

SHE WENT IN HASTE TO THE MOUNTAIN

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Translated from Spanish by B. Miller, Gerard Suel and Otto Miller

Published by
The Workers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
P.O. Box 606, Lindenhurst, New York 11757
U. S. A.

Published in Spain in 1972 and 1979 under the title
SE FUE CON PRISAS A LA MONTAÑA

First English Edition published in 1981 by
St. Joseph Publications, Cleveland, Ohio

Second English Edition of 1981 original translation published
unaltered in one volume in 2003.

International Standard Book Number 0-9604310-7-1

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 00 092773

The Workers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
Post Office Box 606, Lindenhurst, New York 11757-0606, U.S.A.

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Printed in the United States of America

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Acknowledgement

To Brian Miller, M.D., who gave The Workers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Inc. permission to publish his original translation which he placed under the protection of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Patron of the Dying and Foster Father of Jesus the Son of God.

Dedicated to the Mother of God and *our* Mother.

Part I

The Epiphany of Mary

1961

CHAPTER 1

As It Was in the Beginning

“**I**N THE BEGINNING GOD created heaven and earth. And He said, “Let the earth bring forth green foliage and plants that produce seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit on the earth according to its kind, having seed within itself.” And it was so done . . . And God saw that it was good.”

And God said, “Behold I have given you every seed bearing plant upon the earth, and all trees that have in themselves seed of their own kind, to be your food.” (Genesis 1: 1, 11, 29)

And the serpent said to the woman, “No you shall not die the death . . . On whatever day you shall eat from it, your eyes will be opened” . . . And the woman saw the tree was good to eat and delightful to behold, with a delicious appearance. And she took the fruit and ate. (Genesis 3: 4-6)

Thus the Bible tells us about the beginning of all things: the commencement of man’s history. Appearing on the first and most decisive scene of our destiny: God, the evil spirit, a woman, and the mysterious apple tree. And so were enacted the world’s first sin, the Creator’s first

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pardon, the beginning of an existence marked by labor and pain, but not without hope.

What took place at the beginning of history—mankind's great adventure—also happened at the beginning of another adventure—the *epic of Garabandal*.

In the little mountain village of San Sebastián de Garabandal,¹ century after century had passed without history; then one day . . .

A Sunday Like Any Other

The calendars in the kitchens² were turned to the page for June, 1961, showing: *Sunday, the 18th. St. Ephrem, Doctor of the Church, Sts. Mark and Marcellian, martyrs*. So what? It was just one more among the countless days that passed without event in the little world of Garabandal. Nothing ever happened there worth telling.

It was in the great world on the other side of the mountain where things were happening. Most of these were disturbing: men and nations stirred up with unrest, greed, anxiety, revolts; worried about the future with cold wars and real ones on all fronts. What did the coming days hold?

As a ray of hope in the face of all these problems that appeared to have no human solution, within the walls of the Catholic Church in Rome plans were underway with great anticipation to prepare a new council: Vatican II. It would be convened by John XXIII, *Good Pope John*, as many called him affectionately. Even with his eighty years, this man spoke

1. There are approximately sixty houses in the village, built of stone, and arranged in typical rural style. They are grouped together on top of a narrow plain, irregular in outline, about 2,000 feet above sea level, giving the appearance of a wide open Y.

The entrance to the village is from the bottom of this Y, that points downward to a river below flowing into the Cantabrian Sea. An extremely bad road comes up from Cossío some six kilometers away.

The upper part of the Y opens toward the south-southwest to a magnificent display of mountain peaks ending on the one side with the Peña Sagra chain (2,016 meters) and on the other side, farther away and more to the south, with the Peña Labra chain (2,010 meters) that overlooks vast sections of the provinces of Palencia and Santander. From here rivers flow toward three bodies of water: the Cantabrian Sea, the Mediterranean (by way of the Ebre River), and the Atlantic Ocean (by way of the Pisuerga River). In this region, Garabandal is the last village before those imposing mountain ranges from which it is separated by miles of silence and solitude amid terrain of savage beauty.

2. The most popular calendars in those days were put out by the Capuchines in Santander who published the magazine *El Santo* in honor of St. Anthony of Padua.

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with inspiration and hope in his heart like the blossoming of flowers in springtime.³ Through his efforts and by his decree, hundreds of eminent scholars set out to sound out the world, seeking to assist it.⁴ As a result of their search, things like these were soon to be proclaimed to the council assembly:

Though mankind is struck with amazement by its own discoveries and power, it often raises anxious questions about the present evolution of the world, about the place and the mission of man himself in the universe, about the meaning of his individual and collective efforts, and about the final destiny of reality and of humanity.

History itself is undergoing such a process of acceleration that it is hardly possible for man to follow it. We all pursue the same fate, and we are not able to disassociate ourselves into separate individual cases. Such a rapid change, realized in the upset, gives birth to or increases the contradictions and disorder.

So the modern world appears at the same time both powerful and weak, capable of the best and the worst, for there is a choice between the road to liberty and that to slavery, toward progress or toward decay, toward love or toward hate. These disorders are related to another disorder, truly fundamental, which finds its roots in the very heart of each man . . . a weak and sinful creature who often does what he does not wish to do and neglects what he ought to do and ought to accomplish.

(Catechism of Modern Man)

In that grave hour of history when so many things were happening or were about to happen in the world, it would never have occurred to anyone that something important could take place at San Sebastián de Gara-bandal. This village seemed buried in oblivion, lost in the distance. Life there was continuing the same as it had for years, perhaps for centuries. *Today, like yesterday; tomorrow, like today. And always the same: a gray sky.*⁵

Of course the sky in San Sebastián was not always gray, even though it is near to the rainy Cantabrian Mountains; but the life of its inhabitants

3. On January 25th, 1959, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, in the famous Basilica *St. Paul Outside the Walls*, the Pope publicly announced his proposal to convoke a new council.

4. On June 18th of that year, Cardinal Tardini, president of the Preparatory Commission, wrote to the cardinals, bishops, and the heads of religious orders, Catholic universities and seminaries requesting suggestions and topics for the council.

5. Poem of Gustavo Bécquer, a Spanish poet (1836–1870).

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was certainly gray and monotonous. Always the same cows and stables, the same fields and harvests, with nothing changing except the seasons. Here the people still gathered in the homes and assembled as Christians in the house of God, the main building in the village, linked closely to it. Here the latest news involved everyone: Carmen had a baby, Pili is going to get married, Juan's son is returning from the military, the bells will soon sound the death of Uncle Gervasio.

In times past over the trails that wind around Garabandal, many a time the country song had rung out, *I don't know what holds me to my village, nor why it charms me so, nor why it attracts me*. But today the young people were feeling different attractions, wanting to get away from this place where they saw no future, and to get out into the world that could offer opportunities. The old people still remained attached to the village, sometimes by affection and sometimes by necessity; with a desire to persevere, or a noble resignation to maintaining the inheritance of their fathers. As for the young children, they amused themselves as children do all over the world, exchanging gifts, or playing games like hide and seek.

In the days when our story starts, the chief of police in the district of Rio Nansa was Juan Alvarez Seco. This is his description:

Garabandal is a little mountain town made up of about seventy families. The customs of its inhabitants are primarily religious. For example, they never forget to recite the *Angeles* as soon as the clock shows twelve noon. In the evening they always recite the holy rosary in the church. This is led by the parish priest if he is present; if not, the schoolteacher or another villager leads it. As night falls, Jacinta's mother, the wife of Simon, goes around the village with a lantern and bell to call the people to pray for the dead and say the last prayers of the day. On Sundays after assisting at Holy Mass in the ancient simple church, the people take a little recreation. In the evening the young people gather under the porch roofs or the open sky and sing or amuse themselves to the sound of a tambourine.

Sunday June 18, 1961

The day starts very early as there are many daylight hours at the start of summer. The early June mornings radiate enchantment. The climate is caressing, the air pure, with light softly shining through the clouds, awakening the birds, brightly outlining things with an array of colors.

Dawn is known only too well by the inhabitants of Garabandal due to the demands of their work as cattle raisers and farmers; so they do not

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arise early to enjoy the Sunday mornings. Most of them get up later than usual, since the Lord's Day was made for rest.

The men wash and shave, something they do not do everyday. The women bustle around, busier than on other mornings, arranging their family's clothes, since no one is going to go to Sunday Mass without their dress being clean or their suit pressed.

When the bells peel out from the massive church tower to awaken the village, the sounds of a festival day fill the air. The harsh music from the bells bounces off the tile roofs, reverberating through the little streets to be lost far away in the fields and prairies, in the streams and river beds, finally absorbed in the trees and shrubs dotting the hills surrounding the village.

The bells ring out first for the Mass, later for the rosary. Without a Mass or a rosary crowded with participants, how could one picture a feast day in Garabandal? Father Valentín Marichalar, the pastor from Cossío, who is also in charge of the parish of San Sebastián, arrives for Mass after traveling six kilometers of bad road. The rosary is led by any of the faithful, provided that he is capable of saying it without making mistakes in the mysteries or the litany that follows.

The Mass can take place at any time according to the disposition of the pastor. But the rosary is said a little after dinner, since everyone is free at that hour, and there will be time left over for the people to amuse themselves and relax.

On this evening the young people are organizing a little dance on Caballera Street, although some of them are talking about going down to Cossío or Puentenansa. (There was no movie theater, television set, or meeting hall in Garabandal.) Some of the men cluster together to talk; others dispute loudly in the tavern. Some women, many of whom wear the black widow's dress, remain in the church. Others wander down the paths to their homes chatting with each other, or sit down with their neighbors to pass the time on the stone seats next to the house doorways.

The children, as usual, play . . . where they can and how they can. To get away from the calm silence and solitude, most of the boys and girls walk to the square. In this group the games and amusements must not have been very entertaining, since one of them—a personable young brunette with braids—to escape the boredom ending the evening of that

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Sunday *like any other*, suddenly got an idea which she swiftly whispered in the ear of the girl next to her. She herself would confess it months later.⁶

Temptation at Dusk

(Conchita's Diary will always be in italics throughout the book.)

It was a Sunday evening, and we were with all the young girls playing in the plaza.⁷

Suddenly Mari Cruz⁸ and I thought of going to pick apples.

And we set off straight to the place where they were, without telling anyone that we were going to pick the apples.

The idea of picking apples was a real temptation. The apples did not belong either to Mari Cruz or to Conchita; so that this was an actual theft, that is to say, the sin of stealing. During those evening hours, the devil was in action among the inhabitants of Garabandal. He was luring two young adolescent girls to the tree of forbidden fruit—almost as in the beginning

6. Conchita González was her name. She was the last child, the only girl among the offspring of Aniceta González, a woman from the village who had lost her husband prematurely. At the beginning of our story Conchita was twelve years old; she was a gracious young girl, very observant, with a quick mind. However in education she was backward like all the young girls in Garabandal. Her culture could not advance much beyond what she learned at the school in her secluded little village.

Surely on someone's recommendation, Conchita started writing her diary in 1962. In it, in the language of a child, short and to the point, she would tell things that she could not blot out from her memory. I have in my hands photocopies of the original. The pages are large, on a school notebook, written down in wobbly penmanship, with many faults in spelling; but truly charming in what they say.

Her diary begins like this:

I am going to tell in this book about my apparitions and my daily life.

The most important happening in my life occurred on June 18, 1961, in San Sebastián . . .

It happened in the following way . . .

7. The *Plaza* is the name given to this place in the center of the village, since it is an open area from which many streets and alleys take their origin. But it should not be imagined that it is the same type of plaza as in a big city; the ground is unpaved and uncared for, dusty or muddy when it rains, full of loose stones, and covered with debris from the constant passage of men, wagons and animals.

8. Mari Cruz González was the daughter of Escolástico and Pilar. She was 11 years old at the time, thin and dark, and wore her hair very short.

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of time. We do not know if they, like Eve in the beginning, showed any resistance to the tempter's suggestions; if there was any resistance, it had to be very weak.

The girls, seeing that the two of us were going away alone, asked us, "Where are you going?"

And we answered, "Over there . . ."

And we continued on our way, thinking about how we were going to manage to pick them.

Once there,⁹ we started to pick the apples.

And when we were having a good time, we saw Loli, Jacinta,¹⁰ and another little girl coming to see if they could find us.

Seeing us picking the apples, Jacinta shouted out, "Hey, Conchita, you are picking the apples."

"Shut up," I told her, "The school teacher's wife will hear you, and will tell my mother."¹¹

Then I hid among the potato plants and Mari Cruz started to run through the field.

Loli shouted out, "Mari Cruz, stop running." "We see you. We will tell this to the owner."

9. This place is a small garden leading out from the Village in the direction of the Pines. Apparently the garden was not the property of the teacher, but of a woman called Pilar Cuenca.

10. *Loli* (María Dolores Mazón), was the second daughter of Ceferino and Julia, who had a large family. Ceferino was the mayor of the village, and besides having pastures for farming like everyone else in Garabandal, also owned a little store or tavern.

Jacinta had the last name of González too, just like Conchita and Mari Cruz. Jacinta's parents were María and Simón, two Christians of strong faith who bore with dignity the life of sacrifice imposed on them by an existence deprived of wealth.

Loli and Jacinta were 12 years old, and were likable children. The girl who came with them was Virginia, whom everyone called *Ginia*.

11. Aniceta González, whom we have already mentioned, was an old-fashioned Christian who brought up her children very strictly. Her first offspring were boys: Serafin, who knew the hard toil of the coal mines at Santa Lucía (Leon); Aniceto, nicknamed *Cetuco*, who would die at an early age in 1965; and Miguel. It was natural that Aniceta concentrated her care on the youngest of them all, her only daughter! And that she would try to protect her from harm because of her Christian faith and her obligation as a mother.

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Then Mari Cruz returned and we left our hiding place so that we could all be together.¹²

While we were talking, someone-called the little girl who had come with Jacinta and Loli, and she left.

The four of us remained alone; and giving it more thought, the four of us returned to pick the apples . . .

While we were having a good time, we heard the voice of the school-teacher,¹³ who on seeing the branches moving so much, thought it was the sheep, and said to his wife, “Concesa, go to the garden. The sheep are wandering near the apple tree.”

Hearing this, we burst out laughing.

When we had filled up our pockets, we hurried off to eat the apples more at peace in the street, that is in the calleja.¹⁴

Those apples in Garabandal certainly could not have been as enticing as the apples in the Garden of Eden. In places as high above sea level as Garabandal, apples in the month of June, even in years of an early spring, could not be anything more than half-ripe fruit, bitter, without juice, hard—suited to cause a toothache. But still they had an incredible power of seduction for the girls of the village who hardly ever saw any fruit other than that which the summers brought to the garden trees. Almost entirely deprived—at least during those years—of imported fruit, they eagerly went after the fruit from the village while it was still green.¹⁵

12. According to confidential statements Loli made to Father Manuel Antón, the pastor of San Claudio in the city of León, the four girls of our story were not always on the best terms with each other. They had recently quarreled among themselves, as happens frequently with children; and for some time had kept a certain coolness toward each other. They were accustomed to walk in pairs: Loli and Jacinta side by side, and Conchita side by side with Mari Cruz.

I finally had the chance to question Jacinta:

—“For the Angel’s first visit, did all four of you girls find yourselves together by chance? Since it is certain that you didn’t get along very well, especially you and Conchita.”

—“Well, we were like children who quarrel as soon as they get together. We had certainly fought several days before the apparition.”

13. Francisco Gómez, who was partially lame.

14. The *Calleja* is a steep, winding, unpaved trail, which goes from the back of the village to a hill where the Pines are situated.

15. The land containing the garden where the apple tree was growing, at the left of the unpaved Calleja that led to the Pines, was later purchased by the husband of Mrs. García Llorente-Gil Delgado from Seville. The garden was in bad condition. Her husband, believ-

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However in spite of what Conchita writes in her diary, I would think that the schoolmaster's apples, rather than being taken to satisfy their appetites, must have been an exciting escapade for the girls on a dull Sunday afternoon. I would imagine also that the apples, rather than being eaten voraciously, ended up half-eaten on the ground. Many years later, I heard from Mari Cruz herself in conversation with the Argentine counsel, Carlos Espina Rawson, that the apples of our story, rather than being taken for eating, were taken to be thrown as projectiles on the dancers in the square.

When we were enjoying ourselves eating the apples, we heard a loud noise, like thunder.

And we all shouted out: "It seems to be thundering."

That must have been an unusual sounding thunder. And it surely frightened the girls; people fear a storm, especially when it surprises them in an open field in the stillness of nature. The girls were in the middle of that stillness, outside the village although very near to it. They looked up to search for the place where the thunder had come. But neither close by, nor far away toward the heights of Peña Sagra,¹⁶ which so often showed its face surrounded by dark clouds, nor in the neighboring hills of Poniente where the thunder storms gathered, could they find the least disturbance. What a strange thunder! What was going on?

ing in Garabandal, in 1968 built a beautiful stone house there that is the largest in the village. From the beginning of construction he took the greatest care to preserve the tree of our story, something which he could only do half-way, since of the two limbs coming from the trunk, one was already dying and withered, which he trimmed to save the other. And so the tree was there, sheltered by the new house, until the winter of 1975, when a strong wind knocked it down. Now there only remains a small dead tree stump which can be seen at the right of the entrance to the house. The García Llorentes told me that the last apple picking in September, 1974 was of magnificent quality, very delicious.

16. An imposing mountain range that closes off the Garabandal horizon toward the South. On the other side of the Peña Sagra mountains extends the varied landscape of Liébana, at the extreme southwest of the province of Santander. The region of Liébana with its extremely high mountains and steep hills separates the Provinces of Palencia, León, and Asturias. One of the attractions of the region of Liébana is the skyline formed by the imposing mountain tops of the Picos de Europa on their western face. But the real treasure of the region is the very ancient monastery of San Toribio, now restored and run by the Franciscans. Here is kept the largest remaining single fragment of the True Cross, that is, of the wood of the Cross of Our Lord. It can easily be understood why in the nearby land of Garabandal the Virgin came to remind men, *Think of the Passion of Jesus*.

In the Still of the Evening (*Ad auram post meridiem*)

In Paradise, as soon as Adam and Eve, the first sinners, had eaten the forbidden fruit, they heard the sound of the footsteps of God, *walking in Paradise in the still of the evening*. (Gen. 3:8) (*Ad auram post meridiem*)

On that mysterious late Sunday afternoon our young girls had just heard something, and not without fear. (Could it have been the sound of God's special passage to mankind at Garabandal?) The sun was setting over the horizon. In Spain it was 8:30 in the evening.¹⁷

Now with the thunder the breathe of a different kind of inspiration comes to our four little sinners, whom the devil's suggestion had so easily lured to a not exactly saintly garden escapade. The young author states immediately after:

Oh, what a shame.

Now that we have picked the apples, which didn't belong to us, the devil will be pleased, and the poor Guardian Angel will be unhappy.

*Then we began to gather stones and threw them with all our strength to the left side, where the devil is said to be.*¹⁸

The recounting, in childlike simplicity, is noteworthy. The girls react strongly against the spirit of evil that had succeeded momentarily in seducing them. Opposing it, they place themselves resolutely on the side of the good angels whom they thought were watching on their right, leading them to God.

When we got tired of throwing stones, and were more satisfied with ourselves (the relief of conscience that follows a reaction against the devil), we began to play marbles with little stones on the ground.

Suddenly a very beautiful figure appeared to me, shining brilliantly, without hurting my eyes.

In the language of a young village girl, poor in vocabulary and unaccustomed to the abuse of superlatives that permeates the news media, these concise expressions show most extraordinary feelings. The figure

17. Conchita notes the time in her diary.

18. A belief that I myself have observed in many villages in Spain where it is thought that the Guardian Angel stands on the right while the tempter or devil approaches from the left.

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that appeared, and the brilliance that surrounded it, were so much beyond everything beautiful and impressive that could be looked on here below, that Conchita was almost snatched away from the world with admiration and surprise.

The other girls, Jacinta, Loli and Mari Cruz, (later they would explain this about themselves) on seeing me in that state, thought that I was having an attack, since I was saying with my hands joined together: "Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Oh! . . ."

As they were going to call my mother, they found themselves in the same state as I was.

And they exclaimed together: "Oh, an Angel!"

Then there was a short silence among the four of us, and he suddenly disappeared.¹⁹

And returning to normal, and very frightened, we ran toward the church—on the way passing the dance that was going on in the village.

Then a girl named Pili González said to us, "How white and frightened you are! Where are you coming from?"

Very ashamed in confessing the truth, we said to her, "From picking apples."

And she said: "For that . . . you are coming like this?"

We answered together: "IT IS BECAUSE WE HAVE SEEN AN ANGEL."

19. The girl informs us as a participant in that visit from Heaven; but we are able to complete her report with some information from an observer, which we owe to the Police Chief Juan Alvarez Seco:

"Some girls who were also playing in the area, on seeing the four girls in that strange attitude, began to throw stones at them. Then the Angel took them about 50 meters higher up in the same *calleja*. Once there, and while kneeling in their ecstatic position, an inhabitant of the village who was coming downhill from the mountain with a honeycomb wanted to pass between them. Seeing that they weren't moving so he could pass, and not understanding what was happening, he became irritated by the *poor training of those girls* . . . After having passed by the girls in the direction of the village, the man turned to look back and was amazed to see that the girls were still there, exactly in the same position and posture as before. Mindful of this, he could hardly sleep during the night, thinking that all this was very strange. He told this to his wife, but she answered that it wasn't important, 'children's affairs!' " (*This man's name was Vicente Mazón.*)

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And she said: "Is that true?"

We: "Yes, Yes . . ."

And we continued on our way in the direction of the church; and the girl told this to the others.

Once at the door of the church, and thinking it over better, we went behind it to . . . CRY.

This portrait of the young girls appeals to me. Needing to express their indescribable feelings, they would find refuge behind the walls of the church in order to pour out their tears. A mysterious instinct in the Christian soul had brought them there. They could not explain what had just happened, but they sensed subconsciously that it was something very great. Perhaps they also had premonitions that this could be the start of something still greater. Where else could they find refuge and protection, if not in the place that especially keeps the presence of God? Is that not also the best place to pray to Her who is His mother and their own, always so ready to help her poor children? But before going inside to pray, they had to pour out their tears on the walls outside.

Those walls, austere, strong, rising up above the little plateau on which Garabandal rests, have withstood the savage storms of the Cantabrian Mountains,²⁰ looking on century after century of days and nights, of good times and bad. Generations and generations of *Garabandalinos* have come there with their greatest joys, their most hidden sufferings, their final hopes . . . But never had those walls seen such ineffable sobbing of children, such exceptional tears as those the four girls shed under their shelter, while the sun set forever on that day of June 18th, 1961.

There was no one there at the time to mount the church tower to signal the hour by ringing the bells; but with the tears of the children, which were not sorrowful ones, a mystery would begin to sound out from Garabandal that would find a great echo in innumerable hearts.

We met some young girls who were playing, and when they saw us crying, they asked us, "Why are you crying?"

We told them, "BECAUSE WE HAVE SEEN AN ANGEL."

20. This extends across almost all the northern part of Spain, running along the Cantabrian Sea, separating the narrow band of coastal low lands from the wider and higher expanses in the interior country.

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They ran off to tell the schoolmistress.²¹

When we had finished praying, we returned to the church door and went inside.

At the same time the schoolmistress arrived very frightened and said to us at once, “My children, have you really seen an Angel?”

—“Yes, Señora.”

—“Could this be your imagination?”

—“No, Señora! We have really seen an Angel!”

Then the schoolmistress told us, “Let us go pray a Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in thanksgiving.”²²

We know that during that unforgettable Station, the girls’ words of prayers mingled with their sobs and laughter. “*We were in such a state*”, Loli admitted afterwards, “*that we were laughing and crying at the same time.*”

At Day’s End (*Te lucis ante terminum*)

Probably never was a Station like that ever said in the church at San Sebastián de Garabandal. Never such feeling of heart, such desire and need to take shelter near the Person who was truly there close to them—the Living God, full of love, powerful and hidden in His ways, and certainly the Author of all that had just happened.

The schoolmistress felt herself more a mother than ever toward her students who were leaning on her like frightened little birds, trying to feel more secure. They whispered the prayers:

21. In Garabandal there were two state schools in the same building; one of them was for boys, and the other for girls. The first was taught by the schoolmaster from the garden with the apple tree; the second was presided over by a lady who now comes on the scene and will remain for many years in the village. Her name was Serafina Gómez González; she was a native of Cossío; a widow of Raimundo Rodríguez and had a daughter named Toñito.

22. A Eucharistic devotion practiced widely in Spain. It consists of six Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be To The Fathers, with the ejaculation *Long Live Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. And may He be loved by all*. These prayers are accustomed to be said especially during the exposition of the Holy Eucharist, on making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and during Thanksgiving after the reception of Holy Communion.

Said to be originated by the Franciscans, the six Our Fathers of the Station have the following significance: Five are in honor of the Five Wounds of Christ—the wounds of the hands, feet, and side—and the sixth is a prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father to gain indulgences.

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Long live Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament . . . Our Father . . . Thy will be done . . . Forgive us our sins . . . Lead us not into temptation . . . Deliver us from evil!

The prayer of their five souls in the dark and deserted church was a real *Compline*²³ at Garabandal on that June Sunday that had begun *a Sunday like any other*.

The light of day dimmed. Time for evening prayer. On that day and at the same time as at Garabandal, just as it has been happening for centuries in the Church's countless monasteries and convents, great numbers of souls consecrated to God were saying before Him the liturgical prayer for the end of the day.

(Te lucius ante terminum.)

As the day ends we pray to you, Creator of the Universe, to be our Guardian and our Defender according to Your great mercy . . .

Guard us as the pupil of Your eyes; in the shelter of Your wings, protect us . . .

Let Your Holy Spirit descend upon us, Lord our God.

The girls did not understand the meaning of the word *Compline*, but one can do many things without knowing how to define them.

When we had finished saying the Station, we went to our homes.

It was already more than nine at night, and my mother had told me to come home during the day.²⁴

And on that day it was dark when I arrived.

When I got home, my mother said to me, "Didn't I tell you to come home before dark?"

Very frightened because of two things—for having seen the figure so beautiful, and for coming home late—I didn't dare to come into the kitchen.

23. Compline is the last hour of the Divine Office, the official daily prayer of the church; the proper time for its recital is nightfall. This prayer has the purpose of offering the day just concluding to God and petitioning his protection against the unknown dangers of the coming night.

24. It would be expected, and very proper for Aniceta to watch like this over her only daughter. In Garabandal the nights are really dark with the streets hardly lit up. And although the people were of upright morality, a girl like Conchita had no business being in the village at such a time.

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And I leaned against the wall, very sad.

What a picture. The young girl in the fresh radiance of her twelve years, leaning against the wall in dismay, trying to support with the softness of her look the unlikeliness of her words.

And I said to my mother, "I have seen an Angel!"

The acid response of Aniceta could be expected:

"Is that all? On top of coming home late, you come saying these things!"

And I answered again, "But it's true I have seen an Angel."

The replies, and the replies to the replies continued between the daughter and her mother. Aniceta, less sure each time in her refusals, finished being much inclined to admit that her daughter, that daughter for whom she lived and whom she watched over with extreme care, must have really experienced something.²⁵

25. I have come across a new version of what occurred on that memorable afternoon. It comes from Pilar, the mother of Mari Cruz, and was taken down on a tape recorder in the kitchen of her home—without her knowing it—on the afternoon of July 25th, 1964:

"We never fought with each other . . . And it happened one day, a Sunday, the 18th of June. I was at the laundry with a cow that I was keeping at the house. (*Pilar took the cow to water at the laundry, as was her custom, so that it could be stabled, since night was falling*) There I met Angelita, the wife of Fael, and I don't know who else . . . She said to me:

—"But what happened to Mari Cruz?"

—"What's happened? What's happened?—I answered—*What's she done?*"

—"But you don't know about it then? *That she says she has seen an angel.*"

—"An angel? *Oh, what a thing!*" This frightened me. I thought that she had done something bad. After that, I went on walking while thinking, "Is it possible that that girl is going around saying these ridiculous things about angels and church affairs?" (*The atmosphere in Mari Cruz's home must not have been especially religious. Conchita lets an observation escape in her diary about Mari Cruz' father Escolástico, who does not go much to mass.*)

While walking I met Mari Cruz right here by Sinda's home. I was irritated and I said to her:

—"Listen, Mari Cruz, what are you going around saying here?"

—"Nothing."

—"What do you mean nothing? *They told me at the laundry that you have seen an angel . . . Look, I am going to give you a beating, since you are too old to say these things . . .*"

While I was saying this, Jacinta, who was there, answered:

—"Yes, we really saw him."

—"May God be praised."—I said—"You are also mixed up in this? *What a shame. Most Holy Mary. Young girls of your age!*"

And that day I gave Mari Cruz a good scolding; but I didn't scold her after that.

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Years later on April 8, 1967, during the great tests, doubts, and contradictions, Aniceta said to the Argentine priest Julio Meinvielle, who had come up to Garabandal with Jaime García Lorente from Seville:²⁶

“I recall seeing Conchita when she came back to the house after her first apparition. She came completely transformed. Even the voice had changed, and this struck me greatly. It was like another voice, a very soft voice. And she smiled with a gentleness in her face.”

Loli came home with her sister Amaliuca, who was a year younger. They were afraid, expecting a scolding for returning late. In the households at San Sebastián there was strict discipline with young girls, and especially about returning home before dark.

When they arrived, their mother was already in bed since the poor woman had worked hard all day long. They went upstairs to her bedroom and knocked softly on her door, Loli behind Amaliuca.

—“*Mama,*” they whispered.

—“*Yes, mama, mama,*” Julia answered sharply, “*What time is this to get back home? What do you think this is? I ought to give you a beating.*”

—“*We are late because Loli has seen an angel.*”

—“*An angel? Not a devil? You ought to be ashamed of yourself! Get going, eat your dinner and get to bed. I’m tired. Don’t bother me.*”

The girls went downstairs and ate. Then Loli, as was her custom, went to the house of her maternal grandmother who lived next door to sleep with her since the woman lived all alone. (This is the house now occupied by the remaining members of the Mazón-González family.)

Before going to bed, the grandmother and her granddaughter were in the habit of saying together the prayers of the Scapular of Mount Carmel, and they started this again on the night of June 18th, 1961. But the grandmother immediately noticed something unusual in the child who was on her knees leaning against her, trembling like a frightened little bird. (Loli at that time was quite diminutive.)

26. Reverend Julio Meinvielle, a prominent figure among Argentine Catholics, had heard and read about Garabandal in his country. As soon as he could, he took a plane to Madrid and Jaime García Llorente picked him up at the airport and took him straight to Garabandal. There the perspicacious priest contemplated, prayed, and listened . . . And his impression was decidedly favorable. He said to his companion Jaime on the return trip, *Garabandal will be the banner of the counter-revolution.*

As It Was in the Beginning

—“*Child! What’s happened to you?*”

—“*Grandmother, I’ve seen an Angel.*”

—“*What? You’ve seen an Angel? Are you all right? Come on now!*”

The little girl insisted, and with such a tone of excitement that the grandmother, although not yielding her entire belief, was partly convinced.

The recitation of the Our Fathers and Hail Marys continued, and everything ended as usual with the ancient and beautiful invocation that had to resound like never before on that night:

GRANDMOTHER: *Be our consolation. The way most powerful.*

LOLI: *Give us your loving protection, Mother of God, Our Lady of Mount Carmel.*²⁷

That was at 9:30 at night. Later that night we didn’t speak any more about it. It was an ordinary night, just like any other.

Conchita states this in her diary, but we can be sure that for the four girls of Garabandal that night could not be an *ordinary night, just like any other*. It might have been that in the external aspects of eating, bedtime, etc., but within the hearts of the four girls, that night had to be quite different, stirring up their feelings and desires. They could still remember the beautiful vision of the *calleja*, and it filled them with such joy. But with it there was mixed the anxiety of many unanswered questions—these two above all:

Would he return?

What did he want from us?

27. I was finally able to learn also from Jacinta how the meeting with her parents took place on the night of the first apparition:

“On returning home, I couldn’t hide our seeing the Angel . . . My mother and my brother took it as joke. They couldn’t believe it, and tried to convince me that the best thing to do was forget it . . . When I said that the Angel had wings, my brother replied that it had surely been one of the big birds that he has seen at times in the Peña Sagra mountains—not being used to them, we had been frightened, and the scare had made us see strange things . . .”

My father interrupted to say, “I don’t want to take a serious matter like this for a joke. I don’t know what occurred, but I know Jacinta well. And I know that if she says that she has seen an Angel, something like this happened.”

“We didn’t discuss the thing any more that night. When I was alone, I couldn’t stop thinking of what had happened in the Calleja.”

CHAPTER 2

Preparing the Way

WHEN GARABANDAL AWOKE on the 19th of June, one topic monopolized all the conversations in the kitchens¹ and on the streets. *You haven't heard? . . . What they saw? . . . Yes, that's what they said; but you have to find out for yourself! . . . Anyhow, something strange must have happened to the children because . . . What happened? . . . I am going to ask Maria and Aniceta . . .*

What Would An Angel Be Doing In Garabandal?

When we got up, the people had begun to talk:

—*“Those four girls saw something, since they came down with such expressions!”*

—*“It could have been one of those big birds, since it was dark . . .”*

1. In villages and towns like Garabandal, the kitchen is the most utilized room in the home; here visitors are received, here the entire family congregates. During the winter months this is especially the place for talking or working.

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—“*Or perhaps some little boy surprised them while they . . .*”

—“*Or they were dreaming . . .*”

—*Well, everyone had his own idea about the thing.*

It was a day in which they talked about nothing else.

Not surprising! Nothing like it had ever happened at San Sebastián de Garabandal. While the people there were used to thinking about God, they never would have thought that they would come in contact with Him beyond His mysterious veil on a streetcorner! Every Sunday, while reciting the Credo at Mass, they alleged their faith in the all powerful God who had created not only a world of visible things, but also another world of invisible ones. But how could anyone expect something that had never happened before to happen suddenly now? How could they comprehend that four children of their village were able to view the light of His invisible world?

If what the girls said were true, it could have the most unexpected consequences for everyone . . .

They asked us to describe what we had seen.

And very happy with the beautiful figure, we were glad to tell them, since there were some people who doubted that it was true.

We told how he was, how he was dressed, very brilliant . . .

Most of the people laughed at us; but it was all the same to us because we knew it was true.

As the young girl described, the conversations were animated in the early hours of the morning. And the girls could hear the people talking as they walked to school,² where the doors opened at ten o'clock.

When we arrived at the school, the schoolmistress asked us, “My children are you certain of the things you said yesterday?”

We answered at the same time: “Yes, Señora. We saw an Angel!”

The other children from the school who surrounded us were amazed at what we were saying.

I can imagine that there was great excitement among the other young girls accustomed to the monotony of their day to day life. Who would

2. The schoolhouse is not in the center of the village, but on the perimeter near the church.

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not envy their four schoolmates? Oh, if they could be part of such an exciting thing too!

It is doubtful that there was much studying done on that morning in the young girls' school at Garabandal. However, Conchita writes in her diary, *We acted the same as always, undisturbed*. If tranquillity came to them from their vision, it should be recognized that this is a sign of the best origin. Neither the devil, nor neuroses, nor hallucinations leave such peace.

When we left school (a little before the dinner hour), each one went to his own home.

Jacinta and Mari Cruz went together and met the parish priest, Father Valentín Marichalar.³

—Very alarmed, he said to them: “Look here, look here! Is it true that you saw an angel?”

—They answered together: “Yes Father, it’s true.”

—“Perhaps . . . Perhaps you may be mistaken.”

—Smiling they said to him: “No. Don’t be afraid that we saw an Angel.”⁴

Then they went toward their homes.

The parish priest walked around to see where he could find me.

Finding me near my home,⁵ he became very nervous and said to me, “Conchita, be honest. What did you see last night?”

I explained everything to him . . . and he listened very closely, and finally said to me:

“Well if you see him tonight, ask him who he is and why he is coming.”

“See what he answers.”

The priest's reaction was perfectly logical. He knew that what the girls said was completely possible. God concerns himself deeply with His

3. Father Valentín resided in Cossío where he was the parish priest, but he had to go up to San Sebastian frequently since he was also in charge of that parish.

4. Although Father Valentín did not hold the same feelings as the old Israelites for whom it was impossible to see an angel of Yahveh, and not die, he certainly could not exclude the possibility of an angel's supernatural intervention in the village. What consequences that could cause!

5. Conchita's house was at the extreme end of the village, directly opposite the church and school, with a view upwards towards the Pines and downwards toward the valley where the Molinos River flowed.

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human creatures, especially within the church. Although His concern comes to fall almost always within what we call *ordinary providence* (that is, without recourse to spectacular intervention), there is no difficulty for Him to go beyond the ordinary when it suits His pleasure and is helpful to His creatures. And the angels are His ministers above all to protect and aid mankind. Father Valentín could not have forgotten those beautiful texts from the liturgy of October 2nd that set down so highly the ministry of the angels on our behalf.

Yes, what the girls say is very possible, although not so easy to believe. Why would an angel come to Garabandal? And did he really come? That was the most important: to establish the truth of the matter. It would be just as foolish to believe everything right away as to close one's mind in an obstinate *It cannot be*. Father Valentín had to know the first lines of the last book of scripture: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to make known to His servants the things which must shortly come to pass: and signified, sending his angel to His servant John.* (Apocalypse 1: 1) He must have read too that passage from the book of Exodus: (23: 20–21) *Behold I will send my angel who shall go before you, and keep you in your journey, and bring you into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice.*

The girls were talking about remarkable things; however Father Valentín knew them well, and it did not enter his mind that they invented this. Before anything else, he had to find out what had happened.

Conchita promised that she would try to get the answer to his two questions. Then he directed his footsteps to Loli's home.⁶

Loli responded the same as the rest of us.

And so he was more and more impressed because the four of us agreed in everything.⁷

6. This was a typical ancient village house, looking out over a little square. Later the Mazón family moved into the house next door which also faced the little square; here their small business was continued.

7. Through a careful interrogation, conducted separately on each girl, it would be impossible to find such agreement if all this had been only *a game*, and even less would there have been agreement if these things had been staged or fabricated by the girls. Furthermore, Father Valentín knew them well, and was aware of their sincerity and great reverence for everything religious.

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Finally he said: "Good, we are going to wait two or three days to see what he will tell you and whether you are going to continue to see this figure that you call an Angel . . ."

Then I will go to the Bishop.⁸

The girls ate, probably in a hurry as is the custom in the village, and with no more ceremony than to say grace. Then they went back to school which re-opened at three o'clock.

Toward 5:00 the classes finished, and the girls were free to play or do their housework.

I went to the house of the woman from whom we buy milk, and she said to me, "Is it true that you saw an Angel? Or is this a thing that the people are saying?"

—I answered, "It's certain that we saw an Angel!"

—She continued to question me, "How did you see him?"

—I explained it to her in such a way that she listened very closely.

—And then smiling, she said to me, "Since I have a good opinion of you, I believe that you saw the Angel. But the others: No!"

—Then I said to her, "But all four of us saw him——Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz and I myself!"

When I came home with the milk, I said to my mother, "Mama, I'm going to pray in the Calleja."

This was heard by a stonemason named Pepe Díez,⁹ who was there working to repair our house, and also by my brother Aniceto, who was helping him.

8. At this time, Bishop Doroteo Fernández, the former auxiliary bishop under the recently deceased Bishop José Eguino y Trecu, was the head of the diocese of Santander. Bishop Doroteo had been born in León and was a professor at the major seminary there when he was named the Apostolic Administrator for the Santander Diocese. Certainly neither his assignment nor his arrival in the Capital of Santander could be called warm among influential ecclesiastics. In spite of the fact that he had the rank of a bishop, he was placed somewhat out of the way, with his actions limited to being rector of the seminary of Corbán, not far from Santander. Here after a few years the situation was in turmoil; these were the first advance signs of what later would become the general open confusion in the Church.

9. This man is still working as a stonemason in the village; he is one of the best-informed witnesses of the *Garabandal events*. His wife is Clementina Gonzalez, from whom he had four children at the time.

Conchita wrote these things in her diary more than a year after they happened. And perhaps, as they were side-lights to the really important events, she did not record them accurately.

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—Then Pepe said laughing: “Yes, Yes, let her go. Why not let her go pray?”

—My brother objected to this: “Conchita, don’t let it happen!”

The people will laugh at you and at us too.

They will say that you are going around saying that you are seeing an Angel.

And that you are lying.

But the desire of meeting the marvelous apparition again attracted the girl too much, and she did not leave her mother in peace until she obtained permission to go to the calleja.

Soon she met the other three, and joining arms, they went in the direction of the calleja. They encountered an unbelieving and hostile crowd that questioned them and made jokes about them, since no one believed in the apparition; or rather no one wished to expose themselves to ridicule before the more *sophisticated* villagers by showing any belief in the strange story of the four little girls.¹⁰

But people followed them secretly, especially some rude young boys who wanted to show their beginning manhood by vulgarly interfering with the girls. The four began to pray in the calleja; but it wasn’t possible to concentrate on their prayers because of the little tribe of enemies with disheveled hair and dirty faces, who started throwing stones at them, accompanying the missiles with laughs, insults and other words.

Concerning the conversation with the stonemason Pepe Díez, we have information from his wife Clementina which complements and enlarges on what Conchita gives. Clementina states that on that day Pepe tried to prevent the girls from what could have been a dangerous *episode* by threatening them . . . He spoke to Conchita in this manner:

“Listen, child, what kind of a tale are you telling about the apparition of an angel? Don’t you know how serious this is? . . . Don’t go on with this foolishness.”

“If you continue with this, I’ll report it to the police, and they’ll come, take statements, and submit you to questioning . . . And you might end up in jail . . . And the trouble might involve your families . . . Embarrassment . . . Shame . . . Disgrace . . . You are not the type of girl that plays around with such things . . .”

Then in a similar tone, in a way to intimidate them, he spoke to the other three girls when they came looking for Conchita. They listened, a little frightened, but didn’t reply. Finally they said what they were going to do, and that they had not made up anything. And could they be allowed to go in case the Angel came back?

10. The population of La Montaña (Santander) are intelligent by nature and not easily taken in. They are serious people, hardly naïve, and cautious to the extreme in not being taken advantage of in business or in assuming a stance that would have to be abandoned later.

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It was a dark evening, overcast. *The sky was full of clouds and it was very windy.*

Things finally quieted down and the girls prolonged their prayer, hoping to see the angel come. But the angel did not come. The calleja, which a little while later would be for them *a little bit of heaven* (as Conchita referred to it) was on the evening of June 19th, under a cloudy sky, with the derisive laughter, the stones, and the blowing wind above, an unpleasant scene of painful disillusion. But why didn't the angel come? Would he perhaps come another time?

When it became late—it was 8:30—they lifted their bare knees off the stones of the rough road, and went down towards the church.

Before arriving, they met the schoolmistress. She tried to raise their spirits with a rather childish explanation that they probably did not believe at the time:

Do you know why he hasn't come? Surely it's because it's so cloudy.

In the church they made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

The girls themselves could not explain the unusual connection that seemed to unite the calleja with the church. In the calleja nothing had been said to them, not a word of explanation, nor a command, nor even a simple request, and they were uneducated children; but a mysterious instinct brought them from the one place to the other. Yes, what they had seen with their eyes of flesh, surrounded by light in the calleja, had guided them firmly and gently to the One there in the church, Who can only be found with eyes of faith amid the shadows of mystery. In the former place was the wonder of the vision; while in the latter was the true security of Him Who is always a Refuge, Who cannot deceive.

A Light in the Way

After their visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the girls walked home. As night fell over Garabandal, so darkness fell over the hearts of the four little peasant girls.

As soon as her daughter appeared in the kitchen, Aniceta asked: "*Did you see the Angel?*"

The same question must have been heard in the homes of the other three; and the answers must have all been the same as Conchita's response to her mother:

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“No. Today we didn’t see him!”

Then I went about my work as usual.

Yes, *work as usual* was what remained. As if the day before had been no more than a meaningless flash of light in the somber life of a village child. Everything would be forgotten little by little, and finally there would only remain the monotonous weariness of her poor daily surroundings and *work as usual*.

No wonder that after supper as she went to bed *at a quarter to ten* she was not able to sleep. Her adolescent mind was filled with dejection:

Since I couldn’t sleep, I started to pray.

And then I heard a voice that said to me, “Don’t be troubled; you will see me again.”

The voice left a deep impression and Conchita continued praying, although with a much different state of mind. She went on praying *for a long time* until finally she fell asleep. And so with a finale of prayer the day of June 19th, 1961 ended; a day of excitement in Garabandal, full of contrasting feelings and contrasting words, varying between hope and fear, between disbelief and desire.

On the next day, Tuesday, the village attitude was about the same, although the number of suspicious and hostile comments was increasing.

Since we hadn’t seen anything on June 19th, they thought that he wouldn’t appear to us again.

But they didn’t know what had happened to us during the night—what we hadn’t told anyone.

While going to school Conchita learned that during the night her three companions had received the same assurance as she, *You will see me again*. And so they were full of secret joy and predisposed to face the various incidents of the day.

The day passed like all the others, without anything worthy of special mention, until the midafternoon hour came when the children, having left the classroom, asked for their lunches.¹¹ The four visionaries, besides ask-

11. The lunches taken in the afternoon almost always consisted of bread and something else to go with it. The children did not ordinarily stay home to eat. They came home, asked for lunch, got it, and went back to eat with their schoolmates.

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ing for their lunches, also asked with much more insistence for a special permission—to go together to pray in the Calleja.

But they ran into difficulties.

My mother, and also the parents, brothers, and sisters of the other girls were worried.

They had a very great conflict, for if they leaned to what was true, they also thought the opposite.

And there was above all the burden of human respect, the fear of being ridiculous that is so constraining in the small towns.

At first Aniceta showed herself completely intractable.

If you want to pray, go to the church; the calleja isn't the place.

Conchita implored, but without result. Fortunately Loli, Jacinta, and Mari Cruz then arrived, and they had already obtained permission to go.

—“Please, Señora. Let Conchita go. Let her go!”

—“But why do you want to go make fools of yourselves?”

—“We aren't going to make fools of ourselves! We are going to pray, and to see if the Angel comes!”

—No. Conchita isn't going. You can go if you want.

They left, but very slowly, until they no longer could be seen because of a wall in the way.

I remained, very sad.

My mother suddenly changed her mind, and with a loud voice called: “Loli. Tell the other girls to come here.”

Soon they arrived, and my mother said to them, “If you do what I tell you, I'll let Conchita go.”

A simple strategy had occurred to Aniceta to protect herself from insult and ridicule in case things did not come out as the girls expected:

“You three go alone now, as if you were going to play there, without saying anything to anyone.”

“And when you arrive at the calleja, Conchita will go secretly, so that no one will notice.”

Loli, Jacinta, and Mari Cruz were not very convinced, afraid that Aniceta was not speaking seriously. But they began to walk . . . slower and slower. Conchita had to reassure them that she would come. And a little

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later she did come. She found them complaining about her being late. But their displeasure soon passed and the four, *very happy*, knelt down on the rocks of the calleja and began to recite the rosary. Very hopeful in the beginning, their anxiety increased as the beads passed through their fingers.

*When we had finished, the Angel hadn't come.*¹²

We decided to go to the church.

And when we got up, since we were on our knees, we saw a very brilliant light surrounding the four of us.

We saw nothing else except the light.

And we screamed with fear.

The light, though blinding, did not blind them; but it encircled them resplendently, isolated them from everything, and blacked out the road. From this came a sensation of constriction—*with fear*—that left them lost and floating in mystery, adrift in something completely unknown that they could not comprehend.¹³

The second day, Monday the 19th, they were made to pass through the experience of *It is not he who wishes or he who runs*. (Romans 9: 16) That is to say, it did not depend mainly on themselves whether or not this series of miraculous contacts with the infinite unknown would occur. Everything depended on Him Who is high above all things. At the same time, so that they wouldn't fall into anxious dejection, He gave them a pledge that what they had seen on the previous evening was something very real—with a reason and a meaning—and that it was only the beginning of something more.

12. In Conchita's diary the *Angel* is always written in capitals, so as to make it understood that she is discussing a very important and distinguished angel.

13. Prudencio González was one of the residents of the village who did not take the four girls' story seriously. She laughed at the *foolishness* that the people were talking so much about. But that evening she was coming down the *calleja* with a herd of sheep, and suddenly coming out of the shadows, she had before her eyes the group of four young girls completely alone and outside of themselves. The scene impressed her.

Her sheep were going toward the village, closing off her path between the rocks that formed the sides of the *calleja*. As well as she could, she slid carefully between two of the girls. She had to lean on one of the girl's shoulders and her impression—as she admitted later—was tremendous, as if she were touching a mystery. The shoulder did not seem to be soft warm flesh, but rather something rigid and cold, trembling.

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From this they were specially prepared for the third day, June 20th, with the phenomenon of the blinding light surrounding them, blacking out the road and isolating them from everything. Their spirit and eyes had to be made ready to pass with a form of natural agility from the dull world of day to day living to a higher world of wonders flooded with brilliance. In this world of light they would have to encounter—alone—elements extremely far above all those things that made up their daily existence.

For this, even the calleja—the path previously seen by the four village girls—would be blocked out by the mystery of the light, revealing a new destiny—at the time well hidden in the secret designs of God. So the childrens' startled reaction of fear can be understood—and their screams, which seem to be an unconscious pathetic call for help and explanation. It is never painless to be brusquely taken away from one's normal way of living.

The People Become Aroused

When the four girls found themselves again, as if nothing had happened, upon the normal ground of the calleja, it was already night—9:30—and so they did not make their intended visit to the church.

They were hardly able to talk about the effect on them. On separating, they agreed not to say anything to anyone. For this reason their answers to their families' questions in their homes were evasive. They carried their secret undivulged to the silence of their beds.

But soon they became aware that they could not keep it hidden like this. The request of the parish priest had to be carried out: *If we saw something again, we should tell him right away.* They wanted to obey. But how? He lived in Cossío, six kilometers down a seldom traveled and treacherous road. *Our parents would not let us go alone.* There was no other solution except to reveal to their families what had happened; and so they did, on the morning of June 21st.

This information, strictly confidential, was passed right away to Father Valentín, although something must have filtered down to him as the day wore on and the expectation in the village increased. The first extraordinary phenomenon of the calleja had not had any witnesses; they had been there alone, as Conchita said, "*We five: the Angel, Loli, Mari Cruz, Jac-*

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inta, and myself.” But on the evening of Wednesday, June 21st, 1961, for the first time there would be other observers.

In the evening, after having done what we had to do, (This is a very important observation. Heaven always teaches us to fulfill our duties since this is the way all order is maintained.) we asked permission from our parents to go to the same place where the Angel had appeared to us.

But while going to the calleja, seeing that the people did not believe, we told a woman named Clementina González that if she wanted to come with us . . .

But she didn't want to come alone since she had her doubts, and she went to call another woman named Concesa.

Noticing us going together, other persons joined us also, and arriving at the calleja, we began to pray the rosary.

We finished it, and the Angel had not come.

The people were laughing hard and said to us, “Now say a Station!”

And so we did, and on ending it the Angel appeared to us.

In their rapture, the girls did not forget the request of the parish priest:

We asked him who he was and why he had come.

But he didn't answer us.

The works of heaven follow their own cadence and its mysteries are not ordinarily immediately unveiled. It is necessary to prepare, wait, and merit.

What happened at that time to those who had come there just to look? The persons, who on that night of June were the first to view the girls' ecstatic transport, were carried away with emotion. A strange and sweet trembling seized them. They didn't know whether to shout or cry, or whether they should shout for the rest of the villagers. Weren't the four transfigured girls the same ones that they knew? Weren't they just like the other children of the village? Weren't they the same ones who walked around town with the other young girls, who ran and played every day in the little streets of San Sebastián?

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How they held themselves! And what expressions on their faces! Positioned on their knees on the rocky ground of the trail,¹⁴ their faces turned upward toward something or someone that held them enraptured, their lips parted in a slight smile that gave a charming beauty to their expressions.

Such a limpid look in those eyes! And how those eyes gazed at something that no one else could see! Those present were certain that not even the best photographs could capture the scene completely.

When the four returned to normal, they saw with surprise that some of the people around them were crying, and that others were striking their breasts, and one of them, Clementina, was ready to run to the village to call all the people there.

“*Oh, my children,*” exclaimed someone, expressing the feelings of the rest, “*When you see the Angel again, tell him to forgive us for not believing!*”

A woman said to my aunt (Aurelia) who was among the people:

—“*Did you see the Angel?*”

—“*No, I haven’t seen him; but if you don’t believe in this, you don’t believe in God.*”

Clementina González gives another version of this episode. The discrepancies between her report and Conchita’s can be easily explained, since Conchita was only able to learn what happened around her and her companions during the ecstasy by what was told her by others later on, while Clementina González experienced it first hand. According to the latter, it happened this way:

She had gone to the schoolmaster’s home and was talking with his wife Concesa, seated at the entrance of the old house. (The house is no longer standing, as Conchita’s brother built his little hotel *Mesón Serafín* on its former site.) The women saw the four girls coming, and Conchita came up to Clementina and asked her to accompany them to a place in the Calleja where they wanted to pray. Clementina agreed and Concesa went with them too. They started praying with the girls, and only a little later, on noticing that *something was going on* in the Calleja, did other people

14. Although rocks and stones are scattered all over Garabandal, it is hard to accept the remark in *The Star on the Mountain* from one pilgrim who states, *This town is the rockiest in all Spain.*

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begin to come, such as Angelita, Conchita's aunt Aurelia, Clementina's 12 year old eldest son, etc.

Those that had come, moved only by curiosity, did not take the matter seriously. On seeing that nothing was happening in spite of the girl's prayers, they were talking and laughing . . . But the girls' sudden entrance into ecstasy made quite an impression on them. They were not able to see the transfigured faces well as they were in back of the visionaries. They wanted to go ahead to look at their faces but Angelita, the first one who tried it, came back trembling as she felt a mysterious obstacle that "*prevented her step and held her back*". Then from their positions, leaning forward and stretching their necks, they were able to see the sides of some of the girls' faces and to hear some of their speech . . .

Clementina soon became very excited by this inconceivable spectacle. And certain that something was happening there—something from heaven—began to speak out like this, "*Conchita, my child, pray to Our Lady of Mount Carmel . . . Pray to the Sacred Heart to help us . . . Let them tell you what they want from us . . .*" She was talking of going to call a priest . . . of calling the whole village . . . because of this. What could this be? All of those present did not share her exceptional excitement, and even continued laughing . . . It was at this time that she, and not Conchita's aunt, said, "*Oh children! If you don't believe in this, you don't believe in God.*"

All those who saw us went down to the village telling everyone about it, since they were very impressed.

*For they had never seen or heard anything like it.*¹⁵

It can be imagined how the news spread through the village, and what was talked about in the houses on that night in June, a night of grace.

15. It can be easily understood what upset and upheaval came upon the good people of Garabandal as a result of the things happening in the village. Mari Cruz's mother, Pilar, illustrated this in her conversation recorded on the occasion already mentioned:

"When I saw my daughter for the first time in that way (in ecstasy), I was very frightened. I thought she was having an attack. I point out that I had never heard talk of apparitions. Well, perhaps apparitions; but not ecstasies. I was unaware of those things. I didn't know anything at all about them. Now I have learned something. And finding my daughter like that—and going to touch her—and she was so rigid—and going to lift her up—and I couldn't. I said to myself, "*This little girl is going to die; she is having an attack!*"

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“Everything Seems To Be Coming from God”

Of course the news came quickly to Father Valentín. And not only to Father Valentín. The chief of police, Juan A. Seco, has written in his memoirs:

On June 21st, I was informed that something miraculous had occurred in my district. On that day I had gone to consult with a doctor of the area in Puente Nansa. And Dr. José Luis Gullón, who was very amazed, mentioned to me what had just been told to him by two women who had come down from Garabandal, *that an angel had appeared to four young girls from the village.*

I think that at the time I forgot to ask the doctor for the prescription that I needed for my ear, because it struck me that I no longer needed it, since I was hearing perfectly what the women had informed him. I went directly to the headquarters of the Civil Guard and ordered Officer José Fernández Codesido to go up to San Sebastián and carefully investigate everything that happened. On his return, the officer reported to me that he had been with each of the supposed visionaries individually; and that they coincided completely: *that they happened to be playing marbles at the entrance to the calleja which is named Campuca Street and that suddenly . . .*

After that day I felt satisfied, and ordered a pair of guards to remain permanently in Garabandal. The news spread through all the neighboring villages and every day people made the journey to Garabandal, which required increasing the size of the guard. Soon there came to be crowds of 500 to 3,000 persons a day.

But let us return to Father Valentín.

The good priest must have been so impressed by what was told him that he had already decided to go to Santander on the same day, June 22nd,¹⁶ to completely inform the Bishop. Someone made him hold off, observing correctly, *Why don't you wait to see for yourself what's going on? Surely something will happen this evening, and then later you can give a better report about everything.* Thanks to this intelligent observation, that Thursday, the day of the week dedicated to the Holy Eucharist, which in 1961 had more daylight time than any other day in the year, was the first

16. Although I cannot give the exact date that Father Valentín went to Santander to inform his superior, I know that Ceferino Mazón, the father of Loli, went with him as a civil official of the village, accompanied by two other men of some importance in the area: the *indiano* Eustaquio Cuencia and the professor Manín. (The term *indiano* is generally given in Spain to emigrants who have returned from America after having made their fortune there.)

Father Valentín spoke alone behind closed doors with Bishop Doroteo Fernández. After listening to him, the bishop said that for the moment, obviously, there was only one thing to do: *Watch and wait.*

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to have a priest in the Calleja at Garabandal as a witness of the communication that God seemed to want established from on high with men.

At the usual time of the evening, at 8:30, *Te lucis ante terminum*, fervent prayer rose up from the community on the stony path to the pines, a path that was already radiating the miraculous. A calm fell on the surrounding plains, and spread through the ravines to the mountains above. The soft fragrance of summer, the scent of fields in bloom and new-cut hay pervaded the air.¹⁷

Around the girls gathered an assembly of almost all the people in the village, presided over by its pastor. One by one the beads of the rosary were counted out with the thrill of expectation . . . And at last the ecstasy of the girls!

This is certain! Shouts of enthusiasm mixed with sighs of emotion.

But not all resistance was vanquished. Among the onlookers was a certain Professor Manín.¹⁸ Surely out of a desire for more complete information, this man took the girls to a neighbor's house after the ecstasy to interrogate them tenaciously about what they had seen. Some of the people got the idea that he had *prepared* the girls for their visions in the Calleja; the Civil Guards were suspicious of him, and even considered throwing him in jail.¹⁹

On that Thursday evening, Fr. Valentín was satisfied with being no more than a witness. But on the next day, June 23rd, he began to act as the person mainly responsible for what was happening.

17. Planting and harvesting hay is a principle occupation for the peasants in the mountains, who gain their living mainly from their cows. The countryside of the whole Santander region, not only the area near Garabandal, is almost a continual succession of fields of hay and woods of Eucalyptus. During those June days to which we are referring, the hay harvest was in full swing.

18. This professor was in San Sebastián tutoring the son of an *indiano* of the village. His name was Manín or Manuco (a nickname of Manuel). He recently lived in Santander.

19. The police chief mentions in his memoirs:

“In the village there was a teacher or professor who had come to give lessons on the assigned courses to the son of the *indiano* Taquío. (*Eustaquio Cuenca*) And the teacher accompanied the girls during the apparitions to hear what they said, and to take notes. The people began to talk about whether he was hypnotizing them, and whether he was giving them pills or other things of that type. One day after the apparition, one of my sergeants informed me that the teacher had taken Conchita to the home of the *indiano* and that it was true what the people were saying . . . I went immediately and actually found the teacher with the girl in a room. I asked him what this was about, and he answered that he was doing work for Father Valentín, gathering information that they could later present in a report to the bishop.”

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At the same time of the evening, after the usual prayers there was another ecstasy in the Calleja. But the number of onlookers had markedly increased, since the news of what was occurring in San Sebastián had already traveled to the surrounding villages: Cossío, Puentenansa, Rozadío.²⁰

The ecstasy finished, the people showed their feelings by rushing to embrace the girls.

That day the guards did not want the professor to take us for questioning.

We went with the parish priest to the church sacristy where he questioned us, calling us in one by one, to see if we agreed.

The examination must have completely satisfied Father Valentín, since on coming out into the courtyard with the girls, he said to the people waiting there:

Up to now everything seems to be coming from God.

We can imagine the happiness of those good people. How could God have so distinguished Garabandal? What did He want from us? From now on people will look with envy on the village which up to now they had regarded with pity.

The first Saturday since the beginning of events had come, falling on the last Saturday of that memorable month of June. Would something special happen on that day of the week especially consecrated to the Virgin? Would only an angel come without speaking, or would he bring something from Her? She who was so much invoked with the petition of the Hail Mary and the salutations of the Litany of Loretto!

During the first hours of the afternoon, the road going up to Garabandal saw a continual passage of people who were coming to the village in search of—they themselves could not even say. It took more than curiosity to make them come up the road perspiring and exhausted. Many of them were peasants who had left their urgent work in the middle of the hay harvest. But that which was said to be taking place at Garabandal was

20. These are all small riverside towns on the banks of the Nansa River. Puentenansa is on the river below Cossío; Rozadío, on the river above. This latter town is the 'Robacio' of the book 'Penas Arriba', the childhood country of Neluco, the young and dedicated doctor of the novel.

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more important than all those pressing occupations. Nothing like this had ever occurred around here before, and besides . . . why lose the chance?

When the girls, *accompanied by the people*, arrived at the usual place, they met many strangers *who had come in advance to take a place and see us better*.

There wasn't time to start the rosary. The Angel appeared immediately, and the four girls were enraptured away from everything around them. They were alone with the Angel in the splendor of something wonderful. Then they noticed something new about him. He continued gazing on them with a smile; he was still silent. But below the Angel today was writing that had some unknown meaning. The first line started, *HAY QUE . . .* and the second held a series of capital letters, that the girls later learned were Roman numerals, designating a date.²¹

We asked him what this meant, and he smiled . . . but he didn't tell us.

When the apparition was over, the young men of the village took us away in a cart, so that the people would not crush us, and so they would not kiss us.

They took us to the church, and Father Valentín, the parish priest, took us into the sacristy one by one so that we would tell him what had happened.

