts. I must admit that during the year 1961

28. In a note from Canon Julio Porro Cardeñoso, he states, “We have seen them coming down the stairs in their houses, sitting down, either head first, or even tilted backwards, sliding down from the first floor to the ground floor.”

I saw the doctors from the Commission only three times. Once was the time when Dr. Rocha de la Nansa had notified me that this time the young girls would not appear at the *cuadro* because he was going to hypnotize them and thus stop them in the lane. That event ended in a big fiasco for Dr. Morales. (See page 70.)

The second time, on October 18, 1961, when the first Message was given and when the police force was protecting the children from the crowd, the behavior of the doctor was such that he could not accomplish the test he wished to perform.

The third time, they came to Garabandal during the night, when all the neighbors were asleep. They tried to take the visionaries to Santander without the permission of the children’s parents or the village’s.

I have experienced all the events which took place in Garabandal since the first apparition. Today, after seven years have elapsed, I still think about them day after day. My role as Sector Chief for the Civil Guard gave me the occasion to clean up my soul a bit, which was badly in need of it.

The apparitions unfolded themselves in such a religious atmosphere and made me live such marvels which I cannot forget. They incited me to a deeper faith and I am taking courses in Christianity. I have become a member of the Nocturnal Adoration Society [a society which spends one hour each month in adoration of the exposed Blessed Sacrament]. But each day I think that I am not doing enough.

I don’t believe the devil can ever take away the peace which dwells in me and which I lacked before. I can’t contain myself for I am constantly aware of the two Messages given to the world by the Virgin. And we must all think about them.

I would like to say to all Christians of good faith that of all I have just narrated, the most important is the Message of June 18, 1965. The devil has been unleashed, but we are in Mary’s time. Her Immaculate Heart will triumph and if we are in that Heart, we will triumph also.

Juan Alvarez Seco
Barcelona, March 7, 1969

Chapter 9

In Conclusion

After having read the villagers' testimonies, it is easy to note that they differ fundamentally from those of the visionaries. The four little girls have testified to what they know by direct, sensorial or intellectual communications. In the words of St. Paul, "If it is within my body, I do not know; if it is outside my body, I do not know. God alone knows. . . ." The visionaries have given us their testimony upon their "return" from a quasi-incommunicable state—the supernatural. On the other hand, the villagers are recounting what they have perceived through the normal sense channels, what they have seen and heard.

Due to the lack of an impartial and thorough investigation, the Church has not pronounced itself. Consequently, the faithful are bound to remain in a certain state of expectancy, although the quality and orthodoxy of the Messages received at Garabandal can, in a way, authenticate the visions. Everything seems to be in suspense until the great prophesied Miracle comes to pass—a Miracle—the nature of which we do not know nor the time when it will occur.

The magisterium seems, at least until then, little inclined to pronounce itself. It is true that the earlier retractions of the visionaries have caused some embarrassment as to their credibility. But should these retractions be considered an obstacle?

It would be opportune to remember that in the realm of the mystic, the reasoner and the logician must tread with great circumspection. In a work of high spirituality, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, the American Cistercian, Thomas Merton, wrote: "The contemplative mind, at the moment he is trying to communicate what he knows, retracts what he has said, denies what he has affirmed. . . ." This is because it is so difficult to pass

from the supernatural world to the terrestrial one.

The experiences of the saints confirm this attitude, so confusing to us pragmatists. Coming down from a marvelous and unworldly universe, the visionary sustains the effect of a shock, unable to "realize" what has happened to him, let alone transcribe what he has seen and heard in the course of his ecstasy. From that stage to self-doubt (" . . . maybe I was dreaming . . .") is but a short step. He is simultaneously certain and incredulous: "Nevertheless, it is turning!" said Gallileo. But the manifestations at Garabandal are quite different:

The state of the girls during the visions; their insensitivity to pain, their invulnerability, their heaviness, and their petrification, is adequate proof of their escape from our world toward another plane where the mind is all powerful and confirms the reflection of St. Paul. The same applies to the comparison made by the shepherd Cosio concerning Conchita: "She was like a dead thing"—dead to this world, but living in another one.

In analyzing the answers from the witnesses to the question concerning the length, place and aspect of the visions, it does not seem that we can consider, even for one second, the idea that the little girls could have hypnotized the witnesses or provoked some collective hallucinations. That would be granting them a rather astonishing power, considering their age, lack of culture and intellectual formation and the fact that they never looked their "subjects" straight in the eye, indeed, were not seeing them! Also, the girls had to deal with specialists, such as Dr. Ortiz (pediatrician), and Dr. Puncernau (neuropsychiatrist), who explicitly stated that there was no animus or manipulator between the visionaries and the crowd.

If hypnotism were present, the duration of the ecstasies and the quantity of "subjects" to be hypnotized should have brought the girls to a point of exhaustion! . . . But, all the witnesses categorically declare that the girls were never in better health than during that epoch.

Besides, they had not hypnotized anyone before 1961 and no one after 1965, not even once! If their power were so great, why did they not "work" on members of the Commission, Dr. Piñal, Dr. Morales or the bishops who questioned them? No, truly, that theory cannot be taken seriously.

Apart from the testimony of the visionaries, still unexplored in detail, there exists the testimony of the inhabitants of Garabandal who have "seen the seers seeing," who have heard them

talk, observed them in their ecstatic state and whose reflections are the principal aim of this book.

With all the risks of error and contradiction inherent in a report by fallible human beings, these simple mountain people have delivered their version of the facts. As men and women without malice, but not without finesse, they have judged events and protagonists. In the absence of a complete and exhaustive examination performed by theologians, the declarations of an Avelina Gonzalez or a Domingo Cuenca, to mention only two, carry for "those who have not seen anything and cannot say anything" a very great importance.

If, as most of the villagers have mentioned, "It was sufficient to see in order to believe," and have cited irrefutable examples to support their affirmation, who is in a position to contest them? They were the ones who witnessed the apparitions and mysterious phenomena for which no natural or scientific interpretation could validly be brought forward.

Could the witnesses be lying? For what reason and to what purpose? To attract tourists, as someone has suggested, and thus increase the price of their meager lands? Or to exploit the naive pilgrim? Very well, but there are some, like Pilar, who have nothing, no land to sell, no house to let. Moreover, it would require a prodigious agreement of all the inhabitants of the village in order that no one "let the cat out of the bag"—a sheer force of extraordinary character to enable them to have played this role since 1961! What's more, it would have required an instigator with a fertile imagination, to have had the idea in the first place to convince the entire village and hold the people in his grip for so many years. Who could have played this role? It suffices to spend but one day in Garabandal to recognize the absurdity of this hypothesis.

Until now, these events have brought more trouble than benefits to the inhabitants, especially to the families of the visionaries.

Lies on the part of the witnesses? To question the integrity of men like Don Benjamin, Pepé or Simon might result in not a few unruffled feathers and that holds true for members of the Church hierarchy as well.

Furthermore, to sit down with these simple people and listen to them for hours on end is enough to convince anyone of their total sincerity and truthfulness. And what about the other witnesses from all of Spain and other countries of the world? Would they have reason to lie?

On the other hand if they have not been incited, if they do not lie, is the entire population of the village a sect of luminaries? The succession of priests in Garabandal can best answer as to the quality of the villagers' faith. If, in 1961, all the inhabitants were suffering from delusions and, many years later, they were still suffering from the same delusions, then that is quite serious. But it is a known fact that this is not the case and those who would put forth such a hypothesis would do well to have a mental equilibrium as good as the villagers'.