The pastor was anxious to assemble the greatest number of facts in order to bring an early and complete report to his Bishop. The apparition on that Saturday held particular interest because of the writing, which might be the key to the solution of the strange mystery of the calleja; but the girls were not in a position to satisfy the understandable curiosity of the priest. Absorbed in the contemplation of the Angel, who was above every wonder of this world, they had not understood the Roman numer-

21. An article in the French edition of Conchita's Diary relates:

In a letter written to Mr. William A. Nolan of Illinois (U.S.A.), Conchita describes this in the following words:

"The first times that we saw him, he didn't say anything to us, up until the first of July. Before the first of July, he carried some writing at his feet, but we didn't understand what it said. The words that we understood were these:

On the first line: "There must . . ."

And on the last line: "XVIII-MCMLXI".

This is what we understood."

This is an allusion, as will be brought forth later on, to the message of October 18th, 1961.

als. And they had paid little attention to the strange writing which even the Angel himself had refused for the moment to explain.²²

El Cuadro

As can be imagined, on the next day, Sunday, the last Sunday of June and the octave of the first phenomenon of the Calleja, the village was crammed with pilgrims, among them being *the school teacher from Cossío*,²³ (I do not know why Conchita mentions him so specifically) *five priests*²⁴ some of whom *did not believe*, and *many doctors*. The atmosphere in San Sebastián on that beautiful day of June was like a holiday. And the people *continued to be excited*.

And it was not without reason.

When the sun declined over the horizon, the whole mass of people came together around the now illustrious location of the Calleja. Previously the village people had built a barrier there with wooden logs tied together with cords to protect the girls.²⁵ Because of its square form, it immediately received the name *El Cuadro*, a word which would come forth many times in the history of Garabandal. Thanks to this bulwark of defense, the girls were able to meet their vision without disturbance away from the danger of the thoughtless, although explainable, avalanches of the crowd. And it also made it easy for those to be at their side who had more of a right or more of a reason to be there: their parents, their brothers and sisters, the doctors, and the priests.

22. In October of 1975, I questioned Jacinta:

—The inscription that the Angel carried at his feet on those days—was it difficult to read, or could you read it clearly?

—“I hardly remember. What I do recall is that the row of capital letters—whose meaning we didn’t understand—greatly attracted our attention. Later they told us that these were Roman Numerals.”

—You didn’t understand what the writing meant when you saw it. Did the Angel give you some explanation?

“No, it was the Virgin who explained it to us later.”

23. This teacher was still teaching in the same school in 1970; his name is José Gallego.

24. Father Pedro Gómez from Puente Nansa (a former Jesuit, now no longer a priest); Fr. Juan González Gómez (a native of Garabandal); Fr. Arsenio Quintanal from Celis, Father Alfonso Cobián of Rivadesella, accompanied by a Dominican priest. Father Juan González Gómez was later named pastor of Puente Nansa. After August 20th, 1972, he began coming to San Sebastián de Garabandal for religious services on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays.

25. According to the notes of Police Chief Juan A. Seco, this protective barrier had been constructed on the previous day, Saturday, June 25th.

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It began as usual with the recitation of the rosary. And the Angel did not fail his appointment with the girls, nor the expectation of the multitude.

That day, while I was seeing the Angel, our family doctor²⁶ grabbed me, lifted me up, and let me fall from a height of about a meter.

And on hitting the ground, my knees made a sound as if they were broken.

My brother wanted to stop him from doing this, but a force inside him kept him back.

I was unaware of all this but the people told me about it later.²⁷

When the apparition was over, the people were very excited and they all wanted to see my knees.

And I didn't know why.²⁸

From the Cuadro, the girls and many other persons went toward the church, there to piously conclude with a prayer to the Blessed Sacrament what they had experienced in the Calleja with such emotion.

The girls then went to the sacristy *where there were doctors and priests* who assaulted them with questions that they answered with the ingenuous calmness of normal and honest country girls possessing quick intelligence, if poor culture.

The result: *Some of the priests didn't believe; some did.*

And who would wonder? In the first place, it was still too soon to take a definite position. And secondly, the affairs of God are never convincing from the start, nor do they overcome all resistance right away. How were the sermons of Jesus received? And what were St. Paul's experiences in preaching the Gospel to the Jewish communities that he met on his apostolic journeys? A revealing fact was stated at the end of the mission work

26. Doctor José Luis Gullón, resident of Puente Nansa.

27. During the ecstasies, the insensibility of the visionaries was total. They neither saw nor felt anything that was outside their *field of view* . . . and their field of view was completely removed from the spectators.

28. Juan A Seco confirms the episode of the doctor forcefully lifting up Conchita and added: *"When it was over and the girl was examined, the marks from the fall were clearly seen; and also the marks from the pinching, scratching and punching, which as a form of test, some had done to the visionary without her showing the least reaction of pain. She didn't notice any of these things and none caused her pain; only the signs remained."*

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of Paul and Barnabus in Antioch of Pisidia: *And as many as were ordained to life everlasting believed.* (Acts 13: 48)

Besides there was no obligation to believe in this Garabandal affair; it was not a requirement to be in God's good graces. Here the question was above all to be more or less open to the unknown, to be spiritually receptive.

It was also on that Sunday night of June 25th that there began to appear—for the first time I believe—a certain *explanation* that would go on to augment, and which would play an important and deplorable role throughout the history of the events. It is almost lost in some lines from Conchita's diary:

The teacher from Cossío was there; but that day he didn't believe, and said everything was a farce.

And he said to my brother, "Your sister puts on a good act."

Yes, the four village girls, with a mentality (because of their remote isolation) of 8 or 9 year old children, who had never seen a motion picture, a television program, or a theater play, showed themselves right away such formidable actresses that during months and even years they were able to deceive thousands of people from Spain and foreign lands, among whom were hundreds of priests, doctors, lawyers, engineers, writers, and newspaper men. How unseeing must our show producers be not to have offered contracts to the girls that could have been for them a profitable venture.²⁹

When all the turmoil of that unforgettable afternoon had ended, the four girls came upon another surprise:

29. There came forward at that time the explanation—very easy to mention, but so difficult to prove that up to the present no one has done so—that all this was an effect of some disease or abnormality of the visionaries. Police Chief Alvarez Seco wrote down:

"The doctor in charge of the district, Doctor José Luis Gullón said that these were seizures and diseases, that all that was happening was due to an illness that the girls had. He never said what illness it was. But I could see that they were in good health, that each day they were looking better and more healthy, while their families, parents, sisters and brothers gave the appearance of exhaustion and their faces clearly showed the lack of sleep and rest."

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We looked at our legs, and they were full of punctures and marks from those who scratched us.

*But they didn't hurt us, although the marks were there.*³⁰

At Last the Angel Speaks

As if it was necessary for everyone to recuperate from all the frenzy and excitement of the previous days, on Monday, June 26th and Tuesday, June 27th, *there was no apparition*. And what was worse, the girls began to fear that everything had ended.

We were very sad, since we thought that we would never again see any thing.

Nevertheless the entire reason for the Angel's coming was to communicate what was contained in the *writing* seen on the last few days; but the girls had not given this the least attention. The letdown and the bitter reaction of disgust, which manifested itself in threatening words from the large crowd that had gone up on those two days with desires of seeing something, contributed to augmenting the unfortunate girls' dejection. No more than prayers had taken place in the calleja. And the crowd had not come precisely to pray. They went home saying, "*It's obvious! Since there are many of us and the people in Garabandal are not used to this, they didn't dare to do these things in front of us!*"

The four girls continued doing their work as usual, going to school, and visiting the Blessed Sacrament; but they could not hide the suffering that they carried within.

30. Father Ramón María Andreu (with the authorization of the Santander chancery and his own superiors) was one of the exceptional witnesses of the events of Garabandal. He compiled a report of exceptional value, and in it he points this out about the ecstasies of the children:

"The anesthesia to pain appears complete. Besides the tests that were done on them, like pricking them, I have seen them fall hard on their knees without any sign of pain.

What impressed me the most in this regard was when I saw Loli smack her head hard against a concrete walk. The noise was fearful; those present reacted by letting out screams; but the young girl, sitting on the ground, smiled and spoke with the vision. On returning to normal, we asked her if she had felt any pain. She didn't remember any smack on her head. She said that could have occurred when she felt something like a cramp over her whole body, but without any pain. Nevertheless, there was a bruise on her head at the place of the injury."

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Their suffering must have been plainly evident, since the good people of the village felt it necessary to console them. Wednesday, June 28th was an ordinary school day.

When we got out, the people in the village, seeing us so sad, wept and kissed us, saying:

Pray very much so that he will return!

When evening came, we went to the calleja and did as usual.

The people prayed the rosary with more faith than ever so that he would appear to us.

And on finishing the litany, he appeared to us and came smiling more than ever.

The girls pleaded with many questions, asking above all for him to tell them why he had come. They obtained only smiles.³¹ That is, they received no clarification; but such happiness that the duration of the ecstasy which was an hour, from 9:00 to 10:00 at night, seemed to them *a minute or less: So happy were we with him.*

The Angel did not make his visit to the girls on Thursday the 29th or on Friday, the 30th.³²

31. Many people find the procedure in apparitions strange. The *ways of God* are not easily understood. Bernadette Soubirous, the visionary at Lourdes, (the Garabandal children knew nothing of Lourdes) said to P. Gondrand in a letter in 1861, "She didn't say a word until the third time she appeared to me." And at Lourdes there were many fewer apparitions than at Garabandal.

32. Perhaps it was during the apparition on this day, the last Friday of the month of the Sacred Heart, that Jacinta saw Our Lord "*standing on what appeared to be a little white cloud, showing a bright red heart on the left side of His chest, from which white and gold rays irradiated.*" He did not speak to the girl. But with a gesture of His left hand, He presented her His heart, while motioning with His right hand for her to come near. Jacinta obeyed, and was overwhelmed by the beauty and splendor of his garments, and even more by His person . . . His brilliance was much superior to that which she had seen in the Angel, and even superior to that which she would later see in the Virgin.

Jacinta's vision took place in the Calleja, while her three companions, kneeling at her side, were looking at St. Michael. The vision lasted only (or so it seemed to her) a few moments, but it left an indelible impression on her, although she kept completely silent about it for many years.

In the vision, two things especially impressed her: Jesus look, and His majestic bearing.

His glance penetrated to the deeps of her soul. She could not bear it for a long time! Nevertheless, the Lord's look "*was full of immense love.*"

As for His supremely majestic bearing, it should not be forgotten that Jesus is The Lord,

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Faustino Gonzalez was a cattle raiser and shepherd who lived in the old town of Obeso in the district of Rio Nansa on top of a hill where the ancient tower of the former lords of the area can be seen. However he went many times to the mountains of Garabandal, for he had a cabin there surrounded by pastures for cattle grazing.

The things that were happening in the village at the time were naturally the subject of conversation between Faustino and the other men who lived in the neighboring barns. On the 29th of June, the last Thursday of the month and a feastday (Sts. Peter and Paul), they decided to go see what was happening. They were a group of ten or eleven, and by their crude dress and manner of traveling they appeared to be coming more to ridicule than to seek devotion. It could hardly have come into their minds that heaven would concern itself with insignificant creatures like the children of Aniceta, Ceferino, Símon and Escolástico.

In the village at the usual hour the people gathered at the Calleja, as the sun fell beyond the horizon. Our herdsmen did not neglect to take an early place in the first row; thus they could observe what was going on at their leisure.

That day an old woman from the village started to lead the rosary. The girls took their normal place within the Cuadro. And for a while the prayer continued without anything happening; it seemed that the Angel was in no hurry. Our men, who had not come there strictly to pray, lacking better entertainment, amused themselves by watching the old woman who was leading the prayer. Her face showed such compunction, such devotion, such an appearance that it made them howl with laughter. But their laugh froze abruptly; for suddenly with a quick seizure and a sharp thrust of their heads upwards, the four girls left their normal state.

“To see that transformation, while watching their faces”—later confessed Faustino Gonzalez to Dr. Ortiz of Santander—*“We experienced such emotion that tears poured out from us, even though we were hard as stone.”*

The return to the barns in the warm air of the night was made in a much different manner than the going. When they gathered together again in the cabin, they could talk about nothing else except what they had seen

before Whom *every knee should bend of those in the heavens, on the earth and under the earth.* (Phil. 2: 9–10)

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and heard. Sleep did not come; and then one of them suggested that they stop talking and pray the rosary, even though it would be no more than a reparation for the offense to God and the Virgin caused by their foolishness in mocking what was going on.

They all accepted the idea very well—for one time their inveterate human respect did not matter—and in the solitude of night in the mountains, with the light accompaniment of mooing from cows, the stable heard for the first time or as never before, a rosary from men who had felt near at hand the unexplainable mystery of God.

That night must have left its mark on the herdsmen since a month and a half later when Celestino Ortiz made his first trip up to Garabandal, he was “pleasantly surprised by the attitude with which those rustic men prayed the rosary in the streets, as they accompanied the girls with their heads respectfully uncovered.” He spoke about this with one of them, and received this response:

“Those of us who graze cattle in the mountains come down to the village on Saturdays to pray the rosary with the girls. We take care of the cattle earlier than on other days so that rosaries like these won’t be missed. They are worth a thousand of those we’ve said before in the church.”

—“Isn’t that a little exaggerated?”

—“No, doctor. No. In the church we are distracted many times; but here we pray and go on thinking.”

The month of July came. Its first day fell on a Saturday.

That day many people came; since it was the Virgin’s day.

Perhaps she would appear to us.

In the Cuadro at the usual hour, the girls were counting out the Ave Marias on their rosaries, accompanied by the waiting multitude. And finally the Angel came. But this time he did not limit himself to smiling. This time, finally, *HE SPOKE!* And his most important words were these:

I come to announce to you a visit by the Virgin under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, who will appear to you tomorrow, Sunday.

Outside of themselves with joy, the four girls cried out together:

“Let her come right away!”

Preparing the Way

The Angel smiled.

Finally, the reason for so many repeated visits by the mysterious celestial personage appeared clear: He had come to prepare the way.

And it could well be supposed that what he was preparing, what was about to come, was extremely important, since the introduction had been so long and intensive.

The girls, overjoyed with the great announcement that they had just received, conversed happily with that person whom they had seen so many times but to whom they had never yet spoken.

There was so much that they had to ask and say. And the Angel was in a mood to speak without restriction too. Conchita wrote later, *That day he spoke to us about many things*. The main part of these things will remain forever secret, since they were only of interest to those who were involved in that conversation. The Angel had come undoubtedly for all, or at least for many; but before all for those four young girls over whom surely the Lord held, *special plans of love and mercy*.

The visionaries recalled with the apparition the various happenings and the most striking things that had occurred during the previous meetings; for example, the fear that Loli, Jacinta, and Mari Cruz had felt on the first day when they saw Conchita swept up like a victim of an attack. While recounting this, now that everything had become clear, the girls laughed boisterously with the Angel. After so many meetings and so many hours shared together, a pleasant familiarity existed among *the five*.

The most important question was related to the mysterious writing that the Angel had brought on the last days. He answered:

The Virgin will tell you about it.

As in so many other things, it was necessary to wait. God brings everything with order; He has a rhythm which rarely coincides with ours, and which therefore so many times upsets us.

The Saturday interview on July 1st, the final interview of that first stage, lasted *two hours*; but it must have been stupendous to the girls—as Conchita stated—it seemed like *two seconds*. The parting was:

—“*I will come tomorrow with the Virgin.*”

That made us sad.

She Went in Haste to the Mountain

Returning to normal, the visionaries were extremely surprised on seeing night around them, since they had come from a world flooded with brightness.

The people who had heard the long conversations in ecstasy crowded on top of them, asking them what had happened and what had been said to them. And the girls explained what they could, as well as they could. Their poor village vocabulary and undeveloped expression were not suited to speak of things about which even the most highly educated minds would find great difficulty in discussing.

With this in mind, we can better understand how to interpret the description that they repeatedly gave of the Angel:

He was dressed in a long flowing blue tunic without a belt.

His wings are rather long, very lovely, pink in color.

His face was neither long or round; his nose was handsome; his eyes dark; and the face tan.

His hands were fine with short nails; his feet weren't seen.

This description does not clash with the traditional representation of the angels in our Catholic Church; but it does not appear to say much. The most interesting thing the girls expressed about the Angel was that, in spite of his appearance as a child, they said: "*He gave the impression of great strength.*" Yes, the Angels of the Lord, although they can adopt a child-like appearance to show the complete innocence of their being, are creatures of a higher nature, full of strength and light, close to the All High, and *powerful executors of His commands.*³³

33. Years later, how did the visionaries recall the Angel's series of apparitions at Garabandal? I was able to interview Jacinta in October, 1975. Here are some of the questions and answers:

—"*What impression did the Angel make on you? Did he seem simply a handsome child, or someone important and strong with a great mission?*"

—"*I don't know how to answer that question. He always appeared like a child, although we felt great respect in front of him.*"

(This means, according to what I understood by her explanations, that inspite of seeing him as someone of youthful age and small stature, she had the impression of being in the presence of someone very important, much higher than the girls.)

—"*How could you have enjoyed so many hours with him if he didn't speak to you?*"

(According to Conchita the Angel did not talk until the afternoon of July 1st.)

—"*We were only with him a short time. It passed swiftly.*"

Preparing the Way

What orders did the Angel come to accomplish among men in the Calleja at Garabandal?

At present he was preparing the way . . .

Someone was going to come!

—“That was your impression. But the witnesses stated that your ecstasies at that time sometimes lasted very long.”

—“It could be that way. I only remember that we passed them very well; the time seemed very short to us, seeing him . . . We were the ones who spoke. Sometimes we told him things, and other times we asked him questions. Then he answered us with signs and gestures. For example, if we would say, “Do you want us to pray more,” he would incline his head as if to say “Yes.” It was the same when we asked, “What do you want from us . . . that we should be better?”

CHAPTER 3

She Went to the Mountain

MANY CENTURIES AGO a small yet very beautiful episode took place. It was recorded under the influence of the Holy Spirit, beginning:

In those days, Mary arose and went with haste to the mountain country of Judea. (St. Luke 1: 39)

In Mary's life as recorded in the Gospel, this was one of her magnificent moments: the Visitation to her cousin Elizabeth who was soon to be the mother of John the Baptist.

The feastday and liturgical commemoration of this episode comes each year to all the places where a Catholic Church exists on July 2nd.

However, what concerns us now in July 2nd, 1961, when a place in the Catholic Church had more than just a feastday or liturgical commemoration.

On July 2nd the little mountain village of San Sebastián de Garabandal would experience a marvelous reoccurrence of Mary's Visitation.

With the gesture of a mother who could not wait any longer—her children being in danger—once again *she arose and went with haste to the*

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mountain.¹ Why? So that she could live with us and assist us! Just as she had lived and assisted in the town and home of Elizabeth on another occasion.

In this modern Visitation, the footsteps of the Pilgrim Virgin² were more subtle than in the ancient Visitation; and only angels knew where she was going and that she was coming to see us.

The splendor of the light from the *all beautiful* was to shine brilliantly in the darkness at San Sebastián de Garabandal, where the people could barely earn a living, much less comprehend what an angel would be doing there.

An Encounter of Love

It was a festive summer evening, at nightfall.

It was the hour to pray Vespers³ in the secluded convents and monasteries. And as usual the prayer ended with many lips bursting forth in the words that the most holy Voyager from the ancient Visitation had radiated from her inner soul during the exchange of greetings with Elizabeth:

*My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
Because He has regarded the lowliness of his handmaid.
In the future all generations shall call me blessed,*

1. The province of Santander is commonly called *The Mountain (Montaña)* by its inhabitants. This name comes from the time when Burgos was by law and by actuality the *Caput Castellae* (Capital of Castille) in the region of Castille that now corresponds to the province of Santander, which was then called *the Montaña* of Burgos.

2. Under the beautiful title of *The Pilgrim Virgin*, the Virgin Mary is honored on July 2nd at Sahagún. (Province of León) The church of this city as well as the beautiful statue of the Virgin are some of the rare remains of an ancient Franciscan convent. On July 2nd the statue is carried in procession, dressed in a robe from the court of the Queen of León, Donna Urraca (1077–1116).

3. This is part of the Divine Office or liturgical prayer of the church; the proper time for its recitation is in the afternoon or early evening.

She Went in Haste to the Mountain

*For He Who is mighty has done great things to me.
And Holy is His Name.
His mercy is from generation to generation,
To those who fear Him.
He has shown might with His arm.
He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their hearts.
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
And raised up the lowly.*

(Luke 1: 46-55)

No one was reciting Vespers at that hour in Garabandal, and even if someone would have been reciting them, it would have been impossible for him to comprehend the tremendous significance of the actual thing that was going to happen there. For right at that hour, according to the words of old, *in the fullness of time*⁴ she was coming *with haste* to the *Montaña*.

It was approaching six in the afternoon—the long afternoon of a July that was just beginning—as a murmur of expectation and curiosity rippled through the village. Some strolled through the streets, some made a visit to the church, all sought to be as near as possible to the children when the hour would come for . . . Who knew what to expect?

After a rosary said at three o'clock, the girls had gone down the road toward Cossío to see if one of Conchita's brothers, whom they were expecting, would be coming. They met a large crowd on the way.

They stopped us, and gave us gifts, boxes of candy, rosaries, caramels, and lots of things.

The driver of a car going up recognized them before they had arrived at Cossío and brought them back to Garabandal.

When we came to the village, a large crowd was waiting.

*There were ten or eleven priests, doctors, an abbot, and many cars.*⁵

4. Expression of St. Paul in his epistle to the Galatians: But when the fullness of time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman. (4: 4)

5. Among the doctors that came, there were two from Santander who would be seen often in the course of this history. Juan A. Seco states:

“The calleja was full of people praying the rosary; everyone wanted to be present for the ecstasy. At my side was the second director of the society ‘Saltos del Nansa’, Mr. Rocha,

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*We went to the calleja to recite the rosary.
And before we had arrived there, the Virgin appeared to us with
an Angel on each side.
One of these was St. Michael.
The other we didn't recognize.
He was dressed like St. Michael
They appeared to be twins.⁶*

St. Michael. Here for the first time the illustrious name is mentioned. And so we now know the identity of the mysterious angel who visited the children so often during the preceding fourteen days. Today he returns accompanying the Queen; his mission of announcing and preparing the way culminating in her sovereign audience.

Although his name had no special significance for the visionaries, it has a great significance for us. Whatever is starting to happen in Garabandal cannot be without the gravest consequences, since God has deigned to use His highest archangel for it.

Catholic doctrine and teaching have always represented St. Michael as the leader of the celestial spirits. He is the instrument God uses for His great works. He is the one who watches from his high place over all the elect—Guardian Angel of the Synagogue in its day, and now Guardian of the Church. He it is who leads, as Prince of the Celestial Army, the great combat against the powers of hell.

In the last book of Sacred Scripture, the final pages of the history of salvation, St. Michael appears as the angel of the last and decisive combat. (Chapters 12 and 20) We might ask ourselves if we are not entering into the final stage of history. The time in which Satan will be permitted to *lead away the nations* is evidently drawing near.

Today formerly Christian nations have either arrogantly apostacized, declaring themselves officially atheistic, or have come to take a policy of ignoring God to suit their own convenience.

who had come up with Doctor Morales and Doctor Piñal from Santander. I recall that Mr. Rocha told me, 'This afternoon the visionaries won't come to the cuadro for a vision,' giving me to understand that these doctors knew how to end the phenomena. I answered him, that in Divine affairs, it is not the doctor who has control."

6. In progressing forward with Conchita's diary, as will be observed later on, we will expand on these paragraphs.

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Pope Leo XIII had mysterious and urgent reasons for ordering the prayer after low mass: *St. Michael, the Archangel defend us in battle . . .* For some years now, almost since the days of Garabandal, the hierarchy has thought it opportune to stop those prayers *post Missam*. But this does not permit anyone to think that he can neglect prayer to this holy Archangel, as if the battle had already been won. The situation in the church today and the signs of the times proclaim rather the opposite.⁷

Yet the great times have hardly begun. Now the Woman (the enemy of the dragon) and the Angel of the Last Combat, according to Chapter XIII of the final inspired book, must deploy a truly decisive action in our midst. Careful attention should therefore be given to what they request.

Who was St. Michael's unknown companion in that first Marian hour at Garabandal? Even the girls themselves did not come to learn who he was. However we can suppose he was one of the angels of the first rank, since he showed himself so similar in everything to St. Michael that he could be taken for his twin. Perhaps it was St. Gabriel. Who would be more suited than he to accompany Mary, to whose life and destiny he was so closely linked? (Luke 1: 19,26)

On the right side of the angel, at the same height as the Virgin, we saw an eye of great size.

*It appeared to be the eye of God.*⁸

7. I know that when Conchita was told of the suppression of the prayer to St. Michael at the end of low masses, she exclaimed, How unfortunate! Now when there is such a need!

* * *

Many years later Jacinta told me that they did not know that the Angel in the apparitions was the Archangel St. Michael until the Virgin told them on July 2nd.

—“And can you tell me who was the other angel accompanying the Virgin?”

—“St. Gabriel.”

—“Are you sure?”

—“Very sure.”

8. According to Police Chief Juan A. Seco, “the four visionaries, on beginning the ecstasy, shouted out together, *The Virgin!*”

A little while later, Conchita was heard to say, “Oh! What an eye!”

This mysterious eye must have been marked out by an especially striking light. According to the same witness, the girls appeared for the first time with tears in their eyes, showing more rigidity than before, and were very pale, “with a face of wax”. “The one who cried the most was Mari Cruz, whom a doctor grabbed by the lower jaw in order to twist her

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Today some might find the figure of the eye not *with the times* and too naïve to find in an apparition, like a picture from an old catechism book. But the children from Garabandal were not familiar with catechism books and were not concerned with showing themselves as being *with the times*. They simply described what they saw. The eye was seen as a sensible sign to inculcate in them and in us the insensible truth, the great truth that so many today want to ignore: that everything is written down . . . That we are going to have to render an account of all our actions. Everything is observed, everything is recorded, everything ends in final judgment. Today free will controls the situation, but at that time no one will escape. In the end, the Last Judgment. And complete justice, for *neither is there any creature invisible in His sight, but all things are naked and open to His eyes.* (Heb. 4: 13)⁹

That day we talked much with the Virgin.

And she talked to us.

We told her everything . . .

When the visionaries came to the time of the ecstasy, their faces would change expression completely. They would take a position with their faces looking upward toward the Pines: on the right, Maria Dolores; in the middle, Conchita and Jacinta; on the left, Mari Cruz. I was at the side of the latter. They all were holding rosaries in their hands, and they began to tell the Virgin the things that they had done. Although they spoke very low, they could be heard perfectly.

At one time María Dolores showed her teeth; later it was learned that the Virgin had mentioned that they were very pretty. After this, Conchita opened her mouth and twisted her lips in an unusual way; later it was learned that she wanted to show the Virgin a tooth that was decaying. At another time, the Virgin must have asked them about Father Valentín, since they said that, *He was plain-looking, but very good.* Father Valentín himself heard this as did others who were close. I myself heard them speak to the Virgin about the civil guards and petition for their benefit *because they protect us from the crowd and prevent them from hurting us.*

face so that she would not stare so fixedly. He was not able to accomplish this in spite of the force that he applied. I heard a crack and I feared that he had done some harm to the girl.”

9. In the Apocalypse, (1: 14) the Lord is shown with eyes like a burning flame, indicating His penetrating Divine Knowledge, which is aware of everything, even the most hidden.

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With the greatest confidence they also asked the Virgin to hand her crown down to them; and she must have yielded to their desires, since we could all observe their gestures in taking in their hands something that was coming from above them, and then passing it from one to the other. Conchita dared even more. She asked the Virgin to give her one of the stars in her crown in order to put it on her head in a manner that all present might see it, and so believe in the truth of the apparitions. It appeared that the Virgin answered, "They will believe."

(Testimony of Don Juan Alvarez Seco)

And so these simple children of the earth were thus in intimate converse, full of familiarity, with the Queen of Heaven. For she who is a Queen is also a Mother. Mother above all! Not just a mother, but *THE MOTHER*. It is She who bears in herself all the right of maternity without limitation or restriction.

We can picture these simple children of the earth in their expressions, their gestures, their plain peasant clothes. But how can we conceive the appearance of the Mother and Queen from Heaven?

No One Could Be Like You¹⁰

Some lines from Conchita's diary aid us in forming an idea of her appearance:

The Virgin comes in a white cloak, a blue mantel, a crown of little golden stars.

The feet are not seen; the hands are open and there is a scapular on the right one: the scapular is brown.¹¹

10. Verse from a hymn to the Virgin of the Piedras Albas area, a parish of Cabezuela in the valley of Jerte, province of Caceres.

11. Rather than being like the small scapulars currently worn, the scapular held by the Virgin resembled the maniple that the priest *formerly* carried on his arm during the celebration of the Mass. I say *formerly* because presently the maniple has been discarded in the new liturgy. The girls saw that a mountain was painted on one side of the scapular. At the time they did not understand the reason, but they would learn later. In Spain, an expression used is *Virgin del Carmen* which is an abbreviation for *Our Lady of Mount Carmel*, one of the most ancient titles in Catholic Marian devotion and one which ties Mary closely to her native land, the land of Our Saviour, and to the mysterious destinies of its people.

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Her hair is long, a dark chestnut brown color, wavy, parted in the middle;

The face somewhat elongated;

The nose also somewhat long, and fine;

The mouth, very beautiful with lips a little full;

The color of her face tan, much lighter than that of the angel, different.

The voice, very beautiful, a voice very unusual.

I don't know how to explain it.

There is no other woman who resembles the Virgin, either in the voice, or in anything.

Sometimes she carries the Baby in her arms.

He is very small, like a newborn baby, with a round face the same color as the Virgin's.

He has a very small mouth, and hair slightly long.

He is dressed in something like a blue tunic.

Taking into account the poor expression of a young girl from a very secluded village, the resulting description is astonishing. The vision must have been really marvelous for her to be able to expand so much in trying to describe it. With all this, it can be understood that human language is

It should be added that Mount Carmel, historically the site of awesome works of God, has been for many centuries—at least since St. John of the Cross—the symbol in the Church of the height of perfection to which every really Christian soul is called. The ascent cannot be easy, being the great enterprise of life; but what is found on the summit is worth the effort: All that rests on that mount is the honor and the glory of God.

It appears very significant and of tremendous meaning, that the Virgin has desired to appear at Garabandal as Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

The fact that the girls could not conceive of a Virgin of Carmel clothed in white and blue corroborates the authenticity of their vision. The statue that they saw at the church, and the various religious pictures that they had seen presented the Virgin of Carmel robed completely different. If they described her as they have in spite of what they were accustomed to see, it is because that was the way they saw her.

And now comes the best thing. On July 16th, 1251, in the first apparition of the Virgin of Mount Carmel to St. Simon Stock, General of the Carmelites, she was dressed with a white tunic and a blue cloak, as at Garabandal!

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not made for realities that are so much above our experiences and happenings here below.

I don't know how to explain it. There is no other woman who resembles the Virgin, either in the voice, or in anything.

You have your reasons, child. Everything has to be explained in language proper to it. The words of this earth cannot adequately explain the things of heaven. Because of this, one is forced by necessity to have recourse to clumsy negatives.

After her visions in the grotto at Lourdes, people asked Bernadette, *Your Lady of the Grotto, is she like Fulanita or Menganita?* Bernadette was not able to contain herself, and answered with unusual forcefulness, *Please, there is no comparison possible.*

Later the great sculpturer Fabish finished his statue of the apparition in Carraran marble, and hoped to get from Bernadette an enthusiastic remark like the exclamation, *That's her!* He was only able to obtain this kind concession, *Your statue is very beautiful, Mr. Sculpturer, but it's not she. No. There is as much difference between this and what I saw as there is between heaven and earth.*

The children of Garabandal, as at Lourdes, could talk about the appearance of her hair, the color of her clothes, the position of her hands; but they could never describe to us the complete *grace* of her person, the charm of her smile, the radiation of light in her appearance, the celestial melody in her voice, the splendor of her goodness, her loveliness, her purity, her love, all those things that make her seem divinely transfigured. A singular creature in whom Nature and Grace have united to give the absolute maximum, making her an unsurpassable miracle of perfection!

No wonder that she is considered the figure of Paradise, and that the hours with her appeared to the visionaries as fleeting minutes, and that the place where the apparitions occurred most frequently would be called *a little bit of heaven.*

This has been told to me about Loli. Sometime after the things we are relating, she was taken by friends to look out for the first time at the sea near Comillas.¹² That magnificent panorama ought to have impressed her.

12. They brought her there to see Father Lucio Rodrigo, a Jesuit whom we will discuss later on; he was professor of moral theology at the famous pontifical university of that coastal village, relatively near to Garabandal.

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Someone must have said to her, “*What do you think? Isn’t this marvelous?*”

“*I see that it is,*” answered the girl. “*But after having seen the Virgin!*”

In order to better picture the meeting of the children of Garabandal with the Queen and Mother of Heaven, I would like to place here what Conchita said a long time later to Isabel de Daganzo, a painter from Santander now living in Barcelona. The woman herself gave me this testimony, guaranteeing it with her signature.

This is a resumé of my conversation with Conchita in Burgos¹³ from the 7th to the 15th of November, 1967 about the apparitions of Garabandal. With her help and that of the most Holy Virgin I wanted to put on canvas something that would depict well those celestial scenes.

I showed her, among various sketches, one of Our Lady of Garabandal. (She had assisted me in making this one, first at the village and later at Pamplona.) From this came the picture that is venerated today in St. Michael’s chapel at Garabandal, and from which so many holy cards in color have been reproduced that have circulated over the entire world.

“Your Virgin is good,” Conchita told me, “only you should make the tunic more gracious. There were no clouds, only light. At times she smiled so much that her teeth could be seen. Her hair was more wavy. The flowers on her robe were embroidered in white. The scapular was one single piece and somewhat bigger.”

—What did the eye in the first apparition signify? Was it like this? (I made a drawing.)

—“No, it didn’t have that shape. It was a normal eye, with eyelashes, brown in color. And I don’t know what it signified. The light was all the same and the greatest light was here.” (Drawing on paper, she pointed out to me the large eye, and where it was positioned, and without the least hesitation pointed out the exact distance and space.)

A little later she added, Many things happened during the apparition on that day. Among these was a rainfall of stars. The four of us saw it—Loli, Mari Cruz, Jacinta and myself.

I asked her how they fell? From her hands?

“No, no. They fell from above, as if it were raining.”

One of my canvasses showed the Virgin on top of a red cloud, because I had read of this in a book.

13. Conchita was living at the time in the city as a boarder in the school of the Concepcionistas Misioneras de la Ensananza. There she remained during the entire schoolyear of 1966–1967 and up to Christmas of the following year, at which time her mother took her out of the school.

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“We never saw the Virgin on top of a red cloud. What happened was that one day, while we were not in ecstasy, a red cloud covered the four of us and frightened us very much.”

Another canvas represented the Lady on top of a star with a long tail, with the four visionaries on their knees at her feet.

“Yes, one time a bright star with a large tail passed by; but it passed, it didn’t stay at the feet of the Virgin. And there were not four of us, only Loli and myself. That was the feastday of Our Lady of the Pillar.”

On another canvas Our Lady appeared as Queen of the Angels, surrounded by them.

“I didn’t see the Virgin surrounded by angels; but I don’t know if the others saw her that way.”

—“How did the Virgin bless you and kiss you? Like this?” (And I showed her another canvas.)

“She didn’t bless us, but she did indeed kiss us. She faced us; she came down to our level. And when at times we couldn’t reach her, we lifted one another up.”

In recalling these things, a soft breeze seems to go gently through the soul. What a Mother we have in the sky! How she comes down to us with supreme delicateness, seeking to lift us up toward her so that we might be less unfortunate and miserable.

“Could you tell about something”—Isabel finally asked Conchita—“that I could put on canvas that could cause fear?”

“No. What I have seen that could cause fear is the Chastisement,¹⁴ and I can’t tell you about that. Besides, terror and fear are not the best for moving souls.”

Mountains and Hills, Bless the Lord; Bless the Lord all Things That Breed on the Earth. (Daniel 3: 75–76)

Let us return to the narration from the diary:

*That day we talked much with the Virgin,
And she talked with us.
We told her everything.*

Concerning what was comprised in this *everything*, Conchita wrote down especially this:

14. The CHASTISEMENT, is one of the great secrets of Garabandal. It will be elaborated on later.

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*We told her that we walked to the pastures, that we were tanned,
that we took the hay to the barns.*

And she laughed.

We told her about so many things!

Since the first time I heard the story of Garabandal (unfortunately I was not there to see it personally) these words from Conchita have always sounded like music from a great pastoral symphony. They are like a brief strophe of pure air, of untainted fragrance, of childlike freshness on which were just beginning to fall the first traces of decay. With all the charm of a hillside breeze, those lines from the hand of the little narrator, chiseled with grace, truthful and sincere, reveal to us how hard each day was for the little children of the mountain village during the summer season.

It is a pleasure to walk through the hillside meadows when everything is in bloom; cut hay gathered and stacked under the sun has a fragrant scent. But to work hard, cutting and gathering it, carrying and putting it in a barn far away—the peasants do not call that a pleasure.

We should not be surprised then that the girls of Garabandal on that July 2nd, while seeing the heavenly Mother for the first time, would tell her all about the hard work of gathering hay. Didn't that stand out as the most detestable of all their daily chores? And the Mother was there to learn about it. No one could listen like her, for no one could love like her, for no one could be as interested as she in everything that concerned her children. Her laughter and smile full of tenderness and grace came as a breeze from paradise on those four creatures who so early had come to know the hard facts of life. When they had finished their childlike conversation, the Mother could speak with the words of Isaac of old, "*Behold the fragrance of my child is as the fragrance of a fruitful field, which the Lord has blessed. God give you the dew of heaven.*" (Gen. 27: 27–28)

Mother And Teacher

We said the rosary looking at her.

And she prayed with us in order to teach us how to pray well.

The simple practice of the rosary, so underestimated today, has extraordinary and mysterious power to lead souls through Mary to God; it obtains from Him the mercies that the world needs. Imagine listening to

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the Virgin reciting the *Our Father* and *Glory Be to the Father* with the young girls. Then everything was a prayer of love, of praise, and of petition. But according to what Conchita tells us, when she recited the *Ave Maria* with them, it was not only an exercise of prayer, but also an instruction. The four girls, like other children, and adults too for that matter, had the bad habit of praying in a hurry, with poor pronunciation, almost mechanically. She showed them that one should not talk to God like this. Afterwards when the girls had learned their lesson,¹⁵ the celestial apparition accompanied them only in the recitation of the *Gloria*.

When we had finished the rosary, she said that she was leaving.

And we told her to stay a little while, since she had been there only a very short time.

And she laughed, and told us she would return on Monday.

Then when she left, it made us sad.

Nothing astonishing about that. In heaven time passes rapidly; while in the darkness of hell, the hours pass slowly in monotonous depression.

When she had gone, the people came to embrace us and ask us what she had said.

Some of the people didn't believe since we had talked so much.

How could the Virgin talk and listen so much?

Always the habit of applying our feeble conceptions and poor judgment to everything, even to the things of God! To say that the children had talked too much! As if God and the Virgin were such haughty persons that one could only go to Them with great formality and protocol to deal strictly with serious matters and important business.¹⁶

15. During the apparitions one of the things that struck the visitors to Garabandal was the prayer of the girls in ecstasy. They prayed with great cadence in their voices, unhurriedly, with tremendous feeling. Hearing some of these prayers on a tape recorder was—of all the things that I first knew about Garabandal—the thing that most convinced me.

16. From the beginning, one of the *strong* reasons that certain intellectuals advanced against the supernatural nature of the events of Garabandal was namely this: the quantity and the *purity* of the conversations that the visionaries held with their invisible interlocutors. Although this may be a very wise point, how can anyone show that the matters of children are of less worth and importance in the eyes of God than the affairs of adults?

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“For My thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways My ways. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts.” (Is. 55: 8–9)

At that time Jesus answered and said: “I praise You, Oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things (the Queen’s mysteries) from the wise and the prudent and have revealed them to little ones.” (Matt. 11:25)

But the majority did believe, because they said it was like the case of a mother who hadn’t seen her daughter for a long time, who tells her everything.

And how much more we who have never seen her.

Besides, she is our mother in heaven.

They took us to the sacristy and a priest named Father Francisco Odriozola¹⁷ questioned us one after the other.

And afterwards he told the people what we said to him.

That is how the Sunday of July 2nd ended.

A very happy day, because we saw the Virgin for the first time.

For we are all always with her, whenever we want to be.

There could not be a better conclusion for a main chapter of the new *Visitation of Mary*.

She is always with us.

And we can be with her, “*whenever we want to be.*”

By faith and love, by devotion and imitation. Nothing is more important than that, more important even than the apparitions themselves, which would serve no point if they did not lead us to that end.

“*Blessed are you who have believed,*” was said to Mary at the time of the Visitation. (Luke 1:45) We, her children, do her little service if we do not strive to acquire before all other virtues, the first one of faith.

July 2nd, 1961 . . . The Lord’s day . . . Sunday. Day of a new Visitation by the Virgin. With the passing of time, it will come about that the Catholic liturgy will repeat in commemoration of July 2nd at Garabandal that which it says each year on February 11th in celebrating Lourdes:

17. This priest resides in the city of Santander; sometime later he was named canon of the cathedral. He was to become one of those most involved in the *investigation* of Garabandal, and his name will always be connected to the history of these amazing events.

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Today the glorious Queen of Heaven appeared on the earth. Today she brought to her people words of salvation and tokens of peace. Today the choirs of angels and the faithful, exulting with joy, celebrate her Immaculate Mystery.

(Antifon from Vespers)

CHAPTER 4

And He Dwelt Among Us

THIS IMPORTANT STATEMENT refers to the fulfillment of the greatest event in history: the Incarnation of the Word and Son of God. (John 1: 14)

But we can use these words in a different analogy when describing the collection of lesser events that comprise the history of Garabandal.

It was as if the Virgin, with her new Visitation on that first Sunday of July, 1961, was to begin her mysterious dwelling among us. In the first Visitation of the Gospel, Mary stayed in Elizabeth's home about three months in order to accompany and assist her. (Luke 1: 56) Now for the same purpose of accompanying and assisting at Garabandal, she has remained with us more than three years. Our need is greater than was that of her cousin Elizabeth.

More than once I have been thrilled at Lourdes in hearing the French song that begins, *Chez nous soyez Reine*. (Be with us, our Queen.) At the time of departure during the great pilgrimages, this song is sung with devotion and feeling. These words implore the Virgin to be Queen *Chez nous*. This French expression is hard to translate and refers to what is properly one's own; what belongs to one's own house in a special way; to

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what is particularly one's own. *Chez nous soyez Reine*. Be Queen among us, with us. Queen in our lives and in our homes.

At Garabandal this hymn might be slightly changed. For at Garabandal she came as a Queen, but also as a Mother. It seems that Mary came here to manifest her maternity in all its beauty and graciousness.

The children understood this from the first meeting. Although ravished by the unparalleled beauty of the apparition and by a glory greater than that of any earthly Queen, they did not stay in a state of awe toward the *Lady* as well they might have called the Vision seen at the calleja, as formerly Bernadette had called her Vision at the grotto.¹ The children looked at the Vision more in the quality of a mother and immediately began to confide in her and speak freely. Conchita has related some of this:

That day we talked much with the Virgin, and she with us.

We told her EVERYTHING.

And she laughed because we said so many things.

She was like a mother who for a long time had not seen the daughter who was telling her everything that had happened.

And much more in our case since we had never seen her.

And she was our Mother from Heaven.

The first day was already marked with a pattern that would be seen from then on. The MOTHER came to listen with an interest and pleasure to all the words of her children, their little affairs, their child-like interests, their troubles. She came also to enter their lives as a MOTHER-CHILD, to place herself at the level of the children and even condescend to submit to their innocent requests. She gave them her crown of golden stars to touch and examine. She placed her Child in their arms. She received and returned kisses, and even went so far on one occasion as to play with the children.

Naturally she did not come just to hear or be heard. If she descended, it was done to raise us up. And all those things that seemed so trivial and disconcerting to the wise and prudent of this world (Matt. 11:25) were to become in her hands the elements of a divine pedagogy with which she would teach, prepare, and condition for the difficult works of God.

1. Bernadette Soubirous, the visionary from Lourdes, did not immediately recognize that the one who was appearing on the bank of the Gave River was the Most Holy Virgin; for weeks she only knew to speak of the lady, the lady of the grotto at Massabielle.

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*Oh Lord how admirable is Your name in the whole earth!
For Your Magnificence is elevated above the heavens.
Out of the mouth of infants and of nursing babies
You have perfected praise,
because of Your enemies,
that You may destroy the enemy.*

(Psalm 8)

But let us not get ahead of the story.

An Exciting Monday

We can imagine that the four privileged girls slept blissfully on that Sunday night. The marvelous presence of the Mother of God had filled them with joy thru the music of her words and the radiance of her continence and smile.

Naturally on waking up that Monday morning, July 3rd, the thoughts of the four girls were drawn immediately to the Virgin, and so they returned in a hurry to the scene of their good fortune.

Monday, July 3rd arrived, and we were very happy to have seen our Heavenly Mother.

In the morning, the first thing that we did on Monday, July 3th, was to go to pray there at the cuadro, the four of us together.

Together and certainly alone. The villagers had a lot of things to do. They had to make journeys to the distant pastures. The girls themselves would have to do the same. However, since the happenings of the previous evening, they had to understand that prayer—conversation with heaven—should not be just one of the many things that take up the time of day. It should be the most important—that with which they should start the day—and it deserved their greatest concentration.

Together and alone. Under the deep blue summer sky, surrounded by the silence and tranquility of a nature pure and renovated from the previous evening. What a beautiful morning prayer! God's four little girls were there looking up to Him, with their sighs supplying words for many of God's creatures like the sun and vegetation that can not express themselves, as they prayed to the Spirit that breathes where He wills; and you

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hear His voice, but you know not where He comes nor where He goes. (John 3: 9)

Together and alone. Offering up the new day to God in thanksgiving and petition, unusually joyful and unusually ardent, sensing themselves both sheltered and at the same time obligated by an immense display of Divine Love. From where had this mysterious whirlwind come to suddenly interrupt their way of life and draw them into something they could never have imagined?

After praying there in the cuadro, we went back to our homes to do what our parents ordered.

And then we went to the school. At the class we met our schoolmistress Serafina Gomez.

She began crying and kissed us saying, "How lucky you are, etc. . ."

The good schoolmistress' feelings are readily explainable. How could she even have dreamed that such things would happen to the children in her simple little school.

And the wave of excitement rippled through the village.

When we left the classroom everybody was talking about the same thing.

All were very impressed and happy.

And they believed very much.

And our family felt the same way.

As for Loli's family, her father Ceferino said, "There's never been anything like this."

You are very right my friend, Ceferino. Things like these just starting to show themselves have been only rarely seen in the world, and perhaps it would be better to say that this type of thing has never been seen. Well could you praise God and try to cooperate with Him.

It was the same also with her mother Julia.

And María the mother of Jacinta, believed very much too, and her father Simon even more.

If we performed some practical joke, Jacinta's father would say that the apostles had done the same.

And he would begin to explain the things we did; to him it appeared that everything we did was good.

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The good will of Simon and his noble sentiments for the things of God, (qualities found in genuinely good souls even with a lack of education) caused him to protect and excuse the girls from the opinions and comments which were soon to burst forth from the sceptics who never understand the working of the Divine Hand in lowly human affairs. Simon would have preferred then and there to see the girls immediately in a state of absolutely faultless angelic perfection so as to prove the authenticity of their visions.²

The parents of Mari Cruz, Escolastico and Pilar, did not appear to have the same level of enthusiasm . . . As for the family of Conchita:

My mother really believed, without doubting anything.

How much we talked on that Sunday!

My brothers really believed insofar as they saw, and not only did they believe, but also it made them quite spiritual as it made many people.

Good sign! This affair was more than just something exciting, a remarkable change in the ordinary routine of country living. It was producing an impact on consciences and leading to a revision of ideas and conduct, awakening the need to become better.

There were people who liked what happened on that Sunday.

And there were others who were not impressed.

In our daily life, we did what our parents told us to do.

It is striking with what frequency Conchita repeats in many passages of her diary the fact that they applied themselves above all to fulfill the obligations of obedience.

2. There are apparitions and ecstasies which are a reward for virtue and at the same time a strong confirmation of it; and for this, they are only given in the highest realms of the spiritual life, to those we call saints.

But there are also apparitions and ecstasies that happen to those who, while receiving them, serve more as instruments than as recipients. God uses these persons to bring forth His extraordinary designs of mercy. And so He chooses not those who merit more, but those who are more useful for His plans. In such souls there can co-exist both the extraordinary favors of God and also many of their own imperfections. These imperfections will disappear if these souls try to correspond; not immediately and from the very first day, but as a fruit of persevering effort, since both in the natural life and in the spiritual life, progress is gradual. Without taking this into account, one will not be able to easily understand Garabandal.

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Surely the obedience mentioned by Conchita had its foundation in the solid upbringing received in families with Christian tradition; the contacts with the Angel and meetings with the Virgin could not but strengthen that way of acting. During those extraordinary sessions of instruction—the ecstasies—following teaching not invented by man, time would not be allotted for dissertation on a person's rights, on the requirements of one's own personality, on liberty. On the contrary, almost always would be taught the old doctrines of self-denial, taking up the cross each day, and of being submissive as the One who for love ended up, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. (Phil. 2: 9)

For this reason, it never occurred to the girls to oppose the recommendations of their elders in age, position, or authority by using the excuses used by many today to escape bothersome discipline such as, You don't understand us. You belong to another century. Those old-fashioned ideas are passé.

They obeyed and offered up the sacrifice, knowing that the way to God is by renunciation and sacrifice, that the chores and duties of each day are more important, though many times less satisfying, than anything else, even the moments of paradise in the calleja.

In our daily lives we did what our parents told us.

The ultimate instruction.

But duty did not take up all the hours of the day.

In the afternoon when we left the school, (5:00 P.M.) as we had spent a very happy Sunday, July 2nd, and as we already had such a desire to see her again (The Virgin), we went there; (the calleja) and we began to say the rosary.

We were alone.

And when we had finished and hadn't seen her, we said nothing at the time.

We weren't surprised, nor were we sad, as she could still come later.

Then, since she hadn't come, we went to our homes and did what we were told to do at home.

The Mysterious Calls

When the hour was approximately the same as Sunday—the first day on which we had seen the vision—our families, who were now believing a lot, said to us “You should go to say the rosary in the Cuadro.”

And we told them, “We haven’t been called yet.”

And they thought about this and said, “But how are you called?”

And we answered that it was like an interior voice, but that we didn’t hear it with the ears, nor did we hear ourselves called by name.

It is a JOY.³

There are three calls.

The first is a very little joy.

The second is somewhat greater.

At the third we become very excited and feel great happiness.

And then she comes.

We would go outside (to the site of the apparition) after the second call.

For if we would go after the first we would have to wait a long time, since from the first to the second there is a long wait.

Here emerges for the first time a phenomenon that is most amazing, most unusual, and most proper to Garabandal: the visionaries’ interior calls. At this stage of our history Conchita advances explanations that were the fruit of larger experience later on. So as to better understand this phenomenon, I am going to insert here what was written in the early times of the apparitions by Father Ramón María Andreu S. J.,⁴ an exceptional

3. Here the youthful Conchita tries to explain in her poor vocabulary what no human tongue is able to express adequately. She does not succeed in telling us what these *calls* are in themselves; she informs us as well as she can about some of their effects. We are here before a case of direct communication between God and the soul, without the interplay of signs and words. The interior of the soul is marvelously filled by a divine breath which calls it, and fills it with light, assurance, docility, and joy toward God or the Virgin.

4. The name of this Jesuit priest will forever be linked to the history of Garabandal. He had three brothers in the Jesuit order, two of them stationed outside of Spain. He was dedicated especially to directing retreats on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, and had his residence in the House of Christ the King in Valladolid. Later on we will see in detail his connection with Garabandal.

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witness of the Garabandal events. It is to be pointed out that the calls occurred only when the Virgin was going to come, and never when it was simply a visit with the Angel.

Father Andreu reported:

The phenomenon of the calls or interior touches from which the ecstasies arose happened to the four girls in the following way. They would say that there were always three calls. These could occur at the same time when they were together; they could occur at the same time when they were separated; they could occur at a time which was not the same even though they were together; they could occur to all four, or to just one, or to several of them.

The word call was originated by the girls themselves who talked like this: Today the Virgin did not “call” me. Today she “called” me. I have already had one “call” or two . . .

It is not easy to describe the nature of the calls. The girls said they were like a joy from within, a clear and definite joy that was always present. It was as if the Virgin had said in the first call, “Jacinta!” and in the second, “Jacinta, come!” and in the third, “Jacinta, run, run, run!” But all this without audible words.

The children hid the calls; and if they were not asked, or if they did not spontaneously mention them in some cases, they would not have been noticed.

Here are some cases that I myself observed. One day Loli was pouring a glass of water for Mr. Mattutano⁵ so that he could take an aspirin. And while she was still pouring she felt the third call. Putting down the pitcher and glass, she exclaimed, “Let’s go, Father, since she’s calling me.”

On another occasion I was with Jacinta, Loli and three priests. Being advised that they had received the second call, I went with one of the priests to Conchita’s house and there asked her, “How many calls have you had?” She answered me, “Two, Father.” Then Mari Cruz who was there said, “The Virgin hasn’t called me.” I told her, “Well, then, go home.” And she obeyed.

The children could notice that, although the third call had begun, there still remained a period of time, as they told me on one occasion, “There is only time for one line.” (I was writing, and that was the way it was.) Another time I heard this, “Father, there are now two and a half.” This half must be like the coming of the third.

5. Mr. Matutano, who was from Valencia, lived in Reinosa (Santander) because of his rice business. He frequently visited Garabandal, pitching a tent near Conchita’s home. One of his daughters was very close to Conchita, and from this came occasions of mild vanity for the visionary, since the young Valencian painted her nails, gave her jewelry, clothes, etc. After relaying this information, this priest who was trustworthy added: “This is another detail that shows what many of us have done to the girls—disturbing at times the work of heaven in preparing and directing these girls toward the struggle that they are going to have to face in the future.”

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These words were written down by Father Ramón María Andreu, an eyewitness of many things at Garabandal. Let us return now to the unfolding of the story on Monday, July 3rd.

We told (our families) about the calls.

They were astounded since they had never seen or heard this!

After our conversation with them, we had a call and we told them about it.

The four of us were together.

And there were many people and some of them didn't believe, which could have been because they had never come.

They spoke to the parish priest Fr. Valentine, "Why not put two in Loli's house, and the other two in Conchita's house?"

And Father Valentín said, "That's a good idea."

So with the parents' permission, it was done that way. Loli and Jacinta were put in Loli's house; Conchita and Mari Cruz in Conchita's house.

They separated us that way to see if the four of us would come together at the same time.

And after a half hour we received the second call.

And the four of us came together there in the cuadro at the same time.

And the people were amazed.

As soon as we arrived at the cuadro, the Virgin appeared to us with the Child Jesus.

But the Angels didn't come.

She came with a broad smile, and the Child was smiling too.

And the first thing that we said was, "Where is St. Michael and the other Angel?"

And she smiled even more.

The people and our parents who were there gave us articles so that we might present them to be kissed.

And she kissed them all.

And since we liked to make up games for the Child Jesus, we picked up pebbles.

And I put them in my braids, Loli put them in her sleeves, and Jacinta gave them to Him.

But He didn't take them; He only smiled.

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(On this occasion Mari Cruz offered the Child some carmels that had been given to her.)

And she said many things to us.

But she didn't allow us to tell these things.

In this childlike narration there are many astonishing things. The miraculous exact coincidence of the calls in the four girls in spite of the separation imposed on them. The fact that the angels, having completed their mission to prepare and accompany, had prudently withdrawn so that all attention might be directed on the person who really mattered. The presence of the spectators who tried to enter more into the grace of Mary's presence, offering objects for her to kiss so as to treasure them later as the sweet radiation of her maternal benevolence. The girls' normal reaction to a beautiful Child, making up games as an expression of their affection for Him.

But what is most worthy of attention is that She said many things . . . although she did not permit the girls, as least for the moment, to repeat what she said.

With the visionaries she tolerates many childish things. What mother or teacher doesn't do so? But she raises them up above their childish ways and natural dispositions. She didn't come just to pass the time, even in her almost divine way. Nor did she come to demonstrate her kindness in a multitude of small favors. She came above all to aid and direct, not according to our ideas or plans, but completely according to the difficult designs of God. For this she spoke many things on that night. For this she was to continue to speak on many other nights. Certain things, that were of interest to all or many, would be known at the proper time; certain others would remain forever personal secrets of the visionaries. What St. Therese of the Child Jesus wrote about her own story, can be written now about Garabandal: Many pages of this story will never be read on earth.

In this meeting, after having exchanged words with the children, the Queen might have added the words from Proverbs (8: 32-35) that the Catholic liturgy has often placed on her lips.

Now therefore, you children, hear me:

Blessed are they who keep my ways.

Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not.

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*Blessed is the man who hears me,
and watches daily at my gates,
and waits at the posts of my doors.
He who shall find me, shall find life,
and shall have salvation from the Lord.*

The Kiss of Grace

On that July Monday, the day of the second apparition of Mary, Queen and Mother, the calls appeared for the first time, as we have just seen. And something else also appeared that has no precedent in the history of the Catholic Church, and which would come for that reason to be uniquely characteristic of Garabandal. I undertake to describe here the kisses of grace.

We have previously read:

*The people and our parents who were there gave us articles so that
we might present them to be kissed.
And she kissed them all.*

Through these words this fortunate happening is indicated. During the course of this history, many examples will come forth of the Virgin's hidden generosity. Here it is necessary to make some observations which will aid in understanding this better.

Again we go back to the testimony of Father Ramón María Andreu and the report he wrote three months after the Garabandal phenomena had begun:

Stones have also been a frequent article in the visions of the children. The stones involved were small, about the size of carmel candy. They gathered them from the ground while in the trance, or else they brought the stones with them beforehand. They gave them to the Virgin to kiss, and afterwards they returned them to people as a gift or sign of pardon. It was frequently seen that the Vision herself asked the children for more stones; but they didn't gather more.

Cases of hierognosis (Secret and mysterious understanding to distinguish holy and sacred objects from other things.) have been observed in connection with the stones kissed by the Virgin. For example, one day one of the children in a trance held up a little cup of stones to offer them up to be kissed by the Vir-

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gin. While raising one of them toward the Virgin, she was heard to say very clearly, "What? What has already been kissed? Oh! It is André's."

A little stone is an insignificant thing, worthless; but the same stone is converted into a precious treasure by being distinguished with the Virgin's kiss.

The kissing of stones occurred mainly in the first weeks of the ecstasies. Later almost nothing else was kissed except religious articles like crucifixes, rosaries, medals, holy cards, scapulars . . .

It was customary to see the children with rosaries, medals, and crucifixes around their necks. These were the things that the public gave them for the Virgin to kiss. A considerable number of cases of hierognosis have been observed in connection with the offering of these objects to be kissed. Also cases have been cited—the majority difficult to prove—of favors obtained or cures made either at the moment of giving those objects to be kissed, or on receiving them back, or later when the recipients used them. (*Father Ramon*)

It was a proven fact that the children, in spite of the multitude of objects that passed through their hands and which they held up to be kissed without any pre-established order, never erred in returning each one of the objects to the proper person. And they did this with their faces turned upwards, without seeing the people, and sometimes with the persons involved being behind their backs, or deliberately remaining at a distance. In all these circumstances it was evident that someone invisible was there with words or gestures directing the hands of the children.

But the Virgin did not only kiss definitely religious articles and small stones, the simple stones of biblical significance, she also kissed other objects that did not appear appropriate for her lips.

Among the numerous episodes that have been recorded with complete guarantee of accuracy, this one is particularly striking:

One day Conchita was in the kitchen of her house surrounded by persons who were waiting for the moment of the apparition. On the simple table that served for the family meals, the objects that she was going to give to be kissed were being gathered. Together with these, someone had put there a stylish woman's powder case. The child and those present wanted this removed. How could the Virgin come to kiss an object so profane and used only for the service of vanity? Nevertheless, the powder case remained there.

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The ecstasy began and those present saw with astonishment that the visionary's hand, without her looking at it, before going to any other object, went first of all toward the previously discussed powder case. The child raised it toward the invisible Virgin and then set it down with great respect on the table. Among those present, surprise must have been mingled with doubt. Was it really the Virgin who was appearing? It didn't seem that she would kiss such an object . . .

As soon as the ecstasy was finished, Conchita was asked for an explanation. And she declared that the Virgin had asked immediately for the powder case in order to kiss it, saying that it was something "belonging to her Son". The girl did not know anything more. But the person who had put the powder case there did know more and revealed the secret. During the terrible Spanish civil war (1936–1939) in the Red Zone when priests were being executed and had to be hidden, the powder case had been used to bring Communion Hosts to various locations and especially to prisoners whom the Reds held captive in order to execute. Thus it had served as a pyx.⁶

Besides religious articles, the objects that probably were the most kissed at Garabandal were wedding rings. Concerning this we have innumerable stories, some of which will be mentioned later.

If there is anything mysterious as to why the Virgin kissed these objects, it is not difficult to figure out. This is the hour of great crisis in family life. Among non-Catholics the breaking up of married life has been advancing during the past few years in an alarming degree. But even in Catholic families this evil is becoming more and more prominent. Certainly in Spain it is noticeably less than in other countries, and certainly the people of Garabandal have remained in this respect unchanged; but the Virgin did not come only for Garabandal, nor only for Spain. She came for all her children and if some ought to reform for the evil done, others should be warned so that they do not fall into the same evil. With her kiss the Virgin here indicated in advance what the Church, united in the Council, wanted to remedy and would declare later with its Pastoral Document *Gaudium et Spes* (Part II, Chapter I).

6. This episode definitely happened. Ramón Pifarré from Barcelona, visiting Garabandal with his daughter Asunción, brought the powdercase to Conchita's house.

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With regard to the Virgin's kisses, I would like to inscribe here two interesting things.

The first is an affirmation. It is certain that Conchita has said more than once on behalf of the Virgin:

Jesus will perform prodigies by means of the objects kissed by her, before and after the miracle. And the persons who use these objects with faith will undergo purgatory in this life."

The second is an anecdote which helps us understand that these kisses belonged strictly to Mary's maternal role. It happened several years later on June 18th, 1965, an important date in the history of Garabandal. On that day the village was swarming with strangers who had come to be present at a special apparition announced in December of the previous year. One of these strangers, undoubtedly not possessing a kissed object and wishing to have one, offered a rosary to Conchita. The young girl, sure that on that day only St. Michael was coming, would not accept it, saying to the surprised man:

—"The Angel doesn't kiss."