Then what if the girls' visions were of demoniac origin? The demoniac hypothesis demands serious consideration. But how can we explain that while coming out of an ecstasy, the four girls were far from being troubled, agitated, frightened, or worried, as is usual in those who suffer from diabolical manifestations? On the contrary, the girls were laughing, smiling, rested and relaxed which are probable signs of divine action. The witnesses are unanimous in attesting to this fact, and the amateur films and photos back it up.

We should take note of the episode referred to as "the mysterious voice" (August 17, 1961) which is mentioned in several testimonies cited in this book, and which shows strong indications of being caused by the devil. The agitation which this voice caused the girls is counter-proof to the divine origin of all other manifestations. You could compare it with the diabolical manifestations to which the young Bernadette Soubirous had been subjected during the Lourdes apparitions.

Then again, the Bishop of Santander could have been right: that it was a childish game, and the villagers fell for it. We shall answer by reporting once more the words of common sense spoken by Ciriaco Cosio, the old shepherd: "Only a bishop could make such a statement, because he never had any children." It is doubtful if any mother or head of family, gifted with even a modicum of common sense and having children the same age as the visionaries, could ever believe such a thing.

If it were a childish prank, then these youngsters, of eleven and twelve years of age when it began, should have thus amused themselves for four and a half years without once betraying themselves. They would have to have carried their deception as far as exposure of their eyes to strong TV lights without blinking; having their legs pricked with pins or needles without complaint; letting their limbs be distorted by doctors; finding means to resist, with astounding strength, attempts to be lifted; walk-

ing on their knees over thorny bushes without being scratched; letting themselves fall heavily on sharp stones without being injured; receiving hailstones full in the face in the middle of the night without protecting themselves; going out in the dead of winter through snow and the rough mountain paths; and numerous other unnatural occurrences.

Moreover the four young girls would have had to amuse themselves by taking walks in the village and to the cemetery in complete serenity while those who accompanied them were shaking with fright; by changing weight (how?); by being able to deceive the doctors during medical examinations; by deluding their own brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and neighbors, the whole while keeping a perfect physical and mental equilibrium. Obviously preposterous.

So what, then, can we conclude? The inhabitants of the village and other witnesses answer: "For us there is no doubt possible—this comes from God!"

And addressing themselves to the religious authorities and to scientists, they say,

"If you deny this origin, you must bring us, not just hypotheses but proof in the same manner as we have brought you facts which we have seen."

Chapter 10

Supplementary Documents

Position of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

July 28, 1965

According to *La Documentation Catholique* dated October 17, 1965, No. 1457, page 1823:

Notice from the Holy See.

Official Bulletin of Santander Diocese—August 1965.

The Holy See, under date of July 28, 1965, after having acknowledged receipt of the information given by the Bishop of Santander, textually mentions: "The documentation transmitted shows with sufficient clarity the prudence with which Your Excellency has acted upon this question. If something new happens, please inform the Holy See."

Raimondo Verardo, O.P., Commissioner.

March 7, 1967

According to *La Documentation Catholique*, 1967, No. 1491, page 672:

Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith addressed to Mgr. Vicente Puchol Montis.

Rome, March 7, 1967

Excellency,

With a letter written in the month of October last, you have forwarded to this sacred congregation the documents drafted by the diocesan commission, as well as the norms given by Your Excellency regarding the "apparitions" which they say have taken place in Garabandal.

This sacred congregation has carefully and attentively examined all the documentation, as well as the ones sent from other places and has finally reached the conclusion that this question has already been thoroughly ex-

amined and dealt with by yourself and consequently there is no reason for this sacred congregation to intervene.

I thank Your Excellency for the diligence and prudence of which Your Excellency has given proof in order to solve this affair and I am happy to take advantage of this occasion to express my great esteem and affection.

A. Cardinal Ottaviani
Pro-Prefect

March 10, 1969

According to *La Documentation Catholique* dated June 7, 1970, No. 1564, page 532.

Letter from the Cardinal-prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to the Bishop of Santander.

Rome, March 10, 1969

To His Excellency Mgr. José Cirarda Lachiondo, Bishop of Santander.
Excellency,

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has duly received your letter dated January 31 last, with which you sent a dossier concerning the apparitions of Garabandal, asking it to sanction by its supreme authority, the proposed arguments.

This dicastery has already dealt with this question more than once and your recent letter has given it the occasion to attentively reexamine it, but as this examination did not bring to light any new element, there is no need today for the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to directly intervene in this affair.

You know our congregation has always refused to substitute itself for the authority which first examines and judges such kinds of questions, and it has refrained from any kind of interference. In its correspondence on this subject, it has been content to congratulate the prudence and the pastoral solicitude with which your curia has acted, without ever bearing judgment engaging the authority of the Holy See. One should not forget in fact that when the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith engages its authority in the study of a certain question, it gathers all the data on the problem to submit them to its examination. But in this occurrence it did not deem it necessary.

Moreover, the decree rendered by the authority of the diocesan ordinary who has the right of competency, must constitute, even for the ordinaries at large, a sufficient motive to discourage the faithful from all pilgrimages and exercises of piety relative to the said apparitions and communications in question.

I take this opportunity to express, Your Excellency, my sentiments of profound esteem.

Franjo Cardinal Seper
Prefect.

May 10, 1969

According to *La Documentation Catholique*, dated September 21, 1969, No. 1547, page 821.

Spanish text published through the religious service of the *Agence Prensa Asociada*, Madrid, May 27, 1969:

Following the publication of the official note from the Bishop of Santander on March 17, 1967, and the letter from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith dated March 7, 1967, no new elements have appeared. Consequently, the Bishop of Santander retains the authority to judge the situation concerning Garabandal.

The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, without dealing with the root of the question, has decided that the Bishop of Santander has acted correctly on this question, and in perfect agreement with his authority.

It is useless for the defenders of Garabandal to seek an approval by the Holy See contrary to the actions and decisions of the Bishop of Santander in this affair.

Being given to understand that the Bishop of Santander has full authority on this point, it is untrue that a private investigation has been launched by the Holy See.

It is equally inaccurate to affirm that Paul VI has granted to Conchita Gonzalez a private audience or a special benediction. In fact, she received the benediction during a general audience but it would be tampering with the truth to interpret that as an approval of Garabandal by the Pope.

January 21, 1970

According to *La Documentation Catholique* dated February 15, 1970, No. 1557, page 161.

RETRACTION. In our issue dated September 21, 1969, page 821, acting upon the good faith of various press agencies, we presented as "Note from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith" a text concerning the Garabandal apparitions. Many readers have contested the authenticity of that note. We then referred the matter to the Sacred Congregation in question. Here is the answer we have received from its secretary, Mgr. Paul Philippe, dated January 21, 1970: "The text (on Garabandal) published in issue No. 1547, dated September 21, 1969, from *La Documentation Catholique*, is not from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

June 7, 1970

The above note and subsequent retraction caused *La Documentation Catholique* in its issue No. 1564, dated June 7, 1970, page 534, to specify:

Fr. Romagosa is the originator of the "Note from the Congregation for

the Doctrine of the Faith," published under that title in our issue dated September 21, 1969, page 821, and about which we have published a retraction in our issue date February 15, 1970, page 161.

Fr. Romagosa has communicated to us the following account concerning the above:

Eight months prior to writing to Mgr. Cirarda, Fr. Romagosa had gone to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, where he asked for a declaration for the press concerning Garabandal. After having presented to a member of the Congregation the writings that the partisans of Garabandal are circulating, in which it is said that the Bishop of Santander is not authorized to pronounce himself on the authenticity of the apparitions, Fr. Romagosa was handed on May 10, 1969, a press communique in which the authority of Santander was sustained concerning that question.

On the basis of that communique dated May 10, Fr. Romagosa drafted a declaration which was diffused throughout the entire world by the Bureau of Roman Information of the episcopacy of the United States.