—"Why is that?"

Conchita smiled and said, "Only the Virgin kisses. The Angel is not the person for that."

Now let us return to those first days in July of 1961. The apparition of Monday, July 3rd, started at 7:30 at night and ended at 8:00.

When she said to us, "Stay with God and with me also, that made us sad." (Her departure)

And we said, "Goodbye, goodbye."

The last thing she said to us was, "Tomorrow you will see me again."

On July 4th, we were the same as usual, and the people of the village and our parents, brothers, and sisters were believing more each day.

The strangers who came were very enthusiastic in telling other people to come.

We continued leading our normal lives, doing what our parents told us.

Evening came on Tuesday, July 4th, the third day of seeing the Virgin.

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Many people had come, and priests.

The rosary was at 6:00 in the evening at the parish church and we had one call.

The church was full of people and on the main altar were about a dozen priests and photographers⁷ taking pictures.

When the rosary was finished, we had two calls and we decided to run to the cuadro, and the people ran after us . . .

Before all had arrived, Mari Cruz and I were a little higher up than Loli and Jacinta. The two of us were inside the cuadro itself, and the other two not inside.

And the people said that for all that we had run, we didn't perspire.

And they were perspiring and arriving all exhausted

And they were amazed.

But it was as though the Virgin carried us!

According to the witnesses of the Garabandal phenomena, the girls' race to the site of the apparition after feeling the third call was awesome, and there was no way of following them. Therefore, Conchita said with reason that it was the Virgin—a supernatural force—that carried them. Because of this they did not feel any tiredness or signs of fatigue, like perspiration, shortness of breath, fast heartbeat, etc . . .

If all this were mere child's play, as has been said (even officially), they would soon have become physically and psychologically worn out. Nevertheless the races, the trances, the exertions and the vigils which took place almost daily, month after month for several years, exhausted everyone else except the visionaries. And all who could observe these things from up close, including eminent doctors of various specialties, agreed in describing the amazing naturalness, normality, childlike and adolescent freshness and mental balance that the girls had in their way of acting. Only intervention from on high could have left the girls' weak natures intact and enriched in such circumstances.

7. Cameras appeared in Garabandal from the beginning, brought for definite reasons, most of the time with the desire of perpetuating the beauty and emotion of those extraordinary scenes.

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Another new confirmation of the basic theological axiom, Gratia naturam non destruit, sed perficit. (Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it.)

Serious Words

This apparition of Tuesday, July 4th, 1961 was very important because of the statements of the Celestial Apparition.

The Virgin was smiling as usual.

And the first thing that she said to us was

—“Do you know the meaning of the writing that the angel carried beneath him?”

We spoke out together, “No, we don’t know.”

—“It gives a Message that I am going to explain to you so that you can tell it to the people on the 18th of October.”

And she told it to us.

The message, brief in words, extended in content, was the girls’ secret until the 18th of October. I would like to speak about this now; however, when the story arrives at that date, the message will be mentioned and commented on.

Once again I must express my admiration for the divine teaching in the events at Garabandal.

Heaven accommodates itself to the capacity of young girls inferior in education, but not inferior in intelligence. Little by little they are first introduced to what they will learn and experience. Then later on they are made to learn and experience many more advanced things.

It begins with the visual and the imaginative: the brilliant figure of an angel, suggesting so much to the visionaries even though he appears without speaking; an angel surrounded with signs very appropriate for drawing attention toward what he wants to say. To this is added the even more beautiful image of Mary with the two angels and Mysterious Eye. Then it goes on to words: a few important words that ought to remain engraved in the souls of the girls, although they did not understand them. Conchita testifies to this with a brief addition that she puts in her diary showing the Virgin told her the message on July 2nd, but that only later, on Tuesday, July 4th would she begin to understand the message. She told us on the first day, but we didn’t understand.

And He Dwelt Among Us

They heard the words without being able to comprehend either their significance or their content. Finally the explanations and illustrations begin.⁸

To the young village girls it was necessary to explain the significance of terms that seem self-explanatory to us. The girls, for example, did not know the meaning of *sacrifices* or what it meant to *make sacrifices*, something that was repeated very much in the conversations with the Virgin.

After her smiling condescension, the marvelous teacher comes forth with serious things. But she has such grace in her words! And how she accommodates herself to her little disciples. With a love and a patience without limits, she comes to instruct them first, and through them the rest of us . . .

- By giving small and progressive lessons that they are able to assimilate,
- By accompanying the lessons with kisses, smiles and condescension, even to the point of playing with them,
- By placing herself in the daily existence of the four girls, even to listening to some of their conversations that appeared banal and unimportant, something to waste the time of one so great as the Mother of God.⁹

8. We know that on the 28th and 29th of July, there was an *intensive course* on the contents of the message. We will speak about the 29th of July in Chapter 8. With regard to the 28th, I put down here the testimony of Police Chief Juan Alvarez Seco who was an eye-witness of what he reported:

“The visionaries were in ecstasy in the cuadro, very serious, and totally absorbed in what the Virgin had to be teaching and advising to them. Big tears flowed from some . . . Emotion also held many of those present. When the ecstasy was finished, the girls spoke a little with Father Valentin and he said later, breaking the intense silence of all those that were there: The Virgin has given the girls a message that they cannot reveal at present, either to the parish priest, their parents, or the bishop.”

9. Fourteen years after the events, Jacinta confirmed many things for me.

—“Did the Virgin begin immediately to explain what you had seen in the Angel’s inscription?”

—“Yes, from the first days.”

—“And did she spent some time giving instructions during all her visits?”

—“Yes, whenever she spoke it was always to teach us something.”

—“We know that you told her a multitude of affairs and trivia that only could have interest for you yourselves . . . How did she react to that?”

—“She heard us with an attention, a patience, and a goodness that I can understand only now.”

—“Did she take what you said as a basis to instruct and counsel you?”

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Yes, she lowered herself to our level, and among us she established her dwelling. In everything she acts as a mother who is in no haste when it comes to things concerning her children, since her haste is to wait for them: that they might believe and improve, that they might enter into the right way, and go forward beyond their childishness, frailty, and pathetic lack of correspondence.

It is the Seat of Wisdom speaking to everyone from her cathedral at Garabandal:

*Oh, children how long will you love childishness,
And fools covet what is harmful to themselves;
And the unwise hate knowledge.
Turn to my reproof:
Behold I will utter my spirit to you,
And show you my words.*

(Proverbs 1: 22-23)

—“Many times!”

—“And what was, in your opinion, the principal usefulness of all the conversations with the Mother of Heaven? . . . saying it in another way, what did you get out of these conversations?”

—“I don’t know about the others. But for myself, what struck me the most was the necessity of submission and obedience to our parents and superiors, like priests, rulers, and so on . . .”

—“In all these visits, did she come for you, or rather for the Church and the world?”

—“For the Church and the world, no doubt about that!”

—“It seems that she revealed “secrets.” Were they about your personal future?”

—“When we asked her about that, she never answered.”

—“At the time she predicted to you things about the future, referring to the Church and the world . . . Besides the Warning and Chastisement that we know already, can you tell me some others?”

—“No, I can’t say anything, since we have to keep it secret.”

—“Alright. How do you interpret, “They will believe. They will believe.” that she responded to your repeated requests for her to perform a great miracle so that everyone would be convinced?”

—“I don’t know . . . All that I can testify is that she told us this many times.”

CHAPTER 5

The Extraordinary Happens Every Day

UP TO THIS POINT we have followed step by step, day by day, the progression of this amazing story. From now on it will not be possible to continue in this way since it is not possible to contain in one book all the things known on the events of Garabandal. Besides neither can the facts be related to the dates with precision, nor can the dates be associated accurately with many of the facts. Conchita herself in her diary relates the first sixteen days one after the other. Then, from the 4th of July, as we are going to see, she does not hold strictly to the calendar and mixes many things in her narration, relating only what seemed most important in her estimation or what stuck the most in her memory.¹

1. Sometime after having written this chapter, there came into my hands some notes from the many taken by the parish priest, Father Valentín during the time that we are recounting. His notes are brief and somewhat confusing. This is not surprising since he had so many things to take care of each day and he had to write down in a hurry what might be called the daily official report.

From these notes, I perceive that the angel, who had visited the girls so often during the last fortnight of June, did not return to the children for about a week (from Sunday the 2nd of July, the day of the first apparition of the Virgin, until Saturday, July 8th). But on July

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Furthermore I do not believe that it is necessary to minutely recount everything about Garabandal. What I would like to do is to present a good in depth picture of the thing as a whole, in a way that will aid in evaluating all the signs of this extraordinary work of God and the Virgin on our behalf.

Theological Study In Action

The month of July 1961 saw these marvels become commonplace. Each day had its *session*: More or less in the same manner, More or less at the same time, More or less in the same places.

8th and the following day, he showed himself more familiar than ever with them: “he kissed us on the cheeks and on the forehead . . . and he kissed us as though we were in a line.” Thus began a new and astounding page in the heavenly communications.

During those days (Tuesday, July 11th, in all probability) began something that for many would be a cause of difficulty: the girls’ Mystical Communions, as they came to be called. I say that this probably began on July 11th, because in the writings of Father Valentín is found this short reference: “They said they had received Communion on the 11th, 12th and 13th.” This is the first time that he speaks of this.

These Communions always occurred at the time and place that the angel advised on the previous day. It is important to mark here the general observation made by Father Valentín: “Whenever the girls said something in advance, it always happened.”

Before beginning these Communions, the angel gave the usual catechism class . . . in all probability during the apparitions of July 8th, 9th, and 10th.

The first time that the girls talked to Father Valentín about the angel giving them Communion, he questioned them, then later wrote down, “They said that the angel does the same as I do when I give Communion.”

These Communions always, or almost always, had a prayer of thanksgiving recommended by the Angel: “Soul of Christ, sanctify me; Body of Christ, save me; Blood of Christ” . . . (Anima Christi of St. Ignatius)

The persons who were present did not see either the angel or the Sacred Host; but they did see perfectly the gestures and movements that the girls made in receiving Communion; and there are numerous photographic proofs of this in circulation.

This is significant: It is a proven fact that the angel came to give Communion only when a priest who could do so was not in the village. This is the *style* of Divine Providence: to come to our aid with extraordinary means (if God so desires) only when it cannot be accomplished with ordinary means.

From Father Valentín’s notes it is seen that on all or almost all of the days during July, the girls had an apparition either with the Virgin, or with the angel, or with the two at the same time. But it seems to me that to dwell longer on Father Valentín brief resumes would be both boring and tiring, since they contain no more than external details, which are the least important, and besides are mostly the same from day to day.

The Extraordinary Happens Every Day

The privileged children went in and out of the ecstasies with an extreme naturalness, and spoke of the marvels in the same way they spoke of other everyday occurrences. The villagers became accustomed to seeing these things without surprise, encountering the intermingling of another world at the turn of each corner, down every street. Only the daily newcomers—the pilgrims who came from areas increasingly more distant—were astonished to behold with their own eyes and touch with their own hands things completely extra-real, things they could never have even dreamed.

All that came were influenced by curiosity; but besides this easily understandable curiosity, there were many different attitudes and motives for coming. Almost no one wanted to remain simply an observer in the moving and beautiful spectacle. The observer pondered over what was happening, trying to size it up to determine exactly what was going on, if possible. First, observe; then try to understand what it meant.

This happened especially with the doctors and priests. The names of some of these will remain forever linked to the history of Garabandal; some pro and some contra; some for what they have done for the manifestation of Garabandal, and some for what they have done for its condemnation.

Among those who contributed to make Garabandal known by his observations and opinions, a priest by the name of Ramon María Andreu Rodamilans merits special mention. He was not one of the first to come; however he was the first to put in writing a serious study of the things that were happening in the remote *Montaña* village.

Because of this I consider it extremely useful to insert at this point in our history what Father Ramón Andreu wrote down as the fruit of his experiences in Garabandal during the summer of 1961.

His writing starts like this:

With the special authorization of His Excellency Bishop Doroteo Fernández, Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Santander, and with the blessing of my superiors, Right Reverend Fathers Conrado Pérez Picón, vice provincial of Western Castile and Cipriano Arana, rector of the professional school of Christ the King at Valladolid:

I visited the location of San Sebastián de Garabandal, near Cossío, of the district of Puente-Nansa, in the province of Santander, because of events that were taking place there concerning four young girls who were affirming that they were seeing and hearing the Virgin. And I obtained the following information, which I now place at the disposition of the ecclesiastical authorities, with the aim of simplifying the work that will have to be done because of such events.

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These notes were written by Father Ramón during September and October of 1961, although his observations and experiences had already begun in July. Because of this they hold great importance in the understanding of what Garabandal was in that first summer, in those weeks of our story when the extraordinary began to be for those people there no more than an unusual normal.

Among the entries that this report contains on its first page, I would like to point out the following, which I consider to be of significant importance:

A miracle can come as a confirmation of a supernatural happening; but a miracle does not make a happening supernatural, nor in any case does it confirm it. From this the error and the mistake of those who examine Garabandal with the idea of witnessing a miracle at all costs.

With regard to the young girls, he says:

The psychological age of the so-called visionaries during the first month was equivalent to eight or nine year old schoolgirls from the city.² Their conduct was good from the moment the occurrences we are relating began, according to the judgment of the pastor, the schoolteacher, and their own parents. Also they appeared normal before the visions started and they continued to be normal when out of the visions.

Why young girls for such things? The *Mystical Evolution* by P. Arintero³ explains this:

Because the very young, the feminine, the virgin souls hold a heart more pure, or more generously do violence to the passions. Thus the Holy Spirit can make His

2. Apart from Father Andreu's personal experiences with the children's psychology, there is an interesting statement in Father Valentín's notations, written on July 17th:

"Conchita said to the Virgin that she was going to sleep in her room, that she was going to the barn . . . Conchita asked where was the father of the Child (whom the Virgin held in her arms) . . . We do not know the answer; but the girl began to jump with joy . . . The girls said frequently: "Don't go away. A little while longer! Oh, don't go away! Do you want us to sing or pray more? What do you want us to do so that you won't go away?" And at this time they began to pray a litany in jest saying, "St. Conchita . . . St. Loli" . . . I could not describe the exceptional happiness of the girls."

3. The renowned Dominican professor, Father Juan González de Arintero, was born in a little mountain city of Valdelugueros in León in 1860 and died in Salamanca in 1928. Among his many achievements was the restoration of the study of mystical theology in Spain.

His venerable remains are kept in Cantalapiedra, Salamanca, in the chapel of a cloistered convent of Poor Clares to whose foundation he contributed.

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light shine in them. The words of the sixth Beatitude, Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God, find fulfillment in their life. Men and the highly gifted thus have no reason to reproach women. It is not so much a privilege of little ones and women to see better the supernatural things, as much as it is a punishment for men and the learned in order to humiliate them. St. Theresa one day was requesting from Our Lord that instead of heaping so many favors on her, He should give them to the learned men, the priests, the religious, the theologians. And He answered her: Those do not have the time or the desire to enter into confidential relations with Me; and, since they always disdain Me, I have to direct Myself to simple women, though I desire to discuss My affairs with men.

After this Father Andreu spoke about the spectators:

The visitor who comes to Garabandal, seeing the young girls speaking to the Virgin, usually passes through the following stages:

—When hearing about the matter for the first time, the visitor would usually take it for a joke; and thus, when deciding to go up to the village, it was as much for curiosity as for what he had been told.⁴

—The visit to the village ordinarily made a good impression because of its total simplicity and the absolute lack of any preconditioning.

—The first thing that would occur to someone during the phenomena was to think it was a comedy or an attack of hysteria. Since he would not see a miracle, he would pass initially to a feeling of disillusion. (An ecstasy is not a miracle.)

—Observing the actions of the young girls usually made an impression when—overcoming the obstacles of the large crowd—the visitor would come to see and hear close up in a more thorough fashion.

—The majority of those who came to Garabandal did not understand the events which were happening there; but they came to have an intuition that something important was happening.

—Then follows a state of waiting that seemed to lead them to continuing reflexion about their observations in Garabandal.

The Scene of the Action

The isolation gave the village and its inhabitants a feeling of tranquility and peace, that now has changed because of the influence of the pilgrims and the curiosity-seekers. At nightfall the mother of Jacinta walks through the streets

4. As Father Valentín wrote for the 17th of July:

“Eight priests, two doctors, and some 600 people from afar were present; but there have been days, on Sunday, when there were about 3,000. Many came out of curiosity; after having seen the girls, they changed; I have seen men cry.”

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ringing a bell, according to an ancient tradition, to call the townspeople to pray for the souls in purgatory. The rosary is said in the church every evening.

The patience of the girls' parents has undergone a real test because of the events. Being very simple and humble people, they have suddenly found out that their daughters have become the subject of phenomena that constantly leave them exposed to the whims of the people surrounding them. This has created a situation that they are not able to control, for the public is not always aware of what is proper in its words and actions. And so they have slapped the children, insulted their parents, and created many disagreeable situations. Because of the absence of police in the village, it came about that the girls' parents and the local youth had to take it upon themselves to protect their daughters and sisters, even to the point of shoving. The parents desired to know more than anyone else what was going on; and they found themselves unaided before happenings that they did not end up understanding.

During the three months that this situation continued, with so many arrivals and such crowds, with so many and such diversified personalities coming, the fact that nothing happened that had to be regretted could be interpreted as evidence that an invisible hand was watching over the visionaries and protecting them carefully.

The villagers neither affirm nor deny anything. They do not tell about anything more than what they have seen. But all of them, knowing the sincerity and the normalness of the children, hold the conviction that what the girls say is true.

In attempting to act in a scientific manner, it is not possible to keep for investigation more facts than those that are given by eye-witnesses. Actual facts can be changed into fantastic rumors when news passes from mouth to mouth . . . The facts to which I attest in this writing have been observed directly by me except in those things where another source is explicitly mentioned.⁵

5. I wanted to document this book on the scene and first hand with the witnesses who lived these events, but Bishop Cirarda of Santander always refused to give me permission.

Consequently, I had to procure the necessary documentation for this work by more labor and less detailed background information.

Did the Bishop of Santander really want the case of Garabandal brought out into the open?

In October of 1968, a French layman F. Corteville, publisher of the bi-monthly periodical *L'Impartial*, passed through Santander and sought an audience with Bishop Cirarda. This was given and in it he spoke about Garabandal . . . Mr. Corteville tried to suggest the formation of an international association of the type which he directs with regard to the Virgin of LaSalette to produce an in-depth study on the occurrences in the celebrated little mountain town.

"Will you permit me then, Your Excellency," he asked, "to examine the evidence and documents that are kept in the chancery?" Bishop Cirarda (Mr. Corteville himself told me this) gave a mute response, but very expressive, of . . . refusal.

The Protagonists

As has already been indicated, the four children in their ordinary state, that is to say, outside of their ecstasies or trances, show themselves to be completely normal. So they appear to the doctors, especially to those who have shown themselves most careful in their examination. The four children are completely normal to any other observer, just as they are to the immediate families, to the parish priest, and to all those who have known them for some time.

With the arrival of the events, the only ones who suffered healthwise, because of worries and troubles, were the families. The children themselves, on the contrary, after three long months of ecstasies and almost daily occurrences, while being awake so many hours of the night, have remained completely normal. They play and converse like the other children, make the long walks to the pastures (some of them five or more kilometers), do the household chores, and act, to put it briefly, just as any other young girl of their age and environment.

Continuing on, Father Andreu mentions a letter written to him on August 24th, 1961 by a pediatrician, Doctor Celestiro Ortiz Pérez of Santander. This letter attests to the absolute normality and good health of the visionaries and refutes certain points of view of a Doctor "X"⁶ who was trying to give a naturalistic explanation of the unusual occurrences at Garabandal. He ended with this revealing episode:

One day, in the village, a young girl suffered an attack of nerves (showing itself in gestures and attitudes of great excitation), pretending that the Virgin had already given her a call. They brought me without delay to the home of Ceferino, where we were together with Loli, Jacinta, a doctor and several other persons. She was given a sedative, and the doctor and all those present could see the tremendous difference there was between the agitated and most nervous aspect both in speech and appearance of the young girl who was suffering the attack and the customary calmness of Loli and Jacinta, who then were smiling and helping to calm down the young girl. After taking her aside and putting her to bed, she slowly came to herself. A little later, in a vision, the two girls were heard to say: "So she pretended that the Virgin had called her! Ah, that is because she is sick. How she frightened us!

Concerning his observation of the children, he wrote down the following:

1. They have no desire to be spectacular. On the contrary, they prefer to get away from the people who come to see them. One day Loli and Jacinta, coming

6. This refers to Doctor Morales, a well-known psychiatrist from Santander, who, as we will mention later, was named to be a member of the Commission appointed by Bishop Doroteo Fernández to study Garabandal.

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down from the pasture, on arriving on a hill from which they could look down on the village, said to one another: "What a pain. How nice it would be for us to be alone. And now once again with the crowd."

They stated that the Virgin had told them they should remain in their homes and not to go out more than to do their shopping, that is to say, that they were not to walk in the street during the night hours when the crowds gathered. The Virgin did not tell them this every day; nevertheless, they carried it out well.

2. On the other hand, the children were pleased that the crowds came, in order that they might believe. However they did not seek after them when they came.

3. One thing that could not be denied was the fact that the majority of the visions took place in public, where a superior force led them out and brought them. But it is certain that as soon as they came out of their ecstasies, they hurried to get back in their homes.

4. They were not disturbed at all when there was no ecstasy even though many people had arrived, and the visitors went away disillusioned and dissatisfied.

These opinions of Father Andreu are confirmed by the following article written by Miguel González-Gay in the weekly *Que Pasa?* on the fifth of April, 1969:

On the afternoon of July 25th, 1964, feast of St. James the Apostle,⁷ there was a fiesta in the village of Garabandal. From afar one could hear loud voices that were partly drowning out the thundering of a storm. It was nightfall and gathered together in the kitchen of Mari Cruz' home were her family, a woman lawyer from Madrid and a man from Santander. The kitchen being almost dark, the man from Santander easily placed a tape recorder under the table and led the conversation toward the happenings experienced by the girls. Mari Cruz' mother revealed many confidential things. Among other matters she said:

She, Mari Cruz didn't want anyone to see her. Don't think that Mari Cruz sought to be seen by the people; she wanted to be left alone. Look, one time it happened that the child went to gather nuts with a girl named Pili, the daughter of Mingo and Nati. They were in a field on the mountain, farther away than from here to Cossío. The young girl was calmly gathering nuts, when all of a sudden she started saying that she had to go to the Pines. She began to run and the others weren't able to follow her. And she said to them: "Look, if there are no people there at the Pines, you can leave me alone. But if there are people, tell my parents"

Escolastico, the father of Mari Cruz, interrupted to say that his daughter's comrades had asked how she had been able to run like that, since they were not

7. A holy day of obligation in Spain.

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able to follow her. She answered them, “At the time it seemed to me I was sitting down.”

She arrived at the Pines and Matutano was there; she fell into ecstasy. When they arrived, the other young girls said that they were exhausted from running, while she was as if nothing . . .⁸

And see if she did this to be seen. One day she was in Torrelavega. Her cousin came home and found her alone there in the kitchen in ecstasy; and God knows the time she was held like that. On another day Nisia, coming from eating at the La Cuenca, found her alone like that at the Pines. And she was happy; she preferred to be alone.

There have been abundant proofs that the vision aries were not attached to exhibitionism or spectacularism. Nor did the ecstasies depend on whether or not there was a crowd, although the events came of course for the common good.

Aniceta recalls one night when the weather was very bad—“a horrible night” as she put it—during which she had to accompany her daughter in ecstasy to the cemetery. The good woman admitted that she was very afraid, and for nothing in the world would she walk alone at night, and much less take the path that led to the graveyard. This fear only disappeared when she went with one of the girls in ecstasy; then she felt different. Now this night she and Conchita, completely alone, went through those solitary, dark, and muddy paths. They stayed for a long time praying for the departed at the gates of the cemetery.

Then coming back to the village, still walking alone in ecstasy, Conchita started to run down the streets and alleys, singing the rosary to which her mother responded the best she could. (She has said that Conchita ordinarily sang very bad, “almost as bad as Father Valentín”, but while in ecstasy she changed and sang magnificently.) Finally, some people came out of their homes and joined them.

“There is another very interesting point”—continues Father Andreu—“with regard to the visionaries: the concordance of their answers. Many times tricky questions were put to them in order to lead them into contradictions. To better evaluate their answers, the following should be taken into account:

A) The children, when speaking in the normal state, could have all the weaknesses proper to their condition, their situation, etc.; thus they could have mem-

8. According to Fr. Valentín’s notes, this episode took place on the 20th of September, 1961.

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ory lapses, inaccuracies of speech, weariness, even going to the extent of telling a lie.

B) Since all four did not have the same visions, it is natural that some of the girls gave information and details that the others did not know.

When it consists of describing things that they have seen, I have noticed that they were all in agreement, provided that they were speaking about things that they had all four seen. On the contrary, there were little hesitations when it concerned naming the dates on which certain events had occurred. It was on this score, more than anything else, that some of them did not agree exactly with some of the others.”

Continuing on, Father Andreu quotes some texts from masters of mystical theology in order to shed light on these experiences, and he ends the discussion with an interesting fact:

Talking on one occasion with the children, I asked them if they remembered what they had seen in their visions. And changing the words of my question a little, one answered this way: “What the Virgin said to us I remember well; concerning what I myself said—not so well.”

In order to explain some of the phenomena that took place in them, the visionaries were accustomed to using negative expressions. Thus, for example, speaking of the Virgin’s voice: “There’s no voice like hers.” Or in wishing to describe what the *calls* were or what they felt during the marches: “Well, the thing is something like this, or I don’t know.”

With regard to the marches, they told me: “We go as though we are in the air, as if we are lying down. I don’t know, like in another world; but in the daytime, and with the sun. Compare this with St. Theresa.” (*Interior Castle*, Chapter 5)

The Phenomena

The visions of the children of Garabandal could not be counted by days. Beginning from July they began to increase so that they frequently occurred several times each day. The time of the ecstasies varied greatly. Sometimes they occurred at the first ray of dawn, sometimes after dinner. For a long period the usual time for the ecstasies to take place was between seven and nine in the evening. Later they began to occur during the night, ending at times at five o’clock in the morning. This should not surprise us, notes Father Royo Marín⁹ with regard to the frequency of the

9. A celebrated Dominican priest renowned as a preacher, professor, and writer. Born in Morella (Castellón) in 1913, he lived for many years at San Esteban in the providence of Salamanca. He will be mentioned again later on.

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ecstasies and the visions. “In some saints these have occurred on a grand scale. For St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, St. Michael of the Saints and St. Joseph of Cupertino, some years of their lives were a continual series of ecstasies.” (*Theology of Christian Perfection* N° 465)

There also was much variation as to the duration of the ecstasies. Sometimes they lasted a short time, from two to five minutes. This occurred on few occasions, and always with the purpose of some advice or information with regard to the visions themselves, as: “Today I will not come, since they are singing so much, or I will come to see you at such an hour.” But ordinarily they lasted a half hour or more. Sometimes (recalling the time when Loli was in ecstasy from nine at night until five in the morning) the ecstasies were interrupted for a time, as a pause for resting between visions. And the duration of these interludes varied, as in the case just mentioned, when there were two intermissions lasting about an hour and a half.

When the children were in ecstasy, they had the impression that time was standing still. Thus, very frequently after an hour or more in ecstasy, they would exclaim: “Don’t go. Why do you go so soon? You haven’t been here more than a minute. What? So long? I thought that it was only a minute . . .”

In spite of the very difficult positions in which they held themselves, in spite of the long marches, in spite of being on their knees on top of sharp stones, their impression was always that the vision had lasted only a brief time; and when it ended, they remained with a sensation of having rested. All their appearance seemed to confirm this since they showed no sign of fatigue or of exertion. Their complexion had a light pallor, but felt fresh to the touch.

We have already mentioned some of the things that were said by Mari Cruz’ mother. Pertaining to this is the following:

“One day a man from Madrid was here and he said to my daughter, “If you will repeat now the things you were doing, I will make your home into a chalet and I will buy you a car.” She shrugged her shoulders.

But I said, “How is she going to do that? Really it is impossible for her to do that thing again.”

“And there is no one who can do it. Do you think a person is going to stay in the position that she was in one time for two and a half hours? Who is going to stay two and a half hours the way she stayed?”

“And who will fall on their knees on top of a sharp stone and not hurt their knees, as she did one time without anything happening? Mr. Emilio del Valle took

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that stone. She was on it about three quarters of an hour and Emilio said it is not possible to stay in that position. I can assure you that Mari Cruz is not faking this.”

Escolastico put in his part:

“Candido and I were in the stable one day and we were laughing at them and we were asking them, “What are you accomplishing with this?” And they answered us, ‘You are laughing? Well, some day you will see.’”

Mari Cruz’ mother added:

“Why doesn’t the Virgin act in these apparitions the same as she has acted in the others?”

Men rule the affairs of earth, but not the affairs of heaven . . .

Continuing the report of Father Andreu:

Faced with the intrusion of curious and devoted people who were coming in great numbers, the parents determined to close the doors of their homes and keep the children inside. The Virgin told them to obey and that she would continue to come in spite of everything.

Beginning on August 3rd, the falls in the state of trance increased considerably; sometimes the four together; sometimes several of them; sometimes only one. The position that they adopt in these falls is truly like a sculpture of great beauty. It was not remembered—I certainly have not seen it—that they even one time took a position the least bit indecent or incorrect.¹⁰ They could be on the ground a moment or several minutes. The fall, when several of them were involved, was accustomed to be admirably synchronized; and without the least preparation, they formed groupings that were on the whole truly extraordinary.

(Father Arintero, in his book *The Mystical Evolution* mentions, “In the false ecstasies, the convulsive movements that usually occur are uncoordinated and unseemly, and the person is exposed to great dangers; while in the divine ecstasies an admirable modesty and composure is kept, and

10. Donna María Josefa Herrero y Garralda, a woman from León who went up to Garabandal in July and August of 1961, assured me about this, marveling over the perfect modesty that the girls demonstrated during their ecstatic falls. Not only was their bodily posture really beautiful and dignified, but also their clothes always *fell* in a proper way, even to sliding in a direction that appeared contrary to the law of gravity: “It was as if an invisible hand was there not to permit anything bad to happen; everyone felt a great respect in front of these scenes.”

11. Andrés Otero Lorenzo was present during these days of July and August in 1961 at an extraordinary spectacle of which there were many witnesses: a mysterious game of the girls in ecstasy in the choir loft of the parish church. Repeatedly with their faces looking up and listening to someone invisible, they mounted on top of the railing of that choir loft without

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there is no risk of danger, even though the person should happen to fall into fire.”¹¹

In the Garabandal phenomena two groups or camps can be distinguished. One group consists of the spectators and the other of the young girls. The spectators could see the girls and their manner of comporting themselves, their movements, laughter, words, anesthesia, etc.; but they could not see the apparition. The girls viewed the apparition, being in its light, hearing its words; but they did not see nor were they aware of the public, although they knew that the public was there since the apparition told them of this many times.

The girls in their vision saw each other; however if one of them came out of the ecstasy and the others did not, the ones in the ecstasy no longer saw the one who was not in it. If she went back into ecstasy they would see her.

There existed also an intermediate zone. From the first days of September it was observed that the girls who were in ecstasy were able to establish contact with the other visionaries who were not; but only with them. Thus for example, if Jacinta went into ecstasy, she could communicate with Mari Cruz, Loli, and Conchita who were near to her and out of ecstasy, that is, in the normal state. This contact was established through questions which could only be made mentally.

Besides this medium of questions and answers, it was usual to have another manner of intercommunication. The girl in ecstasy was accustomed to remain rigid—as if paralyzed—at times. It was useless then to try to move or change the position of her face, hands, arms, etc. The effect was like dealing with a statue. But it didn't result that way for any of the other visionaries in the normal state. She could change the position of her companion in ecstasy, at which time the

looking where they were putting their feet, and walked along the outside edge, in continuous danger of falling and hurting themselves. And they jumped down to the floor of the church and then went back up to jump down again.

The first time that he saw them on the choir loft railing, or outside of it, the man ran to give possible help, saying very fearfully, “They will fall and be killed!” And he could not understand the calmness of Ceferino, Loli's father, who unexcitedly said, “Don't worry, nothing is going to happen.”

12. The chief of the Civil Guard, Juan Alvarez Seco, who lived nearby, remembers this case.

“One day María Dolores was on the second floor of her house where she had apparitions many times. Her father Ceferino had said that, when they came down from there to the floor below where the tavern was, they should unscrew the lightbulb since there was no switch to turn it off. Loli, while putting her hand on the bulb this time, fell into ecstasy, and she didn't take away her hand. We all feared that if she continued like this, holding onto the lit lightbulb, she would burn her hand. Her mother said, “Heavens, take away the lightbulb!”

However all our efforts were useless. Then we called Mari Cruz who wasn't in ecstasy, and she—with the greatest of ease—made Loli let go of the bulb. Then the girl went down the stairs and continued her ecstatic march.”

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tremendous rigidity that existed for other persons appeared to change into a great flexibility for her.¹²

Many reflexes disappeared during the ecstasy; others remained only deadened. Thus the eyes appeared as if dead, without sight; but in proportion as the visions increased, the eyes appeared to acquire a brilliance in the pupils. The children cried at times with tranquil tears that ran down their faces. These tears corresponded with the times in ecstasy that they learned things and must have seen the consequence of what they had heard and seen, since they were then heard to say, "Oh! Pardon, pardon. Mercy. Ah! Let's not do that again! Yes, let's tell them about it."

On one occasion they returned to the normal state with tears in their eyes and said that the Virgin had complained that the people were acting with irreverence in the church.

Another time the same thing occurred while in the street and the children declared that Father Luis had told them that there was little order among the public; that they were climbing one on top of the other; that they should advise the pastor and his brother¹³ to try to establish order, arranging the young men of the village in a large circle. And the girls said that—because of the disorder—the Virgin was leaving soon.

The Spectators

In the beginning the spectators did not take any part in what was happening. But later they took a certain participation. The girls not only spoke about the spectators that they knew, but also located them and touched them during the ecstasies. As the girls explained it, they didn't see them but they felt them by touch. (Although they didn't feel it when they were touched by the spectators.) They came to localize spectators in two ways; either by pointing in various directions until the vision would tell them where they were, or by allowing their hand to be taken by the vision to the place where the spectators were. This occurred mainly when they were returning the medals and rosaries.¹⁴

When they went to put a rosary or a gift kissed by the Virgin over someone's head, they were accustomed to say, Take my hands and place them since I do

13. *Fr. Luis*: Fr. Luis Andreu, who will be discussed later. *The Pastor*: Fr. Valentín Marichalar. *The brother*: Fr. Ramón María Andreu (brother of Fr. Luis), the author of these writings, who was spending some time in Garabandal.

14. It should not be lost from view that the girls when entering into ecstasy were taken away from the normal world of the senses; taken up into a supernatural light, which blinded their normal vision, breaking their contact with everything that physically surrounded them.

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not see the person. At those times the movement was much more rapid and more exact, and they placed the rosary or gift without touching the head. These cases have been very numerous.

There has also been participation by the spectators as a group. One day the Virgin advised the girl to pray the rosary in the church after the vision; but she found the church locked. So she started to pray at the door, and entering again into ecstasy, the Virgin told her to pray louder so that the people could answer her. It was a beautiful rosary through the streets of the village; the girl in ecstasy marching ahead, leading in a loud voice, and the public answering. The girl did not count the Ave Marias that were being said but she did not err on the number for any mystery, for the Virgin told her when it was time for the Gloria. This occurred on many other occasions.

On the pages of his history Father Ramón put down many details about this relationship between the visionaries and the spectators. Let us read some of them:

On one occasion the girls in ecstasy fell down on their knees before each person present and said the Act of Contrition. But when coming in front of a young child—without seeing him—instead of saying the Act of Contrition, they prayed a Salve.

The example is forceful and nothing could make us more aware on the one hand of the dignity of every son of God with a baptized soul, and on the other hand of the realization that we are all sinners and in need of a continual practice of repentance. And beyond that, it points out the permanence of the state of grace brought on by baptism in those who still have not committed personal sins.

Another time one of the visionaries made the sign of the Cross on all the persons around them except one . . . We can imagine that person's dismay. The parish priest asked the girl later why she had not made the Sign of the Cross over this person. And the girl responded that the Virgin had said that this person was the only one of those present who had made the sign of the Cross on getting up in the morning. On questioning all those involved, it was learned that it had indeed been like that.

A good lesson concerning the necessity of not starting our day without prayer. There are few things so advisable for a Christian Life as to mark the start of each day with the raising of the heart toward *Our Father Who art in Heaven*.

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A very concerned woman requested the visionary to ask the Virgin if her husband believed in God. After the ecstasy she learned the answer. In God he believes; in the Virgin, very little; but he will believe.”

This became clear on learning—the visionary did not know—that the husband was a Protestant.¹⁵

A man on his knees prayed mentally for the conversion of his son-in-law. As he was thus in prayer, known only to himself, a girl in ecstasy approached and spoke into his ear the word *Yes*, which some of those nearest to him were able to hear also. When I asked the girl later why she had said this “*Yes*,” she answered, “The Virgin told me: Here is a man: Tell him *Yes*.” I insisted on knowing to what this “*Yes*” referred. “I don’t know, the Virgin only told me at the time that I should say *Yes*” to the man.

On August 15th one of the girls prayed with a rosary that I had given her; when returning it later I saw that the cross was gone. It had come off and been lost. It was useless to search in those streets, alleys, and trails. After twenty days, on the fifth of September, it occurred to me to mention it to the girls, who asked the Virgin for the cross from my rosary. I was able to hear myself the dialogue in which they asked and how the exact location was indicated. At the end of the vision, we went without hesitation to the place mentioned and there the crucifix was found in the mud under a stone.

Another time five holy cards were given to the children for the Virgin to kiss. The visionary was holding them up one by one to the Vision, all except one which it appeared she did not wish to take. The owner of that holy card, shaken, then came to me crying and saying that she wanted to confess her sins. Later she returned to give her holy card to the girl in ecstasy and the girl, after she had listened to the Virgin and smiled, offered that holy card first of all to Her to kiss. The person to whom this happened in front of me gave me permission to mention it.

Here is another case concerning the state of conscience. I saw one of the girls in ecstasy suddenly fall on her knees in front of a woman. The woman drew back very deliberately as the girl, holding her glance fixed on high, coralled her in a corner. There the girl smiled very gently for a few moments and then left her.

The effect that this caused in the person was very great. And afterwards I learned that she had come to Garabandal very distraught with the thought that her confessions had not been made properly. For that reason she had prayed to God and the Virgin, “If my past confessions have been made properly, let the girl come clearly to me.” She had barely formed mentally this prayer when the girl—from the other end of the street—advanced on her knees toward her without paying attention to any other person. The answer had been wonderful.

15. Now he is a Catholic, and definitely as a fruit of the *child’s play* of Garabandal. His story will be brought forth later on.

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The capacity that the girls in ecstasy possessed to know hidden things about the spectators has been shown on many other instances. But attention is called particularly to the facility with which they discovered some of those around them were priests.

Many times they said that priests were there when no one could have suspected it. Or that there were more priests than there appeared to be (due to their disguises), and it was always proven that it was indeed so.¹⁶

Concerning the spectators in Garabandal we can add this curious bit of information that Father Andreu gives us:

In the beginning, during the first month and a half after June 18th, something happened three or four times that presented a characteristic of great originality. On coming out of the trance, the girls said, “The Virgin said that Sari and Mary Carmen¹⁷ should come together with us; the others should be far away so that they don’t hear what we say.” And then the visionaries went up to the Pines¹⁸ and went into ecstasy in front of those young witnesses who were able to move as they pleased among the visionaries. These witnesses were six years old.

On one occasion the people sought to change one of these for another older girl about twelve years of age. But the Virgin told them not to do so—they were to be the ones that she had mentioned. We were able to ask these child witnesses what the visionaries were saying, but they were barely able to repeat some of the words that they had heard, much less understand their significance. It seems that all this corresponded to the days in which the Virgin was manifesting a secret to

16. It is beyond doubt that particular attention has been accorded priests at Garabandal. Proofs of this are innumerable. In this regard, these events point out the tremendous crisis in the Church that soon would come out in the open.

17. Sari is Loli’s sister; her complete name is María Rosaura. Mari Carmen is Jacinta’s sister.

18. The Pines are one of Garabandal’s holy places. There are nine pine trees without other trees in the area; they are on a high plain above the city, and are the first thing that is seen, together with St. Michael’s chapel, when one comes up the road from Cossío to San Sebastián.

The nine Pines of our history are what remains of the small planting of pine and oak trees that had been done many years ago on the slope of Mount Hormazo. This was brought about by an agreement between the pastor of the village, Father Angel Cossío Vélez and the mayor, Serafín González, Conchita’s paternal grandfather. It seems that the occasion was the First Communion of the children from the parish, and that the priest gave the Church’s blessing to this small planting of trees. The trees were planted by the children from the village, and the affair took on a festive air even to the composition of verses which the children sang; one of these is:

*Come you little children to plant the trees.
And let each one of us plant here.*

At the time who would imagine the phenomena to which that location and those trees would serve as a backdrop!

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the girls. Only concerning one of these ecstasies was a young witness able to explain anything to us. “They said that she shouldn’t tell us bad things.” (meaning what frightens or terrifies) “That she shouldn’t make us cry, that the things are sad.” The little children didn’t understand anything more. At times they became bored and came to us saying, “They’re crying.”

Father Andreu attempts to give a probable explanation of these episodes, as striking as they are obscure:

The interpretation of this seems to be that Father Valentín, the parish priest, should have a control from afar, through the witnesses, of what was happening in those trances, without hearing what the children were saying.

I do not know what to say about all this; but it gives me much to think about. And this strengthens my conviction that Garabandal is still covered with a formidable mystery whose enormous scope will be revealed to us only with time, according to the plans of God and according to how we merit to understand the mystery.

We have desired to measure things too much by reason, too much by the light of human science in that which is far above our understanding, and which can only be obtained by humility and simpleness of heart. For it is written:

*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the prudence of the prudent, I will reject . . .
Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . .
But the foolish things of the world has God chosen
that He may confound the wise.
And the weak things of the world has God chosen,
that He may confound the strong.
And the base things of the world
and the things that are contemptible has God chosen;
and things that are not,
that he might bring to naught things that are.
That no flesh should glory in His sight.*

(Cor. 1: 19–29)

Contents of the Ecstasies

We have large fragments of dialogue from the girls in ecstasy. In general the speech is simple and to the point, with childlike expressions, and gives the

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appearance of dealing with the happenings of the day or the previous days. Similar to what happened at Lourdes with Bernadette Soubirous, some of those that heard the conversations took them lightly; that is to say, they considered them trivial.

Through the conversations the extremely simple and transparent souls of the girls could be seen. They made exclamations like these: "How nice it must be in heaven! Take me even if it would be to bring me down another time." They were heard alluding to sacrifices, to the sins that they had committed, to persons there who didn't believe . . . From which it came that they asked frequently for cures and miracles in order that the people might believe. But the normal topics in their conversations were simple things that corresponded mostly to their everyday life.

Frequently in their ecstasies they sang the popular song:

*St. Michael the Archangel,
Great warrior
Who in the fiery battle
Vanquished Lucifer.
Who is like God?
There is no one like God!*¹⁹

The girls said that the Virgin requested that a chapel to St. Michael be built on a site at the Pines. I myself heard this said in their state of trance and also in their normal conversation.

On other occasions the girls in ecstasy composed verses. Generally these corresponded to what are called ballads in poetic literature. They accompanied these with music, that is, they recited them while singing.

As the raptures continued into September, 1961, verses formed part of the nightly rounds that the girls in ecstasy made to the other girls sleeping in their homes since they had not been called by the Virgin. Some corresponded to well-known songs like *Noche de Paz*; others were spontaneous and only had a meaning in the circumstances in which they were recited. I remember only three of these ballads, although there were more that they sang; but they could not be written down at the time that they were recited, and besides they were not always heard clearly.

19. This refers to a song that was well-known in the towns and regions of Spain, at least in the northern providences.

In Garabandal, as in all the other sectors of Santander, this song is a residual of a mission or retreat.

What is said here about St. Michael does not need explanation, if one has followed the train of this story with attention.

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The night on which the feast of the Assumption began (*August 14–15*), the youngest of the girls, Mari Cruz, was sleeping in her home. The other three together sang to her, without previous rehearsal, some stanzas that began like this:

*Get up, Mari Cruz:
Don't you smell the lilies?
That the Virgin brings you
So that you will be good.*

On another night Loli was by herself singing to the other three who were in their homes since they were not having a vision. I could only hear what was said to Conchita:

*Get up, little Conchita,
For the Virgin is here,
With a bouquet of flowers,
To give a present to you.*

Isn't this exceptionally charming? What nights, the nights at Garabandal in those days! The peace, the grace, and the favors of God rained down—by the intercession of the Virgin, through the four girls—onto all those who were either still up or had gone to sleep in the humble village, so close to the clouds, so far from the baseness and vileness of the big cities. Paris, la nuit! Madrid, con sus noches! There so much dissipation and empty frivolity. On the contrary, what nights were those of Garabandal on that summer of 1961. It is not surprising that those who lived there and the pilgrims from afar frequently called that town a “little piece of paradise,” and many did not hesitate to declare, “There I experienced the most unforgettable moments of my life.”

We have already mentioned the part that the little stones, the medals, the rosaries, the crucifixes, and the marriage rings played in the ecstasies at Garabandal. And there is more to be said on this subject. Let us listen again to Father Ramón:

THE KISSES—During the visions it was seen that the girls kissed something . . . Their gestures were evident, and they said later that they had kissed the Virgin, the Infant, St. Michael. And they were kissed in return. The motions of kissing, being kissed, receiving the Child, and taking the crown came across perfectly clear, and everyone could recognize them. In the numerous trances that I witnessed, I never saw a simultaneous action of the girls kissing together, but always one after the other. I only saw the simultaneous action when it was clear that the kiss was not given directly, but instead given from afar—what is called

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throwing a kiss . . . Frequently on terminating a vision, the girl or the girls who were having it would receive a kiss on the cheek—or two kisses, one on each cheek—and they would give only one in return.

THE MIRACLES—After Father Valentín told the girls to ask the Virgin for a miracle in order to be able to demonstrate a sign and be able to believe, they requested this many times. In the beginning, the Virgin smiled.²⁰ Afterwards, it appears that she became serious . . . When the girls told her that many did not believe, that no one believed, on various occasions she answered, “They will believe.”

Actually the girls stated that they had heard from the Virgin that there would definitely be a miracle,²¹ although they did not know when, or in what it consisted.

PRAYER—In the events of Garabandal, prayer has always been the most important thing. Very seldom would there be a vision in which the girls did not recite the rosary or pray a Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The recitation of the rosary is frequently accompanied by song, at least during one decade. The girls are not seen counting the Hail Marys; nevertheless they never make a mistake in counting out the right number. They say that the Virgin advises them when it is time for the Gloria. The Virgin prays with them, it appears, the part that corresponds to the Gloria.²² If sometimes they make mistakes or do not do it well, the Virgin nods her head a little to call their attention, though she remains smiling.

They ordinarily use the form that they learned from my brother and me: “God salute you, Mary! You are full of grace. The Lord is with you. You are blessed among all women.”²³ When they recite it singing, they employ another formula, the popular: “The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among all women”—which is what corresponds to the music. They recite the Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament many times with the ejaculation, “Long live Jesus in the Blessed Sacra-

20. This request for an actual miracle, to serve as a sign for everyone, began very early, undoubtedly because the people were continually asking for it. On July 15th, a Saturday, Father Valentín wrote down:

“They were there at a quarter before nine; they were some seven minutes in this state as usual and they were talking in a low voice. I got up close and I heard the following: “Perform a miracle for us! Let the night be changed to day.” (Mari Cruz said this.)

And Conchita said: “Yes, perform a miracle for us even though it be only a little one.”

And the following day, a Sunday and the feast of the Virgin of Mount Carmel, they said, “We saw the angel smiling. When we asked him to give us a sign, he became serious.”

21. This miracle to come is part of the immense mystery of Garabandal. Later on we will give more details about the Great Miracle.

22. According to what we have already learned from Conchita’s diary, in the early times when the Virgin prayed the whole rosary with the girls, including the Hail Marys, it was to instruct them to recite the rosary more perfectly. Later she only recited the Gloria.

23. The form of the Hail Mary that the girls learned from Father Andreu is what is heard from the girls on the tape recordings of their prayers in ecstasy.

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ment!” Also they cross themselves many times; and always do so on their arrival at the church. At times they do this in a hurry, badly, and the Vision corrects them . . . On one occasion it was learned that she corrected them as to the way of placing their fingers in the form of a cross to kiss them on ending the sign of the cross.

The Virgin’s style of prayer shows much similarity with Lourdes and Fatima; but in this case, besides the devotion to the rosary, it appears that she wants to bring out the attention that we owe the Blessed Sacrament.

And I would go on to add here that by this Garabandal comes to point out the great fall that the Church has undergone in the terrible crisis today: the setting aside of prayer, especially on the part of consecrated souls and the forgetting of the Sacramental Presence of Christ among us.²⁴

As he continued, Father Andreu brought out another very remarkable matter that occurred in the early ecstasies at Garabandal:

I myself have witnessed things that have given me reason to say that the girls spoke foreign languages while in their state of trance. Actually it isn’t exactly that, at least not at the time I am writing these lines;²⁵ the fact is that the girls have said some words in other languages. I have heard the following . . . (He gives some words in French, in Latin, in German, and the beginning of the Hail Mary in Greek.) The most interesting thing is not that they spoke these words in ecstasy, but that they corrected themselves when they spoke them badly, so as to come to a rather correct diction and pronunciation. They gave the impression that they were hearing the words from someone, one after the other, and that they were simply repeating them.

OUTWARD APPEARANCE of the CONVERSATION—From the second day of July, the date of the first apparition of the Virgin, the girls held their dialogues in ecstasy in the following ways or positions: on their knees, weaving back and forth, walking, and lying out on the ground. They have held these conversations singly (individual ecstasies), two together, in a group of three, or all four-together.²⁶ When there are several together in an ecstasy, everything about them is simultaneous and well synchronized; they speak and ask questions at the

24. The reality of this abandonment of prayer and the lack of devotion to the Holy Eucharist is so obvious that it is not necessary to give proofs. The amazing activities at Garabandal could well be an answer from heaven to this unfortunate attitude of many chosen.

25. September of 1961.

26. In the writings of Father Valentín, there is a note corresponding to Sunday, July 23rd, that reads this way:

“Since yesterday the Virgin has appeared in distinct and separate places. Today she was at the Pines with Loli and Jacinta; Conchita and Mari Cruz saw her at the village fountain.”

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same time, make the same exclamations of joy, and of fear . . .²⁷ and this, without there being—this is clearly seen—the slightest dependence of one upon the other. It appears unquestionable that they are corresponding to something that they are seeing and hearing at the same time.²⁸

The sound of their voices varies. Sometimes it is almost inaudible, and other times it is heard normally. Ordinarily their speech is very low, something unusual, like a whisper. Their way of expression is the same as they use in ordinary conversation except for rare exceptions. In cases when they hear words whose meaning they do not understand—a frequent occurrence—they ask the vision for an explanation. And the vision either gives them the explanation requested, or—as occurred in the case of the word sacrifices—tells them to question the priests later on.

Frequently the girls are heard saying toward the end of the trance, “Don’t go away! Oh, don’t go away!” Thus they express their desire to remain in that state . . .

The words of St. Theresa in this regard are applicable: “The soul dares not move or stir, for it thinks that if it does so, this blessing may slip from its grasp: sometimes it would like to be unable even to breathe. The poor creature doesn’t realize that, having been unable to do anything on its own to acquire that blessing, it will be still less able to keep it longer than the time for which the Lord is pleased that it shall possess it.” (*Autobiography of St. Theresa of Avila ch. 15, Par. 1*)

It is interesting also to read article 421 in the Theology of Christian Perfection by Father Royo Marín, who expounds upon the statement that “No one

27. In Cangas de Onís (Asturias), during the Holy Week of 1969, I heard from the venerable priest Father Alejo Martino, retired pastor from Corao:

“Sometimes I went up to Garabandal too. I was present at an ecstasy of two of the girls: two angels in human flesh couldn’t have had finer expressions . . . You would have to see it! And later, how the two made the sign of the cross at the same time in absolute concordance of movements!”

28. As a further illustration, Mr. Miguel González Gay, a lawyer from Santander, gave us this episode:

“Don Tomás, an indiano from Cossío, who owns a popular bar in Santander, recounted that one day, while walking through the Pines in Garabandal, he came upon Mari Cruz by chance—alone—kneeling in ecstasy. He knelt down at her side, trying to hear what she was saying, “Dear Virgin, why have you called me so late, since the others have already started the second mystery of the rosary?”

“I didn’t stay to hear more; with all my might I ran down to the village, and I asked where the other girls were. They told me that the girls were next to the church. In a few steps I was there and I could verify with tremendous amazement that at that exact moment they were finishing the second mystery. How can such a coincidence be explained, if there were not someone who at the same time was in the company of the girl alone at the Pines and the two girls in the village?”

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can go into contemplation²⁹ on his own desire.” This has been observed many times—in fact always—in the girls of Garabandal, who had to remain waiting, without the ability to hurry up the trance in spite of their desires. (I can name two single exceptions, in which they received a formal order to enter into ecstasy: one from the parish priest, and the other from me.)

Once they had received the third call, the girls were seen to enter, leave, and return to ecstasy without premonition or previous preparation, remaining in the trance with whatever they had in their hands—a flashlight, a glass, a dress, the hand of another girl—and there was no way to make them drop those articles . . . On the contrary, at other times they had been prepared, ready, isolated from everyone, waiting for the vision; and the wait had been in vain.

It was seen that it didn’t depend upon them to have the ecstasy that they desired so much and that so drew their interest. From this their answer—full of humble sincerity—to the many questions from the people: “Perhaps . . . When she wishes . . . When she says . . .” On one occasion this question was put to them: “Are you always going to see the Virgin?” They answered, “Oh! We don’t know.”

What else could they say? How could they understand the mysterious purposes and designs of God?

What was happening in Garabandal did not belong to them. They did not have a right to it, nor did they merit it, nor could they use it at their pleasure . . . They were there simply as instruments, nothing more: instruments in the hands of an exceptional divine action which would show God’s fullness of love, beauty, and mercy; but which still would hide its full purpose and end; instruments each day for the extraordinary plan of God. He would know the reason!

In the face of all this that occurred, and in the hope of that which still can come, we conclude with the confident and laudatory thought of the apostle: (Romans 11: 33-36)

*Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom
And of the knowledge of God!
How incomprehensible are His judgments,
And how unsearchable His ways! . . .
For of Him, and by Him, and in Him, are all things:
TO HIM BE GLORY FOREVER!*

29. This refers to supernatural contemplation, a higher form of prayer that is studied in courses on mystical theology.

CHAPTER 6

He Came Unto His Own, But His Own Received Him Not

IN THESE WORDS the last Gospel summarizes the most important event in history: God's coming down to mankind as one of them; and the result: mankind's rejection of His coming.

I would like to use those inspired words to caption Mary's coming among us at Garabandal.¹

Although in His times Jesus came for all men and all nations, His coming was first of all to the people of His own country Israel. And how did that country, the first called and chosen, react to the coming of Emmanuel?² Some heard and accepted Him gladly; but others—the ruling classes in general, the priests and scribes—were obstinate in their hard-

1. It will be readily understood by an intelligent reader that I am not attempting to put the coming of the Son of God into the world and the coming of the Virgin at Garabandal on the same plane. These two comings cannot be compared either in their physical or their spiritual reality, or in their meaning, or in their relationship to the faith. The comparison given is only meant for illustration.

2. A Hebrew word signifying God with us.

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headed rejection. The first He filled with good things, As many as received Him, He gave power to be made sons of God. (John 1:12) The others he abandoned to their emptiness and misery of soul, You shall die in your sin . . . (John 8: 24) Here is a mystery in that He came to His own and His own received Him not.

As described in the last chapter, during the month of July, 1961, the extraordinary became a daily fact of life for the people secluded in those faraway reaches of the savage Cantabrian Mountain Range.

With the daily lavishing of exceptional graces, the Virgin—according to the words of her Magnificat—was filling whomever received her with good things, making them experience beyond others the marvel of being sons of God and her sons. She acted openly as a mother and teacher; but her actions did not extend to everyone in the same way. She instructed the multitude more in an indirect way, through phenomena that the people could not explain, but in the presence of which they felt a holy reverence. Through these phenomena many entered into living communion with a higher world that until then had but slight importance in their lives. However, to the four chosen girls she gave direct lessons almost every day, and frequently several times a day. Why only to them?

Had they merited more than others? Whoever asks this question I invite to question deeper. Why did Jesus choose only twelve apostles from the many who had been demonstrating themselves as fervent disciples? And why only to those twelve whose names we know today? The evangelist answers, “And going up unto a mountain, He called unto Himself whomever He would, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve that they might be with Him and that He might send them to preach.” (Mark 3: 13-14) “Whomever He would!” We do not know if they were worth more or if they merited more. It should never be forgotten that “No flesh should glory in His sight,” (Cor. 1: 29) but that everyone should say to himself, “For who distinguished you? What have you that has not been received? And if you have received, why do you glory as if you have not received it?” (Cor. 1:7) “But that all might know well then that it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” (Rom. 9: 16)

It would have been very inspiring and enjoyable to have heard first hand the lessons that the Heavenly Mother and Teacher began to give to her four privileged girls and disciples during the summer of 1961. How-

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ever, as the girls were not capable of explaining these lessons,³ we will have to limit ourselves to presenting what others were able to capture indirectly and then transmit in testimony. (There are not many accounts concerning the month of July, 1961 that we are now describing.)

Wings On Their Feet

As an example of what was happening almost every day in Garabandal, here is what occurred on July 16th. This was the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, elaborately celebrated throughout Spain,⁴ which on that year fell on a Sunday.

I received the account directly from the mouth of Andrés Otero Lorenzo, a native of Santiago de Compostela, who later moved to Madrid; he was both a witness and a participant in what he told.

On that July 16th, in the early hours of the afternoon, Mr. Lorenzo came by car to Garabandal together with Mrs. Zubiría and Carmen Her-rero Y. Garralda, youngest daughter of the Marquese de Aledo.⁵ They had left Ribadesella⁶ several hours before and were arriving for the first time in Garabandal.

Like so many other strangers they soon came upon the home and café of Ceferino Mazón and began to ask questions. However no one could say for sure that there would be an apparition that night. Loli, who was doing housework, soon appeared, and they learned from her that there would be an apparition—obviously she had already had a call. However she was not able to tell at what time it would be.

Then they went out to stroll around and learn about the quaint and unusual town. They stopped at Conchita's house and had a talk with her. She confirmed what Loli had said. Yes, they were waiting for something,

3. Furthermore, in her diary, Conchita skips over almost all these dates in July.

4. Apart from devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel per se, among the reasons for this are the large number of women in Spain who are named María del Carmen, and the fact that Our Lady of Mount Carmel is the patroness of sailors.

5. Mr. Otero was at that time chauffeur to the Marquesa. The car that he took that day to Garabandal was a utility vehicle of Mrs. Zubiría that was better suited for the rugged ascent to the village.

6. A beautiful village in Asturias, very popular as a summer resort.

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but much later. From the church tower the bells then began to ring out the first calls for the rosary in the church.⁷

The three travelers went out into the street again and made their way toward the church, strolling leisurely. They had not yet arrived at the plaza when they saw Conchita passing them swiftly, looking upwards as if transported. Mr. Otero, a strong man in his thirties, ran after her, attempting to stay at her side in order to observe her to his satisfaction.

“I was impressed by her face,”—he told me—“her total appearance. I had never seen anything like it before, nor have I seen anything like it since.⁸ The face turned completely upwards with a most beautiful expression; the lips partially open—I don’t know whether for praying or for speaking, or for both—the hands joined in front of her chest moving the beads of a rosary between the fingers. And then her walk! It was really unique in its grace and lightness; she appeared to take normal steps, yet one had almost to run in order not to be left behind.”

When they had come to the level of Ceferino’s house, Loli also came outside in ecstasy with the same attitude and expression as Conchita. Without looking at each other, they joined perfectly together and continued toward the church, not holding hands as on so many other occasions, but separated, each one holding the rosary with her hands on her chest.

The church filled rapidly with the faithful. The two visionaries came in their ecstatic march up to the altar rail itself; there with one of those falls that are so striking and frightening, they dropped to their knees on the floor. Up to here they had come protected by Mr. Otero (who had not separated himself from Conchita), Ceferino, and his older son Fernando (*Nandin*) who had left the house behind Loli. The three had joined hands in the street and had formed a barrier so that the people in their desire to see and touch would not accidentally fall on top of the little girls.

Following the custom, a woman from the village⁹ led the recitation of the rosary and during it the girls in ecstasy answered until the finish. When

7. It was customary to recite the rosary at nightfall.

8. Meaning away from Garabandal, of course; since this man later made more visits to the village and viewed many of the girls’ ecstasies that always left him amazed.

9. Referring to Maximina González, Conchita’s aunt. Father José Ramón García de la Riva, of whom we will speak later on, told me this. Sometimes another woman of the village, Celina González, led it.

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the prayer ended they stood up, left the church reverently, and began an ecstatic march¹⁰ toward the Pines.

The three *bodyguards*, in spite of their robust condition, became exhausted in following them. Many persons, among them the two women who had come from Ribadesella, soon quit—the march was not for the unconditioned. Our informant Mr. Otero does not lack vocabulary, including one that can be very expressive; but he could not succeed in describing the grace of those walks while in ecstasy.

They did not fly as has been said at times by persons who have seen the affair from afar and in the dark. They did not fly; that could easily be determined. Their feet touched on the ground, but in a way that I don't know how to describe. Looking always and only upwards they never stumbled on anything, nor did they slide, nor did they strike against any stones.

And look out! There are rocks and stones throughout those streets and paths of Garabandal. Especially at that time, for later the people that came cleared away the worse stones little by little; I myself have taken many away during my various trips. They marched as if they were flying, but not flying; while the rest of the people were falling and sliding. But you would have to see what that was like! Above all, the running in the dark and in the dim light.

The girls walked as if their feet had eyes to search for the exact spot where it was best to step, always on top of the rocks and pebbles or away from them, never striking against them. And with a lightness, a grace, and rhythm I could not describe. I fell several times and stumbled many more times; but although perspiring and gasping for breath, I couldn't succeed in keeping up with them. I could never forget those marvelous things.