Because the declaration made by Fr. Romagosa did not bear the signature nor the seal of the Cardinal-prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, its authenticity was immediately contested by the partisans of Garabandal. Consequently, Fr. Romagosa wrote to the member of said congregation, who had been at the source of the press declaration dated May 10, asking that it be officially published by the congregation. He was answered that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had never pronounced itself officially on Garabandal because it considered the question to be entirely in the hands of the Bishop of Santander Diocese where the alleged apparitions took place.

This member of the congregation then suggested to Fr. Romagosa that he demand an official declaration from the Bishop of Santander.

April 21, 1970

According to *La Documentation Catholique*, dated June 7, 1970, No. 1564, page 533.

Letter from the Cardinal-prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to the Archbishop of New Orleans.

Rome, April 21, 1970

To His Excellency Mgr. Philip M. Hannan, Archbishop of New Orleans.
Excellency,

This office has received your letter dated April 8, 1970, in which you mentioned your justified fears concerning the diffusion of the Garabandal movement in your archdiocese and in which you also asked the Holy See for a sure and precise line of conduct in dealing with this phenomenon.

The Holy See shares your preoccupation in view of the evident confusion which is increasing, caused by the diffusion of that movement among the faithful, and desires by this letter to clarify its position on the subject.

The Sacred Congregation, in spite of the requests coming from various bishops and faithful, has always refused to define the supernatural character of the Garabandal events after the negative and definitive judgment brought out by the Santander curia. This Sacred Congregation, after attentive examination of the various files in the dossier transmitted to this office, has often congratulated the prudence which has characterized the method followed in the inquest, and has, consequently, decided to leave the direct responsibility of the affair in the hands of the local ordinary.

The Holy See has always felt that the measures and the conclusions of the Santander bishop constitute a line of conduct sufficiently clear for the Christian people and indications for the bishops, with the aim of dissuading the people from participating in pilgrimages and other forms of devotion attached to or founded on the alleged apparitions and messages of Garabandal.

On March 10, 1969, this Sacred Congregation wrote a letter to this effect to the Bishop of Santander who had also asked for a more explicit declaration from the Holy See on that question.

However, the Garabandal promoters have tried to minimize the decisions and the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Santander. This Sacred Congregation wishes that it be understood that the Bishop of Santander has been and continues to be the only one to have complete jurisdiction in this affair, and that the Holy See has no intention of continuing the examination of this question, due to the fact that it feels the investigation as well as the declarations already made by the Bishop of Santander is sufficient. There is no truth in the assertion that the Holy See has appointed an official investigator acting in the personal name of the Pope, at Garabandal; nor in the affirmation, attributed to an anonymous personage, in virtue of which "the verification of the apparitions of Garabandal rest totally in the hands of the Holy Father, Pope Paul VI." Similar expressions which tend to minimize the authority and the decisions of the Santander Bishop are completely unfounded.

For the purpose of answering certain doubts which you have expressed in your letter, this Sacred Congregation desires to affirm that the Holy See has never approved, even indirectly, the Garabandal movement. On the contrary, the Holy See deplores the fact that certain persons and institutions persist in spreading the movement, in evident contradiction to the dispositions of the ecclesiastical authority, thus causing confusion among the people and especially among those who are naive and defenseless.

After what has been said above, you will easily understand that although the Sacred Congregation is in agreement with the contents of the note dated May 10, 1969, (as published in various countries and notably in the French magazine *La Documentation Catholique*, dated September 21, 1969, No. 1547, page 821) it must add that it is inaccurate to attribute the part of the text dealing with the absence of supernatural character in the events of Garabandal, to the Sacred Congregation which has always abstained from any direct declaration on the question, precisely because it did not

deem it necessary to do so, following the clear and precise decisions from the Bishop of Santander.

Such is the authentic meaning of the letter written on January 21, 1970, by Mgr. Paul Philippe, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation to the editor of *La Documentation Catholique*.