Oh! I forgot. Before entering the *calleja*, at the level of the highest houses of the village, in the middle of the street, closed in by its walls, the girls had one of

10. This name was given to the traveling from one location to another that occurred during the ecstasies. These ecstatic walks were very frequent at Garabandal.

“Sometimes they marched forward all together with a normal pace. Other times they started together, and later they separated each one for a different street, to come together again finally at a determined spot, showing great joy on meeting. The most frequent thing was to go forward at great speed, in such a manner that not even the fastest were able to follow them. There have been cases in which they have marched on their knees, and even sitting down . . .

These changes of location in ecstasy were due to the apparition coming and going from the location with the girls following her; but not knowing how. They were not able to say whether they were running, walking, or lying down, or even if they were really moving or not.”

(Father Ramón Andreu)

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their *falls*. It seemed my heart stopped with the noise of the cracking their knees made. "Heavens! Those girls have smashed their knees and broken their legs," I said to myself.

But nothing of the kind happened as I found out later. It had become dusk rather early, for in the final hours of the afternoon some lowlying clouds had come from the surrounding mountains, darkening the sky considerably. The people were quietly walking as well as they could manage behind us, when suddenly, there came the fall. I was seeing it for the first time, and it frightened me, for I saw how they plunged suddenly on their bare knees on top of the ground with its rocks and stones. The fall sounded sharp, like the breaking of bones.

For a little while they remained on their knees on top of the stones. They fixed their gaze on something that was above and in front of them. They smiled, and what a charming smile! They moved their lips as if to speak or pray, but in a whisper, in such a way that one could hardly tell one word from another. It was impossible to doubt that they were with someone.

I had a privileged position, almost leaning against the children, and could observe as I pleased. Thus I could make some tests. I made a motion to stick my fingers in their eyes. Repeatedly I passed my hand in front of them. Not a contraction, not a blinking! They were completely absorbed in something that we could not comprehend, that was totally outside what was happening around them. At my side a doctor—I saw him well, although he tried to hide—dared even more than I myself. With a needle he repeatedly stuck them in the arms. Nevertheless, there did not appear in them the least sign that they had felt anything. I know that these tests were repeated during various other falls that they had during the *march* on that afternoon.

Finally they got up and they continued upwards toward the Pines. We followed them as well as we could through that long and difficult *calleja* of the apparitions. I cannot explain how they—without ever looking away a second from the vision on high—could follow that path without deviating the slightest either to the right or to the left. And how they walked over all types of obstacles, especially at the top of the slope, so steep, with so many bushes and thorny plants.

They fell on their knees before the Pines as if someone had placed them carefully there, without scratch marks, without perspiration, without the least sign of fatigue. On the other hand, the rest of us were arriving perspiring, gasping for breath, with the marks of our falls, spills, and scratches. It did not surprise me that so many people had remained along the way.

On their knees in front of one of the Pines—I think it was the center one—they stayed a long time praying, talking and smiling with someone invisible. Leaning my ear against their faces, I could catch some of the words from time to time. I think that what they repeated most when they spoke was this, "How good, how good! Oh, yes? Oh, how good!"

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I would think that our celestial Mother—on her feast as Our Lady of Mount Carmel—would speak to her little ones out of the great love and mercy she has toward all her children on earth, her little children in danger, telling them about the plans of aid and salvation that she always undertakes for their welfare.

But let us continue to listen to Mr. Otero:

During the time at the Pines I could notice the extraordinary laugh and smile of the children in ecstasy. They laughed with their whole person. They had none of what is so frequent and what we might call laughing with the mouth only. Their laugh came bursting out from within themselves, because I think that they were then full of a joy of which we were unaware.

The people around them started to keep a religious silence, and then someone began to lead a prayer. It was night, but one could see rather well by the light from the flashlights. I myself, not wanting to miss anything, was also there to protect the children—together with Ceferino and his son. To do this, on our knees as we were, we held out our arms and hung on to each other's hands, forming a little wall in a half circle that prevented the curious from falling on top of the two children. In order to push harder, at one time I stretched out my free left hand to grab one of those pine branches—at that time there were some very low ones¹¹—when I heard Loli shout, “Hey, he is touching the Virgin!” You can imagine my emotions!

The coming down from the Pines had more or less the same characteristics as the going up. The children, remaining in ecstasy, had still another *fall*—very different from the ones we were having. And everything ended at the church doors. When the girls returned to their normal selves¹² I could ascertain more at leisure and more carefully that they had not broken any bones, nor did they have any marks on their knees. If that isn't a miracle, then let the intellectuals tell me what is.

To complete my astonishment, after all those things had left the rest of us depleted, I saw that the girls were fresher and in better condition than ever, without tiredness or exhaustion, as if they had just come out of the most restful and contented sleep. I myself wasn't in such good shape. And it was no pleasure to

11. Today it would not be possible to do what Mr. Otero did, since the low branches of the Pines are all gone; the people have cut them off in order to take a souvenir or *relic*.

12. The entrance of the girls into the trance was instantaneous. In a fraction of a second they raised their heads sharply and were held affixed to the vision, which led them from one place to another.

The general way of ending was by making the sign of the cross or giving a kiss. But what occurred at the end, according to what they explained, was that “the Virgin went away as though she were dissolving.” (Father Andreu in the report previously mentioned)

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look at my suit and shoes; I can tell you this, that I had come with some good quality shoes that were almost new, and the next day or the following, I had to buy new ones.

Another thing about the girls that amazed me was that they were oblivious to the things that were happening around them—and that they had the impression that all this that lasted more than two hours, had lasted only a few seconds—and it seemed to them that they had hardly moved.

In later visits to Garabandal with members of the Aledo family, I had the good fortune to see many other things; but the things I saw on the first day impressed me the most.

I can positively assure you that I'll never forget that day. It was unique and I know for my part I've seen many countries and many things.

The man showed me a photograph¹³ of the four girls in ecstasy with the signature of each one of them and their age. He had acquired this on the day after the events related and on it was marked clearly the date: July 17, 1961. "This," he told me, "I would not give away no matter how much money you offer me." And he held it very carefully.

But then, all those things that José Otero could observe on his first day in San Sebastián de Garabandal had been everyday occurrences there—except the ecstatic marches—for almost a month, and would continue to be everyday occurrences for many more months.

And many refused to believe. And almost all were asking again and again for a miracle!

The Works of the Mother and Teacher

God is a spirit (John 4: 24), and the presence and action of a spirit can only be known through its effects. So also through their effects we are able to know the presence and the actions of the Virgin in Garabandal, and discover what these actions were and what she desired during the times of instruction with the children.

Much of what she has done still remains a mystery. It is as if the spirit, like the wind, breathes where He wills; you hear His voice, but you know not from where He comes, nor where He goes. (John 3: 8) Things of God

13. When the events began, amateur and professional photographers soon appeared. These saw a means of income in selling photographs of the girls. But neither the girls themselves, nor their families took part in any of this.

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always proceed like this. There is never a sudden complete unveiling. If there were, men—who are always immature and dull of heart—would probably not be able to endure or comprehend it. The style of God toward His creatures is to act in a gradual way, through stages, according to a rhythm that He alone knows—and which so many times we do not understand—without hurry, but without pause.

The most immediate effects of the presence and actions of the Virgin could be seen above all in the childrens' way of thinking and acting. There was no denying that their way of thinking and acting had changed.

Father Ramón María Andreu in his much quoted report, as fruit of personal observation and direct experience, wrote:

From the beginning of the visions, up until August 25th—some two months—there were various counsels and recommendations received by the children. The order in which they are placed here probably does not correspond exactly to the chronology, but it is not possible for me to name the dates precisely, and furthermore, many of the counsels were repeated frequently.

1. At first the girls avoided the public that came up to see them. We ran away. The Virgin told them that they should not run away, and that if they were asked a question, they should respond to the things that they knew and could talk about. After that, they did not hide from the people.¹⁴

2. Another counsel, often repeated, was that they should be modest.¹⁵ They interpreted this in the sense that they should not be vain, that they should dress with simplicity, and that they should show attitudes of modesty and humility.

3. They had repeated to them probably even more the counsel to be obedient.¹⁶

14. Since the Virgin was not coming for them alone, they knew they had to reveal these things to others, telling them what was able to be told. Although many people asked questions only out of frivolity or curiosity, there were many who needed aid, and who sought to strengthen their religion and faith.

15. *Modosas*. This word is in current use in some regions of Spain and is used precisely in the sense that the girls used it with Father Andreu. It is equivalent to have good conduct, to be a person of good manners. Naturally its meaning is not limited to external actions alone. To say that a girl or adolescent is very *modosita* is a compliment, not only of a person's external comportment, but of all his conduct in those things that are related to discretion, modesty, education, manners, etc.

16. Father Valentín has this recorded in his notes of July 16th, a Sunday, and the feast of the Virgin of Mount Carmel:

“When I went up at five in the afternoon, I met Conchita and Loli wearing two or three chains and medals, at two or three rosaries, watches, bracelets, etc.. I was a little angry with them, and I took everything away; I left them no more than a rosary and a chain with a scapular medal. And I told them that they should obey the pastor and their parents. Later

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4. And also that they make *sacrifices*. They did not understand the meaning of this word. At the request of the Virgin, they questioned priests about it.¹⁷ I myself had to give them explanations.

5. The Virgin inspired in them a horror of sin.¹⁸ One time while alone in ecstasy Conchita said, “And that, what is it? Oh! The sight of sinners. How ugly! Take me away from it! Yes, I don’t want to see it. No!” (crying) “Another time? The sight of sinners? Oh, yes! Sacrifices!”

On another occasion Loli was in an ecstatic position for about twenty-five minutes without saying anything. Finally she said, “Mercy, mercy!” while tears ran down her cheeks.

6. With regard to *piety*, the girls were requested to pray many times, especially the rosary and the Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Each day, besides the rosary that they said in the village, they recited others with the vision.¹⁹

The Virgin also taught them religious songs. And she corrected them when they performed defectively any religious practice, like making the sign of the cross, the recitation of the new form of the Act of Contrition, etc.

7. *Formation of conscience*. Frequently the girls were heard asking questions while in a state of trance. Here are some of these questions:

—“To sing the song ‘Esperanza’,²⁰ is that a sin?”

they told me that they had mentioned this to the angel, and *they could bring the medals, but that they had to obey the priest and their parents, and to live always like children.*”

Some parts of the dialogue with the apparition were recorded on the first day that Conchita had an ecstasy at the Pines:

“One day I couldn’t see you, since they wouldn’t let me come up . . . Yes, I know that we have to obey; but you first of all . . . good, but we have to obey you too . . .”

It should not be difficult to fill in the pauses with the answers from the apparition, which the spectators naturally were not able to hear. At the time of these occurrences no one said that this reminder to obedience was improper or superfluous.

17. We suppose that they did not go to ask those priests who now say that all this matter of sacrifice, mortification, self-renunciation, etc. has nothing to do with our renewed and open Christianity. To this type of priest this matter belongs to the old and stupid asceticism of monastic times, which is now fortunately passé, according to the rhetoric of the new prophets.

18. How could the Virgin come to this mountain place with this matter of sin? Don’t we want a moral code without sin? Everything that’s in man, doesn’t it have value? Such ideas cannot exist in an adult Christianity! Aren’t we all saved, regardless of what happens?

How many inaccuracies and stupidities like these are spoken day after day to confuse the people of God!

19. No one can deny that this fact is very significant, taking into account the new attitude of certain clergy and laymen toward these practices of piety.

20. This refers to a song that was very popular at the time; a frivolous song, vulgar and imbecile like so many others songs that have been successful. For example some of its words were:

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—To say “I don’t want to eat”, “is that a sin?”

—For women to smoke, “is that a sin?”

8. *Significant actions*: One day a woman wanted to have her picture taken with one of the visionaries, but the girl walked away from her saying, “The Virgin doesn’t want us to take pictures with those who wear low-cut dresses.”

9. Attention is called to the simple and confident way that the girls had with the Virgin; certainly they had learned this from her.

It is not easy to judge the spiritual progress of a soul, unless it is judged by a spiritual director who constantly deals with it. The spiritual progress of the girls should be estimated more by the interior than by the exterior; however, it undoubtedly would be reflected in the exercise and practice of the virtues.

HUMILITY—This was shown by the children in various ways: by their manner of dressing, by their manner of speaking, by the small things that they did for the public that came to see them, by the lowly work that they continued to do in front of everyone, by their docility to suggestions from their parents and priests, etc..

On various occasions the Virgin has indicated that when they would come to see her, they should not wear either bracelets or earrings. The only one who had the habit of wearing earrings was Conchita. But in a trance at the door of the church, she was heard asking, “What did I do bad? Oh, good!” And returning to normal, she went to her home, took off the earrings and a bracelet and returned to the door of the church, where she went into ecstasy again. I myself have noticed several times that when they felt the third call, they immediately began to take off any ring or bracelet that they had on their hands and which belonged not to them, but to some other person who had given them to the girls to look at and examine.

OBEDIENCE—As a consequence of the apparitions, the girls were imbued with a spirit of obedience, and not only showed this with works, but also with words. They said that the vision had recommended this very much, and that the Virgin had told them to obey above all their parents and priests.

I have personally noted several cases of this:

*What can one know about women?
And the refrain is repeated:
Oh what trouble you have caused me!
Esperanza. Heavens!
You don’t know a thing except dancing!
Cha. Cha. Cha.*

The music carried in the summer air of the villages, and more than once the young girls of our story had heard it. But undoubtedly in their homes they had heard that they should not sing it—the upbringing in those homes of Christians of old like those at Garabandal was strick—and it was for this reason that they asked the Virgin about this.

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The mother of Mari Cruz one day told her daughter that she should stay home; and she did stay, while the other three went to the Pines for an apparition. When it was mentioned to Mari Cruz that she should not lose the occasion to go with the others, she answered,

—“No, my mother didn’t let me go.”

—But isn’t it better to see the Virgin than to remain at home?

—“The Virgin told me to obey.”

The bishop (Apostolic Administrator) ordered the church closed during the states of trance in order to avoid the lack of respect that the public—without bad will—was committing in its desire to see the girls close up. This measure pleased the parents and the villagers, since they were not looking for sensationalism. The first day that the recommendation was put into effect, the girls approached the church in the state of trance as usual; but on seeing it closed, turned around and then suddenly said, “Ah! That is good.” On coming out of ecstasy they said, “We wanted the church open, but the Virgin told us that what the priest did was right.”

In the face of the agitation and disorder from the numerous visitors, the girls’ parents decided to keep the girls at home with the doors closed when they felt the calls, and not to let them go out. After a trance, they mentioned that the Virgin had said that if their parents told them this, it was right, and that they would see her inside their homes. And so it happened. Obedience in everything, even when opposed to the vision itself or contemplation, is one of the things that the masters of mystical theology have always presented as the best of signs.

We have further evidence that Garbandal followed the most sensible pattern of obedience.

The parish priest, Father Valentín, was at Conchita’s house one day and he said to her,

—“Look, it isn’t possible for all of us to wait at this hour. I will give you a quarter of an hour. In that time I am going to give you three warnings and if nothing occurs before the last warning, you go to bed. This is the first warning.”

And he walked off. After ten minutes he returned to give the second warning.

—“If nothing happens in the next five minutes, as I said, go to bed. It is already very late.”

Two minutes after Father Valentín walked away, Conchita went into ecstasy.²¹

That same day, and without Loli and Jacinta knowing about what had happened with Conchita, I had the same experience with them. They were waiting for the vision since they already had two calls. I said to them, “We can’t wait

21. The Virgin yielded to the will of those who had spiritual authority over the girls, to confirm in them the duty of subjection to their superiors. This episode seems to have occurred on the 25th of August at 1:00 in the morning following a plan made by Father Valentín in association with the pastor from Ribadesella, Father Alfonso Cobián, and another priest.

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any longer since it is very late. I will give you five minutes time. If nothing happens in those five minutes, go to bed.”

When there was yet a minute remaining, I came back to talk to them, “A minute remains. Count to sixty, and if nothing happens before you get to sixty, go to bed.”

They started to count in a loud voice, chanting as in school. When they came to sixteen, without being able to say the word ‘sixteen’, they were drawn into ecstasy with the typical snap of the head upwards.

PIETY—From the beginning of the events, the children received Communion every day and heard all the Masses that were celebrated—unless they were in the pastures.²² As we have seen, they prayed several rosaries a day.

At times the visitors’ attention was attracted by the children speaking in the church and smiling. This drew my attention too and one day I told them about it.

—“But, is it bad to talk in church?”

—It is a lack of respect toward the Lord . . .

—“Then why do the priests talk so much?”

I told them that the things the priests were talking about in the church were important things. (It is to be noted that more than a dozen priests were gathered together in Garabandal at the time.)

“Well, when we are with the Virgin, we also talk. But if you say we should conduct ourselves better, we will try to do it.”

On August 8th, Mari Cruz was overheard in a vision: “Now I know that it is better to pray; before I thought it was better to play.”

FRATERNAL CHARITY—Apart from the detachment that was evident in the girls—for example, in giving away their things, carmels, candy, etc. up to the point of not keeping anything for themselves²³—they showed charity in a thousand ways. They served so many visitors with water and the other things they requested so frequently . . . the care of Loli for her grandmother,²⁴ of Conchita and Mari Cruz for a blind man,²⁵ the amiable patience with so many inquisitive people, the desire that all would believe and be saved . . .

22. It has already been mentioned that some of the pastures of San Sebastián de Garabandal were several kilometers away from the village. When it was necessary to work in these pastures, the villagers had to set out early in the morning, without time to give to other matters.

23. The repudiators of Garabandal have advanced this reception of gifts by the girls as an argument against it. This report throws some light on this matter, but later on we will present other explanations.

24. The paternal grandmother who died in July of 1971.

25. This refers to Jacinta’s grandfather.

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PENANCE—From the time they learned the significance of the word *sacrifices*, they practiced it. For them, making sacrifices was to do what I don't like and to omit doing other things that I like.²⁶

Among these: helping others . . . obeying, giving away the things that they received, and not wearing the bracelets and other jewelry that they had received . . .

PURITY OF SOUL—Often they questioned me about specific things like songs, some words that they said, replies that they had received²⁷—whether or not it was a sin. They did not have a well-formed conscience, and so they did not readily distinguish what was a mortal sin, a venial sin, or no sin at all. But I observed the desire they had to be instructed and learn—for this reason the questions that at times were heard in the trances.

The horror of sin was causing in them a desire to atone for the sins of mankind. But the sins of mankind did not hold for them a concrete meaning, only a vagueness about things that sorrow God and the Virgin. It should be taken into account that, due to the isolation in which they lived, their twelve years of age represented much less than twelve years for children in a city.

The *modesty* of the girls in their manner of walking, of running, of looking, of conducting themselves in general was a close following of the advice repeated by the Virgin that they '*Be modest*'. And they were not pleased when the people came with improper dress. I already mentioned the girl who did not want to be photographed with a lady because her dress was very low-cut. Nor did it please them that women smoked.²⁸

PATIENCE—Having lived in the village, I saw right away that the patience of the girls had to be very great. The people, when they saw them, touched them—even to cutting off locks of their hair. They gave them rosaries, medals, marriage rings to give the Virgin to kiss. They requested kissed objects; they sought to take photographs. I never saw the girls angry. When they were worn out by such an avalanche of people, who even followed them into their homes, they limited themselves many times to keeping quiet and smiling.

One time I asked them, "Why don't you get angry?" They answered, "The Virgin has told us that we should be modest and to answer what they ask us if we can."

26. A definition both simple and magnificent.

27. The girls had been brought up and lived in an atmosphere of rough speech, sometimes very rough. Farmers and herdsmen are not distinguished by the decorum of their language. And Garabandal was not an exception. The girls had heard, since their infancy, a good number of words—including blasphemies—and some expressions had struck them.

28. It is not said that smoking is exactly a sin; smoking by women was not pleasing to the girls favored by the Virgin.

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However, they showed anger against those who had at times prevented the visions by their songs, dances, and drinking parties.

ENVY—In spite of this being a defect so feminine and so frequent, I did not observe the least trace of it in the children with regard to their visions. Some had more visions than others; however, those that were outside of the vision did not envy those who appeared more favored, and they limited themselves to asking those in the vision to speak to the Virgin so that she would soon come back to appear to them. And I noted a charming suppleness and humility in their desire.²⁹

ATTITUDE TOWARD PRIESTS—In the beginning of the events the girls demonstrated a special predilection for priests and religious. Frequently they counted those who had come, observing their habits. And in their trances they always spoke about them with the Vision. If they were asked, “Whom do you want to come the most?” They always responded, “Priests.”

Speaking about obedience, which the Virgin inculcated in a special way, they mentioned that they owed it to their parents and to priests.

Several times the children said in the state of trance that there were priests when none could be seen—since they had come dressed as civilians—and that there were a greater number of them than there appeared to be.

One case among many: A small group of priests was about to leave. Father Valentín remained alone with a sizeable number of lay people. The children went into ecstasy in the church and mentioned that there were two priests there: Father Valentín and another. On hearing this, Father Valentín began looking around him to discover a possible companion; but in vain. A little later a man approached him, and after greeting him, declared himself a priest who had come dressed as a civilian in order to come on a motorcycle.

Another case: One day several priests in civilian dress were walking about San Sebastián. During the ecstasies they heard that the girls were speaking of their presence; and then, for fear of being publicly discovered, they hurried to leave.³⁰

It appears unquestionable to anyone observing these things with an open mind that an extraordinary mother and teacher was journeying in that summer of 1961 to the village of Garabandal and mingling with its people. Almost no one understood what was going on; but the affair was

29. Father Andreu’s observation applies to the time that his report begins; we will see later on that there is something more to be said about this matter.

30. The inhabitants of San Sebastián de Garabandal can certainly recall a great quantity of information—that added onto Father Andreu’s—leaves a well-illustrated history of these summer days of 1961.

there before everyone's eyes: an ensemble of things whose true dimension and significance still remained a mystery; but with a series of effects and incidents that indicated their origin. By their fruits you shall know them, Jesus has said, and by what could be seen in many people from the village, in numerous pilgrims, and above all in the children, there were good reasons to believe what the children were saying: that the Virgin had come and was walking through the village. Yes, the Mother of God and of all men had come to her own. But not all comprehended or wished to receive her.³¹

“To His Own . . .” The Official Stance: *Negative*

We have seen how the parish priest, Father Valentín Marichalar, from the very first days had proposed to go as soon as possible to the diocesan capital in order to inform the bishop about everything that was happening.

It cannot be verified on what date he completed this project; although it was obviously before the middle of the month of July, since during the last half of that memorable month a group of persons from the mountain capital of Santander were already acting as if they were the Commission named by the bishop to study the *Garabandal Affair*.³²

31. I am not accusing anyone of bad faith; if someone has this, only God knows. What I mean is that without having bad faith, one can lack a certain good disposition, necessary for accordance with the Lord above.

32. It appears that this Commission was organized more by the initiative of the Reverend Father Francisco Odriozola than by the will of the diocesan bishop. In the beginning the Commission had taken the matter of Garabandal as of little importance, not worthy of giving it official attention, and hoping that this *fever* or hysteria would soon pass.

Furthermore, this bothersome affair was coming at the wrong time, while Bishop Doro-teo Fernández was entrenching himself in the diocese, since he sought to remain in Santander as the Diocesan Bishop. He avoided this annoying difficulty until the time came when Father Francisco Odriozola convinced the bishop about the necessity of dealing with the affair. It appears that His Eminence, Bishop Fernández told Father Odriozola to choose some competent people and to proceed . . .

With regard to the Commission, its methods of action, its foundation, the reason for its position, etc., a profound study would be required. However, the actual Bishop of Santander in 1970, Bishop José María Cirarda set down insuperable difficulties for this by saying “The affair is already well studied and judged.” Time will tell.

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According to our information, this group consisted of three priests as experts in ecclesiastical disciplines and two laymen as experts in medical science. The priests were Juan Antonio del Val,³³ Francisco Odriozola,³⁴ and José María Sáiz,³⁵ the latter being the best theologian of them all according to the opinion of numerous priests from the Santander area. The canon of Tarragona, Father Julio Porro, also listed Agapito Amieva, the Provisor of the bishop of Santander as a member of the Commission; but this cannot be proven. The medical men were Doctor Morales, a well-known psychiatrist and Doctor Piñal, an anesthesiologist; both lived and worked in the Santander capital.³⁶

In order that the reader might have a better point of reference about the bishop's Commission—and even though this will in part go ahead of our story—I would like to insert here some information that has come my way. On the 8th of May, 1968, the same year of the tragic death of Puchol Montís (the bishop who declared a *No* against Garabandal that appeared definitive), two reputable priests signed a confidential report destined to the cardinals, archbishops and bishops of the French language. These two priests were the parish priest Alfred Combe (a Frenchman of the District of Ródano) and Father José Laffineur (a Belgian who had settled in France and who was to die on November 28th, 1970).

33. José María Cirarda became bishop of Santander in the summer of 1968. A short while later he named Juan Antonio del Val Gallo as Vicar General of the diocese. Bishop del Val did not remain long in this position since several months later he was designated auxiliary bishop of Seville, with residence in Jerez de la Frontera. Cirarda and del Val were classmates in the University of Comillas (Santander). Finally in December of 1971, del Val was named Bishop of Santander. Six bishops in this diocese in less than eleven years!

34. It was already mentioned that this was a priest of the city of Santander, a Professor and a Canon.

35. Also Professor and Canon at Santander. He died suddenly on October 22, 1964, while celebrating Holy Mass in the chapel of the Slaves of the Sacred Heart in Santander.

36. From his father Mariano, Doctor Luis Morales had inherited a psychiatric clinic, well-known in Santander. Doctor José Luis Piñal Ruiz Huidobro then was working as an anesthesiologist, although it appears that he had also worked during a short time with a psychiatrist named Aldama. Recently a letter from another doctor from Santander, Doctor Celestino Ortiz, informed me that a third doctor was a member of the Commission: Doctor Peláez; but it seems that this Doctor Peláez de Valladolid, rather than being a member of the Commission, was an expert that the Commission used at times. Anyhow he was in Garabandal on the night of August 22nd as will be mentioned later.

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The fourth part of this report deals with *Garabandal and Canon Law* with affirmations such as these:

The Commission has never been a tribunal, nor has it ever acted or judged as an ecclesiastic tribunal according to regulations. For example, it has never required an oath from those who were summoned and interrogated.

This Commission was composed of two laymen and three priests. The laymen were a psychiatrist (Morales) and an anesthesiologist (Piñal), which does not constitute, it is noted, a great amount of expertise.

And in what concerns the priests of the Commission, one of them, the abbot (Odriozola) rapidly led the others into the dark, acting as if to him alone belonged all the functions: secretary, counsel, arbitrator, judge, etc..

This priest wished to obtain for himself evidence of the reality of the apparitions, although in this regard evidence could only be given to the visionaries; others would have to satisfy themselves with motives of credibility.

On top of all this, this priest, and likewise the doctors mentioned, have not gone to see the facts on location except in rare instances; and then they conducted themselves, according to witnesses, with a lack of seriousness.

As if seeking to gather only arguments unfavorable to the cause of Garabandal, they have avoided interrogating the visionaries themselves, their families, the irrefragable witnesses that they knew were favorable to the apparitions.

Here we are before extremely serious accusations. It is no pleasure to have these things come to me for they are saying these things against persons whom I esteem. But we urge everyone to clarify the matter once and for all; we have the right to know the truth about what has happened at Garabandal. If the Commission's way of acting has been so clear, objective, and conformed to truth as the Santander chancery would have us believe, and their negative pronouncements so well founded as they say, then let us see the evidence so as to finally disperse the clouds of suspicions, doubts, and comments that disturb everybody so much.

Christians of today, so mature as it is said, are not satisfied with simple official declarations.

Now let us return to the starting point, and continue our discussion of the members of the Commission and the days when they started their activity.

The Apostolic Administrator, Doroteo Fernández, must have had a very high opinion of them since in his first note about Garabandal that appeared in the *Official Bulletin of the Diocese*, dated August 26th, 1961, the Monsignor states, "We have named a Commission composed of per-

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sons of well-known prudence and doctrine in order that they can inform us with a complete guarantee of objectivity and competence about these happenings.”

We are going to see their first activities. But before this, let us consider the situation.

And to do this, we will return to Conchita’s diary.

Two months before the message (which was in October, as will be seen) they took me to Santander by means of a priest named Father Luis.

She refers to Father Luis González López, who years before had been a parish priest first at Garabandal, then at Celis in the same diocese of Rio Nansa, and finally had ended up at the parish of Our Lady of Consolation in the capital of Santander. Father López had connections with San Sebastián de Garabandal not only because of his years as a priest there, but also by family ties, since he was related to Conchita’s mother through marriage between mutual relatives.

But why was it planned to bring Conchita to Santander?

They wanted to take me to Santander, because they said it was I who was influencing the others.

The Commission would have to think this and so would everyone else. Father López, who had been present at some of the events, and Father Valentín Marichalar saw the usefulness of making tests. Conchita’s mother was not overly concerned since everyone had complete trust in Father López as a priest, and it was right in his house that the child would rest during her stay in the capital.

Everyone was very concerned about what was happening in the village, and the concern was increasing each day. Those who felt themselves responsible, while rejecting any possibility of bad faith on the children, had to ask frequently where this affair was going to end; and if there might be any means that might be taken to clarify what was happening so as to guide themselves in the right way. Could it be that Conchita, who was showing herself as the strongest personality and the leader, was influencing the rest of the group?

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And furthermore was she not also staying in the surroundings created by the events? It appeared advisable to make a test, and take her away from those surroundings.

The initiative must have come from the Commission, and Father López would be the perfect intermediary . . . ³⁷

But Aniceta did not take to all these things. For the first time the daughter over whom she watched so carefully was going to be taken away from her side, and her maternal instinct sensed certain risks. Because of this she wished to have some assurance from above.

The night before going to Santander,³⁸ there were many people (in the village) and among them a priest with a white habit.

And it surprised me very much that he came with a habit of this color. I had never seen anything like it.

On that day my mother had told me to ask the Virgin if she should let me go to Santander, and I told her that I would ask her.³⁹

In Sánchez-Ventura's book *Apparitions are Not a Myth*, Chapter VI, more details are given about what Conchita is starting to narrate. These details are given by an *eyewitness* who fills in from his observation the things the girl remembers from her personal experience.

37. A reliable priest, Father José Ramón García de la Riva, later informed me about this, writing, "the voyage to Santander was a trick of the commission (Father Odriozola) on Father Valentín and Aniceta. He assured them that it was solely a visit with the bishop. But it was already arranged with Father Luis to hold the girl in the capitol, well away from the atmosphere of the apparitions."

38. That is, on July 26. There is something strange and unsolved from the previous day, July 25, a big day in Spain because it is the celebration of the feast of its patron, St. James the Apostle. "On that day"—said Juan Alvarez Seco—"I had stationed a pair of guards in the calleja, and another pair in front of Conchita's house. The four visionaries were playing in a field near by; it was a beautiful afternoon and the sky was completely clear of clouds. Suddenly, toward 6:30, a very black cloud gathered on top of Peña Sagra, and from it a striking ray of lightening shot out from on high to below. The girls fell on their knees extremely frightened. The thunder which followed shook us all. But they remained then with a look of ecstasy, gazing toward above . . . I remember that I had to calm down the shouting of Mari Cruz's mother. All remained several minutes in silence. Then there was someone who told me later, very seriously, although without giving it more importance, that he had seen on top of the cloud, one or two figures that looked like the Holy Father."

39. Aniceta's question shows that, in spite of the doubts and fears that assailed her at times, deep down she was almost sure that her daughter was not inventing this or pretending.

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It was July 26th, 1961.⁴⁰ In the morning the girls already had a vision, and then announced another for the afternoon. Before the day is over, they said.

Some six hundred persons had assembled in the village; among them six priests and a Dominican Father from the labor college in Córdoba.

It was 6:00 in the evening when the four of us had already received two calls.

A father had brought us a box of carmels; his name was Alfonso Cobián.⁴¹

He had given them to the four of us.

And when we were eating them, the third call came

And we dropped the carmels on the road.

How we would have liked to eat them!⁴² But we liked more, much more, to see the Virgin.

And besides the third call is a thing that takes us, and we don't know how.

We were going to the place called the Cuadro; but we did not have time to get there, and she appeared to us before we arrived there.

It was approximately eight o'clock in the evening, still daylight during the days of July. The girls began running toward the calleja; but before they were able to get inside the wooden barriers, they plunged on their knees, two in front and two behind. Conchita held her head upwards in an extreme position most of the time; the other three looked in front of them with their eyes firmly fixed up above. Mari Cruz was crying. The expressions on their faces were very gentle. At times they smiled, and at other times they laughed freely.

Then at the same time they all took the medals and rosaries that they wore around their necks in order to give them to the vision to kiss. One of them said, "This is from a man who told me you should kiss it very hard.

40. I am almost sure that this is the date and not the 27th, as Sánchez-Ventura writes in his book.

41. Pastor of Ribadesella (Asturias), as already has been mentioned.

42. There is a significant revelation in Conchita's exclamation. Almost all young girls have good appetites, and we would expect this would be stimulated in those poor girls from the village, so little accustomed to fine things. Grace does not destroy nature.

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Jacinta started one of those oscillatory movements which were to become, sometime later, one of the most striking phenomenon in Garabandal—the *ecstatic falls*.⁴³ There are some very interesting photographs of these falls—especially with regard to Loli and Conchita. Mari Cruz, while in the trance, extended her arm to support Jacinta who had just fallen halfway to the ground.

Conchita said to Mary Loli, “Cross my arms right, you have crossed them backwards.”⁴⁴ (It can be recalled, as already has been mentioned, that during the ecstasies only the girls were able to easily move one another; to all other persons their arms and legs had such a rigidity that it was almost impossible to budge them. A similar thing occurred with their weight and the effect of gravity. They could lift each other up with the greatest ease; while two strong men could barely manage to move one of them.)

During the whole vision—an hour at least—Mari Cruz was kneeling on top of a sharp stone, about 2 inches wide, without showing then or afterwards any sign of pain or discomfort⁴⁵

In their conversation with the apparition they were heard to ask why she had not brought the Infant, and then they began to talk about some priests that were then present,⁴⁶ especially about the one who had most attracted their attention.

43. The *falls* which are mentioned here, should not be confused with the falls of the girls on their knees in the beginning of the ecstasies or in the middle of an ecstatic march. These *falls* we are describing were a swaying of the girl in ecstasy, gradually increasing more and more until she was as though lying on the ground. They occurred rather often at Garabandal, and always the girls' *falls* drew attention by the decorum and the grace of their faces. The spectators could not but be brought to admiration and respect.

44. It seems to me more acceptable, because it is more understandable, what Father Valentin wrote in his notes:

“Conchita was rigid, and with her arms held out forward, and Loli said to her,

—“Put your arms down lower.”

—“You put them down,” Conchita answered.

And Loli lowered one arm. Then I attempted to lower the other; but it was completely rigid. Following this, Loli lowered it.”

45. See the conversation of Mari Cruz's mother on page 94.

46. “Where it concerned a priest, the girls always asked the apparition in a very special and intense way. It appeared that nothing concerned them more.” (Report of Father Andreu in the French publication of Conchita's Diary.)

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Since we wanted so much to know who was the priest who had come in the white habit,⁴⁷ we asked the Virgin.

And the Virgin said nothing; she only smiled.

But we insisted again, and after a long time she said, "He is a Dominican."

And I said a "Dominicu?"

And she said "Yes."

More of the conversation was heard. They told the Virgin that the parish priest had given them plums in the sacristy, that the pulpit of the church was about to fall down, that Father Valentín had scolded Conchita for wearing her hair loose⁴⁸ like St. Michael, that Conchita's mother was very dark-skinned and only had two teeth, that they had made a movie, and that they had never been to a movie theater, although they had passed in front of one in Torrelavega,⁴⁹ That it was a house . . .

And naturally Conchita did not forget her mother's request.

That same day I asked the Virgin if she would let me go to Santander.

And she didn't forbid me.

This is very expressive: "She didn't forbid me." Not a definite approval, not even a warm one. On the part of the Virgin, this must have been like a shrugging of her shoulders, allowing Conchita to go—without forbidding her.

At the conclusion the closest spectators heard the girls say:

"An hour already? . . . That has gone past! . . . A half minute . . . An hour and a quarter? . . . No, half a minute . . . But it is as you say since you don't lie . . . Oh! An hour and twenty minutes."

The spectators could determine by their watches the exactness of the time that was mentioned. The girls threw kisses in the air and opened and

47. In their dialogue, the girls did not talk to the Virgin only about the white habit of that Father, which they had never seen, but also of his "shoes with holes". (sandals)

48. At that time, Conchita had beautiful long tresses of hair, which ordinarily were tied in a braid. Soon we will see the fate of that long braid.

49. The most important city in the province after the capital, known not only for its industry but also for its cattle fairs. The girls would have been expected to have traveled there since the people from the west side of the Montaña did their business more at Torrelavega than at Santander which was much farther away.

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closed their hands with the gestures of waving good-bye. Abruptly, as sudden as turning off the electricity in a lightbulb, the four girls lowered their gaze and heads at the same time, and returned to an absolutely normal expression. "Let us go say the rosary," they said. And thus ended an eventful day in the extraordinary history of Garabandal.

We do not know if Conchita slept well that night.⁵⁰ Since the Virgin had not opposed it, Aniceta decided definitely on the trip of Santander; they would go on the following day. Her daughter had to be experiencing disturbing feelings; that place was far removed from the ordinary run of her daily life. She was going to finally know the beautiful and important city that she had heard so much about; she was going to see things she had never seen. There some men were waiting who did not know what to make of her, and she could not imagine how they would treat her or what they could do to her. What she vaguely understood about the reason for the trip did not ease her mind.

They wanted to take me to Santander, because they said that I was the one who was influencing the others.

As dawn broke on July 27th, Aniceta quickly finished the most pressing household duties and packed the things that she had to take with her. Then she departed with her daughter at an early hour, wishing to find the streets of the village deserted so that it would not be necessary to make explanations.⁵¹

With the arrival of Conchita at Santander, the marvels of Garabandal would be extended to the capital, at the time basking in summertime frivolity. One of its streets, one of the most traditional and typical of them all,⁵² would witness something that it had never before witnessed.

50. On July 28th Father Valentín wrote down, "Conchita set out for Santander, in compliance with the bishop. She said that she wanted to stay, but if they took her, she would go peacefully."

51. The travelers left the town about 12:30 in the afternoon, walking to get on a bus in Cossío for Polaciones-Pesués.

In Pesués, a station of the Cantabrian railroad (a route joining Santander with Asturias), Father Luis González, who accompanied them, bought three first class tickets. And they boarded the train leaving for Oviedo that would bring them to Santander early in the afternoon.

52. Called Calle Alta (High Street), because of its location, and which has been immortalized by some pages of Santander literature. It is one of the few streets remaining from ancient Santander after the terrible fire of February 16th, 1941.

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The first day that I went (to Santander), I had an apparition near the church of Our Lady of Consolation.

And there were many people there; so many people were there that the armed police (Policia Armada)⁵³ had to intervene.

That day they made various tests on me.

And when the apparition was finished, they took me to an office for a priest and a medical doctor to question me.

The priest was named Fr. Francisco Odriozola and the doctor was Dr. Piñal.

We can imagine the commotion that developed in the street's heavy traffic when the people saw such an unusual spectacle: a young girl bowed down on her knees, completely transfigured and absorbed in something that was happening above her, and at her side a poor peasant woman, nervous and upset, not knowing what to do. The gathering of the crowd and the shouting caused, as Conchita mentions, the intervention of the police whose station was right on the street.

There must have been all kinds of comments. Many people who had heard of Garabandal were finding to their amazement that one of its famous visionaries was in the middle of the street. Others who did not know anything about Garabandal or did not believe, felt indignation or pity toward the pair of village peasants who seemed to be either performers in a comedy or else victims of a tragedy.

Among the first to discover what was happening were the priests from the parish church, among whom was Father Luis González López—then a

53. There are two police forces that maintain order in Spain: the Civil Guard (green uniforms) and the Policia Armada (gray uniforms); the latter is in charge of the capitals in the providences and the larger cities.

We know that this ecstasy of Conchita was very beautiful; on her knees and with her head thrust very much backwards. Those that could view it were amazed. To end this spectacle on a public street, several men, taking her up by her arms and legs, brought her to the parochial rectory.

This ecstasy occurred at nine on the evening of her arrival—the same hour on which the others at Garabandal had an apparition at the Pines.

A little after that hour, Aniceta, with her long experience with the nights at Garabandal, became anxious that something might happen to her girl. Father Luis calmed her down, assuring her that there in Santander nothing would happen, that she should not worry thus about Conchita. When Conchita came to herself—the girl having been in ecstasy—she was surrounded by curious people in front of the gates of the church!

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co-adjutor, later a parish priest—who had arranged the girl's trip and assumed responsibility for watching over her. Immediately Father Odriozola and Doctor Piñal were notified. As soon as the ecstasy was over, Conchita found herself before them in an office of the parish rectory.

They told me: that since I had done these things . . . that I was crazy . . . that I was deceiving people this way . . .

We do not know if the members of the Commission spoke this way for simple tactics, or whether their minds were completely closed to the possibility that this could come from a higher cause. There are reasons—that will come out later—to think that it was the latter reason.

I do not know why this brings bad memories of a certain style of investigation and interrogation that has been employed extensively for important trials down through the centuries.⁵⁴

After the interrogation and the insults came other things more amusing.

And he said to me, "Straighten up. Look at my nose. I am going to hypnotize you."

And when he told me, "Look at my nose," I laughed.

And he said to me, "Don't you laugh. This is not a laughing matter!"

And that day they didn't do anything more to me.

We do not know at what time this first session of Conchita's treatment ended, but it must have taken place on the evening that she arrived.

But how Father Odriozola and Doctor Piñal would have been surprised if they had known that while they were questioning and insulting Conchita in the church rectory at Santander, the people in Garabandal were completely aware of what was happening on Alta Street! And not by means of a telephone.

While Conchita's ecstasy was taking place, the other three girls still in the village had an apparition at the Pines; and during it the Virgin told them that Conchita was also seeing her at the same time. The girls told this

54. This is a manner of investigation used very much in the past: a style that seeks to condemn. Questions are asked not to clarify the situation in search of the truth, but rather to find a base or justification for a negative opinion. It is assumed that whoever is judged is in the wrong; and cannot be in the right, since opposed to the ideas, the preferences and the interests of those who do the questioning and make the judgments.

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then to the people, and the chief of the Civil Guard⁵⁵ was able to determine soon afterwards—by a telephone call from Puente Nansa—the complete exactness of his information. For the Virgin had informed the girls at the Pines in Garabandal about what had happened at the same time ninety kilometers away. Father Valentín Marichalar, the parish priest, is one of the reliable witnesses who can guarantee the truth of this fact.

The next day they took me to the doctors⁵⁶ to see if I was ill.

They took me to one whose name was Morales and several others.

55. On July 27th, the Chief of Police, Juan Alvarez Seco was in Santander, unaware of Conchita's trip. Before setting out, he assigned guards to observe carefully what happened that day in Garabandal in order to give him a report later. On returning in the afternoon, he called the two who had been on guard, and from them received the information that "at 1 o'clock in the afternoon, the angel had appeared to Mari Cruz, Jacinta, and María Dolores . . . that they had said that they were not very happy because that day, when the Virgin appeared, Conchita was not coming there to see her . . . and then the angel assured them that "Conchita was also seeing the Virgin, at the same time in which they were seeing her in Garabandal."

Juan Alvarez Seco quickly verified by an official telephone call to Officer Crescencio from headquarters in Santander, the truth of what the guards had informed him. The amazement had to be mutual . . . Someone reported that when the officer in Santander began saying, "Listen, do you know what this girl Conchita has done here?," the officer in Puente Nansa answered, "Yes, I already know."

—"But who could have told you this?"

—"The Virgin!"

56. The visits to the doctors must have lasted several days. On one of these days, the cutting of Conchita's braid took place. This is an interesting episode.

The Commission decided on this haircutting apparently for two reasons:

1. In order that the girl would not be easily recognized in the streets of Santander, since many persons had already gone up to Garabandal, and many others were familiar with the photographs of the visionaries.

2. To eliminate a possible cause of these unusual phenomena. It is hard to believe this last reason, but I have heard it and read about it several times. And here is the straightforward testimony of Father Julio Porro Cardenoso, a Canon of Tarragona, one of the best-informed persons on the Garabandal events, in his manuscript *The Mystery of Garabandal in Catholic Theology*: "Members of the Commission had aired their views that Conchita's braid was the origin of a mysterious fluid that held her companions in control."

It appears more believable what Father José Ramón García de la Riva wrote me, after gathering information in the village, "They took her to a beauty shop. The beautician noticed something unusual in the braid, namely that it was difficult to cut. From this, they said the hair had an unusual force over the other girls." The second edition of the story of Samson; and in this life surprises never end.

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And they all told me that I was well, and that these apparitions were a dream.

And they said that I should stay there in Santander to amuse myself, so that I could forget everything, and not go back to have more apparitions.

As can be seen, the Commission began immediately to observe and study the case of Conchita with close attention. But no matter how carefully they examined the constitution and psychology of the young girl, they could not find anything on which they could base a diagnosis of illness or abnormality. But they had to say something since they would not admit that the things that were happening were unexplainable. And also they had to do something. They said that things like these were unreal: fantasies, dreams, hallucinations. And they did do something: they made a plan of treatment. Conchita would remain in Santander and be exposed to an environment that would distract her so that soon all those strange ideas would leave her head.

The attitude and the words of the consulting doctors impressed themselves on Aniceta's mind.

Then my mother, as she was so convinced that there was nothing wrong (with me) because of everything that the doctors told her, left me (in Santander) and went away.

The treatment to cure Conchita was very appropriate.

Some nieces and sisters of Father Odriozola came every day to pick me up at the house in order to go to the beach and the fairs, which up to then I had never seen.⁵⁷

We can imagine the dazzling and disturbing effect of which up to then I had never seen, or even imagined would cause in the young girl reared in the

57. In treating Conchita by way of distractions, not only did the sister and nieces of Father Odriozola collaborate, but also Antonina González López, the sister of Father Luis.

I am sure that those women acted with good will, persuaded that they were doing a good work. However, I do not accept so easily the good faith of those charged with curing Conchita. One of the methods of treatment was to take the girl away from the practice of religion. Aniceta, who remained some days with Conchita in Santander, was worried and irritated in seeing that not even on one day—perhaps not even on Sunday—was the young girl given an opportunity to assist at Mass.

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poverty of a secluded mountain village, at the beginning of adolescence, with her sensibilities stirred up after being suddenly uprooted from her native rural surroundings, so simple and austere. She had to be enticed by the resorts and beaches crowded with lounging, pleasure-seeking, s eminude bathers, by the booths at the fair⁵⁸ and the shows, entertainments and novelties never seen in the mountain villages. A diocesan priest informed me in a letter that they even took Conchita to a fortune teller's booth.

How could the young girl from Garabandal not be overwhelmed when suddenly plunged in such pleasurable dissipation? Being hurled like this into so many and such unaccustomed experiences, it would have required a miracle to maintain her spirit serene and pure so as to be capable of receiving influences from on high. And it seems that a miracle did not come.

And neither did the apparitions . . .

If from this the commission drew its conclusion that what the child had undergone before was not showing any guarantee of proceeding from God, this shows the measure, the poor measure, of their size as experts in mystical and spiritual theology.

The actions of God do not ordinarily come about with an easy plan that crushes all resistance; nor do the designs of God unfold independently of human correspondence and cooperation. Even God's grandest plans can fail if on the part of the recipients there is an obstinate lack of attention, openness, or docility. Who has ears to hear, let him hear.

*And since I went every day to the beach, the Virgin did not appear to me.*⁵⁹

Father Ramón Andreu wrote in the first edition of his notes:

“The girl mentioned to me that in Santander they showed her photographs and had her experience other things, without doubt a form of testing . . . The purpose

58. Santander had to be exceptionally wild on those days since, apart from the summertime in full activity, at that time the fairs of St. James were being held. The feast of St. James, a holyday of obligation in Spain, falls on the 25th of July.

59. This does not mean that going to the beach is a sin in itself. It means only that such an atmosphere, frequently so full of sensuality and stimulation, poses a serious obstacle to a special communication with a supernatural world.

With respect to Conchita, it appears that the selection of a bathing suit was not carried to the extreme of decency.

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of this seemed to be to remove her from the environment in which she had lived and which thus influenced her visions. Without my asking her especially about that period of her life, she told me in front of some other people, The Virgin stated that she had not come to see me more because I was going to the beach. But now I have confessed.”

Far Away From There . . .

While this learned and inspired treatment was being carried out in Santander to cure Conchita of her visionary disease, far away in Garabandal the events continued their mysterious march.

On the day after the girl's departure,⁶⁰ three priests from the city of León came to the celebrated village: Fr. Manuel Antón, Fr. Victor López, and Fr. Geminiano García. The first was a parish priest from San Claudio (a modern church situated in the best section of León); the two others were well-known for their teaching activities. The three had spent several days on vacation in the town of Barro on the beautiful coast of Llanes; there they received news of what was happening nearby and decided to go see what was going on.

They drove to Cossío and from there walked up to Garabandal. About a half hour past noon they arrived at the village and asking around, found the house of Ceferino. Father Manuel Antón, who told me these things, remembered perfectly that Ceferino was not home but at the billiard grounds, playing with other men the game of bolos of which they are such fans in the mountain villages. His wife, Julia, was cooking. Father Manuel had decided to inform himself thoroughly about what was happening there. Knowing that Ceferino's little girl Mari Loli was experiencing these things *very frequently*, he sought by all possible means to speak alone with her. He asked her father to permit her to come; but Ceferino, who was beginning to get annoyed by the questions, requests, and boldness of many visitors, neither paid him any attention nor stopped his game of bolos.

But Father Manuel did not give up his endeavor, letting it be known—without revealing his identity—that he was an important priest who had

60. Father Manuel Antón, the person who informed me of this, thought that it was on the 28th of July, although he was not certain. With the notes from Father Valentín in front of me, I believe it had to be Sunday, July 30th.

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come with a mission, and had reasons and strong ones to accomplish it. Finally Ceferino arrived and permitted the interview with Loli.

It took place in a room of the old rustic house while the others ate on the tables in the café. Facing Loli, who was very diminutive for her age, Father Manuel tried to win her confidence by conducting himself with authority, as one who had a duty to perform. And he told her that she should explain everything, especially the beginning and how the thing had started, since he was there on behalf of someone very important and later would have to make a report.⁶¹

The girl, thinking herself in front of an authority who had come to submit her to an interrogation, answered the questions and gave all the explanations requested, especially with regard to the beginning of the affair on the evening of June 18th. Father Manuel, who did not know of Conchita's diary and actually hardly knew of Garabandal more than that it existed, told me what Loli had said about the beginning. I can certify that it coincides substantially with the version that Conchita has given in her diary and which I have followed in this history. There were only little differences of detail as occur with any event when there are several witnesses who give their version.

But what most impressed Father Manuel while listening to Loli was her appearance of absolute sincerity; this showed through in her eyes and resonated in her words.

Obviously in the beginning of all this there was no preparation or previous planning of any kind. The children found themselves suddenly with something about which they could never even have dreamed, and which left them in such total bewilderment that they sought shelter first against the walls of the church and then in its interior.

All this was a positive sign of great value for Father Manuel.

Loli came in her recitation to the apparitions of the Virgin. They had talked with her about many things; some of these they could tell the people, but others they could not for: It was still a secret.

Then Father Manuel interrupted her, "You must tell me everything, for I have the right to know. I am an important person."

61. Father Manuel told me that he had tried very hard to learn accurately how the events had begun, since in these matters it is only necessary to see their origin to be able to judge whether they are a fraud or really come from something external and unknown.

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The girl stiffened in her resistance, “I cannot, I cannot. The Virgin has said not to tell these things to anyone until the day comes.”

But Father Manuel ultimately weakened her resistance with these words: “I tell you that I have the authority to ask you, and it is the WILL OF GOD that you tell me everything. So obey.”

Then the girl became nervous, and striving very hard, started to respond to what had been commanded.

“But this was astounding”—Father Manuel told me—“I was not able to understand one single sentence. And it was not that she spoke in a low voice, or that she purposely tried to speak in an unintelligible way; it was that the strangest phenomenon resulted in her speech. Up to this point she had been talking completely normal and I understood her perfectly; but at the time she wanted to tell me the secret, it was as if her lips and her tongue did not respond to her will; there was no more than stuttering and a garble of sounds that seemed to strike against each other. I could see how she was trying hard to make herself understood; but I couldn’t understand a word. It was just as if suddenly she had begun to speak the most strange and unknown language.”

“You see?” She said to me at the end with her usual clear speech. “You see? The Virgin doesn’t want me to tell these things.”

That day there were many people in the village, waiting for the apparition which had been announced for the evening at an undetermined hour. Time passed, which in waiting always seems longer, and with each hour that passed, more and more people became impatient. Two of the girls—Loli and Jacinta—were in the house of Loli’s grandmother, playing on the second floor that has a balcony facing the plaza;⁶² from there they could be seen by the visitors.

The time came when impatience from the waiting began to show itself and Ceferino, urged on by someone or other, went up to where the girls were to see what was going on. He was with them inside, and after a little while they were seen going out on the balcony in ecstasy. There they stayed for a while. Their attitude, gestures and movements were really admirable (as we know they always were during the ecstasies), but Father

62. This balcony extends the whole length of the front of the building and is always facing as much as possible the noonday sun. It is used by the members of the house to get some air or sun, to view the street and the fields, and to hang farm products to dry or cure.

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Manuel told me that some took a certain attitude of skepticism and distrust, because the coincidence of the going up of Ceferino and the starting of the ecstasy appeared suspicious to them.⁶³

The best came later. Already at dusk there had been a rosary in the church, overflowing with people. The two girls in their normal state were kneeling up front on a step facing the altar, so as to lead the rosary from there as they had been asked. Father Manuel managed to find a place close to them and in front of them—with the altar at his back—in order that no detail would escape him. He found a place for Father Victor López beside the girls. The rosary was being recited as usual when suddenly toward the second mystery a trembling developed in the girls, and with the typical sudden movement that many were familiar with, they became totally transported, with their heads facing upwards. Father Manuel could observe them at will, and certified that they were truly extraordinary.

Since they continued to lead the rosary while in ecstasy, he was able to make tests with regard to their insensibility, immobility, loss of normal ocular reflexes, etc. The most interesting test was this. He saw that the children did not count the Ave Marias, either by the rosary or with their fingers. He gave Father Victor the task of precisely counting the number of those they recited to see if the Gloria came exactly at the end of each decade. Meanwhile he did everything possible to confuse them; at various times during the mysteries, he would lean toward them and shout in their ears, “Gloria! Gloria! Say the Gloria, since there are already ten Ave Marias!”

“The efforts were ineffective”—he told me—“They said all the Glorias at the right time, without a single mistake.”

All this, together with Loli’s confessions, left me very thoughtful. And I left Garabandal convinced there was something happening there, something that would be very difficult to explain with purely human and natural elements.”

As we see, the absence of Conchita, who was influencing the others toward all these strange things, caused neither a shutting off nor an eclipse

63. The same person told me that this did not make a good impression on him. And that was the first thing that he saw. Although this was a negative sign for him, he said, “Later I obtained many proofs of a completely opposite type.”

I do not think it is hard to find a good explanation for this coincidence of Ceferino going upstairs and the commencement of the ecstasy, considering what has been said.

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in the phenomena of Garabandal. On the contrary, it seems during the days of her absence that they took on a new measure of frequency and importance. If all the marvelous history of those days could be written down minutely, it would easily fill hundreds and hundreds of pages. We hope that the innumerable anti-Garabandal barriers that now so obstruct our work will soon be knocked down so the task of making a more extensive and accurate documentation can be undertaken.

In the days that I was at Santander there were in the village two Jesuit priests: Father Ramón María Andreu and Father Luis María Andreu.

They had come like many people without believing anything; and one of those days . . .

These names are already known to us since I have already mentioned things ahead of this day. It was in the final days of July 1961, on July 29th to be exact, that two religious brothers entered on the scene. These two religious brothers had an important part to play in the action and the history of Garabandal. Soon we will fix our attention on the second of them. We will leave this to the coming chapter, in order not to extend too much the recounting of what occurred on that illustrious day of July 29th. It will suffice here to summarize what was happening at Garabandal during the time that the Commission at Santander was thinking it had found the solution for this affair with its treatment to cure Conchita.⁶⁴

On July 30th the girls were persisting in their petition to the Virgin that she give a real proof in order that all might believe. "That she would make night into day."

When they said this it was already night; but not to the girls who were immersed in total light. On another occasion they said, "Even though it be only a very small miracle, like our flying."

Father Royo Marín who was present there exclaimed, "To call flying a very small miracle, what those girls must be seeing!"

"The Virgin became serious⁶⁵ when we asked for a miracle", they said later.

64. I took this information from Sánchez-Ventura's book on Garabandal.

65. We cannot completely understand the reasons for the seriousness on the part of the apparition; but some of it is explainable. Garabandal was living a daily miracle: the young children neither exhausted nor shaken by such a profusion of trances, the astounding real-

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That day Mari Cruz had one of her ecstasies alone in the house of her grandmother. “Why do you come here, where nobody sees us?” Undeniably she and her companions wished that all these things might radiate out toward others so that they would believe and take advantage of them.

On July 31st the people could see for the first time the way the girls traveled graciously on their knees during the ecstasies. The apparition drew away and its power of attraction made them advance without changing their posture and without getting up off the ground. On the same day there occurred in Loli the first *oscillations*: a movement or balancing of the body as if it were to fall, but without causing a fall.

On August 1st, Tuesday,⁶⁶ there were ecstasies near the Pines at three different times: 10:45 am, 12:15 pm, and 5:40 pm.

During one of these, at noon, the hour of the Angeles, the girls were heard clearly to pray the Ave Maria with a charming modification and addition: “Holy Mary, Mother of God, and Our Mother”, pray for us”⁶⁷ This seemed acceptable to the Virgin; but she indicated that they should not employ this formula ordinarily as it was not authorized by the church.⁶⁸

On August 3rd, the ecstatic falls occurred for the first time as has already been mentioned.

It was certainly on this date that the parish priest from León, Father Manuel Antón went up for the second time to Garabandal. I say certainly, although he does not remember precisely, since it coincides with the

ity itself of such trances, the personal and certain *signs* that happened every day for someone or another. And the people continued to ask with an attitude of hard resistance or with a disordered thirst for marvels, that they be given a spectacular sign so that they could be certain and convinced!

66. From Father Valentín’s notes of July: “They said that on Tuesday at the Pines . . .” On these dates, Mari Cruz almost always had an apparition apart from the others, very frequently on the rustic balcony of her home.

67. Right here is one of the most significant moments at Garabandal.

It cannot be doubted (all the time we are made more aware) that the essence of the Garabandal events was precisely this: that we would live fully the reality that the Virgin Mother of God is also truly our Mother.

The girls, who were experiencing this daily in a supernatural way, came to express what they felt with that spontaneous addition to the great Marian prayer.

68. Although the reason for the Virgin’s recommendation can be understood, it can also be understood that this does not prevent us from praying privately as the girls did.

arrival of a well-known political figure. Sánchez-Ventura writes that on August 3rd there was in the location of the apparitions an official from Madrid, from which I draw the conclusion that it was on this day that Father Manuel was in Garabandal for the second time. And this time he was alone. One of his two priestly companions, Father Victor López, had preferred to travel on that day to Santander to learn the opinion of the Apostolic Administrator, Doroteo Fernández.

On that August 3rd, Tuesday, Conchita's stay in Santander concluded, and so closed one more chapter in the history of the *events*, a chapter that has to be considered as a bad scene in the mystery of Garabandal.

A Sinister Design Unfolds

At the end of eight days, a man intervened to take me to the village and my mother went to find me and have me come.

His name is Emilio del Valle Egocheaga. I will remember him all my life.

Actually it was Emilio del Valle⁶⁹ who intervened to repatriate her who could be considered in some respects as kidnapped in Santander⁷⁰—although, as it appears, kidnapped much to her liking.

While in Puente Nansa Mr. Emilio had arranged for the taxi driver Fidelín Gómez to bring Aniceta and her sister Maximina to Santander.

When they showed themselves at the house of Father Luis González everyone was surprised by the unexpected visit.

—“We have come to get you,” the two women said to Conchita and the reaction was vivid.

—“No, no!” Conchita's eyes moistened. It was seen that things were going well there; and that the vacation, so novel for her, had conquered her.⁷¹

69. A man from León, very well-known in that city and province, a businessman with interests in the coal mines of Santa Lucía (León) where one of Conchita's brothers worked for a time.

Later Conchita stayed at León with this man's family.

70. All the expenses of the trip were paid by Mr. Emilio since at the time Aniceta had some financial problems. In order to go more presentable on the journey to Santander, she had to borrow one of Maximina's coats.

71. For those who cannot understand this, for those who are let down, who imagine that persons favored by God are immediately changed into souls completely above and beyond

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Father Luis and his sister Antonina reacted with evident opposition. They became very angry that they had come to get Conchita.

—“No, no, I don’t want to go,” repeated Conchita; but almost immediately without further protest she went to collect her things.

Then Father Luis telephoned Doctor Piñal to tell him what was happening; the doctor answered that they should all come immediately to his home.

When they came there, the doctor employed all his repertoire of flattery, promises and threats to gain victory at the last moment.

“I don’t know how you can be so stupid, wanting to go back to the village. Here you would be a lucky girl. We would send you to a good college. You would be a senorita. All that is needed is for you to say that all that village affair isn’t true, that you made it up yourself, that you were deceiving the people. If you persist in talking about apparitions, you will be disgraced. We will declare you crazy and lock you in a mad house. And your parents will go to jail.”

To add force to his words, the eloquent doctor explained to the girl that this was not the first case, that there was another person who also said she had apparitions. She had been locked in an asylum for the insane.

The speech had its effect.⁷² Conchita trembling, with her eyes wide and with tears in them, ended up saying, “Do you know what I say? Perhaps for myself it isn’t certain. But perhaps for the others, it is.”

all weakness or deficiency, I would like to reproduce here the writing of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, an *angelical* saint if there ever was one.