For the purpose of helping you in your pastoral action regarding this affair, this office is attaching to this letter other official documents already published in other countries, mainly in Spain. That is: the two official notes from the Bishop of Santander; two letters from the Sacred Congregation to the said Bishop; and a letter to the apostolic delegate in Mexico.

By now, this office hopes to have clarified a question which not only concerns your archdiocese, but other dioceses as well.

With the assurance of my sentiments of most profound esteem and cordial respect.

Franjo, Cardinal Seper,
Prefect

Paul Philippe,
Secretary

A too quick reading of the last note could lead one to think that Rome has taken a negative view and closed the files. The language of the Vatican (and here we address ourselves to American readers) is not the language of your everyday businessman. One must read the text several times and weigh each phrase:

4th paragraph: "... After the final negative judgment made by the diocese of Santander, this Sacred Congregation. . . bearing in mind the prudence which characterizes the method followed during the investigation, BUT NEVERTHELESS (or: despite that), decide to leave the responsibility for the direction of the affair in the hands of the local Ordinary."

5th paragraph: "... This Sacred Congregation wants it clearly understood that the Bishop of Santander has been and continues to be the only one to have complete jurisdiction in this affair. . ."

6th paragraph: "... quite the contrary, the Holy See deplors the fact that certain persons and institutions persist in spreading the movement in obvious *contradiction* to the dispositions of the ecclesiastical authorities . . ." . . . Here, Rome deplors that there is conflict between the defenders of Garabandal and the Bishop of Santander but she does not herself condemn the actions of these people, and above all she does not pronounce on the essence of the affair precisely. "... that it is inexact to

attribute the part of the text treating of the absence of the supernatural in the events of Garabandal to the Sacred Congregation, which has always abstained from all direct declarations on the question . . ."

We could here say that in April 1970, Rome refused to recommend or condemn Garabandal and left the entire responsibility for making that decision to the Bishop of Santander, preserving also, all freedom of action for the future. Since that date there has been no other official communication from the Vatican. They are maintaining a wait-and-see attitude.

During the Holy Year of 1975, Jacinta made a pilgrimage to Rome. She was given a thirty-minute audience with Cardinal Ottaviani, predecessor of Cardinal Seper, who told her, "... Jacinta, pray very much that the Church renders a statement on the importance of Garabandal. . ." That same day, Cardinal Paul Philippe, co-signer with Cardinal Seper, of the aforementioned note, learning of Jacinta's presence in the Vatican, left a large convocation of bishops to come to see her and said to her, "... I bless you in the name of the Blessed Mother, Jacinta, and I am with you entirely . . ." "For me," added Jacinta, "I understood without any possible doubt, that he wished to say that he was in complete agreement with the apparitions at Garabandal." (Interview with Jacinta and R.P. and J.S., August 16, 1979.)

Fr. Valentin Marichalar, on this same date, told us, "... At Rome, I was told that the dossier appeared to be self-evident."

During 1977:

On the occasion of his *ad Limina* visit to Rome, Bishop del Val contacted Mgr. Benelli, without much success, it seems. End of October 1977:

After a visit from Mari Loli, Bishop del Val wrote to the successor of Mgr. Benelli to ask him to institute a Roman commission.

Mid-December, 1977:

Rome answered that since the files had been transferred to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, we must wait for a response: "... we have taken the matter in hand, there are several extraordinary things there . . ."

December 21, 1977:

Bishop del Val made a pastoral visit to Garabandal. In the church, after his homily, he spoke briefly about the apparitions. These remarks were not recorded, however, and he has not left

any written text. We have ascertained from several witnesses that with all due respect for the opinions of his predecessors, he is well disposed to receive any new element that would cast light on "the affair." He seems to want Rome to participate in the investigation.

"I wish to say that the Holy See should name an official commission to effect a serious study of all that has happened here . . . As for myself, I will receive with warmth and respect any testimony of a serious and responsible nature."