She was speaking of the pleasant voyage that her father had given her to recover after a serious and painful illness:

“Then I began to know the world. Everything was joy and happiness around me. For two weeks I found nothing but flowers on the path of life. The Book of Wisdom is right in saying that the wandering of desires overturns the innocent mind. (4: 12) I admit that this life attracted me.” (*Story of a soul, Chapter 4*)

72. Who would expect anything else? The simple village girl was before an important man from the magnificent city of Santander, so different from her Garabandal; a man who spoke with authority, who had the power to accomplish everything he said. What incalculable consequences would result for her and her friends from the attitude that she then adopted.

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Then Father Luis the pastor stood up very pleased and gave the girl a few paternal taps on the shoulder while saying “Good, good, Conchita! Good, good, good.”

Doctor Piñal immediately took advantage of the situation:

—“Do you want to sign what you have just said?”

“Very well,” said Conchita and wrote her name on the paper that was put before her. “Should I put down my last name too?”

—“Yes, that would be better.”

Maximina Gonzalez, who would not hesitate to swear the truth of what has just happened—and she is well aware of it, since she was present—would not go so far, however, as to affirm under oath that the paper on which Conchita signed her name was *en blanco*.⁷³ But she is almost sure of it. Aniceta affirms this without any hesitation. And she thinks she recalls, although on this she is not so sure, that the signature of the girl was in red ink.

The thing went well with regard to the wishes of the Commission, or at least of one of the commissioners. Then Doctor Piñal—in a better mood—said to Conchita:

—“Good, now that the thing is all settled, now that we know that all this is not true, tell us the message.”

—“No, I am not able to tell that.”

They insisted with very forceful dialogue. The young girl finally found an escape.

—“The fact of the matter is that although I would like to, I am not able to tell it to you, because I can’t tell what I no longer remember.”

The interview was very long; only the major parts are related here. From the house of Doctor Piñal they went to the bishop.

At the entrance Reverend Odriozola was waiting for them. First he took photographs of the girl next to the car; and then instructed them on how they should act in front of the bishop: to genuflect on one knee, to kiss the pastoral ring, etc.

Once they were in the palace, the moment arrived when a priest came to meet them. Odriozola said to Conchita:

“Do you know who this priest is?”

73. What an important document with what they would later write on this paper! One of the decisive proofs against Garabandal that are kept in the Archives of the Commission!

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—“The Bishop.”

That was who he actually was. After the greetings and introductions he ordered them to be seated; he adjusted his insignias and began the conversation, or rather the interrogation.

It seems that it did not last very long. In it was a special question:

—“You, what do you prefer? To be a señorita, or to remain a shepherdess?”

—“To be a señorita.”⁷⁴

They talked about this and the Apostolic Administrator and Father Odriozola exchanged words and plans so that Conchita might study and receive a suitable education. Aniceta and Maximina left the palace happy and began the return voyage to the village, secure about the future. A good future! And her little girl was now out of danger. It would not take them long to find out their error.

The episodes of the last day at Santander Conchita summarizes in her diary like this:

On the day that they took me back to the village, I went to Doctor Piñal to tell him that I was going.

And he became very angry and said to me . . . well, many things . . . in order that I would not go.

And I told him that I was not seeing the Virgin; but that the others were, it seemed to me.

And that the message seemed to me to be true.

And he told me to sign and I signed.

Afterwards he told me that I should go talk to Bishop Doroteo,⁷⁵ and I talked to him.

They all acted very nice to me, after all this.

74. Here is something that shows the meaning of that answer from Conchita's tongue:

On returning to Garabandal, she was talking one day with Father Andreu who had heard something of what had happened in Santander. “In questioning her” recounted the priest—“Whether it pleased the Virgin that she would be a señorita, she answered:”

—“And why shouldn't it please the Virgin that I learn?”

—“And how are you going to learn?”

—“Well, like the others!”

—“I don't understand this very well. What does it mean to you to be a señorita?”

—“To go to school.”

75. Bishop Doroteo Fernández was not bishop of Santander but Apostolic Administrator of the diocese, after the death of Bishop José Eguino Trecu.

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We now find ourselves before one of the most important and decisive moments in the remarkable events of Garabandal.

A Commission which calls itself *official* (and we do not doubt of its character, although no one has yet seen the episcopal document relative to its nomination and attributes) has begun to act before a difficult situation with a style and manner of procedure which has to be classified at the least as very exceptional, if not strange.

The members of this Commission had gone at times, although only a very few times, to the location of the events. But they did this with a secretive attitude, without showing their faces, with a certain attitude as if ashamed, without putting themselves in the best places for observation and examination, without ever proceeding to seriously interrogate the visionaries and the most qualified witnesses. As an example of this, they have never asked the parish priest for his opinion; they must have considered anything that he could say as of very little value to them with their degrees and doctorates.⁷⁶

Many of those devoted to Garabandal have the impression that the Commission members, rather than bringing out into the open the possibility of the fact of an intervention from heaven, were searching for proofs against this possibility. They pried into everything that seemed to be a negative sign; and they approached in preference those who doubted or denied, looking for secretive and whispered testimony rather than open declarations. Because of this, the Commission's position was soon strongly *anti*. From this position they first proceeded with Conchita's sojourn in Santander and then with other things that will come out in this

76. Nothing written here is set down lightly. In the succeeding chapters the proofs of this will become apparent. I wish, however, to point out comments found in the French book *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*, published with the imprimatur of the bishop of Bruges on October 19, 1966, concerning the fourth "nota" of the chancery at Santander, which we will see further on. "The Commission, in four years, has never had the time to investigate in the required method, either the visionaries or the members of their families, or the parish priest. Inconceivable, the French say and all those who know the history of Lourdes and Fatima. Inconceivable, but unfortunately true."

The Commission was satisfied to send emissaries, some of whom we have known, as is known the harm that they caused in this little village, abandoned to itself in the middle of events that were infinitely beyond it. A particular name might be mentioned, and we would be forced to admit that the main activity of the man with that name was to be a betrayer and a spy to Garabandal.

He Came Unto His Own, But His Own Received Him Not

history. They have never occupied themselves in proceeding with a process according to the rules of authentic Canon Law.

The result of the experience at Santander, with the disappearance of Conchita's ecstasies and her ambiguous final denials, confirmed the Commission members in their attitude. In the future they would present these results as an argument that could not be rebutted, as an absolute judgment against Garabandal.⁷⁷

And has the Commission—or rather some of its members—always acted in good faith? With a holy and genuine desire to clarify these things with the light of God? I do not wish to doubt this; but there are certain matters . . . Fr. Julio Porro Cardenoso, Canon of Tarragona, speaking about a letter from Conchita that did not get to the hands of Father Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal, bishop at the time, writes, "This will not be the first time that material on Garabandal has vanished. I could cite a definite fact which a member of the commission had used for prevarication. Likewise I could show the discordance of his statements with the most reliable testimony of the parish priest, written down in his diary." (*The Mystery of Garabandal in Catholic Theology.*)

Incalculable consequences have resulted from the position and procedures of the Santander Commission. It might be asked what course would the mystery of Garabandal have followed if it had encountered official investigators who were more responsible and more unbiased.

Perhaps we will know some day. Perhaps we will never know.

77. It is easy to judge the worth of *denials* so obtained, resulting from such procedures.

And every unprejudiced person can see that such denials do not make a convincing argument against the truth of facts seen by hundreds of witnesses. All that can be concluded is that Conchita in that difficult hour did not exactly act like a heroine.

And as for her responsibility, God alone knows.

CHAPTER 7

“But As Many As Received Him”

FROM THE BEGINNING Jesus Christ was a sign of contradiction among men. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother: Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted. And your own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed. (Luke 2: 34-35)

From this prophecy the great historical synthesis of the fourth Gospel can be better understood. The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him . . . He filled with good things, commencing by opening to them the possibility of becoming sons of God. (John 1: 10-12)

The Virgin Mary also was to be a sign of contradiction. Many save themselves and are saved in her. Many crush themselves and are crushed through her. And always in a mysterious way, extremely difficult to understand.

Those who really seek her at Garabandal—in contrast to others who remain in suspicion and malevolence—she also fills with good things,

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through phenomena requiring great humility and simplicity of heart. Conchita’s denials in Santander caused no lessening in the favors of the Virgin Mother; and she even appeared to extend herself more than ever for her chosen village. And thus, on the same day in which Conchita denied the apparitions, on August 3rd . . .

The First Falls from Grace

While the taxi of Fidelín Gómez was devouring the kilometers on National 634: Torrelavega, Cabezón de la Sol . . . bringing home the young girl together with her mother and aunt—unforgettable scenes were unfolding on the mountain heights at Garabandal.

A large crowd had gathered, and there were more guards than ever.¹ Was trouble feared? No. It was simply that the Director General of Security had come up to the village on that day, not on an official visit, but like so many other people out of easily understandable curiosity; it was not every day that one could witness marvels so far beyond what men could stage.

Also touring the village, as we mentioned, was the parish priest from León, Father Manuel Antón. He gives us the following account:

At nightfall, Loli and Jacinta left Ceferino’s house where they had been playing upstairs. The whole crowd that was waiting in the plaza began to move. And I took great care to hold a place up close, hanging onto Loli by her coat, determined to remain near to her. In front of us a lieutenant from the Civil Guard was walking without hurry, with his arms extended so that no one could get ahead of him. Thus he held back the girls who were following directly behind so that they could not go into the swift walk with which everyone was familiar, and which had already left the Director General and his wife far behind.

I didn’t let go of Loli’s coat until we came to the Pines. There the girls placed themselves in the center and the guards spread the people in a wide circle, as in

1. Carlos Arias Navarro. This man had been governor of León in the 1940’s. There he met his wife, María Luz del Valle, daughter of Emilio del Valle.

In 1965 he left his position as Director of the Department of Security to become mayor of Madrid. Later he was Minister of the Republic, and finally President of the Republic (1974–1976), the last president under Franco and the first under King Juan Carlos.

According to the testimony of the Chief of the Civil Guard, previously mentioned so often, Emilio del Valle was also in Garabandal on this date with his daughters. “Don Emilio’s daughters gave me several medals for me to give to María Dolores so that she could give them to the Virgin to kiss.”

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a *corro de aluche*,² so that everyone could see better. Inside the *corro*—at the side of the girls—remained only Mr. Carlos, his wife and myself. One of the girls started the rosary. Everyone was kneeling on the ground. And I remember that many young men had climbed onto the limbs of the pine trees, but I can testify that their attitude and manners did not detract in any way from the general atmosphere of profound reverence and respect.

After the third or fourth Hail Mary of the first mystery, the rosary dropped from the hands of the young girl leading the recitation. And as if with one voice the two spoke out *Ah!* in a whisper, going suddenly into the ecstatic position with which so many are acquainted. What began then was something whose beauty and feeling could not be put in words, even though giving the best possible description.

It was clearly seen that they were in an animated conversation with someone. Continuing to look upwards, at times they would trace little circles, little crosses, and other signs and figures on the ground; there they put the articles prior to holding them up in their hands as if offering them to be kissed.

I could not catch what they were saying during all these activities, but I heard what they began saying later, “Come down. Come down.” And they held their arms as if desiring to receive something in them. To me it was evident that they were asking the Virgin to come down and hand them the Infant. They had such longing in their eyes and in their requests.

Seconds later, they gave the impression that they were holding in their arms what they so much desired, since they lowered their gaze and leaned gently toward something that seemed to pass from the arms of one to the arms of the other. Meanwhile they repeated, “Oh how beautiful! How pretty! But how beautiful you are!” I can testify that they said this in a way that would impress you; in their words and in their gaze they showed souls full of love and joy.

From their gestures I could follow the time of returning the infant to the mother, etc.. Then I heard them: “Don’t go! How long? Three quarters of an hour already?” I hadn’t noted the time; but nearby I saw a priest—later I learned that he was the priest from Aguilar³ de Campoo—and showing me his watch, he assured me that was the exact time that they had been in ecstasy, since he had taken care to look at the time when it had started.

The thing didn’t stop there. Later we had a second scene that thrilled us even more. As they told me later, it was the first time that something like this had happened: the girls fell on the ground in ecstasy; but with what gracefulness, and what poise!

2. The *aluche* is a sport played in León and Santander. The games are always played in the open air in fields or meadows. Spectators gather around in a big circle, leaving the center free for the competitors of the match—from this the popular name of *corros* for these competitions.

3. A city famous for pastry in the north of the province of Palencia on the left bank of the Pisuerga River.

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We were all very frightened, fearing that something serious might have happened. The mother of one of the girls⁴—I don’t know which one—came up to hold her daughter, crying with great distress. All excited, almost shouting, I began to say, “Is there a doctor in the crowd who can help in this extraordinary affair? Is there anyone here?”

Father Valentín, the parish priest, who was in the crowd, then interrupted the general worried silence, saying in a grave voice, “This affair here has always been extraordinary. What is happening is that we are men of little faith.” I admit that the ending impressed me; and after years I remember it as if I were hearing these things right now.

After awhile, as if coming out of a wonderful sleep, the girls returned to themselves, and became again so natural, fresh, smiling.⁵

We can imagine the people’s feelings and comments as they came down from the Pines.

But the day still had not ended. In Garabandal during the early days, everything ended in the church before the Blessed Sacrament. It was a daily living of the ancient Catholic maxim: To Jesus thru Mary.

In the chapel would be new communications.⁶

4. From some notes written by Father Valentín concerning the 3rd of August:

“In the evening an ecstasy started about 9:00. Loli and Jacinta were praying the rosary; at the first Our Father, they went into ecstasy. They spoke with the angel, they sang the hymn to St. Michael . . .

Then a strange thing took place: the girls fell backwards. Jacinta’s mother held her up, and the Director General of Security held Loli. They were fallen down for about ten minutes. Later the girls asked who made them fall.”

5. “I remember something very unusual about this apparition: María Dolores was found lying on the ground in ecstasy with her face upwards, speaking with the Virgin and the angel, and saying, If you don’t help me, I won’t be able to move. Soon after, I saw Loli hold out her arm as if to take the hand of someone who wanted to help her, and little by little, she was lifted up until she was in a sitting position.” (Juan A. Seco’s notes)

6. From Fr. Valentín’s notes:

“When the affair at the Pines finished about 10:30, the girls said that they had to go pray at the church. There they were on their knees on the first step of the altar about 10 minutes. They were asking for Conchita. And we overheard soon afterwards that she was in her home, that she had already come back.

They continued praying the rosary. When the ecstasy ended, I asked them why they hadn’t taken places on the carpet as I had told them. They answered that the Virgin had said to them, That was Father Valentín’s place, and for that reason they had taken a place on the side.

Mari Cruz had not gone to Mass that day. In the evening she didn’t see anything. This is the first time that this happened, although she had said on the previous night that she would have an apparition.”

Conchita Arrives

When I arrived at the village from my trip to Santander, several priests and many people came to meet me,

For Loli and Jacinta had said in their apparition that I was coming on the road, as I really was.

The Virgin had told this to them while they were in the church.

We have much more information on this than what Conchita writes so briefly.

When the three travelers arrived at Cossío, some young girls were awaiting them, among whom was the daughter of the school teacher at Garabandal. Aniceta, who had arrived upset and was becoming more uneasy after she saw them, kept asking, “What do those girls want? What do they want?” When they approached, she went nervously up to the school teacher’s daughter. “Where are you coming from? Is there a fiesta in Garabandal?”⁷

On arriving at the village, Aniceta said to the people who questioned her, “I’m satisfied. There’s nothing to this. We’ve been to the Bishop. And there’s nothing to this.” For the simple woman, the Bishop had to be absolutely infallible.

They went directly to their homes and shut themselves in; Aniceta was in no mood to talk to people or make explanations. But Maximina wanted to see what was going on and was able to witness some of the last scenes. She heard that Loli and Jacinta, during an ecstasy in a church, had asked the vision about Conchita, and then had said, “Is she coming now?” And minutes later, “Oh, she’s in the house now.” Maximina closely watched what was still going on during that memorable evening, and then went home.

When on that same night Father Manuel Antón arrived at his residence in Barro (Llanes), he talked with Father Victor López, who had just returned from Santander.

—“What!” asked Father Victor, “Do you still believe in Garabandal?”

—Now more than ever after what I’ve seen today.

—“Well I personally have almost no belief. I’ve spoken with Bishop Doroteo⁸ and he told me . . .”

7. Aniceta asked these pointed questions because she was annoyed that this group was waiting for her daughter. It seems that she had returned from Santander with the hope that everything would soon return to *normal*.

8. It was not remarkable that Father Victor would speak on familiar terms with the Apos-

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Naturally he related his interview with Conchita on that same day and what Odriozola and Piñal had said.

Garabandal was beginning to be marked by a great sign of contradiction. Whoever kills you, will think that he has done a service to God. (John 16: 2)

Our Lady’s Voice

The following day, when coming down from the pastures, my mother and I met my Aunt Maximina González, who was very excited and told us,

“Do you know that the Virgin’s voice has been heard on a tape recorder?”

And I asked her, “What did she say? And she . . .”

We have additional details about this episode that Conchita mentions, and which she did not witness, since she had to go far away from the village to the pastures to gain with difficulty her daily bread. It should not be imagined that the life of the visionaries had been changed into a continual celebration of wonders, or that due to the ecstasies, that they had been dispensed from all work and trouble. It was rather the contrary, and after many sleepless nights in vigils that could exhaust the strongest, they had to begin the new day very early during that summertime and had to work like all the other village girls.

Conchita is alluding to the following:

On that August day, Mary Loli and Jacinta had another apparition in the morning at the Pines. They were presenting medals and rosaries to kiss as usual, oscillating back and forth and falling. Then on their knees they were carrying on a dialogue; in it Jacinta was heard to say: “Conchita has already come. They’ve cut her braids in Santander. She’s very pretty and tanned from going to the beach.”

When they came out of the ecstasy, they answered questions from the people around them. And one of the crowd, who had brought a tape recorder,⁹ let them hear some of the things recorded on the tape; among

tolic Administrator, Bishop Doroteo Fernández, who came from the diocese of León and for years had close relationships with many priests in that city.

9. Police Chief Juan A. Seco also reported the episode with the tape recorder in his memoirs. And he said that it was Angel Domínguez Borreguero, director of the Psychiatric Hos-

these were phrases that they themselves had spoken in ecstasy. The girls were amazed since they had never heard anything like this. The stranger explained how the recorder worked and made some demonstrations during which he handed them the microphone.

“If you see the Virgin again, tell her to talk through here.”

Soon the girls fell into ecstasy again. Mary Loli, whom the new ecstasy had surprised with the microphone in her hand, began to converse with the Virgin: “A man has come with a thing that takes down everything—everything that is said. Why don’t you say something so that everyone can hear you, so that the people will believe? Go ahead, say something. Yes, talk. Say something. Not for us; so that the people believe.”

Eventually the ecstasy ended. What the girls had said to the apparition was played back on the tape recorder for them to hear. And at the moment when they stopped telling her to speak, an ineffable voice was heard—the witnesses classified it most sweet—that said:

“No, I will not speak.”

Loli and Jacinta exclaimed together, “Oh! That’s the voice of the Virgin!”

Everyone was very excited. As Maximina said to Conchita, “The people started to cry because they heard the voice of the Virgin.” This was something exceptional.¹⁰

The owner of the tape recorder started shouting, “I will send this to the Pope.” The people naturally wanted to hear the marvelous voice again. And they played the tape for a second time, but at the proper time they heard nothing.

They came down from the Pines somewhat bewildered, talking of what had happened. They replayed the tape in Mari Cruz’ home.¹¹ And once

pital of Salamanca, who gave the microphone to the girls to record the Virgin’s voice. Gerardo Plaza, a professor at the University of Salamanca accompanied him. Both were vacationing in Llanes, Asturias.

10. I read the testimony of Gaudencio Cepeda Palacios from Torquemada (Palencia), Agustín Piney, from Santillana del Mar (Santander), Luis Toribio Millán, from Aguilar de Campoo (Palencia), and all agreed on the mysterious hearing of that unique voice, and that it was heard when the tape was finished, after a click signaled the end.

11. Sánchez-Ventura is the one who mentions Mari Cruz’ house. (Chapter 8, Page 112, Spanish version); but Father Ramón Andreu says in his report:

“They came down distraught to the house of Conchita, who had not taken part in the vision described, so that she could hear what her companions had said. When coming to the

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again everybody could hear the mysterious voice. And again the girls said that the voice was the Virgin’s.

She was not heard after that. But the witnesses of that unique experience have not forgotten. All kept in their heart what one of them expressed while coming down from Garabandal, “I will go to the grave with the conviction of having heard the Virgin’s voice.”

This occurrence can not be taken lightly since there are twelve signed witnesses to it.¹²

We would all be overjoyed to be able to hear the truly unique voice of Our Lady. But we must recognize that would be too much of a gift for our sinful ears which are ordinarily so open for voices and words opposed to those of the Virgin.

Now we should live with hope and a desire to give a spiritual resonance to the beautiful supplication that the liturgy teaches us to direct to the Virgin with words from the Canticle of Canticles.

Let your voice sound in my ears.

For your voice is sweet.

And your face ravishing.

(Canticles 2: 14)

The duration of August 14th was profuse with wonders. If the tape recording had occurred in the morning, in the evening occurred another series of remarkable phenomena beginning at 8 P.M., first at the Pines and later in the church. Again Loli and Jacinta were the participants. Conchita and her mother Aniceta, who had been working from early morning harvesting hay far from the village, returned straight home to rest a while and finish their housework. At a late hour Maximina went to see them. She related:

When she came, Aniceta was saying to her daughter, “You troublemaker! Don’t you see that your apparitions aren’t true? Why hasn’t the Virgin called you today like the others?”

sentences mentioned, the voice was heard to say: No, I will not speak. Conchita smiled and said very happily that it was the Virgin who had spoken.”

The Father verified that the reference to this event was received from a witness there present, José Salceda from Aguilar de Campoo (Palencia), who was at the time chauffeur to the Fontaneda family.

12. In his book, Sanchez-Ventura gives the name, age and address of seven of these.

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The child answered very seriously, “You want me to tell you all about the ecstasies of the other girls?”

“Yes!” exclaimed Maximina, “Tell us about them. Tell us about them since I’ve just come from seeing them.”

Then Conchita explained in detail everything that had happened, with the stops that the visionaries had made, and the things that they had done. On hearing this, Maximina said, “My hair is standing on end. Oh! This is fantastic! That’s exactly how it happened!”

Maximina later related:

Then Aniceta said to me, “But Conchita has been with me all this time shut up in the house.” She turned to Conchita and asked her, “How can this be?”

—“This is how. While I was in front of the living room, I felt the Virgin calling me by my name. And she told me everything that the others were doing and where they were walking.”

“And I know more, what the others don’t yet know . . . what the Virgin told me. She told me that we would hear a voice, and then we were to go where it took us.”¹³

—“Oh heavens”—exclaimed Aniceta—“and if it takes you over a steep cliff?”

—“The Virgin would never do that. The Virgin would never take us to a bad place.”

“She also told me that the time would come when we ourselves would deny, for we would come to doubt everything.”

And almost everyone would come to doubt.

And so during the evening of August 4th, 1961, when she had barely arrived back from her change of environment stay in Santander, Conchita would receive the first secret and confidential communication about something that no one could then have possibly imagined, and which

13. I admit that I can give no explanation for this enigmatic passage. Let us hope that some day it will be made clear to us, since the great mystery of Garabandal is still unsolved.

Note from 1976—I was finally able to question Jacinta in her home about this puzzling episode . . . without obtaining much light. But something led me to think that the Virgin—with these words spoken to Conchita—might have been referring to the voice of a person who was then alive and was soon going to die: Fr. Luis María Andreu. We know that after his death the girls heard his voice in ecstasy without seeing him. (See the next chapter.) And that mysterious voice gave them much instruction and advice.

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afterward would fall down terribly like a weight of darkness on the mystery of Garabandal: the denial of its visionaries and the falling away of a great number of its followers.

The Veil Does Not Completely Fall

The seers of Garabandal saw and heard what we ourselves now, in the time of faith and hope, can only hope to witness.

But what the girls saw and heard was not the perfect fullness of face to face¹⁴ contact with heaven. The mysterious veil was not pulled completely away even for them.

Plácido Ruiloba, a businessman from Santander, one of the witnesses who has seen many things in Garabandal, recalls those times in 1961:

One day I asked Mary Loli what it was that she saw during the ecstasies and visions in her home, since the ceilings were rather low and would not permit anyone to be in ecstasy above her.

—“When I see the Virgin, I don’t see the ceilings of my home. I see her, surrounded with great light.”

I also asked her if the Virgin leaned over to kiss the articles that they offered to her. And the girl told me that the Virgin did not lean over, but descended gently from her high position until the articles were in front of her lips.

Another time I asked her whether, when they held the infant in their arms as they had stated many times, they felt his weight like other infants. The girl answered that when the Virgin handed her the infant she felt a great pleasure in holding him; but that she noticed no weight, and neither could she press against him. And that she had a similar sensation, very difficult to explain, when the Virgin kissed her.¹⁵

14. We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face, now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known. (cor. 13: 12)

15. Taken from a June 28, 1969 article in the weekly *Que pasa?* written by González-Gay. In a report by Father Andreu, we have another illustration on this subject that apparently belongs to the ecstasy of August 31, 1961:

“Father Valentín indicated to the girls that they should ask the Virgin if she was appearing to them in body and soul . . . The girls asked her, and the Virgin answered that she was not appearing to them in body and soul, but in another way; but that it was she.”

Father Valentín had asked this as a proof, since he had read that apparitions are not accustomed to be in body and soul, and the girls were not capable of understanding these things; they knew only to say that they saw the Virgin.”

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Let the theologians see if all this does or does not agree with what has been taught in the Church about the *reality* of visions and apparitions.

Can such extraordinary concordance with Church teaching, in matters that even many priests are not cognizant about, come from the girls' environment? Can it be the result of the girls' abnormal psyche, or their genius for invention?

And let the theologians look at other evidence, collected by this man who questioned the girls intensely:

Having learned all this from Jacinta's mother (that the Virgin at times gave them the Infant), I took advantage of an occasion to question Conchita.

—If you held the Infant Jesus in your arms, then you would have touched Him.

—“No. One can never touch either the Virgin or the Infant.”

—But don't you hold Him in your arms?

—“Yes, we hold Him in them, and because of that we are not able to bring our arms more than to a certain closeness to our chest.”

—Is He heavy?

—“Not at all.”

—And when you kiss the Virgin, do you feel the freshness and the softness of her face?

As an answer, Conchita took the hand of one of the spectators and raised it toward her face so as to cover it without touching her mouth and her eyes. And she said, “Do you understand now? As if you would kiss your own hand, without feeling it on your lips. Well it is something like that; one sees that he kisses, that he embraces, and nevertheless he feels no touch. Certainly it is she whom we kiss; but we cannot say that we feel either the freshness or anything from her face.”

—How can this be?

—“We don't know; but it's definitely that way. If we wish to reach her with our hands, our hand reaches a point beyond which it can't go, for she is there. But we don't feel anything, outside of the sensation that we surely have her there—in front of our hand.”

Moreover, we know that when the children offered the Infant pebbles or carmels that they had saved for Him, both the pebbles and the carmels were found afterwards lying on the ground.¹⁶

16. Material taken from *Star on the Mountain*.

Behind the Mystery, Our Lady

Here I would like to say something about Garabandal using someone else’s words.

“Garabandal has the same spiritual theme as the other great Marian apparitions recognized by the Church.

Our Lady has come on the earth one more time because she is a Mother not only for the visionaries and for a few chosen souls, but for the whole world—this world which is becoming worse, as Loli has said.

At San Sebastián de Garabandal, tears do not flow from the Virgin’s eyes as they did at La Salette. Instead she has chosen four innocent young girls. Through these children, all generous souls are called to partake of the Virgin’s solicitude for the world.

One day the children in ecstasy recited the rosary under the Virgin’s direction and said, “Holy Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us sinners.” Mary, the Mother of God, the Mother of Jesus, lived from the manger to Calvary with her Son and for her Son. She knew the prophecies and the aged Simeon had enlightened her about the sword of sorrows that would one day pierce her heart.

During Christ’s life Mary lived with serenity of soul and anguish of heart. Mary’s *compassion* for her Son was a thing so deeply moving that it is almost necessary to be a sorrowful mother oneself to comprehend it.

More than others, the tragic spirit of the Spanish people seems to have penetrated into this mystery. In Spain we see statues of Our Lady clothed in black, and of the Virgin crowned with seven swords, holding in her hands a cloth to collect her tears.

“For what is she crying?”

It was in Bethlehem, the gospel says in speaking of the birth of Christ, that Mary brought into the world her first-born Son. Her first-born Son? Actually her motherhood did not end with her Son Jesus; at the cross, she became the mother of all uncountable sinful human beings. After being the sorrowful mother at the foot of the cross, she remains the suffering mother who fears to lose the children that Jesus had given her on Calvary.

Now, perhaps more than at any other period of history she sees the de-Christianization of entire countries. At Fatima she showed the three children many souls falling into hell. Few listened! Can we not understand

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then why she calls to the world at Garabandal to hear her message, in order to save it from the chastisement that she fears for it?

At Garabandal the children were astounded one day by the attitude of the Virgin, and Mari Cruz asked her, “You too . . . you pray too?” They did not yet understand that—after having joined with the angel in praising the Virgin full of grace—our Hail Marys ask her to pray for us sinners.

She knows that a terrible chastisement can fall upon her children on earth if they do not convert. She makes an almost desperate effort to warn us, to implore us to prevent our souls from falling into hell and our bodies from being chastised. She then entreats us to pray for the world with her.

Our Mother in Heaven stands before the throne of God. She asks devoted souls, her little children, and those that resemble them to join her prayer and pray with her to snatch victory from Satan, and gain the triumph that Jesus desires to grant to her.”

(Star on the Mountain)

*Yes it is she, the mother concerned for the children,
who is beyond the mist and mystery of Garabandal.*

CHAPTER 8

The First Death at Garabandal

IF I WERE TO USE the strong language of Christian tradition, I would say the first *martyr*. If I were to adapt my language to the 20th century political movements, I would speak of the first *victim*. Taking a medium position between these expressions, I am going to write without pretention about the first *death* at Garabandal.

He was a martyr because he was an exceptional *witness* for the cause, even to giving up his life.

He was a victim because he *sacrificed* his life as a consequence of his total devotion in the service of a cause.

Who was he?

Skeptic at the Start

We have already mentioned these lines from Conchita: In those days while I was at Santander, there were in the village two Jesuit priests . . .

Now let us go back a little in our story, returning to the 29th of July, the date on which the presence of these priests began to be noticed in Garabandal. The two Andreu brothers, Ramón María and Luis María,

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had come like so many other people, led on more by curiosity than the expectation of finding anything really important. They went simply to see what was going on because people were talking so much about what was happening there.

They came like many others, without believing.

Then one day Loli and Jacinta had an apparition at the Pines.

And the priests were there, and seeing them in ecstasy, believed.

But they believed not only because of that.

Conchita mentions only a small part of what occurred on July 29th. Now we can complete her description with some detailed accounts of the first visit of the Andreu brothers to Garabandal.

Upon arriving, they were extremely amazed on hearing Chief of Police Juan A. Seco tell the true story of what had happened on the preceding two days: how the children in their ecstasy on Thursday July 27th at nine o'clock in the evening at the Pines had learned from the lips of the Virgin all that was happening to their friend Conchita at the same time in Santander, first on Alta Street and then later in the rectory of Our Lady of Consolation parish. And how Mr. Seco had immediately checked the accuracy of what the children had said by making an official telephone call to the police chief in Santander. After hearing this, the two brothers were astounded with a feeling they could not describe.

—"What is this? What's going on?" exclaimed Father Ramón.

—"Regardless of what it is, it is going to be something really worthwhile," answered Father Luis.

They asked if something else was going to happen that night. Definitely, someone answered. "At seven o'clock there has to be an ecstasy because yesterday the Virgin told the girls while leaving that she would return today."

Then one of the Fontanedas, who had come with the Andreu brothers from Aguilar de Campoo, could not hide the inner shaking that the waiting was causing him and said to Father Ramón María, "This is terrible, Father! Watching the clock while waiting for a supernatural event like this in cold blood!"

About three or four hundred visitors were in the village on that last Saturday in July. As the hour drew near, Fr. Ramon meandered around

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the town with the others who were showing the excitement of expecting something, without knowing what it was or where it was coming from. Some started going toward the *calleja*.

Slightly later a young child appeared who told the group that were waiting, "There has already been one call."

The news spread immediately and Father Ramón María asked with astonishment, "What's that?"

Someone explained, "First the children receive three calls and then, after that, she comes."

That added another surprise to the many the Father had already received. Certainly this was an intriguing mystery to be carefully studied.¹

Soon Loli and Jacinta appeared, running toward the *cuadro*. The commotion this caused was tremendous. Everyone raced toward the place in a disorganized avalanche. Father Ramón María—in order not to run over anyone, and also not be run over himself—kept himself to the side as much as he could to let everyone else pass by. All he could do at the time was resign himself to staying on the fringe of the spectators without being able to closely follow the phenomena that were so intriguing him. In order to be able to follow what was going on, he started to climb up on top of one of the low walls of loose stones that line the *calleja* in places. Unfortunately the stones began to scatter and fall, making a lot of noise. The people turned to stare, complaining that with such a racket they could not hear a thing that the children were saying in the ecstasies. Then the poor father tried to hide himself as much as he could to escape from glances that were not too benevolent.

1. Several days after what we are relating here, the famous bullfighter Alvaro Domecq, who was fighting in a nearby village, came to Garabandal with his father and retinue. He was amazed at what they told him about the events. He followed the visionaries around saying in typical Castellan manner, "Did you see the Virgin, Sweetheart? Did you see the Virgin, my Angel?"

These men from the bull ring were amazed and amused by the calls that the girls were receiving in their ecstasies. On arriving and having heard someone saying, "Be ready, they have already received two 'calls'," the father of Mr. Domecq joked with his son, "Be careful, Alvarito, not to have one tomorrow!" (In bullfighter's jargon, a call is a warning that the head of the bullring gives to bullfighters who are not performing well.)

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He was in this situation when he felt someone behind him grab his arms. He turned and saw a giant—or at least at the time that is what he appeared to be—who lifted him up and began to force a way through the crowded circle of enthralled people around the children, while saying forcefully to one after the other, “Make way for the authority of the Church.”

Thanks to this providential help, Father Ramón found himself unexpectedly in the best spot for observation, right up against the visionaries, and next to his brother whom he discovered there conscientiously making entries in his notebook, calmly caught up in what was going on.

The first thing that attracted his attention was a man at his side who was bending over, very interested in taking the pulse of the girls. Every now and then he would raise his head toward the people and say, “Normal . . . Normal . . .”

The captain of the guard began hearing “Normal” . . . and asked him, “Hey, are you a doctor?”

—“No sir, I’m a journalist.”

—“Well then, please get out of here at once.”

—“Gladly. Pardon me.”

These rather ridiculous details, and those that received them, caused Father Ramón to think to himself, “This thing has neither head nor tail.”

Soon both the children came to themselves at the same time, perfectly simultaneously, and looked innocently around them. Everyone was at a loss for words. Then Father Valentín who already had experience in these matters—over a month of association with them—came near and asked them with his typical stammering, “What? What? What did the Virgin say?”

—“The Virgin said that we should go to the Pines—we, our families, the guards, the priests and the nuns—and that the others should remain below.”

Father Valentín turned toward Father Andreu and said nervously, “But what nuns? What nuns? There are no nuns here! What nuns? This isn’t the Virgin!”

Father Andreu remained quiet. What did he know? This was the first time he was here and he was rather confused.

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They all went up to the Pines and there the children unaffectedly pointed out the places where the various groups should situate themselves.²

It appeared that the Virgin had told the children that the people could see, but should not hear.³ Only two little children of six years of age, Mari Carmen and Sari (sisters of Jacinta and Loli), could be near the visionaries as witnesses.

The ecstasy and the apparition began. The nearest spectators were able to notice that the faces of the visionaries took on an expression of profound sorrow. One of the girls' mothers could not contain herself. They are crying.

Since he could not manage to hear the conversation, the parish priest called to Mari Carmen, the child witness, in order to question her. The little girl approached unhurriedly, and when she heard the questions of the priest, answered in a bored and indifferent manner: "They are telling the Virgin that she shouldn't say bad things."⁴

Everyone knew that this apparition was different from the others, that the Virgin was explaining and showing very grave things, surely in relation to some great chastisement that would come upon the world if men did not return to the ways of God by doing penance.

2. "Midway toward the Pines, Loli turned around and pointed with her finger, No one should pass beyond here, indicating a path that crossed over from the side.

It wasn't easy to make all that crowd of 500 persons obey immediately. It could be imagined that some hadn't heard what the visionary had said. Three or four of the Civil Guards took charge of implementing these orders. I passed at the side of one of the guards as he was trying to block the passage of some people who wanted to go ahead of him. One of the people said, And who are you to stop me from seeing a miracle?. The guard answered, God commands and He should be obeyed." (From a conference of Father Andreu at Palma de Mallorca.).

It is not easy to allocate each scene and episode precisely to the corresponding ecstasy that took place at the Pines on the afternoon of July 29th.

3. From information that I was able to gather with difficulty, it appears that only the two small witnesses whom we have first mentioned were able to circulate around Jacinta and Loli in ecstasy. Those of the privileged group—their parents, the guards, etc.—had to stay a little farther away, in such a position that they could see, but could not hear; while the crowd—down below to one side, without even seeing anything—remained waiting. At a second stage, those from the privileged group were able to draw closer and encircle the girls. Finally the whole crowd went up to the Pines.

4. Distressing things that were terrifying and painful.

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From statements made later on by the children, it was learned that on this day the Virgin had confided a secret and had completed the message which would be made public on the night of October 18th.⁵

A witness present at the time noted:

They raised up their hands as if holding up something. One pulled in her arms. Kisses were heard . . . They extended their arms . . . They smiled . . . They listened to something . . . And they cried . . .

When they returned to normal we surrounded them and saw that one of them still had tears. Why are you crying? We received no answer.

While some of the people were speaking with the girls, the third ecstasy of the day occurred there in the same location of the Pines. This time the children could be heard with notable clearness.

—The Apparition had come with the Child, since they asked how old He was. They requested her to give them His crown, and they said that it was little.

—The Virgin told the girls that she was pleased with the way the people had acted, since they had docilely obeyed the things she had said about their positions during the ecstasy.

—She advised them to say the rosary one more time, and to do it at the Pines.

As soon as they returned to normal, Jacinta and Loli began right there to say the rosary. On reaching the fifth Ave Maria of the third mystery, the two children stopped at The Lord is with . . . without pronouncing the next word.

5. Concerning this July 29th, so outstanding in the events of Garabandal, Police Chief Juan Alvarez Seco testifies:

I remember that María Dolores said to me, “Chief, you and my father can come up a little closer, about 100 meters to the right of the Pines. The Pastor and the nuns may come to about 100 meters too, but on the left side; the rest of the people below and far away.”

We all did this. And I was able to observe that during the ecstasy the visionaries cried a lot, frightening the little girls . . . Later I learned that the reason for the visionaries being alone and isolated like this was so that the people wouldn't be too stricken on seeing up close what they were suffering, since the Virgin had to be speaking of the message, showing them something of the chastisement and how the cup was being filled with sins. This was what they had to make public later on October 18th.

On this day, the people from the village made a little altar with fruit cases, and they placed it at the foot of the Pines; it was well made and they decorated it with flowers from the fields.

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This ecstasy lasted about an hour. Here are some of the things that were heard:

Why do you come? If the people hadn't obeyed, would you have come? . . . So that they believe . . . (They offer something. They give a kiss.) How beautiful you are! You're very kind . . . Tomorrow we will come while fasting, without eating anything, not anything . . . I am kissing your scapular . . . Today some Carmelite fathers came . . . I remember a Dominican . . . Show us your dress once more . . . It's white with white flowers . . . A guard brought a little girl who couldn't speak or walk . . . I promised him . . . Cure her! Cure someone, so that all the people can see it."

The person who took these notes was one of the two Jesuits who had come up to the village without believing anything. Let us listen to what he said as recorded in the French edition of Conchita's Diary.

We discussed this subject with Father Ramón María Andreu. The following is part of the dialogue.

QUESTION: "In speaking of Loli and Jacinta's ecstasy in her 'Diary', Conchita maintains that you considered Mari Loli's gesture as a sign. Is that true?"

FATHER: Yes, that is certain, but the story is a little more involved than that simple allusion by Conchita in her diary would make one think.

QUESTION: "Could you give us a more definite idea of your attitude and feelings on the day you first went up to Garabandal?"

FATHER: As you might imagine, during that first visit to the village I didn't have the least belief in the world that events could take place there that were worthy of close attention. The first time they asked me to go, I answered, "I don't have any time to waste." I'm usually very busy. Although I finally agreed to travel to Garabandal, it was only because of my friends' insistence and the great need I had for a rest after having preached several retreats on the Spiritual Exercises one after another.

QUESTION: "Did your brother Father Luis believe in it?"

FATHER: No, no more than I. At that time we didn't have any authentic proof. And like everyone else, we needed some minimum evidence to make an evaluation on events of this type.

QUESTION: "Concerning the episode mentioned by Conchita, exactly how did it happen? Can you tell us?"

FATHER: "Gladly. It was, as I said, the first time that I had made the ascent to Garabandal. That day we had the opportunity of witnessing several of the children's actions and movements. At the end of the afternoon we were at the Pines. Loli and Jacinta were in ecstasy. There were only a few witnesses around the children. I myself was very close to them; I could hear them speaking to the

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Vision in the soft low-pitched voice that was typical of their ecstatic state. Now and then I could understand some of their words.

After eight or ten minutes, I thought that this had to be a case of hypnotism. I have to admit that this was no brilliant idea and lacked originality, but it was what I was actually thinking. I looked around to find the originator of this case of hypnosis. I saw Father Valentín, Ceferino, Julia, and the other spectators. They all had such an expression of admiration and astonishment that I considered them more disciples than masters. Obviously the hypnotist wasn't there!

I had already seen both the children go into the ecstatic state and come out of it at the same time. This gave me the impression that they had only one mind. What I thought then doesn't seem to make much sense, but I was thinking it nevertheless, that one of the two children would return to consciousness while the other remained in ecstasy.⁶

At that exact second, Loli, who was next to me, came to, turned slightly and looked at me with a smile. I then asked her:

—"Don't you see the Virgin anymore?:

—"No, Father," She answered.

—"Why is that?" I asked.

—"Because she is gone."

Jacinta was still in ecstasy. I said to Loli: "Look at Jacinta." The child looked at her and smiled on seeing her in ecstasy—for it was the first time that she had seen one of her companions in this situation, being herself out of the apparition. I asked her another question, "What did the Virgin tell you?"

She was about to answer, when she fell into ecstasy again, throwing her head backwards. Then I heard this conversation between the two children and the Virgin:

Jacinta: "Loli, why did you leave?"

Loli: (talking to the apparition) "Why did you go away?"

Then after a short pause, "Oh! It was for that. So that he would believe!"

Hearing this, I rejoined my brother Luis and said to him, "Be careful about what you are thinking. The transmission of thought here is lightning fast!"

My brother responded: "Did something happen to you?"

Yes, I answered him. "I'll tell you about it later."⁷

6. Father thought that if all had been caused by the external actions of a distant hypnotizer, those actions should have affected the two girls in the same way and at the same time.

7. "When the ecstasy ended; I began writing down what had just happened . . . While doing this, the girls entered into a trance again. Soon two nuns appeared walking from the other side of the hill. Seeing them, Father Valentín turned excitedly toward me:

—"Look. Nuns!"

—"Yes, nuns," I answered, not understanding immediately.

—"That's the Virgin!" He shouted out very excited.

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QUESTION: "Father, did you believe from then on?"

FATHER: Without question all this attracted my attention and made me think that it wasn't a comedy, and that there must be material here for profound study. I also took notice that we were face to face with exciting phenomena both for the doctor and the theologian.

From that point to believing, there is—in spite of everything—a step that one doesn't make so easily. However one thing remains certain: if I look back on the ensemble of events in which I have assisted with a sometimes excessive scepticism, I can testify and affirm again that we aren't dealing with a comedy or simulation on the part of the four girls.

Unfortunately, saying that amounts to saying nothing at all. To present the problem is not to solve it.

The question remains the same: "What is the cause of the phenomena at which I have assisted as an eyewitness and of which the story that I have recounted is only the smallest part, a drop of water in the sea?"

How many are the persons with whom I have shared my intense desire to understand? How many times have I asked for a convincing explanation? And I am still waiting for an answer to my questions."⁸

Thus on the 29th of July, 1961, two brothers,⁹ both priests, both religious, initially skeptics in their first impressions, would enter into the his-

And then I understood; this was the explanation of what the girls had said in the Cuadro: that the *nuns* could also be near to them. Not a single nun had been seen in the village, and so Father Velentín was disturbed in the beginning. Now, after a long time, the secret guests were appearing!"

(The two nuns can be identified. They were two religious from a congregation little known in Spain: Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart which at the time had only one house in Cataluña. One of the religious, a native of Santander, was staying temporarily with her family in Roiz, a village not far from the valley of the Nansa River; she was Sister María of Jesus, later Provincial Superior of her congregation in Spain.)

"The nuns arrived in time and were thrilled by the girls' ecstasy. When the girls came back to themselves, they said, The Virgin said that everyone can go up. No one took it upon themselves to give out the news, and they asked me to do so.

I went up to the edge of that little flat area by the Pines, and I saw the crowd who had been waiting so long. I made a sign to them and everyone hurried up in great confusion. The Lord obliged them with a new ecstasy by the girls, truly very beautiful." (Father Ramón Andreu, at a conference in Palma de Mallorca.)

Following such a day, we can imagine with what sentiments the Andreu brothers left Garabandal after their first visit.

8. Journal de Conchita, Nouvelles Editions Latines, Paris, 1967.

9. We have already described one of them, Father Ramón María. The other, Father Luis, was younger; he was 36. He had made his ecclesiastic studies in Oña, Innsbruck (Austria)

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tory of Garabandal where they were to play a major role in the unfolding and development of that history.

In Crescendo

With the coming of August, summertime month par excellence, when Santander and its seaside resorts were overflowing with people, the influx of visitors coming from all regions into Garabandal acquired an accelerated pace. And at the same time, the events themselves also seemed to follow an accelerated pace as they increased in number and became more attention-getting.

On the first day of the month, as we have mentioned, things began with the beautiful addition in the recitation of the Hail Mary: Holy Mary, Mother of God and our Mother.

On August 3rd, the first ecstatic falls occurred together with many other phenomena, culminating in Conchita's return back to town after eight days in Santander, as previously described.

On August 4th, a Friday, the episode of the tape recorder took place.

On August 5th, among other things, everyone's attention was strongly attracted by an ecstatic march at tremendous speed going from the Pines all the way down to the church. Conchita was heard ardently asking pardon for having gone to the beach, and with no less ardor she implored the apparition to make a visible miracle so that everyone would believe.

Father Valentín wrote down in his notes:

At two in the afternoon Loli, Conchita, and Jacinta went up beyond the Pines; there they knelt down and asked, Where are we going? To the church? And they undertook the descent in ecstasy.

and Rome, and for some time he had been a professor at a theological seminary that the Jesuits had in Oña (Burgos). I say had because some years ago it was transferred to Bilbao.

Oña is a small historical city northeast of the capital of Burgos, situated between mountains covered with pines on the picturesque bank of the Oca River not far from its outflow into the Ebro. It had been the seat of a seminary of the ancient monastery of San Salvador—formerly belonging to the Benedictines—abandoned after the laws of Mendizabal in 1835. After the Jesuits vacated recently, the government officials of Burgos made the seminary into a psychiatric hospital.

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At the church they stopped first before the main altar. Then they went to the altar of the Immaculate Conception and prayed a beautiful rosary—Conchita leading, the others answering. All this lasted about an hour and a half.

In the evening, toward 9:30, they returned in ecstasy to the church. I was at the gate when they came and I wanted to stop them, but I was unable. They went in front of the main altar, knelt down and began to speak. Conchita asked pardon for having gone to the beach and movie theater. Conchita wept. They also asked very insistently for her to perform a miracle. And they asked why Mari Cruz was not seeing her.

The absence of Mari Cruz can be explained as due to pressures exerted on her parents, who were already doubting and upset, so that they kept her secluded far from the locations and phenomena of the other three. We know for example that during the days of August one of her aunts from Madrid was there, and she and some other people told the mother, “The child is sick and so are the others.” For that reason, they took her to the pastures whenever they could.

Although I cannot say with certainty that it occurred on this day, I am inserting something here which has been told to me and which reveals quite well the visionaries’ concern during those days. Mari Cruz and Jacinta were taken up into ecstasy near the water fountain, and the people gathered around them. The final light of day was fading. The wife of Augusto Fernández saw that her son, crippled with infantile paralysis, was next to the children in the middle of the crowd, and she feared that something might happen as the crowd pressed against him. She boldly made her way up to him to protect him from a possible avalanche of curious spectators. She reclined on the ground at his side, trying not to interfere with the vision of those behind her, and had the chance to have her head almost leaning on Mari Cruz, whom she heard saying in a whisper:

Look. The people don’t believe. They only believe that we are crazy and foolish. Come. Perform a miracle. Even though it is only a little one . . . So that they might believe. Let three stars fall now.

A few seconds later—to everyone’s surprise and with almost everyone unaware of the reason—three shooting stars crossed brilliantly across the sky.

On Sunday August 6th, the girls had an ecstasy in the evening at 9:30 sharp. During the recitation of the rosary a heavenly music was heard that lulled those hearing it and stirred up devotion as the girls were heard

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chanting the Hail Marys slowly, rhythmically, and fervently. They came out of ecstasy at 10:12; and then to conclude this ineffable evening of communication with heaven, as on so many other occasions, they went to pray a Station before the Blessed Sacrament. The girls did not pray badly, far from that; but the spectators were struck by the contrast between the two prayers. The second, although devout and well said, did not have either the voice, or the rhythm, or the feeling, or the music of the first. It was evident that the girls in ecstasy were before something or someone that transformed them.¹⁰

On August 7th, a Monday, there were more ecstasies. For example, one occurred at 2:00 in the afternoon to all four girls together.¹¹ It appears that this was one of the days in which the Virgin told the girls to stay in their homes without going outside because of the deluge of strangers. In this way the Virgin protected the girls from the crowd's indiscreet enthusiasm and curiosity, and allowed them a little rest.

A Stellar Day!

August 8th of the year 1961 was to be a day especially marked in the unfolding of this history.

At 5:45 a.m. on that day, in the freshness of the early morning air and under a clear sky that was beginning to lighten up, a caravan of automobiles including a jeep left Aguilar de Campoo in the province of Palentia. Pulling away from the towering castle, which from afar appears to give the city a crown of crumbling stone walls, the cars got on the highway that would bring them to Cossío by way of Cervera, Piedras Luengas, Polaciones and Tudanca.

10. Fr. Valentín ends his notes of August 6th like this: "Afterwards they prayed a station in the natural state. What a difference in their prayer!"

11. Another, still more interesting, after it had become dark. During it they made their way to the places where they had previously had apparitions: the village fountain, the apple tree in the calleja, the *cuadro*, the Pines. In each one of these places they knelt down with devotion for some time, and then departed. The tour ended in the church.

"It was a dark night; but they told me that they saw as though it were daylight." (Fr. Valentín)

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When the convoy arrived at Cossío, it was well into the morning. Father Luis María Andreu was among those traveling in a car with members of the Fontaneda family. In Cossío, they parked the cars and the jeep made three trips back and forth to bring all the passengers up to Garabandal.

Fr. Valentín Marichalar, the parish priest, was very happy to see that Father Luis María had come and spoke to him, “You’ve come at the right time, since I have to go to Torrelavega today. I’ll give you the keys to the church, and also entrust you with the care of the parish during my absence.”

Father Luis was pleased to accept and joked with Rafael Fontaneda,¹² “Let’s go, friend, since today I’m the pastor of Garabandal.”

Obviously this was an honor and privilege for him. Mr. Fontaneda was sure that Father Luis was extremely interested in everything about Garabandal since his first visit, although he had not revealed his opinion. Father had talked about visions in general, of their forms and types, of the importance of psychological studies for a suitable judgment on these phenomena. It was seen that he had a passionate interest in the subject.

Acting as pastor, Father Luis had the tower bells rung for Mass. And though it was a work day, many people came, both strangers and people from the village, “Some twenty people, among them Conchita, Jacinta and Mary Loli received Holy Communion.”¹³

“The Mass that Father celebrated”—Rafael Fontaneda assures us—”was exceptionally said. All those present were impressed.”

Of this there can be no doubt, since there were so many witnesses. To what was this due?

At first, some attributed it to the presence of the visionaries. Later, it was related to the fact that this was going to be Father’s last Mass, and that somehow he had an unusual premonition. Also a minor incident may have contributed to it: when going to pour the cruets, they were found empty. The server ran to a neighboring house to find wine, and soon came back with it; but there was a sus-

12. Son and Nephew of Rafael y don Antiano Fontaneda Ibáñez, owners of a well-known business.

13. From the notebook of material taken down by Father Luis María himself on that day in Garabandal, and which his brother Ramón now possesses.

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picion that it might have been spoiled. Father Luis collected himself a few moments in prayer—his eyes closed, his hands in front of his breast—then he made a sign to serve the wine, and the Mass proceeded with complete serenity and devotion. All this, united to the excitement of the apparitions of the evening before and the waiting for those that were expected that day, could have had a decisive influence upon the collective devotion and fervor in the celebration of the Mass. It is certain that the people, on leaving the church, commented on the silence, the piety, and the spirit of faith with which the celebrant and congregation were united in intimate communion before the altar.¹⁴

There was nothing else new on that morning; but everyone was waiting, since the girls had announced an apparition for slightly after lunch, at 2:00 in the afternoon. At that time all four girls, accompanied by a large crowd, went into the church.

At 2:11 they went into ecstasy. They smiled, especially Jacinta. Mari Cruz gestured timidly.

These are the first words that Father Luis wrote down in his notebook. Then he began putting down what he was able to hear of the conversations.

“The Father”—writes Raphael Fontaneda—was next to the girls, and as he had done on previous occasions, was carefully writing down all that they did and said. But he seemed extremely absorbed in the ecstasy, and those closest to him saw silent tears run down his cheeks.¹⁵ Obviously he felt the presence of something extraordinary.

Father Luis was not the only one taking notes; there were two other spectators who also were taking down notes so that the main points would not be forgotten: a seminarian from Aguilar named Andrés Pardo, and the renowned Dominican priest, Antonio Royo María.

From the notes of one or the other, we know that among other things Conchita said to the vision:

“You know what I’m telling you? That you must give a sign; that . . . only one sign . . . at Lourdes and Fatima you gave a sign . . . Do you want me to show

14. Sánchez-Ventura, page 115. (Spanish edition)

15. On the following day at Reinosa when Father Ramón María Andreu was informed of these details, he could not hide his amazement, since he stated, “He had never seen his brother cry.”

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you all that I brought you? (She presents the rosaries and medals.) You have to kiss them . . . How do I look with the short hair? . . . Are you coming this evening? . . . Oh, how nice! . . . How old are you? . . . Oh . . . Three more than I? Six? Oh, yes! I am twelve . . . six more . . . eighteen. Seven more than Mari Cruz.”

Conchita was not the only one talking. Loli asked the reason why the Angel hadn't come. She insisted then in the same request for a sign:

“Give one right now! You always say that you'll give it, that you'll give . . .”

Jacinta took part in the conversation too, asking among other things whether on that night they should be in pairs again as at other times, each pair in a different house . . .¹⁶

Naturely they talked about the priests that were there that day:

“Two priests came today; one is a Jesuit, and he said Mass very well . . . What is his name? Something like Andrés . . . The Dominican . . . In Santander we saw many Dominicans . . . Father Juan¹⁷ told priests not to come. Why did he do that?”

Father Luis was writing down the incidents of the ecstasy minute by minute:

2:19: Loli makes a brusque gesture to fall forward. 2:24: Conchita cries. (Was it because of what had happened in Santander? She had just mentioned it.) A few seconds later Loli falls and Mari Cruz supports her, holding her up by her back. 2:35: The four fall—we tried to hold them up. They remain with their gaze upward, without blinking. 2:40: They get up and kneel down. 2:43: They go backwards toward the altar of the Virgin of the Rosary; falling down backwards in front of it with their backs on the ground, they begin to pray the rosary . . . 2:47: They get up and continue the rosary on their knees. A hand is waved in front of their eyes, and they don't blink; they blink sometimes by their own efforts, but very seldom. A certain rigidity is noted in their jaws . . . When

16. The one who took down the words of Jacinta and Mari Cruz was a seminarian named Andrés Pardo. He has now been a priest for several years and served on the National Commission on the Liturgy.

17. This seems to refer to the pastor of Carmona, Father Juan González Gómez, a native of Garabandal, who soon adopted a hostile or negative attitude toward the events, and was opposed to priests going up to the village. All those in the village called him Father Juan or simply Juanito.

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beginning the litany there is almost an appearance of losing equilibrium again . . . They finish the prayer with an Our Father to their Guardian Angel, a Salve to the Virgin of Mount Carmel and an Apostles Creed to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The ecstasy ends about 3:00.

However, during this ecstasy something was predicted for the evening. And the thing would not be insignificant, since they were heard to say, “How long is it going to be? Two hours? . . . Where are we going to be kneeling?”

Miracle! Miracle! Miracle! Miracle!

A little after 9:00 in the evening, the second session of that unforgettable day begins. Once again the four girls assemble in the church and before the main altar fall into ecstasy. They breathe deeply. Then they laugh, except for Conchita; she speaks, “Yes, as you wish, as you command . . . We don’t care what direction we go. As you say . . . But we haven’t given any proof, and the people don’t believe.”

Toward 9:40 they get up and leave the church in an ecstatic march. They stop at those locations in the village where ecstasies had taken place, and they pray there . . .

Never had stations been made with such devotion in Garabandal. The people who silently followed the girls during their marches and devotedly accompanied them in their prayers were as if taken up by supernatural emotion. It seemed like the way of the Lord, the way of mercy for that village until then so lost and forgotten. Here the footsteps of God and the Virgin traced their way to people regarded as nothing by the world.

In contrast to this world in a rush to secularization, what a night at Garabandal! And it was not the only one. It appeared destined to consecrate everything—the streets, the corners, the houses, the lonely trails, the quiet fields, the starry skies. In all the places where it could, heaven made contact with the earth; and in all the places it could, the inept human creature raised himself up to the one who watches in all places, near and far across a subtle veil.

“Oh noche que guiate!” In a tremulous silence, under an infinite summer sky, all that could be heard were the prayer at the stations and the rhythmic footsteps of the four girls locking arms while in rapture.

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Toward the end of the march they were heard to say, “On what day will we see you again, so that the people may come? . . . The people say that this is a sickness of ours, and the young boys have thrown stones at us . . . Well, if you are happy with us, it doesn’t matter.”

And when it seemed that everything was going to end, they undertook an ascent to the Pines that all the witnesses have classified as *impressive* not only on account of the appearance of the four girls, but also because of the speed and lightness of their march.

On arriving at the top, Loli, who seemed to be trembling a little, said while talking with the Vision, “Yes, here is where the chapel will be built . . . This is a good spot . . . Should we stay here?”¹⁸ And they knelt down.

They sang a hymn to St. Michael. They kissed something in the air . . . And it was at this moment when Father Luis María Andreu . . . Let us listen to the testimony of Raphael Fontaneda:

At the Pines, Father Luis was watching the girls closely. It appeared that he didn’t wish to lose a single detail of what was taking place.

Suddenly we observed a tremendous excitement sweep over him, and four times—obviously overwhelmed—we heard him shout the word *Miracle!*¹⁹

18. According to information given to me, on the first day that the girls fell into ecstasy at the Pines—a date that I have not been able to identify with certainty—Conchita was heard to say among other things:

“It seems that I was taken up, without knowing where, to this place . . . I know the name of the Angel: St. Michael. The same as my brother; but my brother without the Saint . . . Then, the chapel will be here . . . But it can’t be done here! . . . I don’t know how it is going to be done here.”

Recently I questioned Jacinta:

—“Did the Virgin tell you anything about things that should be done here in the village, as for example chapels, a way of the cross?”

—“From what I remember, the only thing that she asked for explicitly was a chapel dedicated to St. Michael.”

—“Where? In the place where the chapel is now?”

—“No. At the Pines.”

—“When should it be built?”

—“When the Church permits it.”

19. Father Ramón was also astounded when they told him about this since he knew that his brother was known for being a calm person, and he himself could never remember having seen his brother in a state of excitement.

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Not only were the spectators able to observe Father Luis' trance; the girls, coming back to their normal world of the senses, saw him also. This was the first and only time that any other person besides the visionaries came into their field of vision.

At the end of the rosary, the four of us were in ecstasy.

And we began to walk toward the Pines.

*And when we arrived there, Father Luis María said, Miracle!
Miracle!*

And he was looking upwards.

We saw him ourselves.

And in our ecstasies we have never seen anyone except the Virgin.

And we saw Father Luis.

And the Virgin told us that he was seeing her and the Miracle.²⁰

20. This does not refer to a miracle, but to *THE MIRACLE*. The visionaries, especially Conchita, have repeatedly spoken of it. It is something still to be realized, a very important chapter in the history of Garabandal, still sealed in suspense. What she is telling us in this episode about Father Luis María Andreu is that on that night of August 8th, 1961, he was able to view beforehand, by a most singular favor of the Virgin, what neither the visionaries nor anyone else has as yet seen, although it has been foretold for everyone.

What we will see then—when the great day arrives—or who we will see is still a mystery . . . The fact that Fr. Luis was not able to survive after his ecstasy at the Pines should make us remember this passage from Exodus (33: 18-20):

Moses said: Show me Your Glory, I beseech you.

And God answered, I will let My splendor pass in front of you, and I will pronounce My name before you.

I have compassion on whomever I will. And I show pity to whomever I please.

You cannot see My face, for man cannot see Me and live.

How can the fragile and weak human creature contemplate the Supreme Being—Who infinitely surpasses man—without disintegrating?

But the desire remains, and we can only repeat Moses' request and the passionate urge of St. John of the Cross:

Reveal Your presence,

And show me the beauty of Your face.

Regard the suffering of love

That can only be healed by Your presence,

And Your countenance.

God alone can strengthen us to contemplate His marvels.

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Several days later Father Ramón María, who had not been in Garabandal on August 8th, learned from the girls something more about the vision of his brother: “He was kneeling with us, drops of shining perspiration on his forehead; and the Virgin was looking at him . . . She seemed to be saying to him, “Very soon you will be at my side.”