February 7, 1978:

New letter (strongly worded) from Rome: ". . . In the face of the international reverberations provoked by the fantastic interpretations of the words of December 21, 1977, the competence of judgment rests with the Diocese of Santander."

April 2, 1978:

The emotion stirred up in the world by these remarks failing to be appeased, Bishop del Val made an announcement published by *l'agence Madrilene, Prensa Asociada*, wherein he stated precisely the meaning of his statements made at Garabandal, and ended by saying that the reactions which they had engendered contra-indicated, as not expedient, the creation of a special commission for this question before the Holy See.

At the end of 1980 we are still at the same point: Rome takes the affair very seriously but officially she declares that it is the Bishop of Santander who must decide.

Then why hasn't Bishop del Val pronounced affirmatively or at least instituted a true canonical investigative commission? The answer may well be for the same reason that immobilizes Rome—to know that the events, past and yet to come, constitute the most prodigious episode in the history of the Church since the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ! Garabandal is enormous! If it called us, as did Lourdes, to a simple conversion and penance, and these aspects do appear equally in Garabandal, it is more than likely that the Church (Rome and Santander) would have already pronounced positively, as the dossier is unimpeachable. But the religious authority who recognized it would have to take the responsibility of announcing to the world a Miracle more extraordinary than that of Fatima, which has never been easy; then, more difficult also: a worldwide Warning; the last of the Popes; the end of time; a Chastisement which some believe to be the Day of Yaweh mentioned in the Bible. Any-



Bishop del Val is pictured with the inhabitants of Garabandal outside the village church during a pastoral visit to the area in December, 1977.

one would postpone it, and that is understandable. Never in the history of the Church has a Pope made such earthshaking pronouncements. It would take nothing less than a miracle for any bishop to overcome this enormous obstacle. Well, isn't that exactly what heaven has predicted and announced? Recall Conchita's letter to Fr. José García de la Riva, dated November 29, 1962: ". . . In the Diocese of Santander, a bishop will come who will not believe when he arrives: the Virgin will give him a sign, he will believe and he will lift the ban on priests going to Garabandal . . ."

Will this bishop be Bishop del Val? One can ignore the question but it appears at least highly probable that with so much attention, anguish and prayers on his part, that he will be the one to whom the promised sign will be given.

We understand his temporizing attitude. We assure him of our affection, our respect and our prayers, but at the same time we suggest he be so bold as to institute a true canonical investigatory committee* that won't mean he's acknowledging the apparitions: a commission which he will form sooner or later, too late perhaps, as were the demands made by Mary at Fatima for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart: ". . . They will do it, but it will be too late. . . ."

For the moment we remain in suspense.

*We have often heard the objection that the Diocese of Santander would not have the financial resources to launch a full scale investigation; the author proposes starting a fund for this purpose, and is convinced that money will pour in from all over the world.

Chapter 11

Reflections on the Great Miracle

In spite of the important literature dedicated to the apparitions of Garabandal for the last sixteen years, no great deal of emphasis has been placed on their multiple references to the ecclesiastical life. The apparitions took place from 1961 to 1965, thus paralleling the convocation and the unfolding of the various sessions of the Council. The Virgin announced to the young girls the death of John XXIII. She also predicted that his successor would continue the Council and bring it to an end. As Vatican II is undoubtedly a capital event in the Church history of the twentieth century, the coincidence with Garabandal is not at all hazardous. But, no doubt we shall have to wait for the accomplishment of the prophecies—the Warning and great Miracle—so that the relationship between these two dissimilar events may appear in full light. While waiting, we must satisfy ourselves to underline certain contact points.

One for example, was totally unexpected by the contemporaries. It was that part of the June 18, 1965, Message which states that many cardinals, bishops and priests are on the road to perdition. If we place this affirmation in its proper place with regard to the Church—the end of the Council—and address ourselves to the present situation within the Church, we cannot but be impressed by this “clairvoyance.” For it has become evident today that the actual crisis is a crisis “within the Church” especially among the priests. We can now better understand the insistence with which Our Lady of Mount Carmel asked of the four girls and all of us to *pray for priests*.