It was about 10:00 at night. Father Luis came back to normal and “The girls began the descent, saying in ecstasy that they were going to the church. They said this as they usually did in their conversation with the Virgin . . . Father Royo Marín advised those present to run to the church since, according to his expression, The girls had wings on their feet.” (Testimony of Raphael Fontaneda)

If the ascent had been rapid, the descent was almost vertiginous. It is not surprising that the girls lost two rosaries from the ones that had been entrusted with them to present to the Virgin to kiss. One of these belonged to a seminarian. Conchita, who was the one to whom he had given it, mentioned it in the church: She was heard to say, “I lost the rosary . . . The one belonging to the student . . . I feel bad about it. Should I go back? . . . Oh . . . Where did I drop it? . . . Up there? . . . Higher than where we saw you? Oh!”

The other belonged to Father Luis. His was not an ordinary rosary but one of those that were beginning to be used at the time, shaped like a ring, with a cross on top and ten small protrusions to count the Hail Marys. It is put on the index finger on which it is revolved with the thumb. On leaving the church, Loli went up to Father, “I’ve lost your rosary, but the Virgin has told me where it is; Let’s go find it.” Julia, the mother of the girl, heard this and objected, “No, not today, since it is already late. Wait until tomorrow, and when there is daylight you can find it.”

Father Luis immediately approved Julia’s sensible decision, and a little while later said to the girl, “Loli, I’m going to leave tonight; when you find the rosary, don’t tell anyone except my brother Ramón. If I don’t come back, he surely will.”

Not many hours later, the hidden prophetic meaning of those words would be revealed. The little rosary was found at the exact location that the Virgin had indicated; but its owner would no longer have a need for it.

The miraculous finale of that unforgettable August 8th, Conchita gives us in her diary:

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The people said that we prayed a Credo at the Pines.

That day was the first in which the Virgin taught us to pray.²¹

And we went down to the village in the same state.

And when we arrived at the church, the Virgin left our view.

As the Virgin had not appeared to Mari Cruz for several days, she stayed in ecstasy with the Virgin.

And she went into the church.

And before the altar of the Virgin of the Rosary and St. Michael the Archangel, she began to pray the Creed with the Virgin very slowly.

And Mari Cruz said that the Virgin said the prayer ahead of her in order to teach her to pray slowly.

After the Credo, she prayed a Salve.

And then she made the sign of the cross very slowly, very well.

And she talked with the Virgin, and said, Oh, how good that the Infant Jesus comes.

How long it has been since He has come.

Why do you wait so long to come to me and come more often to the others?²²

This was heard by several people who were close to her: among them were Fr. Luis María Andreu, a seminarian, and Fr. Royo Marín.

21. From the beginning the Virgin taught the girls to do all things well, especially those things more directly concerned with God; and she instructed them above all in their way of *acting*. It seems that on this day she began a more complete course of instruction on this theme, adding explanations by word and lessons by her example.

If the reader has previously encountered in Chapter 5 many of the things that are now being brought forth, it should be understood that Chapter 5 attempted to present in advance a panoramic view of what the summer of 1961 was like in San Sebastián de Garabandal.

22. Of the four visionaries, Mari Cruz was the one who had the least number of apparitions and the first one from whom they were taken away. Why is this? God alone can answer this question.

And no disfavor to the girl can be concluded from this, since if it is true that there may be human obstacles to the Divine Action, it is also true that God can distribute His gifts to whomever He pleases, without doing wrong to anyone. The inequality can be recalled with which He acted toward the children in the communications at Fatima.

Because of this, could there have formed in the heart of Mari Cruz a form of bitterness, or even envy, to which the many visitors contributed by their preferences for the other girls? At present we do not have information to answer this.

Valuable Testimony

It was natural that those who had been witnesses of the events on that afternoon and evening began commenting among themselves on leaving the church. In this group Father Royo Marín said, “I’m not infallible; but I am a specialist in these questions;²³ and it appears to me that the visions of the girls are true. I can perceive four positive signs which do not leave room for doubt.”

Then Raphael Fontaneda came up and said to him, “Father, if the affair is as important as you say, why don’t you stay here a few more days to study it better?”

Father Marín responded, “It’s not possible for me to stay now; but this thing is so clear that there’s no room for doubt.”

And it should be noted that Father Marín had gone up to Garabandal more skeptical than the others; childlike simplicity is not usually the characteristic of clergy who are cognizant of their diplomas and doctorates.

It was late at night when the troop of travelers that had left Aguilar de Campoo at daybreak began the descent from Garabandal—some on foot, others in the jeep. By deference, Father Luis María was made to go down in the vehicle. During the trip all could observe that he was overflowing with an interior joy, and he manifested this in a thousand ways, at the same time declaring his absolute certainty about the truth of what the visionaries had said.

In Cossío it was necessary to wait for those who were making their way down by foot. Father Luis did not get out of the jeep; he was almost asleep when Father Valentín Marichalar, the parish priest arrived. Then he spoke very clearly to the priest in a serious voice:

Father Valentín, what the girls say is true; but don’t repeat around here what I am telling you now. The Church should use great prudence in these matters.

That night before retiring, Fr. Valentín carefully wrote down in his diary what Father Luis had said to him so seriously at the time of departure.

On the return to Aguilar from Cossío, a different route was chosen than

23. A few years previously he had published an extensive and very documented *Theology of Christian Perfection* which had great success in the latin-speaking countries.

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the one used for arrival, longer but better: through Torrelavega and Reinosa. Continuing the description of Raphael Fontaneda:

In Cossio we departed in the various cars that made up the expedition. Father Luis was asked to go in my brother's car, but he preferred to come with me since he had made the original trip there with me. He sat down in front next to the driver José Salceda; in the back seat were my wife Carmen, my 8 year old daughter Mary Carmen, and myself.

Along the way we were discussing what we had seen that day . . . Father Luis told us that he had exchanged opinions with Father Royo Marin and that they were both in total agreement.

My wife as well as I and José Salceda were all impressed by Father's deep and intense joy, as well as his conviction. He spoke without haste and many times repeated these phrases, "What a gift the Virgin has given me! I can't have the least doubt about the truth of what is happening to the girls."

In Torrelavega we caught up with the jeep that had taken us from Cossio to Garabandal; it was stopped with the people from Aguilar de Campoo. Our driver drove up to see if they needed anything and he and Father Luis talked a few minutes with the passengers.

On beginning the trip again, I said to Father, "Father, why don't you try to sleep a little?" He accepted the suggestion and slept about an hour, until just before arriving in Reinosa.²⁴ Then he woke up and said, "I've slept very well, and I'm in good shape! I feel great. I'm not even tired."

All the rest of us were half asleep, since it was close to 4:00 in the morning. We stopped at a fountain to drink and refresh ourselves. Father Luis then asked the driver if he too had taken something to drink, and José Salceda answered that he had put some water in his eyes, because his eyes had the greater need.²⁵

Again on the road. Father returned to his exclamations, "I feel myself truly full of joy and happiness. What a gift the Virgin has given me. How fortunate to have a mother like her in heaven! We shouldn't have any fear of the super-

24. An important industrial village in the Cantabrian mountains to the southwest of Santander.

25. All the cars that made up the convoy came to a stop around a fountain on the outskirts of Reinosa. The passengers got out to stretch their legs and refresh themselves; only Father Luis remained in his seat with the car door open. Gradually almost all the other people gathered around him and asked him questions . . .

After a while the trip was begun again with Father's car following in last place. On entering the streets of the city, completely deserted at the time, Father began to say these important things that have been transmitted to us by Mr. Fontaneda, and which were the last words of that true son of St. Ignatius.

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natural life. We should learn to act toward the Virgin as the children do. They have given us an example.”²⁶ “I can’t have the least doubt about the truth of their visions . . . Why has the most Holy Virgin chosen us! . . . TO DAY IS THE HAPPIEST DAY OF MY LIFE.”

He stopped speaking with the last sentence. Then I asked him something, and getting no answer, I said to him, “Father, is something wrong?”

“No, nothing. I am sleeping.” And he leaned his head forward, at the same time letting out a soft sound as if clearing his throat.

José Salceda turned his head toward him and seeing his eyes, shouted, “Father is very sick.”

Quickly my wife reached for his wrist to take his pulse, and cried out, Stop! “Stop! There’s no pulse. There is a clinic here. He must be taken there immediately.”

I thought that it was only a case of car sickness, and when the car stopped, I went to open the door while saying to him, “Don’t worry, Father, this is nothing. It will pass right away with a little fresh air.”

But my wife insisted, “He should be taken immediately to the clinic.”

—“Don’t talk foolishly.”

—“Look. He is unconscious!”

We took him to a clinic a few meters away, and the nurse who opened the door for us told us immediately that he was dead. My wife replied that couldn’t be. And that something should be done. The nurse gave him an injection, while José Salceda ran to call a doctor and a priest. The doctor²⁷ came in ten minutes but the only thing he could do was pronounce him dead. The parish priest came right after and administered Extreme Unction.

After the initial shock and anxiety, we began to act. I telephoned his brother Fr. Ramón, who was in Valladolid preaching the Spiritual Exercises to a community of religious. I also called Aguilar de Campoo and a few hours later my brothers and my brother-in-law arrived. Fortunately Fr. Royo Marín²⁸ also arrived in Reinosa and he accompanied and consoled us. And toward the middle of the morning Fr. Ramón María Andreu presented himself.”

26. The girls attitude toward the Virgin appeared now to Father Luis—after his mysterious trance—as normal and proper. On the contrary, the learned of the Bishop’s Commission found in that attitude a strong reason for coming to their negative position. How could this be with such imbecile and puerile conversations!

27. Dr. Vicente González. The hospital to which they brought the Father was the Clinica Montesclaros (without doubt in honor of the Virgin of Montesclaros who has a sanctuary not far from Reinosa and is held in much honor throughout the region).

28. Father Royo Marín had relatives in Reinosa and this explains his stop there, as he certainly was not aware of the unexpected death of Father Luis María.

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We can imagine Father Ramón's feelings on finding the dead body of his 36 year old younger brother. The news of his passing away had come as a brutal blow. How could he have anticipated such a thing? Concerning Father Luis' illnesses, he knew only of an allergy to grass and hay that caused him to take medicine in the springtime. And he had good reason to believe him full of health, since at Oña he played sports frequently and during his vacations left with other companions to hike in the mountains. He was a man who walked very much. Everyone expected him to be around for many more years.

But the designs of God are inscrutable.

Father Ramón María, who had received the telephone call in Valladolid at 6:15 in the morning, arrived in Reinosa at 11:00 a.m. After praying before the body, he gathered the few things that belonged to his brother, among them a notebook that he carried in a pocket of his cassock—notebook No 3—in which he had concisely put down the incidents of the previous day at Garabandal.

Then he was able to converse with Father Royo Marín and from his lips received these statements:

There is no doubt about Garabandal; the least that one could do is take it seriously. The ecstatic marches are a very clear indication to me. They take place in the darkness, and are so swift that we aren't able to follow the girls. The girls don't look where they are going and they don't stumble over anything; I observed merely slight sliding on top of the wet grass. They hold their eyes wide open but those eyes are dead to all the sensorial stimulation that affect all of us.

Your brother was very learned; he must have been a good professor. He analyzed the thing well and we agreed on everything.²⁹

29. Father Royo Marín's opinion about Garabandal was very firm.

Ten days later, on August 18th, he called from Castro Urdiales (a city on the coast near Santander) to a group of people who wanted to go with him and Father Ramón to Santander to report the news of what had happened.

"I'm sick with a temperature of 104, and regret that I can't accompany you. But you go to the Bishop and tell him on my part, without any reservation, that what is happening at San Sebastián de Garabandal is supernatural with all certainty. That at least is my opinion.

And that he has an obligation to go and see what is happening. If he doesn't want to do so, take him if possible . . . There is a grave duty to accept what God does with sufficient clearness."

After those days in August, Father Royo Marín did not find the occasion to return to the village. Did he change his opinion? In the beginning of 1965 he was in Santander, preach-

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To Your Faithful, Lord

If Father Luis María Andreu did not die of illness, since no one knew of any in him, then from what did he die?

Let us listen again to Mr. Fontaneda:

Whenever my wife and I have discussed those scenes that so terribly affected us, we felt a peace and at the same time a deep serenity. And we are only able to come to one answer for the question: From what did Father die? He died of joy!

Even though he passed in a fraction of a second from a completely normal state to the state of a cadaver, a smile remained on his lips . . .

When I returned to Garabandal I heard what the girls said to me about Father, and understanding something of the ecstatic conversations in which they had spoken of him and with him, all the scenes of that sorrowful early morning of August 9th in Reinosa held for me a special meaning, in which the Providence of God and the Love of Mary played an important part.

This is the happiest day of my life, Father Luis had told me. I wanted to ask him the meaning of that sentence, since I would think that for a priest the happiest day would be that of his ordination to the priesthood or the day of his first Mass; but I didn't have the time. Could his words be an announcement of his entrance into eternal happiness?

All this seems clear when we hear Father Royo, Truly the happiest day in one's life is the day of coming into the arms of God.

And for Father Luis María Andreu, that day was August 9, 1961, at 4:20 in the morning, returning from San Sebastián de Garabandal.

After all this, we can understand better the case of the first death of Garabandal. The body of Father Luis could not sustain the truth and the joy of what he had seen.

Have not the saints, the great favorites of God, confessed many times that when seeing or hearing certain things about Him, they would have died of joy or of pain, if the Lord had not come especially to their aid? It is clear that Father Luis, left to his own strength by the mysterious disposition of God, did not last more than a few hours with the truth and the joy of Garabandal. And thus he was its first death. But he died with the

ing at a church in the city. One day, having completed Mass, several people went into the sacristy and asked him, "Father, what do you think about the apparitions?"

"I wasn't able to return to Garabandal. As a consequence, I have no opinion about what happened after my last visit. But concerning what happened while I was there, I have no doubt that it was true."

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sign of a martyr, as he sealed the truth of his testimony with the laying down of his life.³⁰

His last words were very obligating and grave, leaving no solution except to accept them, for they should be received with the respect owed to the testimony of witnesses who give their life as proof of the truth of their words.

He gave his all to a cause and succumbed, but he lost nothing in pouring himself out. As the preface in the ancient liturgy for the Mass of the Dead, states, For to your faithful, O Lord, life is changed, not taken away; and when the place of our earthly sojourn turns into dust, an eternal dwelling awaits us in the heavens.

Beyond the Twilight

In the sight of the unwise,³¹ it seemed that everything was finished for him, and that it would have been much better not to have undertaken an adventure *so unnecessary*, in which none of the many *wise* ecclesiastics would have prematurely involved themselves.

They closed his eyes and read the prayers for the dead; they placed him in a coffin and his relatives and friends wept; they lowered him into the grave and May he rest in peace. On the next day those still alive went back to their work and play, talking from time to time about *poor Father Luis*. The noble Spanish soil fell over the poor coffin³² of a poor religious who

30. Martyr is a word of Greek origin, meaning witness. The early church used it to designate someone who gave public testimony to Christ, or confessed his faith in Christ before the tribunal, even at the cost of his life.

31. *But the souls of the just are in the Hand of God; and the torment of death shall not touch them.*

In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die; and their departure was taken for misery; And their going away from us, for utter destruction; but they are in peace.

And though in the sight of men they suffered torments, their hope is full of immortality . . . God has tried them and found them worthy of Himself.

The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds.

They shall judge nations and rule over people; and their Lord shall reign forever. (Book of Wisdom 3: 1-8)

32. He was buried at Oña behind the ancient roman monastery church that now is a parish church, in the part of the cemetery holding the remains of the Jesuits who died during the years that the theological seminary was there.

Fr. Luis Andreu was born in Bilbao on July 3rd, 1925. He was ordained a priest at Oña

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owned nothing. Soon he would be forgotten and there would only remain a simple wooden cross painted black to indicate to the few visitors the name of someone who could have been or done so much in his life . . .

The twilight of total darkness is only for those who live within earthly limits. For Father Luis was not to remain a prisoner to the darkness. He would pass mysteriously from the nightfall of life to the dawn of a day that would know no sunset.

The trumpet of triumph would sound for the body that had departed on the route to Reinosa. 'Exsultabunt Domino ossa humiliata.' The bones that have been humbled will rejoice in the Lord.

But it will not be necessary to await the final trumpet to have proof of his new life. Here are some notes from his brother Fr. Ramón:

Father Luis' funeral rites were completed in Oña, and after spending a couple of days with my mother who lived in Bilbao, I went to Garabandal on August 14th. On entering the village the four girls came out to greet me, since they had seen me coming up the final stretch of the road.

They told me that on hearing that Father Luis had died, they had cried with sorrow . . . ³³ That the Virgin had also spoken to them about the death of my brother, and that they had said to her, "Why don't you tell us, since you know? The girls said, The Virgin laughed. So much! And they made gestures illustrating "So much!"

Then Loli handed me the ring rosary that she had received from my brother to give to the Virgin to kiss, and which she had later lost. The Virgin told me so clearly where it was that I found it right away by doing no more than lifting up a few stones."

(Burgos) on July 30th, 1955 by the missionary bishop Federico Melendro, who had to leave his diocese in Anking, China when that gigantic country was overrun by Maoistic communism. He sang his first Mass on the following July 31st, the feast of St. Ignatius, at the Ignatian sanctuary in Loyola. He was 6 years a priest, and 36 years of age at the time of his death. 33. Conchita writes it down in her diary like this:

The following day the four of us went to sweep out the church.

And while we were sweeping, Jacinta's mother arrived very upset, and said to us, Father Luis María Andreu has died.

And we didn't believe it since we had seen him the day before.

We left the church half-swept and went to find out more.

They said that when he was about to die his last words were, Today is the happiest day of my life. What a most good mother we have in heaven!

And he died.

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The conversation with the girls was pleasant and extensive. They told him:

That at the third call they felt something inside that they couldn't stop . . . That the Virgin was always the same, although she appeared sometimes with different garments and under a different title . . . That since a few days before August 8th, she had appeared to them individually . . . That she didn't have the same visions with Mari Cruz as with the others . . . That had been because her mother had kept her shut in the house at times.

The pleasure that Father Ramón felt from this first meeting was soon disturbed. He was interviewed sometime later by the French editor of *Conchita's Diary*.

It was August 14th. I had come from burying my brother Luis. On arriving at Garabandal, a boy from Burgos came up to me and said, The children have said during an ecstasy "What a pleasure! Are we going to speak with Father Luis?" I became depressed. And I thought that this had to be a typical case of auto-suggestion. My brother's death had made an impression on the children and the result could be seen! I wanted to leave Garabandal.

—And yet you stayed?

FR. RAMON: Actually I did stay. But it was because those who had accompanied me didn't want to leave . . .

—*What happened then?*

FR. RAMON: I came back near the children in ecstasy, and I heard again the conversation with Father Luis. After a little while I didn't know what to think. I was truly astounded. The girls were repeating in front of me the words of the Vision. And I heard them describe my brother's death and funeral rites. They were giving a number of very precise details about the special rites of a priest's burial. They even knew that some exceptions to the traditional regulations in the dress of the deceased had taken place with Father Luis. For example, a biretta had not been put on my brother's head, and the chalice, which should have been held in his hands, had been replaced by a crucifix. The girls also gave the reasons for these changes.

On another occasion, I heard the girls in ecstasy say that my brother Luis had died before making his profession. They also spoke about me and my vows. They knew the precise date, the exact place where they had been pronounced, the name of a Jesuit who had made them at the same time.

You can understand my amazement and my confusion in the face of this string of rigorously exact details, since I definitely knew the girls could not know these things, at least not through human intelligence."

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It appears that all the things that Father Ramón responded to his French questioner, *as a whole*, did not happen or were not heard on the day of his arrival on August 14th. Part of these things at least must pertain to what happened on the following days.

Concerning the first vision on August 14th,³⁴ which was about 10:00 at night, we have his brief notation:

The girls went outside in an ecstatic march, their heads turned upwards. They went thru the streets of the village, sometimes joined together, sometimes separated. When they joined together at some spot, they broke out in cries of joy.

And so it was for two long periods, from 10:00 until 12:00. The people followed them, praying. But it is hard to walk everywhere with them because they go so fast. And they never stumble, even with the many stones that are there, or with the mud, or with anything. I followed them at times, and at times I waited at some location, because their paths through the village are identical: in all directions and through all the streets. On one of my stops, some very excited people came looking for me at once, because they had heard the girls talking about my brother and saying, "Then we will hear him speak? Oh, what a pleasure! He was very good!"

Many times after this date, the girls felt the presence of Father Luis in ecstasy and heard his voice, holding conversation with him, although not seeing his face. Conchita wrote in her diary:

Several days after the death of Father Luis, the Virgin told us that we were going to speak with him.

On August 15th, the feastday of Our Lady, there were many tourists who had come to amuse themselves and they were causing scandal.

That was the day that the Virgin told us we would talk with Father Luis María Andreu.

But since there was a scandal, he didn't come.

34. "On the 14th of August Father Andreu came another time; he was with the girls almost all day and during the night up till 3 o'clock. Also in the village on that day were Alberto Martín Artajo (*former Minister of Foreign Affairs*), Father Lucio Rodrigo (*a Jesuit professor in Comillas*), and many people." (Father Valentín's notes)

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At 4 in the morning on the next day, at the same time that Father Luis had died, the Virgin appeared to me in my kitchen and said to me: Father will not come today, but he will come tomorrow.³⁵

On the next day between 8:00 or 9:00 the Virgin appeared to us, smiling very much as usual, and said to the four of us, Father Luis will come now and speak to you.

And after awhile he came, and he called us one after the other.

But we didn't see him; we only heard his voice.

It was exactly the same as when he spoke on earth.

And after giving us advice, he also told us something for his brother Father Ramón.

And he taught us words in French, and even to pray in Greek.

He taught us words in German and in English too.

35. From the report of Fr. Ramón:

“Cases of this have been repeated. When the public were very numerous and had a picnic attitude, with drinking and music or worldly songs, the Vision did not take place. And the public was disappointed.

The first time that I observed this was on the evening of August 15th, 1961, the feast of the Assumption. That day all the crowd waited in vain. At the sight of the crowd comporting themselves as if it were a party, on hearing the worldly songs and seeing the state of semi-drunkenness in which some were found, several people from the village—simple people—said to me, “There surely will be nothing today. This happened another time. And here we are glad that nothing occurs when they come this way.”

On another day, Amaliuca, the 11 year old sister of Loli, called me to tell me in secret that Jacinta was seeing the Virgin in her home. I went and found her there in a state of trance . . . I heard what she said to the Virgin, “Why are you going so soon? Oh! Just like on the day of Our Lady . . . They are singing . . .”

I went out on the street and asked, “Is someone singing here?”

Yes, they answered me, “There is a group here that is having a party.”

And there was no vision until that group that had come in a bus departed. This has happened on other occasions. I have been able to ascertain five at least; and on the five days the visitors' impropriety and irreverence were obvious.”

On the 15th day of August a person, who would become one of the most qualified witnesses of what was happening, came up for the first time to Garabandal: he was Doctor Celestino Ortiz Pérez, a pediatrician from Santander. He wrote me:

“I came with my family. I was there from 7 at night until 6 in the morning when I had to leave to be on time for work. I didn't see anything. My family stayed in the village until 9 in the morning, at which time they were picked up. It was during this visit that we got to know Father Ramón María Andreu; on learning that I was a doctor, he showed great concern that I examine the girls.”

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After a while, we didn't hear his voice anymore.

And the Virgin spoke to us and stayed for a moment and left.

It is certain that several times in their ecstasies the girls pronounced words and phrases in languages completely unknown to them. There are trustworthy witnesses of this. In the French edition of *Conchita's Diary*, Fr. Ramón María Andreu's statement is printed:

The girls have certainly spoken more than once in foreign languages. I myself heard one of them recite the Hail Mary in Greek. I have in my possession a letter from Conchita, in which I would like to point out certain parts in which she informed me of what she had learned in French from hearing my brother during an ecstasy.

Some have expressed the opinion that these words and sentences in foreign languages seem to be a game, rather pointless, and even a little too ridiculous to be admitted as proceeding from God. With due respect to their opinions, this observation can be made:

Everything coming from God has its purpose, but not everything from God appears to us immediately perfectly clear as to its aim or final purpose. God always acts toward us in the realm of the unknown. His plans gradually reveal themselves, following His designs and proportional to our acceptance of them, or at least to our not putting obstacles in the way. When the Divine Hand is found in any given reality as a whole, it is wrong to attempt to reject It because all the details do not appear clear.

What does Scripture show to be the style of God? He certainly does not always declare from the beginning all His intentions and plans and give immediate explanations of everything He is going to do? We must learn to trust in Him, and because of those things that we understand, accept others that we do not understand. The ideas of simple human wisdom have no value before God, especially if they are bloated with pride and self-sufficiency.

At times I have asked myself whether these foreign tongues in Garabandal might not be connected with the universal dimension of its mystery. Today less than ever would the Virgin limit her action to local and national boundaries. Around her are heard many languages because she has come for all, for those that are distant as well as those that are near.

I cannot cease being filled with joy that in these visits of the Celestial Mother the words of the Ave Maria, the foremost Marian prayer, were pro-

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nounced in Greek. Was not this the language in which it was originally written? Was it not from this language that the prayer was translated to all the others? And the Greek language, the language of the first ecumenical church, continues to be the symbol of an important part of Christians of today, who ought to join with us in the same communion of faith and love.

The Virgin is coming to us—through Garabandal—in a great ecumenical hour. Perhaps these foreign languages, besides their value as an inexplicable wonder on the lips of young uneducated children, could indicate the mysterious scope of this new and most singular Epiphany of the Virgin.

The connection of the departed Father Luis with the phenomenon of Garabandal did not end in the days of August, and there are many witnesses of the girls to verify this.

But perhaps the most amazing thing was what Conchita wrote Father Ramón in a letter on the second of August, 1964:

On July 18th—the feastday of San Sebastián de Garabandal—I had a locution,³⁶ and in this locution, I was told that on the day after the miracle your brother will be taken out of his tomb, and his body will be found *INCORRUPT*.

In 1976 the rumor was spread that the remains of Fr. Luis had been disinterred together with the many other Jesuits buried at Oña in the years that the Jesuit seminary had been there—it has recently been relocated—and that the caskets had been opened . . .

It was reported that, “All the bodies were decomposed.”

This information was immediately used as a new proof against the authenticity of the apparitions to discourage many Garabandal devotees, and rejoice their enemies.

There was nothing that I could do but wait for time to bring the matter into the open. And after a year, I received this letter:

My friend Mr. Cabré from Barcelona received a letter from a missionary priest in South America in which the priest said that he had recently met Father Alejandro Andreu, the brother of the deceased. And he had asked him what had

36. Locutions are one of the phenomena of mysterious communication between God and the soul that are studied in Mystical Theology.

Through a *locution*, the soul receives interiorly what God wishes to tell it—without words, but with complete clarity and certainty.

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happened to the body of Father Luis. He replied that they had dug up all the bodies and had taken them to Loyola. And that they had opened up every casket with the exception of Father Luis, by order of the Jesuit Provincial. And so they moved the remains of Father Luis without knowing his condition; the others were decomposed.

As can be seen, the first death of Garabandal was permanently connected to the unfolding of its great mystery.

And we must thank the Lord that He has shown us a new assurance of our fundamental Christian belief that there is

a new horizon beyond the last twilight.

CHAPTER 9

Summertime News

IN HIS WORK entitled *The Spectator*, José Ortega y Gasset labeled the summer that inspired his work as lazy. The summer of 1961 at Garabandal could be labeled singular and marvelous. Singular, because never had its like been seen. Marvelous, because the remarkable events that happened every day were not everyday occurrences.

Some have already been mentioned; others can not be written down; but it would be unpardonable not to mention the rest.

The Commission Doctors

Who they were and how they acted during Conchita's stay in Santander has already been stated. Following this, we know that during the summer of 1961 the distinguished Doctors Piñal and Morales condescended to go up to Garabandal for a few hours, to cast a supercilious gaze on the remarkable things that were occurring there.

Eye witnesses inform us that Dr. Morales was in the village on July 11th. The well-known and renowned psychiatrist from Santander interrogated the girls one after the other, and employed all his persuasive art to

make them cease their “madness” of praying at the Calleja. In his efforts to convince, it is not known whether he resorted to the same arguments that Dr. Piñal had employed against Conchita: many promises, if she would give up once and for all this stupidity; and threats of dire consequences, if she continued with her incredible story.

Actually Dr. Morales believed he had fully succeeded in his plans, since the girls, after his indoctrination, finished with an attitude of admirable docility: “Si, Señor, si; we will do what you say.”

Following this, Dr. Morales, self-satisfied and sure of himself, aware of his importance and high position, went to the Calleja to put an end to this affair publicly; and facing numerous persons there waiting for the time of the ecstasy, he pontificated:

“You are wasting your time. The girls will not come here today. This farce is ended. I, Dr. Morales, assure you of this. You can leave.”

And turning around, he began to descend with the person who was accompanying him.

They had not gone far, when they heard a noise and were able to see the girls who were responding to the call of the Virgin in a swift run.

It could be seen that there was a force acting upon the girls which was not yielding to the desires or decisions of Dr. Morales.¹

Approximately on this date—I cannot give the date exactly—occurred the scene caught on a photograph taken at the beginning of the events: Dr. Piñal, at the side of Mari Loli in ecstasy, putting drops in her eyes . . . Why? According to the reports, he did this not so much to see the girl’s reaction—an action which would have been justified, since that should have been his reason for being there: to observe and investigate—as to see if he could succeed in bringing her out of the trance, showing everyone by this that there was nothing genuine about the phenomena.

1. “On Tuesday, the 11th, Dr. Morales and Dr. Piñal came. I do not know the professional opinion of these doctors; what I do know is that Dr. Morales said that on Tuesday nothing would happen, since if the girls had been influenced, he would un-influence them . . .

When the girls went up to the Cuadro, he was in their path; the girls passed without paying attention to him, and then they were in ecstasy about 60 minutes.

On the following day, they commented: “Didn’t the Carmelite say that we wouldn’t see the Angel anymore?” (Dr. Morales had said that he was a Carmelite.)”

(Fr. Valentín’s notes.)

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But the girl remained entirely absorbed in herself, completely oblivious to him, without the slightest blinking, without her senses noticing the drops with which Dr. Piñal was bothering her.

Obviously the ecstasies did not depend on human desires or designs. They began when some mysterious Being decided they would begin, and they ended when the same Being ended them. Just as Dr. Piñal was unsuccessful on this occasion in attempting to end the ecstasy, equally unsuccessful were other doctors on other occasions in attempting to bring them on. Man can do many things; but there are many more that are beyond his abilities. And it is wise to be able to recognize the difference.

The mentality of the Bishop's Commission cannot pass unnoticed by the reader. The few times that they *bothered* to go to the place of the events, they seemed to go mainly to search for means to put an end to these things, and to discover proofs that they could use for their negative attitude of rejection.²

But not all came with the same mentality.

The serious and impartial investigations, that those who had the duty did not want to make, were made by others who came with an open mind. In those days of August another doctor from Santander, who dedicated himself conscientiously to observing and studying the events, came up to Garabandal for the first time. His name was Celestino Ortiz Pérez; his specialty was pediatrics, in which he had earned a broad reputation.

He compiled a meticulous and elaborate report, containing his observations from many visits to Garabandal between the 15th of August, 1961 and the 25th of November, 1962.

He carefully studied the personal and familial predispositions of the children, their conduct and attitude before and during the events, their character, their intellectual level, how they slept, their reflexes, the ecstatic phenomena. After gathering all this information in his investigation, he

2. Here is another example of their manner of acting. A reliable witness assured me of the accuracy of this confidential remark from Father Valentín:

“I went to Santander on the afternoon of August 15th. I was with the Commission and with Pajares, (Father Francisco Pajares, the old secretary of the bishop) whom I found clear-headed as always; not like Piñal, who appears to be super-endowed. He gave me some advice and since it seemed to me that he was going beyond his position, I answered that I would only do what the bishop told me. Then he spoke about the girls in terms that I didn't like, That they lied, that when they put themselves in a trance, they put themselves like . . .”

reviewed the possible natural explanations: hysteria, hypnotism, catalepsy, pediatric psychiatric diseases; and he came to these conclusions:

1. The four girls, from the point of view of pediatric psychiatry, have always been and still are perfectly normal.
2. The ecstasies—in which we have seen these young girls so often—cannot be included in any of the categories of physiological or psychological pathology that are now known.
3. Considering the length of time that the phenomena occurred, if they had any kind of pathological nature, its signs would have easily been discovered.
4. I cannot find any explanation either in normal or pathological pediatric psychology that could be held out as a natural explanation for these phenomena which, according to the knowledge that we have at our disposition, are beyond natural reality.”³

Unplanned Vigils

The *vigils*,⁴ so well-known to the early Christians and presently almost buried in ecclesiastical use, were to come back to life in Garabandal in a remarkable way.

3. Many other competent doctors from Spain and foreign lands have had the same feeling as Dr. Ortiz Pérez. We remember Dr. Alexandro Gasca because he spoke out very openly. (Dr. Gasca, who later held an important post in the health department of Saragossa, was at the time of the apparitions the doctor for the Nestle factory in Santander and provincial medical inspector of the Department of Health.) Also there were Doctors Sanjuán and Puncernau (Barcelona), and Dr. Apostolides, the chief of staff of the Pediatrics Service in the Central Hospital of Troyes (France).

Also it is known that Dr. Jiménez Díaz (now departed), a professor emeritus of medicine at the Clinica de la Concepcion (Madrid), in front of some colleagues and students who were joking one day about the phenomena of Garabandal on the 8th of October, 1961, expressed his opinion that the least that could be done in the face of such phenomena was to take them seriously, because they dealt with a serious matter . . .

With regard to the medical professionals, I have remembered many times the statement of Jacinta, the little girl from Fatima, during the days of her sickness and martyrdom in a Lisbon hospital, “The doctors don’t succeed better and more often since they have little love for God.”

Certainly this can be said about others besides doctors, and it does not apply to all doctors.

4. *Vigils* consist in passing *while watching* the night or part of the night preceding some important Christian solemn feast, as a preparation for it. The faithful, gathered in a holy

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And here they were very active, since the girls in ecstasy were not accustomed to remain for any length of time in one location, but went from one site to the next within the village and its surroundings.

Especially beautiful among these *vigils* was the one that preceded the Assumption of the Virgin—August 15th—during that year of grace in 1961. On the previous day, August 14th, Monday, Father Ramón María Andreu had come to the village, having buried his brother. In the afternoon, he spoke for a long time with the visionaries, and later was a witness of the ecstasy that we are describing, and which lasted from ten p.m. to midnight. A good time to go to bed! But neither the girls nor their followers had time to get into bed.

At 2:45 in the morning—as Father’s notes—a new ecstatic march of the girls began, as a *vigil* for the Virgin . . .

It lasted until 5 a.m. Conchita, Loli, and Jacinta were involved, since Mari Cruz had not been called by the Virgin, and had gone to sleep.

The march began on leaving Conchita’s house at 3 o’clock, with the girls showing signs of great joy and asking the Virgin to remain until six in the morning. Actually, it lasted almost two and a half hours. And all this time they were marching, except for the short periods when they stopped at the door of Mari Cruz’ house and at the church.

The rhythm of the march was not very rapid; but it was consistent. They marched forward; only occasionally did they march backwards.

And the general tone of this whole trance was one of *joy*. With this joy they prayed the rosaries, they sang many of the Hail Marys, they smiled and laughed, they conversed.

It is very difficult to understand what they are saying, since they are walking. One time they were heard to say: “What a pleasure! But you must tell us where Mari Cruz’ house is, since we don’t see.”

Then they began going back and forth to Mari Cruz’ house, singing verses and other songs. Among the various verses sung by the girls, we were able to clearly hear this stanza:

*Get up, Mari Cruz,
since the good Virgin comes
with a bouquet of flowers
for her little girl.*

place, spend the time in watching, reading from the bible, religious instructions, hymns, prayers, etc..

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From the other poems, we were only able to hear phrases and loose words such as,

*Oh, Mari Cruz!, you don't get up,
even when you are serenaded . . .
Gather up the lilies . . .*⁵

They also sang the Christmas hymn *Noche de paz*, and several *mañanitas*.⁶ Every time that they sang a verse, they laughed and said, "How fast we learned it!"

At one time, the three separated from each other, and a little later they returned to meet together in front of Mari Cruz' home. At a quarter after four, they finally said goodbye to her, "Till tomorrow!"

They went to the church; and asked the Virgin to continue like this until six o'clock, until eight, until nine . . .

Everything ended at 5:00 in the early morning.

They explained to me later, "We went as if in the air, as if lying down perhaps. Like in another world! It was like day, with the sun." (They had to be struck by the night that surrounded them on coming back to themselves.)

When it was over, their pulses were normal and they were fresh, without perspiration; the rest of us were more than exhausted. They were not fatigued, in good humor, and hungry.

The short resume of this exceptional *vigil* brings up certain thoughts. "The general tone was *joy*," Father Andreu tells us, and I ask myself, could it have been otherwise? Did not the nature of the feast that was about to be celebrated require this? The entire liturgy of the Assumption

5. Another verse can be found in Chapter 5.

These verses and other similar ones were sung by the girls on several occasions. In a letter on February 6th, 1970, the pastor from Barro, Father José Ramón García de la Riva wrote me:

"One day I was at Garabandal (He did not go there until August 22nd) and Loli and Jacinta had an ecstasy, chanting verses at the door of Mari Cruz, who was in bed on her mother's orders."

The feastday of the Assumption was uniquely distinguished with something extraordinary too. The same priest wrote me in that letter:

"Actually something extraordinary always happened on the days that we can call Marian." (Saturdays and feasts of the Virgin like the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Nativity of Mary, the Most Holy Name of Mary, etc.)

6. Short musical compositions.

I think by *los Mañanitas* Fr. Ramon is referring to a Spanish song that starts:
These are the *mañanitas*
sung by King David . . .

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is a repeated invitation to joy for us, her children on the earth, as the Collect from the Mass of the vigil brings out:

We pray that we who enjoy her protection, may take part in the joyful celebration of her feast.

Not only to us, but to all creation should this celestial joy radiate. The first words of the Divine Office on this feast of the Virgin indicate this:

Mary has been taken up into heaven! The angels rejoice and with songs of praise, bless the Lord.

And there is a tremendous reason for this, since she who began without stain, has finished in glorious victory.

Undoubtedly what the girls were celebrating on the dark streets of Garabandal was only a poor imitation of the prayers of the angels and blessed in heaven in honor of God's greatest creation.

The girls and those accompanying them on foot at these untimely hours petitioned and praised God through Mary. They were performing a good deed both for themselves and for many other Christians then asleep, or engaged in worse things. They were uniting themselves mysteriously to consecrated souls in many monasteries and convents who in those same early hours were beginning a new day with the solemn prayer of Matens and Lauds of that feastday.⁷

The Matens and Lauds of the girls at Garabandal were very different, unplanned and unscheduled, and not according to a fixed liturgical rite. But does that mean that they were less efficacious for the glory of God and the welfare of the Church? Someday we will know.

The *vigil* of the Assumption was not the only one during those days. On the following Saturday, August 19th, the first Marian day following the feast, there was another one which was longer still, lasting almost the whole night, from Saturday until Sunday. Conchita mentions it in her diary like this:

As she had said, she came.

And she told us the same thing as on the previous day: "Recite the rosary."

7. Matens and Lauds are two important parts in the daily prayer of the Divine Office. Matens starts this prayer according to its own latin designation *Ad Matutinum*, having as its proper time the early hours of the day—the early morning. Formerly in the ancient monasteries it was always recited at that time. Lauds then followed.

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And we began the rosary.

And that night we went to the places where the Virgin had appeared to us at the beginning.

And after our ecstasy the people said that we had gone up to the Pines, and that we had gone from pine to pine on our knees, praying . . .

And during that ecstasy, while we were seeing the Virgin, Mari Cruz, who had seen an apparition earlier, was in bed.

And we told the Virgin that she should tell us a song to sing to Mari Cruz.

We would compose some words, and the Virgin would aid us with others.

The songs were the following:

First she wrote the stanza already mentioned about the *Bouquet of Flowers*. Then follows:

*Mari Cruz, Mari Cruz!
How sad you make us!
Pray hard to the Virgin,
So that she will return to you.*

*Mari Cruz, Mari Cruz!
Do you smell the lilies?
The Virgin has brought them for you,
So that you will be better.*

The Virgin stayed with us from nine at night until six in the morning.⁸

*And that night we played Los Tios⁹ with the Virgin.
Two of us hid, and the other one searched for us.*

8. After such *vigils* the girls should have been exhausted, worn out . . . But no! The testimony about this is unanimous, and has been repeated many times.

When the girls lost sleep because of the apparitions, they did not suffer from any fatigue, and were able to begin the new day as if nothing happened, without the necessity of recuperating the hours missing from their rest.

Taking into account that some or much of this occurred on so many nights during many months, can we not speak of a *miracle*?

9. *Los tios*—similar to the game of hide and seek.

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Another incredible surprise in the history of Garabandal! The Virgin joins in games with the young village girls.

“This cannot be,” many must exclaim. This is ridiculous, unbelievable, unacceptable. A good proof that neither the apparitions nor the ecstasies contain anything supernatural!

Well, I confess that I cannot understand the reason for such games; but there is nothing to stop me from accepting them if I have proof that they actually took place, and that the Virgin took part in them. Can I pretend to easily understand all the components of God’s actions on the world and on souls? It is sufficient to have signs to indicate that these actions are from Him. And then I can be sure that all those things I do not understand obey a mysterious Divine Plan and occupy a place in the disposition of Providence.

My ways, says the Lord, are not your ways; and My thoughts are not your thoughts. (Is. 55: 8)

Besides, have there not been other episodes of interplay from on high and mysterious games with men?

There is an inspired text dating back thousands of years that the Church continually places on the lips of the Virgin:

I was set up from eternity, and of old,
Before the earth was made . . .
When He prepared the heavens, I was present.
When with a certain law and compass, He enclosed the depths;
When He established the sky above,
And poised the fountains of waters;
When He encompassed the sea with its bounds,
And set a law to the waters
That they should not pass their limits;
When He balanced the foundations of the earth;
I was with Him forming all things;
And was delighted every day,
Playing before Him at all times,
Playing in the world;
And my delights were to be with the children of men.

Proverbs 8: 23-31

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There are games that take place between God and the Mother of God and mankind. The important thing is to discover the hidden meaning of these games. This is certain: if God and the Virgin *play*, it is not for entertainment alone. They seek always to communicate and instruct. Nevertheless, we do not understand everything, nor do we understand it immediately. The text of Scripture has its reason for stating, after having spoken of these mysterious games in the presence of God:

Now therefore, children, hear me.
Blessed are they that keep my way.
Hear instruction and be wise.
And refuse it not.
Blessed is the man that hears me,
And that watches daily at my gates,
And waits at the post of my doors.
He that shall find Me, shall find life,
And shall have salvation from the Lord.
But he that shall sin against Me, shall hurt his own soul.
All that hate Me, love death.

(Proverbs 8: 32-36)

O Admirabile Commercium

There is a liturgical antiphon from the Christmas season that begins with these latin words and speaks of the marvelous interchange or commerce established between God and mankind through the Word Incarnate. It seems that an extraordinary ramification of this commerce or interchange took place in Garabandal. It was as if through the Virgin (and sometimes through the Archangel St. Michael) direct conversation took part between heaven and earth.

Many examples of this have already been mentioned, but we will find many more occurring during the days in August that we are still recounting.

Wednesday, August 16th, liturgically the feast of St. Joachim, the father of the Blessed Virgin, and popularly the feast of St. Roche, was a day of direct communication between the departed Father Luis María Andreu and the girls. What Conchita wrote down briefly in her diary about this

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conversation has already been mentioned; but we have much more information at our disposal from the writings of Father Ramón.

He places the ecstasies of the girls at 11 o'clock in the morning, while Conchita speaks of these ecstasies occurring at eight or nine at night. Are two different ecstasies being described here or could it be that the girl, who wrote down these things many months later, was mistaken as to the time?¹⁰ Father Andreu wrote down:

I was going to say Mass; I had put on the amice when they called me: "Hurry, Father, hurry. The girls are coming in ecstasy."

Father put off the Mass until later and went to observe the phenomena. The girls made their way through the village for a while, and then they marched toward the church. Father must have been surprised that there were only three—Jacinta, Loli and Conchita—and he took advantage of the routes they were taking to enter into Mari Cruz' house to see what had happened. The girl told him, "I am hurt that the Virgin hasn't called me." However, she joined Father and they went to the church looking for the three girls in ecstasy. They found them sprawled on the ground in a group of singular beauty.

Father took out his notebook and began to write down what he was able to hear of the mysterious dialogue:

Oh what a voice! I don't know that voice.

Up to this time the girls in their ecstasies were only accustomed to the voice of the Virgin, and to a lesser degree that of St. Michael.

"Tell me. Who are you?" She repeats this question anxiously, "Oh, you are Andreu!"

Loli: Yes, it is your voice; but now it is softer . . . We want to see you. Why aren't we seeing you? Hold out your hand . . . Tell us what you saw at the Pines when you said: "Miracle! Miracle! Miracle! Miracle!" On the branch of the center tree? . . . I will go see and pick a pine cone."¹¹

10. I am inclined to think that these were two different ecstasies, since Mari Cruz is missing in the one that Father Andreu talks about. Furthermore, Conchita says this about her ecstasy: "The Virgin appeared to us smiling very much and said to the four . . ."

11. In this transcription of the conversation, the periods correspond to the pauses that the girls made, which were obviously due to their listening at the time to the person with whom they were speaking.

Undoubtedly the mysterious voice must have spoken of what he had seen and of the exact location where he saw it.

“How happy you must be now!¹² We know the last words that you said: that it was the happiest day of your life.” (A long silence took place, during which they seemed to listen carefully.) “There is already a St. Luis. St. Luis Gonzaga. Oh! That’s it. St. Luis Andreu . . . I thought that heaven was flat, like the laundry when it is spread out.”¹³

A remark like this could be expected from a child living in a mountain village who would associate daily living with the monotony and the everyday fatigue of her way of life, continually climbing up and down steep hills.

“Do you cut your hair? Then you must have very long hair. Do you eat? Then you must be very thin!¹⁴ Oh, I understand!”

(Questions concerning the mysterious state of the departed; the final exclamation shows that he gave them certain explanations with which they seem to have been satisfied.)

“Your brother is here? . . . But he is saying Mass, since the bell had rung . . . He is with us? . . . Next to whom? . . . We will ask him later to see if that’s right.”

During the trances the girls did not see anything that was outside of the apparition. Because of this, they did not see Father Ramón, whom they thought was celebrating Mass at the time. While talking about him, they learned that he was there with them, and right next to one of them. When the ecstasy ended, the Father asked them which one was next to him, and the three answered together very happily, “Loli”. They were well informed.

Loli: “I found the rosary where the Virgin told me, and I gave it to your brother . . . Yesterday (Feast of the Assumption) he said a high Mass, and he preached first to the men, then to the women, and then to the children, and he looked at us . . . Your brother said “Dominus Vobiscum” and I thought that it

12. A clear allusion to the state of blessedness in which the souls of the just enter prior to the resurrection of the body.

13. The point of this comparison can be understood, taking into account that the laundry in the villages, especially the sheets, was laid out in the sun on top of the grass so it could dry and whiten better.

14. The girls at Garabandal with their lack of education could not imagine the life of the next world to be any different than this one.

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was Dominus Vobisquam, as Fr. Valentín says . . . Oh! You! How well you say it! . . . Your brother has taught us a song.”

And Loli began to sing:

*“When I see myself with a headdress
and shoes without heels!
What goes on in the cloister . . .*

Oh! How does it continue? . . . The part about the heart?”

The mysterious voice must have sung what the girl had forgotten, and she cried out in surprise:

“Oh! You know it too!

Everyone said that on the day you said the Mass here, that you said it very well. Your brother also says it very well.¹⁵

Conchita: We told a secret to your brother; First of all he said it was for the men, but then he told it to Carmen. I was so embarrassed!¹⁶

Your brother has told us that if you want to take him away, that you could take him away, as you . . .”

The mysterious voice must have explained to them that it was not like that.

“Ah! So that he can be with us . . . He’s going to come three weeks as the pastor. Very good!

Tell us something for your brother . . . Come, repeat it, so that we don’t forget . . . Now I’m going to repeat it to you . . . That he should make sacrifices, that he should make sacrifices.¹⁷

When will you return? . . . Monday? . . . Why not Thursday?¹⁸ . . . Until Monday is going to seem a year to us.

15. It is seen how important it is before God and man that all the functions of the priestly ministry have the greatest devotion and exactness.

16. This refers, according to Father Ramón, to the time he asked the girls what they would want him to give them. The girls, after much discussion about what they should ask for, indicated to him that they would like a sewing set very much . . . “But no! No! Don’t give us one, since they are very expensive. They cost at least 56 pesetas.”

To give the girls their wish, Father Ramón mentioned the matter to Carmen Cavestany.

17. After the ecstasies, the girls questioned Fr. Ramón—to whom they revealed his brother’s message—about what it was to “make sacrifices”. He explained it to them, and then they replied candidly, “Why should one do something one doesn’t like?”

This question should be asked also, although not so candidly, of today’s prophets of non-mortification as a form or style of the new spirituality . . .

Garabandal insists, as something of extreme importance, upon the ascetic and penitential way of life . . . Probably because of this, it has so many enemies. But this is very clear: without the way of penance, it is not possible to live the Gospel.

18. This conversation took place on Wednesday, August 16th. Naturally—so as not to have to wait—the girls wanted to recommence the ecstasies on the next day, which was Thursday.

This long conversation—of which we have only noted some items of special interest—was regarded by Father Royo Marín as a *wonder*. During it, the visionaries *fell* and got up three times. And they concluded everything by praying a Station to the Blessed Sacrament; three of the six Hail Marys were prayed by the girls in the normal fashion, and the other three according to the formula used by the Andreu brothers.¹⁹

A Voice Coming Down From the Mountains

Conchita's diary terminates her brief summary of the mysterious conversation on August 16th with the dead Father Andreu in these words:

On that day the Virgin told us that on the following day we would hear a voice.

*But that we shouldn't be afraid, and that we should follow the voice.*²⁰

This seems to indicate that something unusual is going to happen, something that is going to bring one more new element in this succession of singular phenomena.

On the next day and at the same time as on the previous day, (that is, at nightfall) the Most Holy Virgin appeared to the four of us.

And for several minutes she was smiling very much.

And she didn't say anything to us.

But apart from this, it becomes increasingly clear that Garabandal has shown a definite predilection for Thursday, certainly because among all the days of the week, this is the day dedicated to the Holy Eucharist.

In October of 1975 Jacinta confirmed for me the conversation between the girls and the departed Fr. Andreu.

They certainly spoke with him, although they did not see him; his voice was unmistakable.

“Days before talking with him, the Virgin told us that we would hear a voice; that we should not be afraid, and should follow it. I think that this referred to the dead Fr. Andreu . . . The strange voice that we heard days later, and which frightened us so much, called us by our names . . .”

Jacinta knows nothing about what Conchita has stated about the exhumation of Fr. Luis' remains on the day following the Miracle.

19. See Chapter V.

20. This announcement must have occurred during a brief conversation on August 15th, since the hearing of the voice in a trance occurred at nine or ten on the night of August 16th.

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After a few minutes, darkness came upon us, and we heard a voice call us.

Then Mari Cruz said, Tell us who you are; if you don't, we will go home.

While we were hearing the voice, it was very dark.

And we didn't see the Virgin.

But afterwards she came.

And it became very light.

And she said to us, Don't be afraid.

And she spoke to us for awhile.

And that night was the first night that she kissed us, one by one.

And then she left.²¹

This raises many questions. From where and from whom does the voice come? What is the reason for it? What purpose does it have? What relation exists between the voice and the Virgin's kisses to the frightened children? Is there some connection with the voice and the announcement made by Conchita on her return from Santander?

I admit that I am not able to give any answers to these questions. Even today this voice remains one of the enigmas of Garabandal.

Because it caused fear in the girls and also because of the darkness that surrounded them, together with the disappearance of the Virgin from view, one might say that it was a voice of the evil one, the voice of the world of darkness, the powers of evil, rabidly furious before this *admirabile commercium* that was being established between the heavens and the earth. But the words of the Virgin that Conchita relates in her diary, that we should not be afraid, and that we should follow the voice, seem to rule out this interpretation. Could it be that the girl is somewhat confused and is not able to express clearly such an obscure matter? Someday—we hope—a clarification of this mystery will come forth.

But we do have something very clear and also very marvelous from that memorable day: the kisses of the Mother that the Apparition begins to lavish on her children.

21. It is no surprise that the girl remembers the exact beginning of the marvelous gift of Our Lady's kiss . . . After that time the spectators knew when the end of the ecstasy would take place—when the visionaries held their faces in an attitude of giving and receiving kisses, which customarily preceded or followed a slow and very pious sign of the cross.

Summertime News

That day was not the only one on which the strange voice was heard.

At that time a person, who was to soon become one of the best witnesses of what was taking place at Garabandal, came up to the village for the first time. Her name was María Herrero Garralda, daughter of the Marquese de Aledo, recently married to Enrique Gallardo Rodríguez-Acosta. Highly educated, good-hearted and deeply religious, she soon gained the confidence of the girls and meditated on the profound scope of the events.

For some time she was content to keep it to herself, revolving in her mind and piously pondering over what she had seen and heard. But later, when the anti-Garabandal storm began gathering due to the prelates at the Santander chancery, she wrote down in French for the Holy Office in Rome, a memorandum of what she herself had witnessed. She did this on the advice of a Belgian priest, Father Laffineur,²² and to him she directed the prologue:

I present this little work. Now that I reread it, it seems very poor, and the reason for this is that it is almost impossible to put in words the feelings of the soul.

I am only mentioning here some of the many—at least thirty—apparitions at which I participated at San Sebastián de Garabandal, beginning on the 17th of August, 1961. I will try to give an idea of those events, although it is impossible to express everything that I have seen and heard. I wish to start this work with something that Loli expressed to me on October 7th, 1962. If it could be known how she loves us, we would have no other solution but to love her very much too.

It was 2 o'clock in the afternoon when I came for the first time to San Sebastián de Garabandal. Accompanied by my sister I went into the bar or tavern belonging to Loli's father, Ceferino. The place was vacant since the apparitions ordinarily took place much later, toward nightfall. (I only know of two or three cases in which they occurred in the afternoon.)

We asked to eat, and Loli herself began serving us. This had to be the first time that she did this since she asked me to tell her about the knife and fork. At the time the little children in those families ate from the utensils without using silverware.

We had just finished eating when Loli came running in from outside, very short of breath, and said to her father, "Papa, come right now since Jacinta is having an apparition."

We all ran toward the little square in the center of the village. There under the bright hot sun was Jacinta, walking very slowly, with her big doll in her

22. Died on Saturday, November 28th, 1970, in France, where he had lived and worked for many years. He was a main figure in the European Garabandal movement, signing many of his writings and letters with the pen name *Doctor Bonance*.

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hand, her head turned backwards, and that sublime expression on her face that cannot be described. Her family was following her in an attitude of great reverence. María, her mother, at one time wanted to take the doll from her hands; but Jacinta, absorbed in the vision, prevented her with a firm and brusque motion. Seconds later we saw the girl lift up her doll toward the vision, raising herself up as much as she could on the tips of her toes—aided by her two companions, Loli and Conchita, who held her up. Loli, who was as if overcome with joy on seeing her friend in a trance, took her by the arm and at that moment—with the rapidity of lightning—fell into ecstasy herself.

The two children, overwhelmed with joy, began to walk through the village, leaning against each other . . . It was then that I heard for the first time that laugh of Loli in ecstasy that has always had such an effect on me. It was a laugh of glory, full of joy; but at the same time, quiet, reverent, mystical. It had nothing in common with this world, nor did it have the feeling of light-hearted laughter; it was as if permeated with the things of heaven.

The two listened and responded to the vision with a speech full of mystery, hardly perceptible.

We were running behind them when, near to the house that now belongs to Mercedes Salisachs, their expressions changed completely. And they began to shout out in a terrified voice, showing on their faces the greatest anxiety and fear. Who are you? Tell us. Who are you? They were like this for a few minutes that seemed interminable.

It was at that time that María, Jacinta's mother, told me confidentially, Yesterday they heard that strange voice for the first time. And they were very afraid, even though the Virgin had warned them, saying that they shouldn't be afraid. It seems that the voice sounds from afar, as if it comes down from the mountains. It's like a hiss or a roar that cries, "Come . . . Come . . . Come . . ."

Once more I ask myself what might be the hidden meaning of that voice, so powerful and unsettling.

It would not be surprising if it were the devil trying to disturb the children. In the life of many saints there are abundant proofs of what he is capable of doing—with all types of sensible means—to frighten and block the road of those who are on the right way toward God. However I have already indicated what seems to oppose such an interpretation.

Could it then be understood that such a voice might be coming from the Most High? On a few occasions, Scripture has exalted the creative power and force of the voice of Yahveh, the Lord, especially in Psalm 28:

*The Voice of the Lord is in power;
The Voice of the Lord in magnificence.*

Summertime News

The Voice of the Lord shatters the cedars . . .
The Voice of the Lord brings forth flames of fire.
The Voice of the Lord shakes the desert . . .

But if the strange voice that came down from the mountains onto Garabandal proceeded from the Most High, why did it disturb the girls this way, without declaring who it was? Does it have a secret purpose which only later will be revealed?

In this case, perhaps we can attribute to this voice a certain apocalyptic²³ sign, like the blast of trumpets in the 8th chapter of this unexplained book when the action of heaven will accelerate its pace and deploy itself against the power of the anti-Christ of this world and of the abyss. And still more could the voice be related to that triple Woe, woe, woe, which will be poured out upon a mankind so wrapped up in the things of the world.²⁴

Is Garabandal coming as a sign to call attention to the unforeseen things which must shortly come to pass? (Apocalypse 1: 1)

Back Again Close to the Mother

The witness María Herrero de Gallardo continues her description about what she saw on Thursday, August 17th, the first day of her stay in Garabandal:

After several very rapid tours through the village—at times they changed directions so quickly that several times I bumped into them—the girls made their way toward the church. There in front of the open door, they fell on their knees and prayed . . .

Then Jacinta laughed and said to the vision that she didn't dare jump over the doorstep in order to go into the church. The vision must have insisted. And then very smoothly, without any contraction of her body—just the way she was,

23. *Apocalypse*—Revelation—is the name of the last book of Sacred Scripture. It is extremely difficult to interpret. By means of figures, visions, and symbols, it gives the mysterious course of the work of Christ on earth and His final triumph in order to strengthen us for tribulation with the security that we are not alone, and that the Hand of God holds a firm grip on the progression of events.

24. And I beheld, and heard the voice of an eagle flying through the midst of heaven, shouting: Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth: because of the remaining voices of the three angels who have yet to sound their trumpets. (Apocalypse 8: 13)

St. Jerome's latin vulgate gives these statements of the eagle like this, Vae, vae, vae!

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with her hands joined on her chest and kneeling—she leaped²⁵ inside, hurdling over the obstacle of the doorsill to the amazement of all those present. She smiled at the vision.

As if playing, the two girls made their way toward the altar; and there on the altar rail continued their celestial game, scandalizing some.

All this was brought to the Bishop of Santander, from whence came the formal prohibition preventing the girls from entering the church in ecstasy; and for this reason, it was closed during the trances.

I can testify that the beauty of their attitudes during this play was truly captivating. Later they fell down very slowly, very smoothly, in front of the tabernacle: Jacinta on one side with her dress covering her legs very properly, her hands crossed on her chest; Loli, similarly, but leaning her head against Jacinta's knees. During this episode, certainly very moving—there were priest witnesses who regarded it with great respect—they carried on a very long and intimate conversation. This could hardly be heard, but it gave me the impression of being like the conversation of children with their mother, whom they tell all about their affairs and what is happening.”

We know through this witness that the ecstasies did not end here, but that the girls then continued their unusual and mysterious *game* in the choir loft, frightening many of the spectators when they glided along on the rails of the balcony and moved toward the edge in obvious risk of falling and killing themselves.

Sometimes they gave the impression of being about to fly. They told me later that the Most Holy Virgin had told them then that they should follow her without fear, but they didn't dare. If we'd have obeyed, we'd have flown.

After a long time they set out, still in ecstasy, toward the village square. Next to the house of Fania they fell another time on the ground, laying full length. Loli was the first to get up and knelt down in prayer with a magnificent expression and gleaming eyes. She recited the *Salve Regina* in a touching way with tears streaming from her eyes.²⁶ And she was like this at the time that she contemplated the HOLY FAMILY as if in a picture.

A priest at my side called my attention to the fact that the trance had already lasted two hours and 25 minutes. At this time a young couple came with a 3 year

25. The word *leaped* is used to describe the marvelous, instantaneous, inexplicable and very beautiful passage over the doorway that left the observers stunned with wonder.

26. Loli, truly transfigured, was on her knees like this for a while imploring, “*Mercy*”. Then she recited an act of contribution with extraordinary fervor, and then a *Salve* as mentioned in the text.

old girl, born without sight. With her eyes full of tears, the mother requested and requested again for a miracle from the Virgin. The girls in ecstasy joined in her petition. The silence during this scene was striking. Then suddenly the little blind girl burst out singing a charming song, full of happiness. Emotion overwhelmed us.²⁷

Finally Jacinta and Loli departed for Loli's house. And very swiftly, without our being able to follow, they went up to the first floor where the apparition continued. A little later the window opened suddenly, and we saw the two girls leaning outside and calling out requests to the Vision not to leave, and requesting that she take them with her. The earnestness with which they petitioned her was striking. A little later they began to make gestures of goodbye with their hands, as if the Vision were withdrawing toward the horizon at the left of the Pines.

Besides this interesting report, we have another report from the same witness which also relates to those summer days of August, and which once more shows us the girls in close intimacy with the Mother.

In front of his house Ceferino told me to go up immediately to the Pines, since Mari Cruz had already been some time in ecstasy. On this day there was a group of *pilgrims* assembled up there around the girls, listening to Mari Cruz say to the vision, Ah! Then it is a Dominican Father who is here dressed as a civilian. (This fact is certain since later in the evening the religious himself, about 30 years old, told me that he was very impressed since he had not revealed to anyone either his condition or his identity.)

When I arrived, Mari Cruz gave the Vision a large number of rosaries and medals to kiss—perhaps more than one hundred. At the same time she began a backward descent toward the village . . . It would have to be seen: sometimes slowing down her walk; at others, speeding up with extreme swiftness, barely touching the ground with her feet, and then only slightly.