Serafin, Conchita’s brother, affirms having heard his sister announce during an ecstasy, that the Warning will be brought about after the Church has been cruelly torn by “something like

a schism.” Thus, that event (the Warning) shall punctuate a sorrowful mystery in a way similar to which the Miracle will punctuate a joyful mystery in the life of the People of God.

One of the strangest predictions of the Virgin Mary deals with the Holy See of Saint Peter which shall not count more than two titularies after Paul VI. On the other hand, it is also specified that the Pope shall see the Miracle from wherever he may be, as if the Mother of God wishes especially to associate the Vicar of her Son to the apotheosis of the apparitions of Garabandal. On this day which shall coincide with an important event of the Church, the ecclesiastical character of what some said “started as an innocent child’s game,” shall then be clearly manifested.

**OTHER BOOKS ON GARABANDAL AVAILABLE FROM
THE WORKERS OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL**

The Apparitions of Garabandal by F. Sanchez Ventura y Pascual.

An excellent account of the Garabandal events by an eyewitness who was present during numerous ecstasies. The first book ever written on the subject.

Star on the Mountain by Father Materne Laffineur.

The author covers the period from 1961 to 1967. There is much valuable information in this personal testimony of a witness to the events.

Our Lady Comes to Garabandal by Father Joseph Pelletier.

Conchita's entire *Diary* and related documents with valuable commentary by Father Pelletier. The whole story up to August 1971.

O Children Listen to Me by Robert François.

Shows how the teachings of the Church came alive and were acted out at Garabandal. Many marvelous episodes from the events.

Miracle at Garabandal by Harry Daley.

Includes detailed accounts of the apparitions by Conchita herself, prophecy of the crisis in the Church, the great prophecies, and the Padre Pio "connection" (real, not a pious fable).

Diario de Conchita de Garabandal (Conchita's Diary) in Spanish.

Mi Tortent Garabandalban? (What Happened at Garabandal?) in Hungarian.

GARABANDAL Magazine. Published quarterly by The Workers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Box 606, Lindenhurst, New York 11757-0606. The official publication of the worldwide apostolate dedicated to spreading Our Lady's Messages given at Garabandal. Covers past, present and future happenings related to the visions and dialogues at Garabandal.

For a complete listing of all available materials on Garabandal write to:

The Workers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
P. O. Box 606, Lindenhurst, New York 11757-0606
U.S.A.

The villagers speak.

The mountaineers of San Sebastian de Garabandal neither anticipated, nor for that matter particularly desired any change in the pattern of their lives that had remained virtually unchanged for longer than anyone could remember. But when four young girls returned from the edge of the village on that fateful day of June 18, 1961, pale and visibly shaken, with the account that they had just seen an angel, these very people would be thrust into the role of bearing witness to the extraordinary events that had just commenced.

“Me, I believe what I have seen.” —*Aniceta Gonzalez*

“All these events were very strange, these events which I still do not understand.” —*Simon Gonzalez*

“What can this be? Everything they predict comes true. Who can be telling them these things?” —*Maria Gonzalez*

“What I have seen I have seen and I say it. And I do not add or subtract anything to what I have seen.”
—*Benjamin Gomez*

“If I had not seen it with my own eyes I could not have been able to describe it to you. What I did not see for myself I do not narrate.” —*Avelina Gonzalez*

“...with everything we were seeing if you didn't believe, it was because you didn't want to believe.” —*Paquita Cuenca*

This is Garabandal seen from a slightly different perspective, through the eyes of those who were there, who lived through it day after day. They are poor, hard working farmers, intelligent, noble and moral, who neither deceive nor like being deceived. Their testimonies, given in a straightforward manner without embellishment, add considerable weight to the conviction that at Garabandal there was a presence that far surpassed the natural order of things.