Halfway down the path near the Cuadro, Loli and Jacinta, who were accompanying her, went into ecstasy too. And the three, holding hands, walked toward the church, which in those days still was not closed to the visionaries. Before

27. This song of the three year old infant is full of meaning.

It was a proof that the requests made for her were not made in vain. In place of the bodily sight that was asked, she received a more useful grace of interior enlightenment that unloosened her tongue with the mysterious inspiration to sing.

There is one thing that we have to hold for certain from the point of view of faith: we never have recourse to God without some benefit. If we do not receive exactly what we seek, and which sometimes is not the most appropriate, He compensates us in other ways, underestimated at the time, but which will show themselves more beneficial for us. After all, the here and now is not always the most important.

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going inside, they made several trips²⁸ around it, counting out the Hail Marys of the rosary. The crowd around them had become very close together . . .

At that time, Conchita also went into ecstasy. The four joined arms, and in an incredible manner passed through the small door of the church courtyard. I say *incredible* since the door or gate was not sufficiently wide to permit the passage of the four side by side without either hitting or crushing the girls.

I was able to slip swiftly into the church, and there at my leisure I had the chance to be able to contemplate the stunning entrance into the sacred precinct of the four girls in ecstasy. They did this slowly, with a stiff and rhythmic step, like a military march, that resounded loudly in the silence and darkness of the holy place. They gave quite an impression of force, as Loli in passing barely grazed with her arm one of our friends of considerable size, and knocked her on the ground.²⁹ I think that all those who were there were seized with a salutary fear. As for me, I confess that I experienced a strong feeling of the fear of God and I was reminded of that part of Scripture that the Church applies to the Virgin, “You are beautiful and full of charm, Daughter of Jerusalem, but you are also terrible as an army in battle array.”³⁰

During these trances, in which the girls were taken up from the world around them to enter into amazing conversation with persons and realities from another hidden world, only certain external manifestations could be seen by the spectators. What was really happening in the internal part of those phenomena only the visionaries could tell about; and up to now, there is little that they have been able to say. This would be expected since the language that we use is made to express realities and experiences of this world, not of the world above.

28. Many times procession-like marches occurred around the church. These marches show the importance of the sanctuary for meeting with God. And also they indicate the importance of religious practices that many would like to confine to oblivion as if they lacked meaning.

29. It should be taken into account that Loli, during these days, was very diminutive for her age.

We have valuable testimony of the impression that the steps of the girls, rhythmic and strong, made in the silence of the night in the streets of Garabandal, drowning out the confused medley of footsteps made by those who followed while praying.

It should not be forgotten that the Virgin, so kind and charming, is also the *Virgo Potens* (Virgin Most Powerful) who battles the powers of evil and is capable of destroying, as the Church sings out in her liturgy, all the heresies that have ever been.

30. Related to this is an annotation made by Fr. Valentín for the 5th of August:

“At nine thirty at night, I was in front of the church gate. The children came, and I wanted to stop them. But I wasn’t able. The force that they display during their marches is enormous; and though wanting to stop them, one can’t, or it is extremely difficult.”

Conchita has stated in her diary that in the trances on the days that are now being recounted, the Virgin took special attention to bring the girls, who were lacking human instruction, to a habit of praying with the greatest care and concentration.

She told them to pray the rosary just as on so many other occasions; but in order to instruct them practically on the way of doing this, she told them on Friday, the 18th of August, I am going to pray first, and you should follow me. And she—states the girl—prayed very slowly. The girls then repeated word by word what she said first, trying to copy her manner, tone and pronunciation. The exercise followed completely the usual way of praying the rosary; but, Conchita tells us, very slowly. And at the Salve she told us to sing, and we sang it.

Attention should be given to this: She prayed very slowly. It is not important to do many things, but to do well the things that have to be done. The thing that matters is not the rapid recitation of many prayers, but rather always praying well during the time that is allotted. To give to each deed—especially to conversation with God—the time and attention that it deserves, has to be the style of the one called Full of Grace. It has been said that one cannot act fast and well at the same time. Always acting properly has been the characteristic of the Virgin's life; for this reason, her perfection is unique.

In the French edition of Conchita's Diary we read these lines from Fr. Ramón:

From the beginning Conchita always said that the Vision made them recite the rosary very often. Sometimes it was chanted, other times simply recited. Also the girls often said it during the ecstatic marches. Then they would be seen stopping at the doorsteps of the houses, or even entering and going upstairs—always in ecstasy—to a sick person's room."

There are tape recordings of the recitations of these prayers. The Hail Mary is said very slowly in a voice both intense and slightly trembling; the words are pronounced very distinctly. Likewise with the Our Father: Hagase tu voluntad, (Your will be done.) is said with special emphasis.

As unusual background music in the tape recordings, underneath the voices of the girls is heard the muffled sounds made by the footsteps of the people accompanying them during their mystical marches through the village.

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Many observations could be made about what has just been described; but it would be better that these observations be made by each person himself. Certainly all these particular instructions and reprimands of the Blessed Mother should not be ignored, both for our own good and that of the Church.

On this 18th of August (exactly 2 months having passed since the beginning of the events), not only were salutary lessons given on how to pray well, but heaven also presented to the onlookers unusual refrains of music, music not composed by man.

The wife of Dr. Ortiz remembers the day well, as it was the first on which she witnessed something.

After the apparent failure of the married couple's first trip (that day of the Assumption which seemed so indicated for a Marian demonstration), they probably would have waited before returning to Garabandal. However the occasion came up of taking to the village some cousins of the doctor's wife who had come from Madrid with a tremendous desire to see what was happening in the publicized village. As Dr. Ortiz could not get away from his professional duties, his wife and some of her friends accompanied her cousins from Madrid.

On arriving in Garabandal, they took advantage of the remaining hours of daylight to wander through the quaint streets and alleys. And as it became dark they set out to witness the remarkable things that were happening there. Since it seemed dangerous and difficult to walk or run after the children in the dark night, they went to the church entrance to wait there, as they had heard that very frequently the trances began, or took place, or ended in that sacred place. Only Fernando, the brother of Mrs. Ortiz, on the recommendation of Fidelín, the taxi driver from Puente Nansa, decided to follow up close all the incidents of the phenomena that were taking place.

And the phenomena began. The only thing that came to those at the church were echoes, among them the cries from the children in the crowd, shouting out, There they come! There they come! This did not make a good impression. Mrs. Ortiz was reminded by this, not to her liking, of the running of the bulls in the fiestas at Pamplona.

Toward 10 o'clock in the evening, after a long and oppressive wait, there began to be heard in the courtyard of the church approaching foot-

steps—firm, rhythmical, staccato. Mrs. Ortiz, her brother Pancho, and his daughter went out toward the street to see what it was, and they found a girl in ecstasy coming in their direction, followed by a small crowd.

The girl stopped suddenly at the side of a house in the little alley that leads up to the church, and stayed there several moments, gazing upwards, absorbed in the heavens. At the same time Mrs. Ortiz, who was very near, was astounded by music like the warbling of many birds, but a marvelous warbling. She turned to her niece and said, “Don’t you hear anything?”

The niece turned her ear toward the visionary, since she had learned that the girls in ecstasy spoke with the Vision. She said to her aunt,

—“No, aunt, I don’t hear anything. I only hear the singing of many birds, but very softly.”

—“That is what I hear myself!”

The visionary—later on they learned that it was Jacinta—went back again toward the village, without coming to the church, and at that moment all the singing stopped.

Mrs. Ortiz recounted:

On joining our group, we were able to hear some young boys who were walking over the little bridge that stood in front of the courtyard.

—“Mother! Mother! Didn’t you hear a lot of birds singing?”

—“Yes, we heard it too,” some women replied.

I asked my sister-in-law Maruja, who told me: “I also heard it; it seemed like the flight of thousands of birds singing at the same time—and marvelously!”

—“Did you notice that everything stopped when the girl left?”

—“No. It didn’t occur to me to connect the birds with the presence of the girl.”

—“Well, it is evident to me that the one thing was due to the other.”

While they were talking, Fernando, who had gone to see the ecstasies near at hand, came. And everyone naturally questioned him:

—“Let us know, let us know. What did you see?”

—“I don’t know how to explain it. I saw faces transformed with sensational sweetness . . .”

—“Didn’t you hear a lot of birds singing?”

—“No, I didn’t hear that . . . But really! What is this ridiculous thing you are asking me about? Birds never sing at night!”

This remark left Doctor Ortiz’s wife, who was not familiar with country life, completely bewildered . . . If birds never sing at night, then what

was it that they had definitely heard? It could be said to her, “Look Señora, those birds that sing in Garabandal are not the same birds that pass the nights perched on the branches of trees.”

Besides, this was not the only time in which the most unusual and sweet songs of birds have accompanied the special communications of God with chosen souls. Anyone wanting to know more on this topic should investigate some of the pages from the life of St. Francis of Assisi, or read the chronicles of the ancient monastery of Leyre in the territory of Navarre and Aragón, which speaks of the holy abbot Virila.³¹

In Doctor Ortiz’ family—because birds never sing at night, and in order not to be exposed to believing something ridiculous—it was decided for the moment not to speak about this. But later on when the family became sufficiently close with the girls and learned that Jacinta was the visionary on that night, they could not contain their desire of asking some explanation. The girl limited herself to smiling and saying evasively, “My grandmother also said at times that she heard swallows . . .”

The “Commission” Intervenes

On August 22nd, Tuesday, the octave of the Assumption and then the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a young priest from Asturias made his way for the first time up the route that follows the Nansa and Vendul rivers to Garabandal; this priest will be forever closely linked with the village. From him we have a valuable book published: *Memorias de mis subidas a Garabandal (anos de 1961, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67 y 68)* “Recollections of My Trips to Garabandal from 1961–1968”. His name was Father José Ramón García de la Riva, the parish priest of Our Lady of Sorrows in the village of Barro, in the archdiocese of Llanes of the archbishopric of Oviedo.

Father José Ramón put down his memoirs in writing with the sole intention of filling any possible gaps in the information obtained up to then so as an aid anyone taking on the important work of investigation.

After explaining in his introduction how he had attempted to make all his trips to Garabandal *licitly*, he begins to describe his first one:

31. The archives of the monastery have the name of this abbot listed as beginning in the year 928.

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I was aroused by a conversation held with Father Manuel Antón, a parish priest from San Claudio in the city of León. This pastor was then spending some days in Barro (Llanes, Asturias). I had just come to this parish, and I did not have the slightest idea of the events that were happening 57 kilometers away in the neighboring diocese of Santander. Those events had begun on the 18th of June, 1961, and I took possession of the parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Barro on August 10th.

In this conversation my curiosity was stirred up . . .

The desire to know the truth about what was happening brought Father José Ramón to Garabandal on August 22nd, a day of great Marian significance, as we have already stated.

He came with his father on a motorcycle, and the first question that he asked in the village was about the time of the apparitions. “At nightfall, after the rosary in the church; the girls are accustomed to go into ecstasy on leaving the church.” This information caused a problem for the new arrivals since they both could not remain till such a late hour. They decided that the priest’s father would go down from the village, and return home in a taxi that was there ready to leave with other persons who also could not wait.

Father José Ramón continues:

“I set out walking through the village with a priest from Burgos who had come from Lora. The streets and lanes were crooked and rocky. Little by little I became acquainted with the visionaries. The first, Loli, I came upon near to her home next to a jeep.” (Her home was then at the entry to the Calleja.) “Later I came upon Conchita and Mari Cruz who at the time were accustomed to walk together. I didn’t see Jacinta until night—in ecstasy. The girls gave me the impression of being normal, playful, pleasant, lively; but rather timid . . . I took some pictures, which I still possess.

I was surprised on seeing them with rosaries, gifts, and medals hanging from their necks. Later I learned that these were carried in order to present them to the Vision to kiss during the ecstasy, and that they belonged to the numerous persons who came up to San Sebastián, brought there either by curiosity or faith. Then I also learned that in the beginning of the apparitions the girls had presented small stones to be kissed, which they picked up beforehand from the ground, and later gave to certain persons at the request of the Virgin. I didn’t get to see this, since at that time they were only presenting religious articles and marriage rings to be kissed.

At nightfall on the 22nd of August, I went to the church; it was simple and congenial . . . At that time there was an altar rail that separated the sanctuary

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from the main body of the church. I took a place on the left, kneeling on the first step; and I made the following reflection, If this is from God, the best part will surely be seen in the church. And I told my feelings about this to a woman who questioned me concerning the location for the apparitions. I began to pray with devotion, and I implored the Lord to soon clarify the meaning of these events. It did not happen like this: the judgments of God are different from those of men—and have their way and hour for being realized.

On that day in Garabandal I met five priests from Asturias, all belonging to the archdiocese of Llanes, and also a canon from the cathedral at Oviedo, besides other priests who were walking around the visionaries.

The holy rosary was recited, led by Fr. Ramón María Andreu, a Jesuit. I recall that before beginning he told us from the sanctuary that the events were very worthy of observation, and that there was a field of study here for theologians, mystics, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc.. He didn't say in public that this was supernatural, as some have falsely attributed to him."

After the recitation of the rosary, while the people were still leaving the church, the first phenomena were already taking place.

Inside of the church, Mari Cruz fell forward by the altar of the Immaculate Conception, and the other girls fell on top of Mari Cruz. I noticed with amazement that, though the girls had fallen violently on the ground, nevertheless their clothes remained in proper position, covering their knees. They were as if in a sculptured group, more to be seen and admired than to be described. At this time Father Andreu pointed out that Father Royo Marín, in his book on ascetics and mystics, spoke of human sculptural groups that the mystics some times form in their ecstasies.

Having seen this, and after the girls had left the church and were continuing their ecstasy in the village, I returned to the sanctuary and there gave my entire attention to speaking in prayer to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. My whole desire was to petition light from God for the bishop and for those charged with studying all this.

Several times the girls returned to the church and placed themselves next to me on the step of the sanctuary. All I had to do was turn my head slightly to one side, and I could see perfectly the complete display of the phenomena, mystical in appearance. In a low voice they prayed fervently in front of the tabernacle. All their comportment was of amazing beauty: head tilted lightly backwards, their countenances shining—as if lit by an interior luminescence that would have been dazzling, if it had not been tempered by an infinite softness."

But on the night of August 22nd, 1961, the pastor from Barro was able to see first hand not only the unique spectacle of those girls swept out of themselves by the mysterious force; he was also able to take in with his

eyes and ears the manner of action undertaken by those there with sacred obligations toward the young girls and their affairs . . .

“My whole desire”—the good priest tells us— “was to petition light from God for the bishop and for those charged with studying all this.”

He did not know that on that day he would meet there, by an unusual coincidence, those so charged. And with dispositions hardly open to receive the Light of God, as we will see . . .

The members of the diocesan Commission (he was not then aware of their existence; he would learn about it later) “appeared soon after the rosary while the girls were walking in ecstasy through the village. And I would have to say that in my judgment the actions of the members of the Commission on that day were not deserving of applause.”

On one of the occasions when the girls had returned to the church, Dr. Piñal approached and from the entrance asked in a very loud voice which all those around the visionaries could hear:

—“What? Is this comedy still going on?”

—“If there’s a comedian here, it’s you!” answered Dr. Ortiz from Santander, who at that time was carefully taking Conchita’s pulse. The sanctuary is not the appropriate place to talk this way, especially in public.

The two doctors had not recognized each other; but it was only a matter of a few seconds.

DR. ORTIZ—“Oh! So it’s you?”

DR. PIÑAL—“I have to say something to you in the sacristy.”

DR. ORTIZ—“O.K. In the sacristy. You can say what you want.”

Then they went into the sacristy and “there ended”, according to what Father José Ramón says, “the investigation by the doctors of the Commission on that day; an investigation that ended before it began.”

But did the Commission priests act in the same way? Let us hear the witness:

One of the priests of the Commission went up to the sanctuary and taking a position there, with his back to the Blessed Sacrament and his face toward the people, unhesitatingly made this comment in a loud voice, “I don’t believe in this . . . whatever may happen.”³²

32. The author of this not so prudent declaration was not Fr. Odriozola, who seemed to be almost always the megaphone for the Commission; we will not mention his name out of respect for him.

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It seems that here also ended the *theological* investigation made by the Commission on that night.

Now the Commission had brought along its *official* photographer. He stopped also at the sacristy, and there was next to the priest who would not believe “whatever might happen”. Father José Ramón heard him say, “I am not a professional photographer; however . . .”

Since the photographer’s camera was automatic, loaded with a roll of color film, and had a flash attachment, Father José Ramón indicated to him that it would be a shame to lose the valuable photographs that he could take of Jacinta and Loli, who were then kneeling on a step “with a truly extraordinary grace and pose”. The answer of the photographer was disdainful and curt: that he had already taken the pictures that he had to take.

Coming to this point, we have to say that on that night the action of the Commission described by this eyewitness cannot be held up as a model for imitation.

They were not on the scene of the events at the hour of prayer. (Perhaps it might be said this was due to the many things that they had to discuss; perhaps so that the devotion might not disturb their thinking.) They only came later, as if to cast a glance and see how to take measures against those *obstinate* in continuing with this.

They did not consider it worthwhile to follow the visionaries closely in their trances so as to understand the thing from its foundations, not miss any pieces, and have complete background and information upon which to solidly base a judgment. Let others be bothered with those streets and trailways! Let others lose their sleep in long and pointless *vigils!* Let others waste their time stupidly following such bewildering phenomena. They, who were the important ones since they had the authority, did not have to follow the thing closely; they had already measured it from afar and knew what it was about. They had heard from the doctor, the priest, and the photographer . . . Case dismissed!

What was disturbing to them was that there were still those obstinate and ignorant people who were holding onto a different opinion from theirs.

Let us hear again from Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva:

I remained in the church until 11 o’clock, in front of the Blessed Sacrament. I prayed, I reflected. I listened attentively from my place to all that I could hear,

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which wasn't difficult for everything was said in a loud voice, and nothing seemed to be secret.³³

For example, I made out perfectly the following sentences, spoken by one of the two priests:

—We'll close the church to this cult.

—We'll give the pastor Father Valentín a month's vacation. Since he seems to be so nervous now, he'll gladly take it.

—We'll order the Jesuit to leave.

—We'll forbid priests to come up to the village.

—And if this comes from God, it will make its own way.”

Brilliant statement, that last one, from the mouths of theologians and priests. As if it were the style of God to impose His way on His human creatures, overcoming all the obstacles and breaking down all the barriers. Were they unaware that God wants to use man in all His acts of salvation? It is necessary to prepare the way with an attitude of sincerity and a mind open to His will—searching docile, with a right intention, with prudence and devotion. God can open a way in spite of all obstacles from man, but He also abandons certain plans of mercy because of those same obstacles. In any case, unfortunate will those be who take a stance more to create difficulties than to seek in their hearts to understand.

It is no wonder that Fr. de la Riva, after describing what happened, says this:

This is really some program of investigation and procedure by a Commission that finds itself before such serious events! Here comes, as at the pretorium of Pilate, a washing of hands . . .

Meanwhile, the bishop, relying on the good faith of the doctors and priests, forms on this foundation the “Notas” that we will learn later.

33. Concerning the *debate* that took place on that night in the little sacristy before the Commission made its decision, we have this short reference from Dr. Ortiz:

“There, in the presence of the pastor Fr. Valentín Marichalar, Fr. Andreu S.J., and those that said they were the Commission, I tried to show them that they were mistaken in many of their opinions . . . And I had to finish by saying that I had not come there to waste my time arguing, that the first thing that had to be done was to observe the affair very closely.” It was when they were alone that the Commission members deliberated in the way that Fr. de la Riva described to us.

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Since what the pastor of Barro has written in his memoirs is very strongly opposed to the Commission, I have sought to corroborate and confirm it with other testimony, and here are some others that I have collected.

From the impressions that I received from others and from what I myself was able to observe on that day, I have to say that the procedure of the members of the Commission was not at the level of the charge received. They did not apply themselves to observe the affairs personally and from close-up . . . Nor did they get information from the girls or the parish priest. I know that on one of the few times that they came during the ecstasies of the girls, they spent their time in the sacristy, talking, smoking, and joking about the phenomena.”

(A pastor from León)

As for the doctors of the Commission, I can say that none of them went up to Garabandal more than five times. Also they never bothered to stay in order to better observe the children and their surroundings. As for the priests, who are said to be part of the Commission, I met Father Odriozola (now canon) and Father Del Val (now bishop) for the first time in Garabandal on the 22nd of August, 1961. They hardly bothered to personally observe the events. The one among them who saw the most ecstasies only saw half a dozen; and never, it was obvious, when they took place at untimely hours.

(A Santander doctor, in a letter of May 30th, 1970)

I know from Ceferino, Loli's father, that the members of the Commission very seldom came up to the village. Perhaps not all of them even came . . . And Loli told me that while she was in the college at Balmori (Asturias) that they didn't speak with the girls . . . that they satisfied themselves with what the crowd in the village or some of the visitors said.

(Fr. de la Riva in a letter of June 1st, 1970)

I was able to observe that during the year of 1961, I only saw the doctors of the Commission at Garabandal on three days.

Once at the time when Mr. Roche of Saltos del Nansa told me that the visionaries didn't come to the Cuadro on that day because Dr. Morales stopped them and hypnotized them in the calleja, with the result already known . . .

Another time—on the 18th of October, during the first message—when they were protected by the police so that no one would bother them, since the people of the village were angry because of their actions.

And a third time, the night that they were in Garabandal while all the people were sleeping to see if they could secretly bring the visionaries to Santander.”

(Juan Alvarez Seco, the local police chief)

Let us add two facts from the testimonies:

1. That the Commission never compiled a process of investigation in the required form.

2. That they never conversed seriously with the pastor, Father Valentín Marichalar, from whom they still have not sought a formal declaration.

As can be seen, this is a grave matter, and later further evidence will be brought forth concerning it. I only wish to put down here some of the things about which I am well informed, which have great importance, and which chronologically belong to the hour of Garabandal that we are now describing.

The ecclesiastical University of Comillas, located in the village of the same name on the Santander coast, directed by the Jesuits of the ancient observance, has had an importance in the life of the Church in Spain as no other teaching institution during the first 50 years of this century.

Class after class of priests have gone out from its walls to later occupy the most varied positions in the apostolate and hierarchy. It has had illustrious professors and teachers; but among those of the highest rank—well known to the Spanish clergy—must be included the person of the one who held the Chair of Moral Theology year after year, Fr. Lucio Rodrigo: a man of books, a man of souls, and a man of God.

The first news about Garabandal came to Fr. Lucio Rodrigo toward the end of July, 1961 thru a priest from Madrid—Fr. Gamazo, one of his former pupils. Fr. Gamazo came impressed, very favorably impressed, by what he was able to see and touch in the secluded village. Later on, at the request of Fr. Rodrigo, this priest wrote down a report that Fr. Rodrigo kept, as a treasure, because it is the best that I have seen.

Fr. Rodrigo thought that this news was of major interest and wrote a letter to San Sebastián, to the marquese of Comillas, who was closely connected to the ecclesiastical University. (Her grandfather, the second marquis of Comillas, Claudio Lopez Bru, had founded the University in the days of Leo XIII.)

A few days later the marquese arrived with her mother, the widow of the count of Ruisenada. On the 4th or 5th of August they all went up to Garabandal; but they came down without seeing anything, since they could not wait until night. It was no surprise that the countess was afraid: “No, no! We can’t wait. At night we could get killed on those horrible roads.”

Thus the first trip to Garabandal was unsuccessful for Fr. Rodrigo in

his purpose of examining attentively the unusual phenomena. But soon a new opportunity presented itself. Alberto Martín Artajo, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, connected to the Jesuits by family ties and education, came to Comillas; with him Fr. Lucio Rodrigo was able to come a second time to Garabandal. It was on the 14th of August, slightly after the death of Fr. Luis María Andreu. And this time Fr. Rodrigo was able to see what so interested him close at hand.

He did not make a judgment right away; he continued to observe, reflect, and entreat God for light. And at the end of many other visits, and no small amount of reflection, he formed his opinion:

“That, in its entirety, the weight of evidence and proof was in favor of a supernatural character of divine origin.”

He said “in its entirety”. Not all the facts appeared equally clear to Fr. Rodrigo. Furthermore, he felt that the visionaries had acted with stupidity through the influence of priests who were indiscreet, and secular visitors still more indiscreet.

But the affair “in its entirety” was sufficiently clear that the unprejudiced observer could see in it a new intervention from God in favor of mankind.

Soon the rumor came to Santander that Fr. Lucio Rodrigo, although maintaining a conduct of absolute prudence, had visited Garabandal. And the members of the Commission saw in this both a great danger and a great opportunity for them because of the prestige and influence that Fr. Rodrigo had with the many priests whom he had taught. A great danger, if he openly held a position differing from the position that they thought to impose; a great opportunity, if they swayed him to their point of view.

On one of the first mornings of September in that summer of 1961, a telephone rang at the Pontifical University with a call from Santander asking for Fr. Rodrigo. The caller was told that he was in San Vicente de la Barquera at the home of Señor X, and the phone call³⁴ pursued him there. It was the members of the Commission who wished to see him. An interview was arranged, and a few hours later the Reverend Fathers José María Saez, Juan Antonio del Val and Francisco Odriozola, accompanied by Dr. Piñal, arrived in San Vicente.

34. Father Rodrigo had gone to the well-known maritime village, a few kilometers from Comillas, to hear the confessions of the religious of the convent of Cristo Rey. He stayed in the house of a man who was the director of a bank there.

The three priests, who had been pupils of Fr. Rodrigo at Comillas, seemed to be coming to seek light to deal with the delicate matter. But the professor soon noticed that his former pupils were not coming for this reason, but rather to win him over to their own point of view. “It was not difficult for me to understand”—he declared to a trustworthy person—“that they were not seeking my opinion as an element to help them form a judgment. They came with a judgment already made, holding a position opposed to any possible supernatural nature of the events.”

Because of this, he let them speak. And later he said to them something like this, that they could take if they wished. In the face of events like those at Garabandal, two definite positions come up-right away. The first: that of people who are devout and uncomplicated, who soon get excited and easily believe it to be from God. The second: that of priests and other persons, more or less intellectual, who in the beginning always are suspicious and easily tend to deny and draw back as if this were the most intelligent approach. But there is a third position, which is undeniably the safest and the only one admissible when there is a grave responsibility toward the matter as in this case. And this position is to seriously examine the facts, investigate them with complete impartiality, without hurry and without prejudice, seeking the truth, which is seeking God above everything else.

Fr. Rodrigo confided to the person mentioned that he was already finding in the members of the Commission something that later would become clear: that they “were searching especially for negative information and evidence.”

The group stood up and at one time Fr. José María Saez remained almost alone with Fr. Rodrigo; he leaned toward the father to say, “I’m with you, Fr. Rodrigo.” Fr. José María Saez was without doubt the best intellectual and theologian among the priests of the Commission. With this reserved statement he did not mean to say that he shared the point of view of Fr. Rodrigo on the determination of the facts of Garabandal, but that he agreed with him as to the attitude to take in the investigation and examination.

The First Episcopal “Nota”

We return now to those days in August.

The pastor from Barro spent the night of August 22nd in Garabandal. He did not sleep well because of the ineffable impression made on him by

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the phenomena that he had seen, and by the not-so-ineffable impression made on him by the Commission.

On the following morning, on going outside after Mass, I saw Fr. Valentín next to the narrow bridge that crosses over the little creek. He was talking with Fr. Ramón Andreu. They came toward me and Fr. Valentín told me on the commission's request that I had to leave the village.

I told them that I knew this and even more, and that I really regretted being obliged to leave since my intention was to remain several more days in this village I liked so much.

Then Fr. Valentín spoke with Fr. Andreu for a few seconds and came up to say to me, We have considered something else. You are going to stay here today as the parish priest since I have to go to Santander. He gave me the key to the church and I was very happy since this fulfilled my desire of staying in the village at least another day.

Afterwards I told Fr. Andreu that I felt inclined to write a registered letter to the bishop of Santander telling him about the bad impression that the Commission had made on me. This seemed good to him and so I wrote it.

After the 23rd of August, 1961, the little church at San Sebastián no longer was to be the scene of the children's trances and games.

In the afternoon on that day—unforgettable for me—Fr. Andreu told me that notification had come from the bishop to shut the church doors to the girls while they were in ecstasy.

I was the one who had to comply for the first time with this order. That day on finishing the rosary, recited as usual at nightfall, the girls went into ecstasy . . . On returning from one of their walks through the village, Loli and Jacinta came back toward the church, and I was struck by the way in which they stopped before the courtyard. At the time I found myself with my back to the closed door. Loli and Jacinta were in front of me at the entrance to the courtyard outside. The girls certainly were not aware that the door was going to be shut, for only those who had given the order and I myself knew this.

I heard Loli say, "Why have they closed the church to us? We aren't coming to do anything wrong! If it isn't open for us, we won't enter anymore."

Since it wasn't possible for me to enter into their conversation, I then said, "You're right. But it's necessary to obey orders."

A woman there present answered, "You're only doing your duty."

Everyone could verify that after the 23rd of August, 1961, the visionaries never again entered the church in ecstasy, thus strictly obeying the order from Santander. They satisfied themselves with going around the church with those who accompanied them, reciting the rosary, and singing the *Salve Regina*. And even when the Mystical Communion took place, none of them were given inside the church, but under the roof overhang.

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To better relive the atmosphere of Garabandal in that period of summer, 1961, I want to assemble here some important information from the last days of August, which I have taken from the Fr. Valentín's notes.

August 29th: Conchita went into ecstasy at 11 o'clock and I heard her ask, "Aren't all priests good?" She made a expression of amazement. Later I asked her about that expression, and she told me that she couldn't talk about it. But finally she explained that the Virgin had told her that actually, "Not all priests are good. "

August 30th: Conchita went out of her house (in ecstasy) at 12:10; she made trips through the village. Near the door of the church, she was heard to say, "I thought all Jesuits were good."

I think that this special mention of Jesuits is due to her association with the Andreu brothers.

In those days Loli and Jacinta had several ecstasies in which Conchita did not take part in spite of being present. At those times, Fr. Valentín used her to question the other visionaries. And he wrote down:

If Conchita makes the questions by word, the girls in ecstasy don't understand; she has to make the questions mentally. The same happened on the previous Saturday, (undoubtedly August 19th) when Jacinta came out of ecstasy and Loli remained in it; Conchita asked questions mentally.

This was repeated on the night of August 30th. Conchita, in the normal state, conversed by thought with Jacinta and Loli in ecstasy, and they answered with words.

When the registered letter of Fr. José Ramón arrived at the chancery in Santander, Bishop Fernandez must have already prepared the first public statement about the events of Garabandal. The diocesan *Boletín Oficial* published it in its August, 1961 issue. Dated August 26th, it read like this:

In answer to the constant questions that have been asked us concerning the nature of the events that are occurring in the village of San Sebastian de Garabandal, and with the desire to instruct the faithful in the correct interpretation of these events, we have felt ourselves obligated to closely study these things in order to fulfill our pastoral duty.

With this end, we have named a commission of persons of well-known prudence and knowledge to inform us with complete assurance of objectivity and competency about these events.

In view of the information that they have presented to us, we believe it premature to pronounce any definite decision on the nature of the phenomena in question. Nothing up to the present obliges us to affirm that the events occurring there are supernatural.

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Considering all this, and withholding a final judgment on the things that may happen in the future, we have this to say:

1) It is our wish that the diocesan priests, as well as the priests from other dioceses and religious of both sexes who are not under our jurisdiction, abstain from visiting San Sebastián de Garabandal from now on.

2) We would advise the Christian people not to come to this place until the ecclesiastical authority gives a final statement on the case.

By these temporary measures, we are not hindering God's action on souls; on the contrary, by avoiding the spectacular character of these events, the light of truth is greatly facilitated.

Doroteo, Bishop of Santander

Undoubtedly this first document has a desirable tone of intelligence and prudence that gives honor to the one who composed it. The bishop believes in proceeding in a most cautious manner, based on the trust put in his investigators. But certain of his expressions have to be taken with reserve because of the information that we have previously brought out.

With the information previously given in mind, it is not easy to be convinced that the facts were studied "closely", nor that the Commission informed us "with complete guarantee of objectivity and competence". And if there is reason to not completely trust the research and official investigators, the statement derived from them that "nothing obliges us to affirm that these events are supernatural" loses much of its strength.

His two recommendations might be very prudent. But if he wishes that the whole judgment of the events be entrusted to the Commission, and the Commission members do not concern themselves much about their obligation, then whose duty is it to investigate, give testimony on, and elucidate these events that are so much beyond the normal routine of Church happenings?

I regret to have to say this; but it seems to me that the actions of the diocesan hierarchy did not proceed in the right direction for the complicated investigation of Garabandal.

CHAPTER 10

On the Way to Salvation

THOSE WHO BELIEVE in Garabandal, accepting the series of events that occurred there as coming from God through the Blessed Mother, will consider Garabandal as a new Mystery of Salvation.

Or rather a new and exceptional manifestation of the great Mystery of Salvation.

That this is new and exceptional seems obvious; but not everyone fully understands the meaning of The History of Salvation. What does this expression mean?

The long process of divine intervention on behalf of a creature so honored by Him as the human being—to pull him away from the harmful situation in which he has fallen and to place him on the right road toward his final goal—constitutes the History of Salvation.

It is not a history easy to understand. To comprehend it in its true dimension and meaning it is not enough to have high intelligence and a capability for good judgment, since the information that comes forth can be just as confusing as it is clear. And so our way through it is always between the light and the darkness: light that is sometimes marvelously bright, and darkness sometimes the blackest. Likewise in going through

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the History of Salvation we continually encounter the Mystery of God. And once more we find here the certain and enlightening truth of Scripture. My ways are not your ways, nor My thoughts your thoughts; as the sky is above the earth, so . . .

The History or Mystery of Salvation has its *official* chapters that give the theme or the key to understanding the material, and which make up the Bible, the only writing known and approved with complete authority. But there also have come out, and continue to come out, complementary chapters. Without these, the official writings of Sacred Scripture would be very difficult for most people to understand, and consequently the march of history would fail to take place or come alive for them.

We can consider what has been written—in lines not always clear or straight—by the *events* of Garabandal as one of these complimentary chapters of the last times.

Did not official revelation close with the death of the last apostle, St. John? While this is true, the history of salvation did not conclude with it, and the march of this mystery continues involving all people for the rise or for the fall (Luke 2:34) even until the consummation comes. (Matt. 13: 39-49; 24: 29-31) Just as God has intervened by actions and words of salvation from the beginning, so He will intervene until the end; thru Himself, or thru others; thru His prophets, thru His own Son,¹ thru the Blessed Mother . . . I will be with you all days even until the end of time. (Matt. 28: 20)

It is the Blessed Mother whom He has sent to act at Garabandal, especially in the early times that we are now describing. But it appears immediately clear that her action—it could not be otherwise—is immersed in the general dynamics of salvation which comes to us from God. (Luke 1: 77-79) We are facing a new manifestation of the great mystery of salvation that He has shown from the beginning to aid His human creatures.

The Mother of God and of all mankind has appeared again among us to repeat one more time in her own name and on behalf of Him Who sent her, *Salus populi, ego sum; de quacumque tribulatione clamaverint ad me, ego exaudiam*—I am the salvation of the people, in whatever tribulation they call out to me I will hear them. (Introit of the votive mass “Pro

1. Beginning of the epistle to the Hebrews.

quacumque necessitate”)

News of the events soon began to spread out into the surrounding areas, and many who were undergoing trials went with them to Garabandal . . . I have no evidence that the Virgin performed any obvious miracle at the time to free those coming for aid from physical or material tribulation. But there are innumerable persons who give revealing testimony that they have not come to her in vain, and that she certainly heard.

There were many mysterious answers given by the Virgin to questions arising from those tortured in the most hidden areas of their conscience.² And what peace, consolation of soul,³ and security went out toward the countless participants of those almost daily ecstasies that some considered

2. One example among a thousand:

The Talavera brothers, who own a hairdressing salon in Astillero (Santander), tell with full knowledge of the matter about what happened to a man from Aguilar de Campoo.

He had gone up to Garabandal during the summer of 1961. While seeing Conchita in ecstasy, he had mentally petitioned the Virgin for an answer to something that was really bothering him . . . The ecstasy ended, and none of the girls came to give him any message. Somewhat hurt, he returned home.

A month passed and he again felt the desire of visiting Garabandal. There he was able to witness an ecstasy of Mari Loli that affected him. After the trance, the man had lost himself among the anonymous spectators (he did not know any of the visionaries personally) when the girl went up to him, and told him on behalf of the Virgin words which were the exact response to what he had requested a month earlier, only mentally, and in front of another girl! This man was ready to swear that he absolutely had not spoken with anyone about his most secret petition.

The Virgin was coming to assist, not to entertain. On the 31st of August, among the many things that the girls were told to ask the Virgin, one was whether it was good for the people to ask questions . . . She answered yes, but that she was not going to answer pointless questions. On more than one occasion, questions of this type were made by people without understanding and without good intentions.

3. Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva, who personally experienced many of the little wonders of Garabandal, mentions in his *Memorias*:

“One day I placed a white metal crucifix on the little table where Loli had arranged the articles to present to the Virgin. Since she couldn’t see this, she sought all day to know the owner. She questioned one of my friends about this . . .

During the night I was seated in Conchita’s kitchen when Loli came in ecstasy, accompanied by her father and other people. She knelt down, presented the crucifix she held in her hand to be kissed, and stayed quietly in front of me. She wanted to give me something, but because of my near-sightedness and being more intent on her face than her hands, I didn’t notice it until Ceferino said to me, “Look, she’s giving you a crucifix.” It was one of the most thrilling moments of my life! It was the metal crucifix that I had left in her house in the morning, without her seeing it, and which had so intrigued her throughout the day.”

an excess that could not be justified, or ridiculed as a game that could not be accepted as coming from God. Those who desired to approach God with simplicity of heart (Wisdom 1: 1) found at Garabandal what they sought.

I now wish to insert a very unusual case. It occurred in the early days of September, 1961. Fr. Andreu was in Ceferino's tavern and store when a priest in a foul mood entered brusquely and made his way toward him aggressively.

—"Tell me. Are you Fr. Andreu?"

—"At your service."

—"Well, I am coming to tell you that I don't like this."

—"No one can know better than you what you don't like . . . Nevertheless, I appreciate the information . . . Have you been here long?"

—"Ten minutes."

—"Man. I have been here four weeks and still haven't come to see everything clearly . . . And you . . . in ten minutes . . ."

This was a priest from Asturias, strong, built like a truck driver. To get out from under this, since he saw right away that he was getting very irritated, Fr. Andreu called Dr. Ortiz of Santander who was passing by and said to him, Listen, Dr. Ortiz, this priest here is very interested in this. And since you are an intellectual, you can explain it to him.

Dr. Ortiz took the priest with him.

Ten minutes later the priest returned. But this time his attitude was completely different. He was pallid, trembling; not the same man.

—"Fr. Andreu, Fr. Andreu. It's for real! I'm convinced."

—"Listen. Let's slow down. Ten minutes ago you didn't like it at all. And now you are already convinced? Doesn't it seem that you're going too fast?"

—"See for yourself what has happened to me. I was walking over there with Dr. Ortiz when we came upon one of the girls named Jacinta in ecstasy. She came up to me and made the sign of the cross over me; and there was a little man at my side, and she made the sign of the cross over him too. And then she gave me a cross to kiss, and she also gave it to the little man. Then she made the sign of the cross over me again, and did the same to the little man. During this I thought, "If it is true that it is the Vir-

gin who is appearing, then let the ecstasy end.” At that very instant the girl lowered her head and looked at me entirely normal!

This left me breathless, and I said to her:

—“Aren’t you seeing the Virgin?”

—“No, señor.”

—“Why is that?”

—“Because she has gone away!”

Then the girl turned around and walked away. She couldn’t have taken four steps when she fell into ecstasy again, and came toward us another time. She made the sign of the cross over me, and then the sign of the cross over the little man; and she gave me the cross to kiss, and she gave it to the little man to kiss . . .

—“Listen. Listen.” Fr. Andreu interrupted him. “Let me know who that little man is, for it seems to me that the really important one in this case is the little man and not you.”

And so it actually was, as was soon revealed.

That little man was a parish priest from one of the villages.

For some time he had been terribly tormented by great doubts about his priestly ordination: whether or not he had a clear and explicit will to be ordained; and whether as a consequence, his ordination was valid or not; and thus, whether he would be exercising improperly and without effect his priestly functions. Only God could know what the man had been suffering because of these scruples.

When he heard talk of Garabandal and of the marvels that were happening there, he thought that he might be able to find a way out of his dark tunnel.

As soon as he could, he went to the celebrated village. But before arriving there, he disguised himself carefully. (At that time it was very unusual for a priest or religious to take off his cassock or his habit without serious reason.) He had so carefully disguised himself that Fr. Andreu said, “There was no way to suspect even remotely the presence of a priest there; his outfit was the strangest that could be imagined.”

It was an initial and consoling response to the priest’s interior doubts that the girl was so definitely repeating on him everything that she had done previously to the priest who was at his side . . . But that was not enough. What can immediately settle a scrupulous conscience! After the

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first joy, spiritual confusion returned, and he thought, I cannot leave like this; I need more proof.

He found a place in a stable to pass the night, and hoped to see if on the following day he would obtain the absolutely convincing proofs that he needed so much.

The new day came and the poor man did not have to wait for nightfall, as would ordinarily be the case. Already in the morning there was an important ecstasy; many persons were gathering for the celestial visit, and our little man naturally was in the front row.

When the girl in ecstasy began to hold out the crucifix to be kissed, the people rapidly formed a line along her path so that the girl could do it easier. The little man positioned himself like everyone else in the middle of the line, and from there observed with what celestial grace the visionary offered the crucifix, and with what feeling those lined up were coming to kiss it, one after the other . . . But he did not content himself with observing; his mind was working, and he formed this idea: If I am truly a priest, instead of giving me the crucifix to kiss like the others, let the girl come and make the sign of the cross over me with it.

Then the girl came up to the police chief who was so well disposed to the cause of Garabandal. She stopped in front of him, smiled, and without looking at him—actually she looked at no one, since during the ecstasy she held her face turned sharply upwards—she slowly made the sign of the cross over him. Then she continued her way down the line, presenting the crucifix to be kissed . . . She came in front of the little man, and she made the sign of the cross over him! The answer seemed very clear; but . . .

The man was hard to satisfy. He did not hesitate to think, This isn't enough since she made the sign of the cross over the police chief too, and the police chief isn't a priest. If instead of this she would have given the crucifix to everyone without exception to kiss, and on me—only on me—she would have made the sign of the cross three times, then there definitely would have been no doubt.

He had not finished thinking this when the girl interrupted her path and made her way back to the beginning of the line, to once more begin holding up the crucifix to be kissed . . . She came again in front of the police chief, and she must have heard something from the Vision, since she was

heard to ask, *What?* Following a brief pause, she smiled, and gave the holy image to him to kiss like the others . . . When she arrived in front of the little man again, we can imagine his emotions. The girl was very carefully making the sign of the cross over him repeatedly—until it was done three times! And something more; she said to him very clearly, Yes.

That was too much; the poor man tried to hide his tears while the girl continued down the line, and he went to the church as soon as he could. There in the sacristy he opened up the sack that he had taken with him; he put on his priest's cassock with more feeling than ever before, and then fell on his knees in front of the Tabernacle, without being able to express to the Lord and His Mother all his feelings of love and gratitude.

When he left the church, he was truly another person, much more interiorly than exteriorly.

How many ineffable mercies of God came thru the Virgin to the souls of those who ascended the high places of Garabandal, believing to have found there a throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid. (Heb. 6: 16) As for those who came for other favors of lesser value—like an improvement in health, the settling of a difficult situation, the solution of some definite problem—and who to the eyes of others would have appeared to have wasted the trip, they ended feeling deep in their souls that they had not come, nor hoped, nor prayed in vain. In their contacts with the MYSTERY OF SALVATION, if their hearts were well disposed, they had not come away with empty hands.

Revealing Facts

This will exemplify some of the things that were happening during the summer days of 1961.

One day in September, Placido Ruiloba, the man from Santander previously mentioned as one of the best witnesses of the Garabandal events, came up to the village with his wife and her father. The father, who already had one of his legs amputated, was concerned that sooner or later the same fate would befall his other leg. "My father-in-law"—Mr. Ruiloba stated—"went with great faith to the place."

Like so many other visitors they stopped first at the house of Ceferino, with whom Placido had struck up a warm friendship. They told him all

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about the condition of the invalid and the desire he had for Mari Loli to petition the Virgin for him in ecstasy, requesting his salvation. That she save at least the one leg that was left!

Ceferino told them that during these days his daughter ordinarily had her ecstasies in the rooms upstairs; and that he, although sorry about it, could not allow many people to go upstairs, because of the danger that the rafters and the ceiling would fall down and cause a disaster; but that specially for this case, he would see to it that they could go upstairs. Minutes later Mari Loli arrived, and the visitors immediately entreated her to remember their request when she would be with the Virgin.

From here they went to Conchita's house, to make the same request. (They transmitted it to Aniceta.) And when they were about to leave, Mr. Matutano,⁴ who was there, told them that it would be worth their trouble to remain, since Conchita already had two calls and it would not be long until the time when the Vision came.

And so it was. It happened in the little kitchen of the house, at the usual hour of nightfall. The small group standing around could follow from time to time the girl's conversation that dealt with many things. One of the things that they heard very clearly was the request for the salvation of the man who was there with his leg cut off. That at least they don't have to cut off the other!

The window was wide open so that many persons, who were not able to enter, could follow the trance from outside.⁵ After a while, the visionary who was still taken up in the trance—her head tilted sharply backwards, her glance fixed on high—held up her crucifix⁶ for everyone to kiss.

4. See footnote 5 from Chapter IV.

5. The kitchens in Garabandal were on the street level.

6. Father José Ramón García de la Riva mentions in his *Memorias*:

“The girls began carrying the crucifix routinely in their ecstasies from August of 1961. When they had the first call, they went to find the crucifix and hid it in their clothes; when the time of the ecstasy came, they had it in their fingers. During the ecstasy they gave it to the Virgin to kiss; later they sometimes kissed it themselves; and finally they gave it to be kissed by the persons who surrounded them, although not to everyone; and also they made the Sign of the Cross on themselves and on others with it.”

The pious use of holy images, their purpose, and their value for salvation should be understood from this.

It can be seen that statues, crucifixes and holy pictures are useful. With their expressions and attitudes, they tell of hidden but certain realities. Is not visual teaching in the forefront today? And images bring to mind persons and facts which have great importance for us,

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And when all those in the kitchen had finished kissing it, she put her hand without difficulty through the bars of the window grate, so that those outside could also come up to kiss the sacred image. They were kissing it one after the other with a great deal of emotion. When it seemed that they had all done this—outside everything was totally dark; all that could be seen were the people on whom the light from the kitchen shown—it was observed with surprise that the girl continued to hold her arm outside, as if she were waiting for someone to come. And those inside heard her say, Oh! They don't want to kiss it? Why?

A short pause followed during which the girl's breathing could be heard very clearly. One of those present could not contain himself and went outside to see what was happening. He found a couple trying to hide in the darkness some distance away. He spoke to them and they admitted that they had withdrawn from the window when the girl began holding the cross to be kissed. He and she both considered themselves unworthy to place their lips on the holy article.

It took a little while for the man to convince them that their attitude was mistaken; that even though they felt themselves very sinful, they had no reason to turn away from the one who had come especially in search of sinners; that it was obvious that she was waiting for them, since there was the girl with her arm held out in the darkness, offering the crucifix . . . to them! And they were the only ones who were missing . . . And the girl was not doing this from her own initiative, since one had to do no more than look to see that she was completely removed from everything that was occurring around her . . . Faced with these thoughts, their resistance waned and from far back they came up trembling to place their lips on the image of the one who had invited them and waited for them in such an extraordinary way.

making us aware of them by association of ideas and reflections, recalling to mind and maintaining certain psychological states.

Speaking to her sister Pauline, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus wrote down in her autobiography:

To the beautiful pictures that you have shown me, I owe some of the sweetest joys and strongest impressions which have inspired me to the practice of virtue. I pass my free time looking at them . . . The little flower of the Divine Prisoner, for example, has inspired me with such beautiful thoughts that I have remained all absorbed in them.

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After those final two kisses, the girl withdrew her hand from the window, and minutes later the ecstasy ended.⁷

Almost at the same time Ceferino came asking for Mr. Ruiloba to come immediately, since his daughter Mari Loli had just gone into a trance. They went as fast as they could and came in time to hear how the girl was faithfully making the request that they had given her. This filled them with consolation. But the consolation was followed by amazement when they heard the girl say “Oh, has Conchita already asked you this?”

Mr. Ruiloba is absolutely convinced that all this had a supernatural cause, since Mari Loli could not have known by any natural means what had just happened in Conchita’s ecstasy.

Someone might ask, “What is the meaning of all this?”

Well certainly the man with the amputated leg remained, as far as his physical condition, in the same situation in which he had been before, without any substantial improvement (now he rests in peace), although with a certain betterment since he was not the same as before with regard to other more important matters. Since he had come with great faith he was not disappointed, and we know that he left Garabandal very satisfied, with a heartfull of joyous thoughts. We know that he was thrilled by what he had seen and heard . . . and sure that he had not lost the way. It could not be doubted that on those mountains something happened that affected him in a salutarious way, something that, although it could not be explained, had brought him closer to a more important well-being. He could comprehend as never before those words of Christ, It is better for you to go into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. (Matt. 18: 8)

And what can be said of the recalcitrant couple? Throughout their life they will never forget those minutes of suspense.

They must have suffered intensely with the shame of knowing their unworthiness: the incompatibility on the same lips of sensual kisses and the kisses of the image of the Absolutely Pure. But then also, as never before, they must have been enlightened as to what lengths God will go to bring back sinners, to pardon them and purify them.

7. Fr. Valentín’s journal shows that this episode took place on the night of September 17th.

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That kiss on a night in Garabandal, so unexpected and so urgent, must have marked the life of that couple with salvation. Before God there is nothing without importance.

*What the storm wind cannot do,
Sometimes is done by a breeze;
And there are lives that are ruined,
By merely a smile.*

If a smile, as the poet Peman⁸ writes, could be the ruin of a life, how much more a kiss properly given could be the start of salvation.

About this time took place, although the exact date is not know, another of the innumerable minor events that constitute the Hour of Garabandal in the tremendous History of Salvation.

I received this directly from the lips of the stone mason Pepe Diez,⁹ to whom it happened; he remembers it as if it were still taking place.

As on almost all the evenings in those days, phenomena occurred in the village, together with remarkable processions of prayer and penance that formed behind the girls walking in ecstasy thru the streets and trails. But on this day Pepe Diez did not bother to take part in them. Besides this being nothing new for him, he was also tired, and he had no desire of being in the procession.

From his house he was able to hear clearly the sound of footsteps and prayers approaching, then receding, to be lost in the distance . . . When all became quiet, he went outside and made his way down a dark alley to better avoid any meeting that might detain him. As he was walking close to a wall, he smacked his forehead against a stone jutting out from it. The reaction was instantaneous, *motus primo primi*, as the moralists say: the typical reaction of so many men who have grown up surrounded by bad language and have made it their own. He let out a blasphemy.

Immediately he felt ashamed. But he did not have time to think about it. Something held him captive in that corner of the alley, as the sound of the *procession* that had faded away was now returning. It did not take

8. Peman, poet, dramatist and Spanish orator, born in 1898. His most well-known dramatic works are *El divino impaciente* about St. Francis Xavier, and *Cuando las cortes de Cadiz* which tells about the resistance to Napoleon's French troupes at Cadiz.

9. See Chapter II, footnote 9.

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long for the procession to come upon him, and he tried without success to hide where the shadows were darkest, so that everyone would pass without noticing his presence. The girl who was coming in ecstasy at the head of the parade, without lowering her gaze from on high, went toward him, crucifix in hand. Poor Pepe would have preferred the earth to swallow him. He fell trembling on his knees, and felt the girl place the crucifix on his lips with a soft force, as if requiring a kiss of reparation for the blasphemy that could only have been heard by the ears of God.

The stone mason was well admonished, more effectively than if he had heard many sermons on the faithful observance of the second commandment of the divine law. He will never forget the lesson.

And so at Garabandal Our Lady appeared in an ineffable way to repeat to everyone, My little children, these things I address to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father: Jesus Christ the Just. And He is the propitiation for our sins. (I John 2: 1)

There were other episodes of instruction during the final weeks of that unforgettable summer. We are going to mention one that deals with a subject that is today neglected to the extreme.

We know that the girls had a most proper comportment. The testimonies of this are numerous and explicit. Here is one of great value because of the competency of the witness—a person who shared the life of the girls as few others:

Since my first visit, on August 22nd, 1961, I took advantage of all opportunities to go up to Garabandal where I have passed and still pass my happiest days.

I determined to study the girls closely, not only in their trances, but also in their normal state. I took pictures that show clearly the girls are not sick or peculiar, and have no abnormal symptoms. I can report with a thorough knowledge of the matter on their manner of comporting themselves in their homes, in the fields, in the stables, in the church, etc.. They cannot be distinguished from the other girls of the village. They play, run, jump up and down, pray . . .

Now there is something that can be noticed in their external manners that is not the same as the other girls. For example, in their way of sitting, they always do it with great modesty. And never have they been surprised in the least lack of purity. Their comportment in this has been in the extreme. Furthermore everyone has been able to observe in the ecstasies how they concern themselves that their dresses are in place.”

(Fr. José Ramon Garcia de la Riva,
Memorias de mis subidas a Garabandal)

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Yes, their comportment was most proper; although we should bear in mind the customs and styles in mode in the daily dress then prevalent in their sheltered and secluded environment. The girls from Garabandal dressed like other girls of their time and area; and because of this, they sometimes wore short skirts, as was then the style.

The Virgin called their attention to this with a mother's delicateness.

In one of their ecstasies¹⁰ the three girls went to each one's home separately, by the Vision's request, to change the dresses they were wearing for longer dresses. Conchita was heard to say later during the trance. "We should always wear long dresses like this, above all for coming to see you." (Sanchez-Ventura)

On August 31st one of the girls,¹¹ while sitting, went several meters forwards toward the church and several meters backwards. The people who were watching became so filled with emotion that many cried . . . Not so much for the action itself of going over the ground sitting down like this; but because in all the distance traveled, the girl's dress, without being disarranged, covered her to her knees. And I observed afterward that, in spite of having slid like this on the dirty ground, the dress had not become soiled. It was on this same day in August that the Virgin advised Loli to lengthen her skirt a little. *She said this smiling.*"

(Fr. Ramón Andreu's report)

The spiritual giants so numerous today even in the clergy, will put on a knowing smile here, discrediting Garabandal because of infantile ideas which to their way of thinking could only have importance for narrow-minded people still affected by the old-fashioned morality of the Middle Ages.

Fortunately God has His own criteria, ordinarily close to the reasoning of simple and virtuous souls, ordinarily distant from those who follow their own ways, the wise and prudent who are not well versed in sacred literature.

Salvation in all its immensity is accomplished through things that are small.

Do not think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets.

I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill . . .

10. This was an ecstasy during the middle of the night, between the 9th and 10th of September.

11. This refers to Conchita, according to Fr. Valentín's notes.

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Therefore whoever does away with one of these least commandments, and so teaches men, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever carries them out and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5: 17-19)

Modesty and decency can never be neglected in genuine morality because they are required by our condition as creatures made to the image and likeness of God, and furthermore raised up to be His sons and members of the Mystical Body of Christ. It is not that we are ashamed of our bodies, but that we are convinced that the most important part of us is not seen. And too much attention should not be given to our physical being while the other, our better part, remains forgotten and obscured. Proper dress is a distinctive trait of the human being who bridles and holds in check the animal nature, since there is in us a higher nature that deserves more attention and care.

Salus populi, ego sum—I am the salvation of the people. Each day it was seen more clearly that the Virgin had come to Garabandal to promote the salvation of her people.¹² None of those who came here with true devotion toward her and a well-disposed heart went away disappointed. And there are many who have stated that they have passed the best moments of their life in that little mountain village. I do not yet know what heaven is, said one priest, but in Garabandal, it seems that I have been on the threshold.

12. More about this?

From the ecstasy of September 4th:

“At 1 o’clock they took the hands of all those present, and made them make the Sign of the Cross . . . Then they sang rosaries through the village—the vision leading, the children singing only a part. They went from house to house, singing an Ave Maria at each house. Sometimes they went up the stairs if it was necessary.”

From September 5th:

“At 5 in the afternoon, Jacinta and Loli went into ecstasy; they made the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of all those that were there; later they went out with a little crucifix and went from house to house, holding it up for everyone to kiss.”

From September 6th:

“They went from door to door singing the rosary. They gave the crucifix to everyone to kiss, and went in where there were sick or old people.”

(The quotes above are from Fr. Valentín’s notes.)

It seems clear to me that in this there is a beautiful way of recognizing and showing that in every home or Christian household—and in Garabandal all of them were—there is truly a domestic church, with all that this means. And that every place where sons of God live, is also a home of God.

From the Waters of Garabandal to the Waters of Baptism

Toward the end of the summer in 1961 there was a unique episode that illustrated the work of salvation that the Virgin came to perform at Garabandal.

Thru a series of circumstances which many might attribute to chance or fate, but which we who have the faith attribute to Providence, a young woman from Paris arrived in the early summer of 1960 at the home of a young woman in Burgos. The young woman from Paris was 18 years old; her name was Muriel Catherine.¹³ The young woman from Burgos was slightly older, and was called Ascension de Luis. The latter informed us of very interesting details about the way Muriel Catherine providentially chose her home and why she stayed with her.

The young Parisienne came desiring to learn the Spanish customs, and at the same time to have some new experiences and explore new horizons. Her parents allowed her exceptional freedom, and so she traveled alone without restriction throughout other countries in Europe.

Ascension de Luis was employed in a state agency and was living almost alone in her family's apartment, since she had lost her parents at an early age, and her brothers and sisters had gone to live by themselves. Because of this she had agreed to have the unknown French student stay with her temporarily. Ascension was deeply religious, marked by an extraordinary devotion to the Virgin, whose maternal help—she was the only mother that she still had—she had sought efficaciously in the important times of her life. Living the faith was for her the most natural thing in the world; and so on the first Sunday in which the French girl stayed in her home, she spontaneously said to Muriel, What time shall we go to Mass?

Muriel accepted the invitation readily and arm in arm the two went to church. However it did not take Ascension de Luis long to notice that her companion was out of place there; her unfamiliarity was evident, though she tried to do as well as possible what she saw the others do.

The reason for this was soon explained, as between the two had grown an excellent mutual understanding and affection: The French girl was not Catholic. Worse still, she did not have any religion. And it was not really her fault. Her father was a Jew, her mother a Protestant; but neither of

13. For special reasons, Muriel Catherine's last name will not be mentioned.

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them practiced religion. And as a result their three children, who had grown up without instruction, did not concern themselves about religion.

This discovery brought Ascension to a greater interest and an almost maternal solicitude for Catherine. It seemed to her that God and the Virgin had confined the French girl with her so that she could open up to her the horizons of faith and hope, to introduce her to the way of salvation. Ascension entrusted this matter to Our Lady in heaven, and set to work.

I was quite moved when she told me that she didn't have any religion. I told her it wasn't possible to live like this, that she ought to accept her mother's religion or her father's . . . Or, since she knew me, a Catholic, she might even interest herself also in our religion, which is the most demanding, but also the most pure—the true religion! And so, comparing one with the others, she could see which would bring her the closest to God.

We began instructions right away, and we held them constantly during July and August of that year.

Catherine responded well, since she was a good person; and even had a little sentiment in her first experiences, in her first prayers. Ascension remembers their kneeling together in front of a picture of Our Lady of Fatima, with some details that are quite remarkable, and her *disciple's* first Hail Marys on a silver rosary that Ascension possessed and used as a precious treasure.

As Catherine liked Spain very much and its customs pleased her, she decided to write her parents to allow her to stay there longer. They answered that she should come to get her winter clothes, and so she went. Arriving in Paris and well versed in religion, she began to tell her parents that she would turn Catholic. She thought that—since they had not given her any religion—it would not matter to them that she embraced the one that seemed the best . . . But that was not the way it was. When she told her parents what she was thinking of doing, their reaction was violent; her father shouted out, Of all things, to become a Catholic! This was considered a real dishonor to the family. Coupled with the little liking that he had for Spanish people, the result of all this was that her father did not let Catherine return.

But I continued writing to her; and in July of the following year, 1961, many difficulties and the firm opposition of her father having been providentially overcome, Catherine arrived here again. A few days later, for the first time there came to me the news or the rumor that there were *apparitions* happening in a

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village of Santander called San Sebastián de Garabandal . . . And then it occurred to me: If the Virgin appeared at Fatima, why couldn't she appear here?

Then I thought that—if this were true, something from God—here could well be the best means for the conversion of my friend . . .

I obtained information on what was happening in the little village of the Montaña province; and we set out on the way; she had more faith than I myself.

On arriving on August 27th, a Sunday, we met a disagreeable situation: a tour group was giving all this a picnic atmosphere, as if it were more like a bazaar than a serious religious matter. We met a Salesian priest who was also upset. On observing the attitude of the crowd, he had become angry, saying among other things that all this had the best indications of being diabolical.

At this point the pastor of the village passed by and approached him to calm him. You can't judge this by what is happening here, by what is seen in this crowd. Wait and see the ecstasies of the girls, which you haven't seen yet.

Nevertheless the priest was not calmed down, and I remember him being very concerned about whether they had done exorcisms on the girls . . . And if they hadn't done this, then whether they shouldn't be done as soon as possible. This priest lived in America and had planned to stay there in Garabandal two or three days to study all this better; I know that later he departed very enthusiastic.

The priest's reaction and words had an effect on the simple people of San Sebastián. Ascension de Luis tells us:

On the following day, Monday, August 28th, the girls and their families were affected, and the village also, by what the Father repeated so often, that this could very well be a thing of the devil. Because of this they had prepared a small bottle of holy water to throw at the apparition the first time that it returned. The apparition should not be trusted, said the priest, since the devil is very clever and can deceive, appearing in many ways; and to deceive he begins with good appearances. The girls, very worried, would not let go of their bottle of holy water for anything.

In the evening Catherine and I, although we were rather unknown, succeeded in entering Jacinta's house. She was in the kitchen with her parents, and Mari Loli was with hers; the girls were unable to hide the worry that they had from what the Salesian priest was saying. What would happen when—on the Vision's arrival—she would receive an *asperses* of holy water? About eight or nine people were there, presided over by the pastor, Fr. Valentín. When I could, I explained very briefly to the girls the situation of my companion, requesting them to petition the Virgin very much for her. And I entrusted my cherished silver rosary to them to give her to kiss.

Not much later Jacinta and Loli went into ecstasy in the stunning way that has been described so many times. And immediately we heard them speak to the vision in that voice like a whisper, so characteristic of the trances:

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A priest has come who says that she is a devil, and that they were going to throw holy water at her so that she would leave.

They said this with striking expressions of regret and fear. But soon their faces lit up with extraordinary joy and broke out in marvelous smiles, as they set down the bottle of water that they had brought to the side and behind them.

This also brought joy and confidence to those present, since it could be supposed what had been the response of the apparition to the frightened expressions of the two little girls. A similar scene had occurred during the apparitions at Lourdes.

“The two girls,”—continued Ascension de Luis—“were sitting in front of us on some small low benches like those still seen in the kitchens of the village. And on their laps they held the religious articles given to them to offer the Virgin to kiss. As soon as their apprehension had eased, they began to speak about Catherine, since they were heard clearly. She isn’t a Catholic . . . No, she isn’t a Catholic . . . She isn’t baptized . . . Come, help her . . . Oh! because of her parents!” They remained for some time on this topic.

And then they began to offer the vision the objects that they held on their knees. It was something worth seeing. Without lowering their heads, or moving their gaze from the spot on which it was fixed, they took the articles one by one. Raising up an arm with great grace as if to touch the lips of whomever had to be kissing them, they remained like this a few seconds with the arm on high, and then lowered it in its place.

When the turn for my rosary came, they were heard to say, Oh! With this rosary she learned to pray . . . With it she said her first Hail Marys . . . Her first Hail Marys . . . It was Loli who presented my rosary, and she continued repeating this. She was putting it down among the other articles when Jacinta took it in her hand and raised it again up towards the vision, repeating in her turn, as if it were something coming from inside of her, Her first Hail Marys . . . Her first Hail Marys . . . Finally she put it down on top of Loli’s knees together with all the other articles.

My excitement was tremendous; and it was even greater when I learned that this certainly was the only article that had received the Virgin’s kiss twice, since they had told me that when the girls presented something that had been once kissed, although it had been done a long time previously, they were accustomed to put it down immediately saying, You say that this has already been kissed. Because of this, from then on I kept the rosary as a real treasure.

When they had finished offering the Virgin all that they had there, they were heard to say, Now? Good! And Loli reached her hand behind the little bench on which they were sitting toward the bottle of holy water that had been set down there. She took it, opened it up, and threw it forcefully upwards in front of her . . .

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And then we could notice a little wonder. The water didn't fall where it should have fallen naturally—upon me, the one who was the closest and the one in front of Mari Loli—but rather, making a mysterious curve in its path, it fell in the shape of a little shower on top of Catherine, who was facing Jacinta. Fr. Valentín, who was almost leaning against Catherine, behind her, assured me that not a single drop had fallen on him. I, who was holding her arm—we were leaning against each other because of the excitement—can also testify that nothing touched me. On the contrary, Catherine felt fully this mysterious bath. Not only on her head, but also on her dress and even on her feet. “Yes, I was drenched!” And I ought to say that this was a very small bottle, and it was not completely full since part of its contents had been splashed on the kitchen floor slightly before the coming of the apparition.

The mysterious meaning of the episode is clear. The young 19 year old girl, through the mercy of the Lord in heaven, had already been brought to the faith; but there was something still lacking in order to enter fully into the City of God, to be counted among His sons:

*Go into the whole world,
And preach the gospel to every creature.
He who believes and IS BAPTIZED shall be saved.
But he who does not believe shall be condemned.*

(Mark 16: 15-16)

Thus heaven intervened miraculously to inspire Catherine to make the last step in the process of entering onto the way of salvation. And that unique intervention had a good ending, as we shall see later.

“A little later”—continues Ascension de Luis—“we saw Loli anxiously searching among the kissed objects, and repeating in a worried manner, Hers, hers . . . Where is hers? It's very small . . .” Finally, as if someone were mysteriously guiding her, she put her hand on the floor near her feet, and picked up a small medal of the Virgin of Lourdes, no more than two or three centimeters in size. It belonged to Catherine and we had given it to the girls when we entered, together with the rosary and some of my medals. And the girls had put them among the many articles that were awaiting the Virgin's kiss; in the course of the ecstasy it had fallen on the floor. The image was so tiny that I am sure it would not have been possible to find it there in the poorly lit kitchen if the hand of the girl had not been guided by someone.

Loli raised up her arm to offer the medal to be kissed; but in spite of stretching as much as she could, it appeared that she was not able to reach. Then she picked up the things that she had on her lap and on top of her knees and stood up. She set the articles on the little bench, and stretched as much as she could on

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the tips of her toes . . . But it was seen that she still did not reach. Then Jacinta stood up in turn, picked Loli up by her knees—without the least effort—and raised her up as if she were a feather. I haven't seen a more beautiful picture: the two girls with their heads tilted backwards, their faces shining with the most ineffable happiness, smiling, making all their movements with an unsurpassable grace . . .

Loli, with her arm on high, tried to reach up with the little medal to the mysterious being that was there. She appeared to have succeeded, and after that Jacinta lowered her down, while addressing her voice upwards, "I . . . I should give it to her? . . . I should put it in her pocket?" . . . She approached Catherine, who was breathless with excitement. (Catherine was seated on another one of those low benches, and it couldn't be observed whether her jacket had pockets or not.) Without looking, Loli then said, "Here, here is the pocket!" And very carefully she put in it the little medal that seemed to have considerably more importance than its size represented.

Following this, the two girls (who were standing in front) began to lean toward us, while rigid and in a very difficult posture, seemingly one that they could not hold without falling. And a little later, with an astounding naturalness, they returned to their normal position. In speaking of this, it might not seem to be much, but I can tell you that observing it was a real marvel because of the expressions on their faces and the gracefulness of their movements.

Again Loli began inclining her body, this time only toward Catherine, to the point of resting almost on top of her, in a posture impossible to hold and without a single motion of loss of equilibrium or balance. Instinctively we stretched out our hands, since it seemed impossible that she wouldn't tumble down. But Fr. Valentín said to us, "Let her alone. She won't fall." She was like this a few seconds and returned to her normal position. I had the impression that the girls were drawn where the apparition (or the Virgin) moved, without ever taking their eyes from her, and that she held and supported them in their most difficult and remarkable positions.

Finally the two girls began to talk to the Virgin. "Here? We should pray here?" . . . And without going out on the street, as on so many other occasions, they began to pray right there—and how they did it!—a Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, while we joined with them as well as we could. Later we saw the farewells: they positioned their faces, first the one girl, then the other, in the attitude of receiving a kiss on each cheek, while they spoke out with most intense desire, "Don't go so quickly! . . . Stay a little longer!" . . . I don't know how long this lasted, but certainly more than a half hour.

Ascension de Luis kept a definite and unforgettable remembrance of that 28th of August, 1961 not only because of the number of things that happened there to her French friend, but also because it was her first visit

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to Garabandal. Many other trips followed as this young woman from Burgos is one of the persons most linked with the famous events. This first trip was a special day for her: the anniversary of the death of her own mother on August 28th. With regard to this, she received marvelous information from heaven at the time when the girls presented a memento of the departed for kissing. Hidden within it was a small leaf from a calendar, but a leaf with a tale . . .

Catherine had to endure the misunderstanding and opposition of her parents. But finally, providentially, she was able to return to Spain in 1963; and still more providentially, she was able to obtain the necessary permit for remaining temporarily to work in Burgos . . . And on the 20th of October, she solemnly received Baptism in the city's magnificent cathedral. The girls had not petitioned for her in vain. In several apparitions they were heard remembering her case, and repeating later in their requests: "At 21 years . . . when she will be an adult" . . . Yes, at 21 years, at an adult age, Muriel Catherine entered into the family of the sons of God with a very Christian and Spanish-French name: Maria del Carmen Catherine.

Could she ever arrive at measuring the depth and width of the mystery of salvation to which she had been brought by the decisive assistance of Our Lady visiting us at Garabandal?

But when the goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Spirit, Whom He has poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His grace, we may be heirs according to the hope of everlasting life. (Titus 3: 4-7)

Why at Nighttime?

On July 29th, 1968, I arrived in the late afternoon at the waiting room of the convent of Poor Clares in Aguilar de Campoo. There, leaning against the grill, since he was a little hard of hearing and did not see very well, I found an old and excellent priest speaking with two monks on the other side of the grill. We exchanged greetings and this priest who liked to joke, for a reason I do not know, came out unexpectedly with a remark about

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the events of Garabandal. “Yes, how are those strange affairs from Garabandal that always have to take place at night. As if the Virgin could not chose better hours to appear! Many things can take place in the darkness . . . At night all the cats are black.”

The good priest, lacking adequate information, had simply echoed the many rumors and prejudices that were circulating from mouth to mouth. How many times, even in the early days, had been promulgated the suspicious question concerning Garabandal, Why at nighttime? The objectors believed to have found here a good basis for distrust and rejection.

It is easy to go from nighttime to accept as likely the existence of other extenuating ideas like rehearsal and deceit; if not on the part of the girls, then on the part of other persons or parties putting pressure on the girls with their parent’s easily disguised agreement. I myself have heard rather weird, if not ridiculous, remarks on this matter. The surprising thing is that even Bishop Puchol came to accept such suppositions—tremendous pressures—in a document more or less official.¹⁴

As the question, Why at nighttime? repeatedly was brought up to the girls and those who were close to them, they consequently passed it on to the one they saw in their trances. And this happened specifically 10 days after the episode of the holy water on the 8th of September, a day which was distinguished at Garabandal since it had special Marian significance.

We have a short story from that day.

With the idea of delving into the extraordinary happenings that were taking place there, one day I climbed the mountain leading up to Garabandal. Significantly it was the 8th of September, the feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Virgin, and I admit taking advantage of the occasion.”

So Father Julio Porro Cardenoso, canon of Tarragona, describes his first visit to the celebrated village.¹⁵

14. “Nota” of March 17th, 1967 to the news media.

15. This distinguished priest soon became one of the most enthusiastic and competent promoters of the Garabandal cause.

He has published three books on the subject:

—*God in the Shadows* (A theological study on the events of Garabandal)

—*The Great Prodigy of Garabandal*

—*Garabandal, Without Meaning?* (Editorial Circulo, Pasco Fernando et Catolico, 39, 7, Zaragoza)

The notes that I am using here were taken from his first book, *God in the Shadows*.

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We came to the place at a time when the visionaries were absent from it, since they had gone to a religious ceremony in a neighboring village that was celebrating the feastday of its patron saint.¹⁶ About 5 o'clock in the afternoon the girls returned to their homes, still not having eaten. Meanwhile, my good friend Father Valentin, the pastor of the place, had informed me in detail of all the most spectacular things. The rumble of thunder broke the almost sepulchral silence that surrounded us while we were exchanging impressions and I was gathering the reports that had been put down in writing and accurately verified.

Fr. Julio later took the occasion to examine each of the visionaries individually, asking them, "what I wanted to clarify the facts I had been told." Then came the evening.

The bells of the church brought us together for the rosary. Three of the girls were present there among the other children. (Jacinta was in bed with a sore throat.) I watched them and saw nothing extraordinary; they were similar to the other girls.

The rosary ended and the church was closed, as the bishop had ordered. At 10 o'clock at night the ecstasies began with Mari Loli in a trance.

A series of observations then followed, certainly interesting, but which we already know, since they have been repeated many times. Two things in particular attracted Fr. Julio's attention:

(1) The strange movement of her clothes while the girl was falling to the ground.

(2) The girl's expressions and postures.

Concerning the first, he says:

Her clothes slid downwards in a movement that was not natural, as if an invisible hand were guarding the most complete modesty of the girl. All diabolical intervention has to be ruled out.

Concerning the second:

Loli fell slowly as though someone were lowering her to the ground; she was as if struck by a ray of light. I observed her closely; she had a truly angelical face; it didn't seem to be the same face.

16. Sometimes they celebrated the feast of the Virgin of the Sick at Puente Nansa; sometimes the feastday was celebrated at the sanctuary of Our Lady of Light on a high hill in the Pefia Sagra Mountains. In the village there was great veneration towards this sanctuary, a continuing tradition from time immemorial. The pilgrimage toward it was long and difficult, five hours of walking on foot on the steep hills of the mountains.

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It was probably during this ecstasy¹⁷ that the girl, on the request of the pastor who had spoken with Father Julio about the feasibility of proposing certain questions “that would be unusual and difficult to answer”, asked the apparition among other things:

What is it that the Virgin most urges the Spanish people for amending their lives?

ANSWER: That they confess and receive Communion.

What sacrifice does she principally request from Spain?

ANSWER: That it would aid the other nations to be good.

What is the sin of parents that offends her the most?

ANSWER: That they fight among themselves: their quarrels and arguments.

Certainly it was at that time that “at the request of the parish priest”, once more the pointed question was also asked: “Why do these things occur at nighttime?”¹⁸

The answer did not come in words . . . the Virgin’s expression “filled with sadness.” And not only sadness: “The Virgin became serious”, Loli said later.

It is easy to understand this response . . . I ask myself: Could there be any other reaction from a mother toward children who show distrust, who come to her with an attitude of suspicion and doubt? And so enclosed in this silent response is a hurt reproach: For months I have come giving signs—the pure of heart understand—that it is I who am here among you, I who act, I who impart the intimate consolations of which many speak, I who give secret answers to many of your questions . . . And now you make this remark? Do you not have sufficient reasons to recognize me, and see that, though you don’t understand them, there certainly are reasons for what I do and the way I act.

Those who find a cause for suspicion and rejection in the nighttime idea, would not react better before the proofs of the daytime, of which there are a great number. Would their attitude have been any different if

17. I have seen later from the notes of Fr. Valentín that these questions that passed from Conchita to Loli, who had gone into ecstasy in Conchita’s home, were not asked on the night of September 8th, but on September 9th.

18. The question took place in an ecstasy on September 8th.

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they had not found the stumbling stone of the nighttime? An episode from the gospels casts some light on this:

*But to what can I compare this generation? said Jesus.
They are like children sitting in the marketplace,
who call to their companions and say:
We played wedding music for you and you have not danced;
we have sung funeral songs and you have not mourned.
For John came, neither eating or drinking,
and they say: He has a devil!
The son of man came eating and drinking and they say,
Behold a glutton and wine drinker,
a friend of tax collectors and sinners!
But the wisdom of God is justified by its works.*

(Matthew 11: 16-19)

*Then Jesus said to the royal official of Capharnum:
If you do not see continuous signs and prodigies,
you do not believe.*

(John 4: 48)

A person can always find reasons for not believing if there is something in believing that does not correspond to his desires. From his place in hell the rich man of the parable requested the patriarch Abraham for Lazarus to come back to life in order to warn his brothers.

*They have Moses and the Prophets . . .
No, Father Abraham,
but if someone from the dead goes to them . . .
If they do not heed Moses and the Prophets,
they will not believe even if someone rises from the dead.*

(Luke 16: 27-31)

The Virgin responded to this question with a sadness on her face, since at the base of it—on the part of some at least—there had to be a disposition neither honest nor sincere.

Only she knows all the reasons for the ecstasies occurring at night. However some explanations have occurred to us.

“Never”—we read in Fr. Ramón’s report—“have the visions and phenomena of Garabandal encouraged a big crowd; rather they have strongly

encouraged the opposite. In fact, the most interesting manifestations have taken place when the mass of spectators had left.”

Thus the fact that many of the phenomena occurred at night had a purpose of elimination. Since it was not pleasant to wait hour after hour to attain these things, after a disagreeable night, awake and almost sleepless,¹⁹ many abandoned the scene and left the village, especially those who had come as if on a tour to entertain themselves with a spectacle never seen . . . On the other hand, those who were seriously interested remained: persons who sincerely sought something and wanted to know what this was about. And so a gathering small in number, but continually renewed, could better observe and associate with the mystery that the girls experienced, a gathering that was physically much reduced in size.

The nighttime, the occasion so often propitious for sin, was marked in Garabandal with a sign of penance, prayer and expiation. Those who conscientiously united themselves with the heavenly walks of the visionaries, finished by experiencing the joy and the harshness of vigil hours that ordinarily left them physically exhausted and depleted. The testimonies that we can gather give an unending list of these things.²⁰

The nights at Garabandal, whatever the perverse and malicious may think of them, were not nights of sin, but rather of expiation for sin and of prayer for sinners.²¹

19. In Garabandal one could not lodge in a rooming house, much less a hotel! Sometimes the village people offered or rented rooms to persons who merited special consideration; but ordinarily the people had to pass the time without sleep, or sleep as well as they could in their cars.
20. Fr. Julio Porro says of his first night in Garabandal:

“At 4 o’clock on the morning of September 9th, I left the village. A vigil like this wouldn’t be worth the inconvenience, after traveling the very long trail to arrive at such an unknown mountain hideaway, if there hadn’t been something very remarkable to be present at and witness.”

21. What we already know about the happenings during the nights at Garabandal is confirmed by what Fr. Julio says about the night of September 8th—9th that he experienced. Following what he says about the Loli’s trance, he relates:

“A series of ecstatic phenomena on the part of her and of Conchita followed . . . in the houses, through the streets . . . in the most diversified positions: standing, on their knees, completely prostrate facing the sky, seated with their arms in a cross and moving in this position through the streets, stuck in the mud and passing over the stones . . . I saw them come down the stairs in Mari Loli’s home while sitting, with their arms in a cross and their gaze fixed on the heavens, without lacking in modesty in spite of their difficult posture . . . They visited the sick, praying the rosary, and in that way entered into the house of Jacinta who was in her room with a throat infection.

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They were a practice of that which had been said by the angel to the shepherd children of Fatima:

You must pray much, speaking like this: “My God, I believe, I hope, I adore and I love . . . and I ask pardon for those that do not believe, do not hope, do not adore and do not love . . .”

Because of this, those nights have left indelible impressions on many hearts. From the rugged and hard trail that led up to the village, to the difficult path up to the Pines, all was a symbol of the penitential and ascetic role that had to be followed by whoever wanted to *enter* in the march—frequently perturbing—of the phenomena.²²

Are the dark nights of Garabandal something new in the experience of Christians? Do we not well know that the nighttime hours appear in the History of Salvation as hours chosen for the admirable commercium between God and man? We can recall some well-known facts. It was at night that St. Joseph was made aware of Mary’s great secret, on which our survival depended. In the middle of the night occurred the coming into the world of the Son of God and the Son of man; and the hours of the night were later those that He preferred to dedicate to prayer during His public life . . . In the secret of the night the mystery of the Incarnation, the summit of all history, and especially the History of Salvation, was realized. The Mass of Sunday in the octave of the Nativity starts solemnly with the words of the Book of Wisdom:

*For while all things were in quiet silence,
and the night was in the middle of her course,
Your mighty word leapt down from heaven,
from Your royal throne.* (18: 14-15)

It was exactly 2 o’clock in the morning; the Virgin told them to recite the rosary again . . . They said it perfectly.

Everything ended with the kissing of the Vision by the girls and of the girls by the Vision, and the Christian way of saying goodbye, Until tomorrow, if God wills. The girls finally embraced, and everyone started to retire. It was past 3 o’clock in the morning. We had been in a constant dance from about 10 o’clock. The visionaries were not tired; we were completely exhausted and drowsy.”

It seems to me that we have here a good example of what those nights were, the nights of Garabandal that some persons look upon as suspect.

22. Narrow is the gate and straight the way that leads to life, and few there are that find it. (Matt. 7: 14)

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And it is evident from the lives of the saints that their great communications with God took place with preference for the hours of the night . . . as if He were pleased to deal with His best friends right during the hours in which others usually offend Him the most.

The hours of darkness should not be so readily connected with the action of the power of darkness. It appears unfounded and unreasonable to try to find in this *nighttime* a sign of evil proceeding from the affairs of Garabandal. Besides anyone seeking darkness as a cloak for his wickedness does not have to search for it here; there are plenty of shadows and nights everywhere to cover the shame of an unworthy life.

Let us correspond with the exhortation of the apostle and leave the work of darkness to put on the arms of light. (Romans 13: 12) However it is to be understood that this does not have any connection with the presence or absence of the sun on the horizon.

Meditation Under the Stars

With another useful report that seems extremely charming let us contemplate one more time how the nocturnal vigils of Garabandal were filled with piety and penance.

We owe this one to the previously mentioned María Herrero de Galardo; it forms part of her letter to the Holy Office, dated February 2nd, 1968. She describes what she experienced a few days after the events that Fr. Julio Porro Cardenoso reported to us. She was there on September 12th, a Marian day also, because on it is celebrated the feast of the Holy Name of Mary.

On that day the ecstasies started about five in the afternoon, and lasted well into the night, with slight intermissions, such as the one in which Conchita said to her mother, “Mama, let me have dinner now, for the Virgin is going to return,” or like another one with Jacinta: “The Virgin told me to rest a little, since she would not be long in coming back.” Her ecstasy preceding this had lasted a long time and the position of her head, bent backward so acutely, must have affected her. But very soon after having said this, Jacinta went into ecstasy again; her rest didn’t last more than three or four minutes.²³

23. As an interesting fact, I am inserting this from Fr. Valentín’s notes for the afternoon of September 12th:

“Towards six, Loli, who went out of her house in ecstasy, came very specially near to “the man who had come many times; the people said he was Balduino.” (*The King of Belgium*)

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I believe it was on this day that I saw the girls obviously play hide and seek with the Vision, although in the beginning I didn't understand well what they were doing. I saw them on the tips of their toes—attempting not to make noise and leaning their backs against the walls—glide furtively up to the corner of the street. There they stuck out their heads a little at a time, appearing to want to surprise someone who was hiding from them—Suddenly, as if they had found what they were searching for at the end of the corner, they let out shouts of joy and began to run in pursuit . . . It was really pleasurable watching the girls' game. Obviously they had a Mother who enjoyed playing with her little children.”

I know that there are people who dislike these games, regard them as trite, improper for a supernatural apparition, and look on them with disdainful disgust. These people are unaware of the gift of holy simplicity. The games, undervalued in spite of their marvelous charm, have been in their case pearls thrown to the swine. (Matt. 7: 6)

It is no surprise that many people are shocked by these games which do not seem to properly fit in with phenomena that are supposed to be supernatural. What can be the meaning of this? Can there be anything in this relative to the History of Salvation that we have been discussing in this chapter?

I admit being perplexed myself, but I am convinced that one cannot expect God to make all His ways of acting toward us completely understandable in every detail right from the beginning.

However I have run into something that appears rather basic and that in some way may unveil the divine pedagogy that may be hidden in the unusual games at Garabandal.

In September, 1969, a group of French *Garabandalistas* gathered for a spiritual reunion at Cande. Among other interesting conferences, there

Jacinta went from house to house, and made the Sign of the Cross on the beds of the sick . . . She turned toward me to meet me on the street, and made the Sign of the Cross on me . . . At 6:30 she passed by praying the rosary and made a Sign of the Cross on the cars that had come up to the village.”

Manuel Lantero, an industrial lumberer from Gijón, who can relate many things from his frequent visits to Garabandal, reports:

“One day I was in a car in front of Conchita's house in the enclosed garden whose entrance was sealed by a fence made of crossbeams. We saw the girls in ecstasy come twice up against the fence rails . . . Finally they jumped over them with extraordinary grace, went to the car, made the Sign of the Cross on top of the hood and the windshield. No mark remained.”

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was one by María Teresa Le Pelletier de Glatigny on *The Catechetics of Mary at Garabandal*, from which these statements are reproduced.

Among the important lessons of catechism by the Virgin at Garabandal, I wish finally to speak of a thing that appears to me to reach the depth of our spiritual life under a childish appearance. I wish to speak of that game of hide and seek in which the Virgin and her children took part during a long night.

The more that I think about this matter, the more I feel I understand it.

You understand that many mothers, teaching their little children to walk, use the nice deception of hiding behind a tree or a door to entice the baby to go after them. Stirred by the desire of finding its mother again, it makes its first steps without even being aware of it.

Previously I compared this attitude of a mother with the Virgin's game. For in the spiritual life, after giving us the joys of His presence, Jesus withdraws so that we might seek after Him more and without sensible consolation . . .

Mary, who knows the ineffable secrets of the divine life, to teach those profound things to her simple little girls, has played at hiding herself in order that the desire of seeing her again, the suffering that they then felt on losing sight of her, the wish that they would have to find her again, would bring them to one day overcome the vicissitudes of the spiritual life, something that isn't easy.

Between the 15th of July and the 8th of August, 1970, Mrs. Le Pelletier de Glatigny was in Garabandal. One day, speaking with Conchita, she asked her if she knew anything about her conference at Cande. Receiving a negative answer, she then explained to the young girl how they could understand those games, now so long past.

—Certainly the Virgin wanted to teach you to seek to adapt to a life of pure and simple faith when the apparitions ended. And now that you find yourself in the middle of spiritual darkness, you can understand better than I what this means . . .

—Yes, Conchita replied, that is what the Virgin wanted to teach us. I will read your conference.

Let us return to the report of María Herrero on September 12th, the feast of the Holy Name of Mary:

Toward 8 in the evening, at twilight, the girls in ecstasy traveled thru the village and headed toward the road going down to Cossío. This was the first time that I saw them leaving in that direction. I didn't follow them since I was exhausted from a lot of running after them, from one spot to the next, on a rather hot afternoon.

The feast of the Holy Name of Mary was the feastday of my name, and of course, that of the one who bore that sweet name like no one else. Because of

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this, I had mentioned to Conchita that she should congratulate the Most Holy Virgin on my behalf . . . I had been thrilled to learn that on one occasion she had made Conchita give her congratulations on his feastday to a certain man who visited San Sebastián de Garabandal with devotion.

Aniceta had forbidden Conchita to venture out on the nearby road that led out of sight of the village. On this occasion, Conchita, seeing herself prevented from following the Vision and her companions, began to cry out loud, imploring her mother to permit her to continue onward. Aniceta was so struck by Conchita's voice, full of suffering, that she felt convinced (according to what she herself told me) of not finding herself simply before the voice of her daughter, but before a strange force that came out of Conchita and her voice. She had no other solution but to let her leave.

And then the four girls began a swift march toward Cossío, so rapid that the people following them were not able to keep up. Then I decided to run after the crowd too; but I felt exhausted, and from time to time I had to stop to catch my breath . . . Fortunately, the girls also slowed down to pray in a loud voice, accompanied by the crowd.

On coming to the little wooden bridge that crosses over the ravine, at the bottom of which a waterfall flows, they stopped completely. And returning to the Pines, they continued their prayers there . . .

Beneath a cloudless sky covered with stars, on a clear transparent night, the Hail Marys were being counted out slowly, as if imbued with an infinite fervor.

The fifteen mysteries of the rosary followed like this, one after the other—without hurry, as the girls were accustomed to pray in ecstasy. Everything encouraged *MEDITATION*.

Somehow I understood then more than ever Conchita's phrase calling the *Cuadro* her little piece of heaven . . . I myself had this little piece of heaven on the twelfth of September, 1961, in the prayer of the night, enveloped in silence and solitude."²⁴

On that 12th of September, in a more private ecstasy following the one that María Herrero has just described, some interesting things occurred in

24. Such a sweet impression remained in the mind of Mrs. Herrero de Gallardo from that prayer and meditation under the stars that years later, in September of 1967 . . . Let us listen to her:

"We made a procession on St. Michael's day. It was a procession composed almost completely of *Garabandalistas* from Catalanes who were coming to inaugurate the private chapel to St. Michael. We went up penitentially from Cossío with the banner of the Archangel and the picture of the Virgin painted by Isabel de Daganzo. I called Mercedes Salisachs' attention on coming to the place, and she made the procession stop there in memory of the apparition of September 12th, 1961. And everyone got on their knees on the hard ground; we prayed one of the 25 rosaries that we recited that day."

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Conchita's house. I say, in Conchita's house, since the girl herself was not there . . . Father José Ramón García de la Riva describes it to us in his *Memorias*:²⁵

Loli was in ecstasy and there came the time—so familiar to many and for all so moving—of returning to each one of the owners the multiple articles that had been kissed by the Virgin. As usual the girl, without looking and without erring, began her task, taking the articles one by one from the pile where they were all piled up and jumbled together.

She came in turn to a wedding ring. Loli took it and gave it to a woman, putting it on the customary finger of her right hand. (*European custom*) But almost immediately, and giving the impression that she was following hidden instructions, she took the ring from that finger and put it on the corresponding finger of the left hand. The woman could not contain her feelings and broke out in tears.

The reason? She was from Valencia and had understood the Virgin's refinement, since in her area—as she told the people around her—wedding rings were not accustomed to be worn on the same hand and finger as in the rest of Spain, but instead exactly where Loli had put hers . . . The thing didn't end there. Loli also told her the name of her husband, which the woman had absolutely not revealed to anyone.”

Another episode, following this one right at the foot of Conchita's bed, occurred during a very prolonged ecstasy of Loli and Jacinta.

I had already given everything I had at hand so that it could be kissed by the Virgin, and I cannot explain now the reason why I also gave Conchita the camera in its case during the ecstasy of the other two girls. (It was known that only by means of one of the visionaries who wasn't in a trance could the rest of us communicate with the girls in ecstasy) . . .”

And so begins the remarkable tale that Father José Ramón describes in his *Memorias* under the title of *The Story of the Virgin's Photograph*, and which I am not going to reproduce here so as not to lengthen this chapter excessively.

Certainly memorable during the apparitions in Garabandal was the first feastday of the Holy Name of Mary!

It was now the pre-autumn season, peaceful and enchanting, and the vigils of prayers and meditations under the stars—like that which took

25. Fr. de la Riva stated that the ecstasies in Conchita's house on the night of September 12th lasted from ten at night until four in the morning.

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place at the little bridge over the ravine—were wonderful. However, simpler vigils composed of amicable conversations in the kitchens of the homes had their own charm. María Herrero described one of the latter type like this:

One evening after the apparition, I found myself alone with Conchita in her home. I took advantage of the occasion and said to her,

—“Tell me about the Virgin, Conchita.” (As a rule, none of the girls spoke spontaneously about their visions; they jealously kept their secret; but that day I was fortunate.)

—“What do you want me to tell you? Today the Virgin came without the Child. And she didn’t bring her crown. Her hair is long, dark brown, parted in the middle . . . We have never seen her with a veil on her head, and her hair waves lightly, as if blown by a breeze . . .”

—“Anything more?”

—“There’s so much! But I don’t know how to say it . . . One interesting detail: when the Virgin prays the ‘Gloria’, she bows her head with extraordinary reverence.”²⁶

—“Have you ever seen her clothed in the Carmelite dress?”

—“She always comes clothed in white and with a blue cloak. Only on the feastday of Mount Carmel, July 16th, did I see her in the Carmelite habit.”

—“And what can you tell me of St. Michael?”

—“He started everything. He came the first time on June 18th, preceded by lightning and a roaring like thunder that made a great impression on us.”

—“That isn’t strange, Conchita, for don’t you know that St. Michael is the leader of the Celestial Army, the standard-bearer of God, the vanquisher of Satan, etc., etc.?”

—“Well, no. I don’t know anything about that.”

At another time in the conversation, speaking of the Child Jesus, Conchita tried to explain how He was dressed:

—“It is very difficult to describe the color of His clothes! It is as if He were covered with a little of the sky . . . but not exactly blue; I don’t know what His clothes could be made from . . .”

Concerning St. Joseph:

—“HE IS THE GREATEST OF THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.”

26. The woman from Gallardo also heard Conchita say, although she does not remember if it was on this or another occasion:

“The Virgin gives the impression of looking more than at you. She is looking at the world. And in what a way! No one could look like that.”

The Designs of God

The presence of St. Michael the Archangel has a definite significance in the mystery of Garabandal. At Burgos in November of 1967 Conchita told the painter Isabel de Daganzo:

He seemed to be about 9 years old, with black eyes, smiling, with spread out pale pink wings, wearing a light blue garment. We didn't see his hands except when he gave us Communion. The bottom of his robe didn't touch the stone that the people call "the Angel's Stone"; he was on top of the stone, but up in the air.

In spite of his harmless appearance, we should remember the true nature of the first archangel, as María Herrero tried to make Conchita, then unlearned, understand. He is God's instrument for the highest missions: God's arm in the great combats.

Why then did he show himself like this at Garabandal? What definite mission did he have? Preparing the way for the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, crowned with 12 stars (Apoc. 12: 1-7) was no minor matter. However there are reasons to think that he was coming for more than that . . .

Outside of the lightning and thunder, everything about him seemed to show peacefulness. But a mission of peace could be the preamble, if it fails, of a final all-out battle.

Who could say whether or not we have already entered one of those final hours prophesized in the last book of Scripture?

*And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun,
having the sign of the living God;
and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels,
to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying:
"Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees,
till we sign the servants of our God on their foreheads."*

(Apocalypse 7: 2-3)

A last attempt at peace before passing on to the final reckoning. An Angel with a peaceful appearance conducts a peace-making mission; though later he can become, in a different stance, the leader of the angels of justice.

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On the shores of the Tigris River, during the most spectacular *prophecy* of his life, Daniel once said:

*But at that time shall Michael rise up,
the great prince, who stands for the children of your people:
and a time shall come such as never was
from the time that nations began even until that time.
And at that time shall your people be saved,
everyone that shall be found written in the book.
And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth,
shall awake: some unto life everlasting,
and others unto reproach, to see it always.
But they that understand
shall shine as the brightness of the firmament:
and they that instruct many to justice,
as stars for all eternity.*

(Daniel 12: 1-3)

Garabandal, an important era in the process of Salvation!

The Virgin, just as the Angel who preceded her, and the angels who later accompanied her, came for our welfare, not for our entertainment. Thru them, one time more:

*For the grace of God, Our Savior has appeared to all men;
instructing us, that denying ungodliness and worldly desires,
we should live soberly and justly and godly in this world,
looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory
of the great God and Our Savior, Jesus Christ,
Who gave Himself for us,
that He might redeem us from all iniquity,
and might purify for Himself an acceptable people,
that pursues good works.*

(Titus 2: 11-14)

On finishing this chapter, my glance chanced to fall on a postcard received several months previously, showing under a thickly clouded sky, the difficult trail to Garabandal. High up in the near foreground, the Pines; behind them in the background, the mountains with their peaks hidden in the clouds. This unique panorama is commented on by some verses written on the card, and regardless of what literary quality they may have, they certainly have put down concisely what Garabandal is;

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and furthermore announce what it will be. Who was the author? Presently I do not know; but in these verses, he speaks to us as the voice of the whole village, the voice of the uncountable people who have gone up that trail with a heart free of prejudice.

*March on . . .
With your eyes fixed on the hopes
From those ancient pines;
With your steps firm,
Gazing in the distance
Where alone God can be reached
By the penitential path of rosaries.
Coming up! Straight ahead!
The Throne of Mary!
The Pulpit of her Prophesy!
Where a misty veil shrouds a mystery,
On which shines the light of God,
Creating a New Day.
Trail traveled a million times;
Forever resounding with prayer;
Where the Psalm has found its home,
And the voice of heaven trumpets its call.*

CHAPTER 11

After Great Hopes Great Disillusions

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

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

Although they were not aware of it, the situation at the time indicated something would happen on their visit. It was the period of the year during which occurred the greatest concentration of Marian feastdays: September 8th, Our Lady of Covadonga, a holy day of obligation in Asturias;

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September 9th, a local feastday of the *Virgen del Monte* in her sanctuary in the district of Santa Maria; September 10th, a Sunday celebrating the octave or remembrance of the feastdays in the previous week; September 12th, the Holy Name of Mary; September 15th, the day dedicated to her Seven Sorrows . . . Truly a good time to come to the town that could be called the Virgin's village!

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

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

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

As they were going, we were able to hear one of them very clearly, "No! No! How terrible! How terrible!" This struck us very much, and the look of fear on the girl's face was such that it couldn't be forgotten; but no one could understand what it meant.

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

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

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

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

"Some flies, so annoying in the month of September, flew about their faces, and some-

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

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

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

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

There were about 50 spectators on that day, among whom were the parents of the girl born without eyes previously mentioned in this book. We can imagine the comments . . . Some were thrilled, and everyone was stunned. The Cuban, a believer but not a practicer, who had come with skepticism, kept repeating over and over, “This is amazing. Only God could do this.”

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

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

This statement furnishes material for reflection and comment . . .

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

times rested right in their eyes, without the slightest reflex of contraction or blinking that could be noticed in the girls.”

2. Fr. de la Riva says in his *Memorias*, speaking of the visionaries’ descent from the Pines: “Who can argue about this *abnormal* and perfectly real fact which is able to be tested and should be tested? If an opponent in good faith exists, I would propose for him to attempt ‘the exercise’ on the location, in the same way, under the same conditions, and especially in the dark night, in the snow, on the ice. And not only one time, but almost every day as at the time of the apparitions.”

Something Great Is On Its Way . . .

The marvels of Garabandal which were occurring daily,³ and which seemed to be acquiring a rhythm *in crescendo*, were holding an ever increasing number of people in expectation.

Besides, special things were happening . . .

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

—Father Valentín can only say, “I don’t know, I don’t know what this is . . .”

Response (learned later): A wide and benevolent smile from the Virgin.

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

Response: “He will see on October 18th.”

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

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

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

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

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

A point of meditation for whomever would miss a holy service, even Sunday Mass, for whatever pretext or without a pretext.

4. According to the notes of Father Valentín, on the night of September 3rd and 4th, Jacinta, Loli and Conchita had a spectacular ecstasy, very moving and very prolonged. Until 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

o'clock in the morning, the three girls were lying down in front of the door of the church, forming a group of singular devotion and beauty. It was then when Conchita was heard to say these words about the miracle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Neither the girls, nor the people in Garabandal could celebrate the feast of the *Blessed among Women* like this; but they celebrated it the best that they could according to their knowledge and understanding. And how well it came off! The rosary of that first Saturday of October 7th was certainly the most beautiful of the year. It had everything that there could be in a prayer to make it perfect: vocal prayers (measured and rhythmical—we know how the children prayed in ecstasy!) and meditation on the mysteries . . . songs of prayer sung more from the heart than the lips. The rosary of the feastday lasted two and a quarter hours. But no one felt the length to be burdensome; and certainly not the girls who were enraptured in heavenly contemplation.

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

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

6. Antiphon from the first Vespers of the feastday.

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

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Had she not come to Garabandal for no other reason than to advance this program? A new Israel of God⁸ was awaiting her coming in order to gather around her and trust in her aid.

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

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

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

Doctor Ortiz noted three details that attracted his attention:

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

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

—A man from Madrid, who wished to follow the girls in those marches, lost the cane that he carried, and lamenting the impossibility of finding it in the darkness, went to sit down in front of Ceferino's door, complaining loudly of what had happened, since "it was a borrowed cane,

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

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and furthermore, a souvenir of the war . . .” Not much later the onlookers saw Conchita appear walking toward them in ecstasy. The girl came up to the man who was complaining, handed him his cane without looking at him, and continued onwards.

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

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

Toward evening the members of the press came up to Conchita’s house. They found her in the little kitchen waiting for an ecstasy, as she had already received calls. Several people were with her, among whom was Dr. Ortiz’ wife, who was seated at her side near the fireplace. The new arrivals stayed at the door, observing the girl closely . . . Conchita, who seemed to be listening to something, leaned toward Dr. Ortiz’ wife and whispered in her ear:

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

—“But which man? There are three . . .”

—“That one, that one in the middle.”

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

—“The girl says that you should sit.”

—“Who? . . . Me?”

—“Yes, yes,” Conchita intervened—“you.”

—“But . . . me?”

—“Yes, you!”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—"I was never concerned about counting them."

—"Well you should do it."

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

Fr. José Luis Martín Descalzo whirled around and left with his companions. It seems that he departed from Garabandal in a bad mood; we

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do not know if that was because he did not like the village or because his arguments had been torn down by the observations of a layman.

Awaiting the Great Day

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

Nevertheless, the phenonema continued daily.⁹

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

And we saw something like fire in the clouds.

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

When it was over, the Virgin appeared to us.

And we asked her what that thing was.

And she said that she came in it.

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

- Conchita and Loli, in ecstasy at the door of the church, sang the Ave Maria in a beautiful duet.
- On one of the nights Conchita was surprised in ecstasy while she was still eating, sitting by the fireplace. She was marvelously transformed, holding a glass of milk in her hand that no one was able to take away from her.
- Someone came to ask Maximina González for lodging from the 14th to the 18th for a young woman from another country who had previously been in the village (*Muriel Catherine*). Dr. and Mrs. Ortiz, who were not acquainted with her, heard comments that she was Jewish, but that she wanted to be baptized, and were really surprised by the ingenuousness of the visionaries who commented, "Since she is so big, how can the godfather hold her in his arms during the Baptism?" After the Baptism of adults was explained to them, Conchita exclaimed happily, "Great! That way Mari Cruz can be the godfather can I can be the godmother!"

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

It was the feast of Our Lady of the Pillar¹¹ during another day of our apparitions, at which Loli and I were present.

While we were looking at the Virgin, a star with a very long tail was seen beneath the Virgin's feet.

Several people saw this.

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

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

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

10. Luke 21: 11,25.

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

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

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

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

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

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a Station to the Blessed Sacrament, and later stopped in the *calleja*, at the site of the first apparition, where she prayed another Station.

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

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

—“Why did you scream?”

—“Because we saw the Virgin throw down a star.”

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

—“Well we certainly saw it. The Virgin did this.”

Father Valentín mentions this phenomena in his notes:

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

It is understandable that all these things, wrapped like this in a halo of mystery, and probably magnified by being transmitted from person to person, necessarily had to leave the people very impressed.

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

Anticipating the day, people started to come.

For example, two days after the feast of Our Lady of the Pillar, there appeared for the first time in Garabandal a German engineer who was

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residing in Spain at Madrid: Máximo Förschler Entenmann.¹² Although Protestant, he was very closely tied to the Andreu family; because of this he came accompanied by Fr. Ramón María.

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

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

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

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

In the village were a doctor from Santander and a bone specialist from Burgos.¹⁴ I called them. After an examination they made a diagnosis: besides the obvious swelling, there was probably a fracture of the ankle, at least a hairline crack. They applied a thorough dressing and an icepack that was able to be

12. This man describes himself like this:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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found, (from the indiano who had a refrigerator) and with several others carried him in their arms to the bed; his pains were terrible.¹⁵

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

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

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

It seems that took away Máximo's indifference.

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

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

A short time after having kissed the crucifix that Conchita had offered him, he saw that she was beginning to make the sign of the cross and to hold out her cheeks for the invisible kisses: the unmistakable sign that the ecstasy was going to end. Then he rapidly formed in his conscience a petition to the Virgin: *that the girl would also give the crucifix to Máx-*

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

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

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

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

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

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imo . . . (Hours before, the good man had followed the visionaries in their trances without obtaining the least demonstration of attention from them; but rather the opposite, since several times they had given the crucifix to the onlookers while they had always passed him by.)

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

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

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

We have the following information about this from Father Andreu.

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

—"What are you doing, Father?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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“What strange things happen in this village!”

Continuing now with Mr. Förschler’s description:

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the room where Loli’s trance was taking place, a man finally forced himself in. It was the first time that he had been at Garabandal, and he carried in his arms a sick baby who was a heavy cross on his shoulders. The baby was crying. Loli, undoubtedly advised by the apparition, went toward it and—without looking—signed it with a perfect sign of the cross. Immediately the tears stopped and on the convulsing face of the little child an unexpected smile appeared. The father’s sad expression softened with emotion, and he said simply, “I have never yet seen him smile!”

When the ecstasy ended, Mari Loli asked for “the sick baby who was carried in his father’s arms.” She wanted to meet him, since she had not

yet seen him, and at the same time she wanted to transmit the message with which she had been charged. She caressed the little baby and said to the father, dwelling slowly on the words, “The Virgin told me that you shouldn’t worry.”

Jacinta—who at the time was in ecstasy in the street, searching for the man who had come—also repeated, “on the part of the Virgin” the same words of comfort with regard to the little baby.¹⁸

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

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

At 10:30 at night they gathered in front of Ceferino’s ancient house. Then Conchita came in ecstasy, drew near, and began to hold out the crucifix to be kissed . . . The two men kept themselves away from her, and in order to hide better, went up the outside stairway of a nearby house.¹⁹ However the girl—with her head in a position incredibly tilted backwards, without seeing either them or the stairway—climbed the stairs miraculously and held out the crucifix for them to kiss. The first man shook visibly, and turned his head; but the girl managed to make the sign of the cross on him twice with the holy image. She insisted again that he kiss it and once again the man refused. A third time the girl made the sign of the cross over him with an extreme gentleness in her expression. Only then did the man relent and put his lips on the crucifix! Almost the same thing happened with his companion.

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

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

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

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

—“Father X, what has happened?”

—“Let me alone, let me alone.”

In the end he confessed:

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

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

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

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

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

It is not unusual that God gives even more than what is asked from Him, and this happened to the man whom no one knew. Seeing other persons offering the girls (at the time of farewell) cards and photographs for

them to sign, he also presented one . . . And he could later read a dedication on it with a clear mention of his priestly state.

Expectation Begins to Mount

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20. Juan A. Seco reported:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was a rosary in the church as usual; also as usual, there was an apparition. I think that the vigil that night had to be very long and animated.

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

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

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towns and cities were serenaded by the monotonous sound of falling rain and swirling water.

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

On October 18th, 1961—María Herrero tells us in her report—“I awoke to pouring rain throughout the province of Santander. We left at an early hour from the capital of the Montaña, and there on the mountain of Carmona²¹ we had to get into a caravan, a very long caravan of cars preceding us, which without doubt was going as we were towards San Sebastián de Garabandal.

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

And then we had six terrible kilometers facing us. The rain, which was not stopping, had converted the road upwards into a quagmire.

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

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

What this witness experienced was also being experienced at the same time by thousands of persons of every state and condition. Their hope and desire had to be very strong to uphold them. Not by an affliction of hysteria, nor to take part in a game of children, were they doing this.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Waiting for Heaven

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

On arriving in the village next to Ceferino's house, I put down my umbrella, and raising my eyes, I saw Loli behind a window on the upstairs floor. She was watching everything with that look of hers, so transparent, so pure. She did not seem to be very surprised by the crowds that were continuing to come. (I'm sure that she had never before seen such a crowd assembled together.) She must have been sitting; later I learned that she was suffering from an inflammation of her knee. I couldn't speak with her, since at the time I didn't have sufficient friendship with the girls, and even less with their parents, who were not inclined to conversation and confidences . . . and especially on that day when they had to defend her from the assault of countless inquisitive people.

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

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A little later I met Elena García Conde from Oviedo who said to me, I am impressed. I spoke earlier with Loli and she suddenly exclaimed, “Oh! If they knew who was here among them today!” She said this in an exceptional manner! Please, ask her whom she is talking about.

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

Fortunately I was able to locate Father Valentín; he was going from one place to the next very agitated and nervous; he seemed to be sunk in a sea of confusion. On one of his passes by I went up to him, and after the greetings he said, “Heavens! I don’t know what’s going to happen here . . . I am really afraid of all these people. And they aren’t going to like the message!”

—“Oh! Then you know the message?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Remove from us every stain of error and corruption.

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

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

Who could say that this prayer, commanded many years ago during the pontificate of the foresighted Leo XIII, has not reached its full significance in the time of Garabandal? The hour comes, overriding two epochs of the Church: the period of the monolithic, secure Council of Trent of the Con-

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

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

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tra-reformation; and at least for the moment, the insecure, agitated and confused period that has followed Vatican II.²⁸ This hour of Garabandal could well be a preview of salvation against the gravest dangers that surround us . . . And at the time, the presence there of *OUR MOST POWERFUL PROTECTOR IN THIS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE POWERS OF DARKNESS* would have a most definite reason and significance.

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

Heaven seemed to rage against us. A horrible cold began to join with the constant hard rain that culminated in a hailstorm, and then converted into slush toward 5 or 6 in the afternoon. Although I found refuge in a house where they gave me food, I wasn't able to put out of my mind the turbulent atmosphere of the streets and trails in which various languages could be heard, although naturally predominantly Spanish. (I believe that only among the religious was there a majority of foreigners.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

H Hour

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

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

The Virgin was smiling as usual.

The first thing that she said to us was: "Do you know what the writing that the Angel is carrying beneath him means?"

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

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

And she told it to us.

And it is the following . . .

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

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

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

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

We are accustomed to repeat frequently the proverb *Man proposes but God disposes*. On that key day at Garabandal this was reversed. Heaven proposed and earth disposed . . . And thus the thing came about. When we attempt to revise God's designs, the results are never brilliant.

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

The night came down and they did not know what might happen to the great multitude, in total darkness, over such roads, and under the worst weather conditions. “Why do you fear, men of little faith?” the Lord could have said to them too. Perhaps a prudence too human did not leave room in them for the matter of confidence in God and complete acceptance of what He has planned—something that is always decisive in the works of the spirit. Though they did not comprehend these things, why could they not have adhered exactly to what could some way be coming from above, and accept that mysterious challenge with all its conditions, behind which there could well be the sign that was sought?

The Commission said:

as there were many people,

and it was raining much,

and there was nowhere to shelter the people,

it would be better to say the message at 8:30 or 9:00.

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

At 8 o'clock, Father Valentín was no longer able to resist further pressure from the Commission, and went in search of the girls so as to perform the matter—not according to the instructions that the girls had received—but according to the directions given by the Commission. What should have occurred at the door of the church was forbidden (such was

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the way to better emphasize that the official ecclesiastic element had nothing to see in this) and everyone went rapidly to the Pines.²⁹

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

“We marched”—María Herrero tells us—“stumbling in the dark, swimming in a sort of flood of mud, stones and branches that was streaming down from the Pines. We fell, we rolled down sometimes, we climbed up on all fours, holding with our hands onto the big rocks on the ground or onto the bushes on the banks. Many were on the verge of giving up . . . And in spite of so many falls and stumbles, I know of no one who broke a bone or hurt himself in the least. Doesn’t that seem astounding?”

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

Let us hear the witness again:

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

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

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

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

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Later the fragile silhouettes of the four girls³⁰ suddenly appeared in the distance with the throng that surrounded them, protected by several pairs of guards on horseback.

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

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

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

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

This was not exactly what they had been told to do. The pastor, Father Valentín Marichalar, who was embarrassed by the childishness of the message, did not have the courage to make the proclamation that was asked of him. Was it perhaps out of human respect? Did he have a fear of being ridiculous? I do not think that his actions on that night did him any honor. But who can judge?

The reading by the four girls was not exactly a good proclamation; the words of the message came out from their lips hurriedly, not pronounced

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

“But the foolish things of the world has God chosen,
that He may confound the wise.

And the weak things of the world has God chosen,
that He may confound the strong.

And the base things of the world,
and the things that are contemptible,

has God chosen, and things that are not,

that He might bring to naught, things that are;

that no flesh should glory in His sight.” (Cor. 1: 27-29)

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

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correctly and with a schoolgirl cadence . . . Nevertheless, from that moment on, those who were really looking for a word from heaven as an exhortation or warning knew where to find it.

“I distinguished clearly”—said María Herrero—“the childlike voice of Conchita reading the message . . . Afterwards, because the girls were not heard well, two men repeated the reading in a loud voice.”

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

*It is necessary to
make many sacrifices,
do much penance;
but first, we must be very good.
And if we do not do this,
a punishment will come on us.
Already the cup is filling up,
and if we do not change,
a very great punishment
will come upon us.*

A Call to Salvation

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

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

No wonder. The same would probably have happened to me. But now I feel myself obligated to proclaim that, by means of those four young

girls—seen in all their littleness and insignificance—that same One speaks to mankind Who from the beginning had come speaking words that do not pass away, although heaven and earth pass away. (Mark 13: 31)

God does not communicate with man ordinarily by saying sensational things but rather by saying what is necessary for salvation.

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

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

“With meekness receive the engrafted word, that is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if a man be only a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man looking at his face in a mirror. For he saw himself and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was.” (James 1: 21-24)

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

Nevertheless *that* was a new proclamation of what has been from the beginning. Something we need to hear, although we do not like hearing it. Men like things that are exhilarating, not things that are essential . . . And

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

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

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what entertains will always be better accepted among men, in the beginning at least, than what obligates . . .

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

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

The expectations of the people who had witnessed the multiplication of bread must have been even greater than those of the pilgrims who had gone up to Garabandal. They had there the all powerful King who could be the solution to all their problems! Jesus escaped from them, and in the synagogue at Capharnum on the following day spoke out: "You seek me not because you have seen miracles, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Labor not for food that perishes, but for that which endures for life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you." (John 6: 26-27) This offered nothing sensational or encouraging, but caused a disillusion and disenchantment that ultimately changed into hostility and hate, resulting in complete alienation from the Man Whom they had previously admired and followed with great zeal. "After this many of His disciples withdrew; and walked no more with Him." (John 6: 67)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Opposing the present development of one’s own personality³⁴ is placed the former “Deny oneself” for Christ! And against the current planned destruction of every inconvenient moral obligation, comes forth the statement: *Take up your cross each day.* (Luke 9: 23)

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

It is necessary to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

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

The words of Jesus: “I am with you all days until the end of time” (Matthew 28: 20) do not carry only the subtle and symbolic meanings that some theologians of intelligence, but not of good sense attribute to them.³⁵

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

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

35. I cannot speak badly of theologians; among other reasons, because of the words of St. Francis of Assisi, “You should honor and reverence all theologians and those who admin-

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

But first we must be very good.

How well this is known.

How well it is forgotten!

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

In this period of darkness, these enlightening words remind us that we were not born good, but are called to become that way by daily effort. If we do not fight against the appetites of our flesh, we will be drawn fatally toward ruin. “The flesh lusts against the spirit: and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another . . . Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh . . . If you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.” (Gal. 5: 16-17; Rom. 8: 13)

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

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

ister to you the most holy divine words, since they administer life and spirit to you.” But there are theologians and theologians. If today all are administering spirit and life, it is hard to see it. I am afraid that neither the Church nor the faithful have any reason to thank some of these theologians.

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

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

The obligation of becoming better, of coming to be very good, as the girls said at Garabandal, is the main reason for all our other activities.

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

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

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

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

The mysterious cup symbolizes the “patience” of God looking down on the disobedience of His creatures. When the last drop of our sins fills the vessel, the workings of justice will be set in motion. Garabandal points to

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

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

1. Breaking away from past sins and giving them up by means of repentance.

2. Expiation of past sins through the practice or acceptance of painful and difficult things.

3. Replacing the regretted past with a new and better life.

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

“Because He has appointed a day wherein He will judge the world with justice, by the Man Whom He has appointed; giving faith to all, by raising Him up from the dead.” (Acts. 17: 30-31)

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the time of destiny mentioned in the last book of the Bible, the book telling of the consummation of the world:

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

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

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

Then there were bolts of lightening and peels of thunder and a great earthquake, such as never has been since men were upon the earth. (Apocalypse 15: 6-7; 16: 17-18)

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

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

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

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

Darkness Descends on Many Hearts

The attentive silence that had accompanied the reading of the message was broken almost as soon as the paper containing it was put away. A murmur rippled through the crowd as the message was transmitted to those who had not heard it well, and then . . . On seeing that everything indi-

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cated that that was all, a gale of disappointment more frigid than the storm swept over the crowd, and somber darkness deluged many hearts. What they had so much hoped for had not happened. And this message alone was not worth all this trouble.³⁸ Garabandal was a failure. It was finished. How stupid we had been to come up to this place!

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

No one plays games with the Almighty.

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

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

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

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

For a long time he made his way from one spot to the next—through the water that gushed down the hill in torrents everywhere—amid the crowd going up and down; he was drifting like a shipwreck:³⁹

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

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

"Midway in that painful ascent, I felt myself truly lost. In the night, in the middle of that mountain covered with shadows, a tremendous pain came into my soul, an unsupportable

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

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

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

I changed locations, and again I remained stationary for a length of time that I cannot recall. I was as if unconscious; I was only aware of the continual footsteps of the crowd about me, who passed around me on one side or the other; the flashlights came and went in the darkness . . . Suddenly someone flashed a beam of light in my face. A friend⁴⁰ who was coming down had just recognized me and wanted to give me his impression right away, "This is marvelous . . . It's astounding . . ."

I let him speak, answering in my mind, "You'll understand later!" His enthusiasm hurt me; it almost made me angry.

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

I sheltered myself for a while in a house so as not to get wet. But I felt so discouraged that everything was bothering me. Because of this I went outside and directed my steps to the house where they were waiting for me. I had a need for familiar faces in order not to feel so desolate . . . A little after that Loli's sister Amaliuca, somewhat younger than her, arrived. Signaling to me and two other persons,⁴¹ she said, "Loli says that you should come. You . . . you . . . and you . . ."

I had no desire or intention to go. Finally I decided, thinking, "Well, to visit the sick is still" a work of mercy. I assure you that though I went, it was with the idea of saying a final goodbye to her and this whole thing.

feeling of solitude and a conviction of the ridiculousness that all this represented." (Fr. Ramón)

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

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

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

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

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

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

—Yes I know. Do you know too?

—"Certainly. The Virgin has told me."

—When?

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

—Well, tell us who it is.

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

—It is I alright. I don't believe in anything.

An understanding smile shone in Loli's childlike eyes:

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

I was astounded, staring at the girl.

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

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

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

In spite of the untimeliness of the hour, Aniceta received us.

—Can I be with Conchita?

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

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

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

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

—"At least for a quarter of an hour."

—And what did she say?

—"I don't know what I can say."

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

Conchita smiled. "Well, there is something that I can say. When you went up, you went up happy; when you came down, you came down sad . . . She told me

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

As anyone might surmise, I was speechless.

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

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

When things ended at the Pines, my friends insisted on returning immediately and in a hurry to Santander, without staying longer in the village”—María Herero tells us—“And so I missed something that would have been marvelous to see.”

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

Conchita recorded the episode:

After reading it, (the message) we went down toward the village.

And at the calleja, in the place that is called the Cuadro, the Virgin appeared to us.

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

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

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

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And I was very surprised.

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

Returning now to the report of María Herrero:

I came down with the crowd, and like many others was partially unhappy and partially impressed. I didn't hear, as on going up, the groups reciting the rosary or singing hymns.

When coming down from the village, I began to feel more afraid. An avalanche of people were coming down in a rush, full speed, sliding in the mud and pushing. So that nothing would be missing, a tempest was unleashed like I've never seen. Thunder roared, rumbling thru the valleys; and lightning flashed without ceasing, blinding us with light. How many times I invoked St. Michael!

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

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

I couldn't doubt the truth of the apparitions that I had witnessed; I'd have let myself die to defend them. What then had happened on that disheartening October 18th? Had we let the Virgin down, and would she never return? Very probably! The thought tortured me, and thus that night was for me a real *dark night*, perhaps the only one with regard to Garabandal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I cannot tell anything further with accuracy; but I am sure that the 18th of October was full of interesting episodes that are more or less unexplainable. But no one can doubt one thing: that the angels of the Lord watched over each one of us so that, as the psalm says, our feet would not be dashed against the stones of the roads . . . I believe everyone returned safely to his home. I at least have not known of any accident. And that seems to me to be a very great miracle.

Everything about that day has remained deeply imprinted in my memory, giving the picture of a day of disillusion and of penance, a rather pale picture of what the day of the Warning⁴⁴ could be, since everything in the atmosphere seemed there to test us. It really was a day of purification. Never has anything struck me with such fear of the Lord as what happened on that day.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 12

Garabandal's First Winter

FROM MY SCHOOLDAYS a passage from a play still remains etched in my mind:

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

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

Garabandal's First Winter

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

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

From Warning to Discredit

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

Most beloved sons:

It has been some time since you were told what our attitude must be in the face of the public rumors that attribute to the Most Holy Virgin certain marvelous events, especially revelations, apparitions, oral locutions, and other more or less extraordinary signs.

We¹ would like to see in all of you the highest discretion and prudence with which the Church judges the supernaturalness of such phenomena. Powerful is the Lord, Who gives us revelation when it pleases Him to manifest Himself, and speaks to us when it is in accordance with His goodness. But it would be a great lack of wisdom in us to accept every wind of human opinion as coming from the Lord. When God wishes to speak, He does it in terms that are clear and unequivocal. When He wishes to tell us something, His words do not allow tergiversation (evasion) or obscurity. And it is the Church founded by Jesus Christ—not by public opinion, and much less by any particular person—that is competent to judge definitively on such allegedly supernatural events. Let no one arrogate and attribute to himself functions and powers which God has not entrusted to him, for such a one would be a usurper and an intruder.

In what concerns the events that have been happening at San Sebastián de Garabandal, a town in our diocese, you should be told that in the fulfillment of our pastoral duty and to avoid the unfounded and bold interpretations of those who

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

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venture to give a definitive judgment where the Church does not believe it still prudent to do so; also to guide souls, we have come to declare the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Doroteo, Apostolic Administrator

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

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

And the Apostolic Administrator had not personally seen or observed anything. He has based his opinion completely on the Commission, which also had not seen or observed the matter sufficiently. Furthermore, it had not taken the precaution of proceeding with a legitimate investigation, questioning in an adequate manner the girls and the main witnesses: the girls' families, the village priest, and the honest people who closely followed the affair.²

It seems proper to have official regulations of a disciplinary character to avoid possible abuses or excesses. But why was there such a hurry to pronounce, even though provisionally, upon the character of events that were still going on and still had not been adequately studied? We can remember that at Lourdes and also at Fatima the local diocesan chanceries waited until the end of the events—and until an authentic canonical process was concluded—before speaking out officially on the character of what had occurred.³

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

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

2. What I am stating in this paragraph has already been shown in the preceding chapters.
3. In Lourdes the ecclesiastical verdict came after four years of waiting; (1858–1862) in Fatima, after thirteen (1917–1930).
4. Months later, Bishop Doroteo Fernández was reassigned from Santander—where, according to what had been said, he hoped to remain as the titular and residential bishop—to Badajoz, where he was the Apostolic Administrator until 1971.

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

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

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

- There is also in the *Nota* a third discrepancy: placing in front of the faithful certain truths so that they would easily be led to believe that the diocesan chancery was “the Church,” and because of that to accept what the chancery said with “perfect, complete, and humble submission.” This type of submission is due only to teachings that explicitly and unquestionably come from the Higher Magisterium. At the diocesan level, the charisma of infallibility does not apply; at the low level of a bishop, the final word in questions and teachings of the faith cannot be made. As a consequence, in front of the episcopal dictates—the dictates of one definite bishop—we can be called upon for practical obedience and respect, but in no way are we required to give “perfect, complete, and humble submission” in our way of thinking . . .

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

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

It is hard to understand how a bishop, and moreover one who was an expert in Scripture as Bishop Fernández, could sign his name to this. If anything appears clear in the Bible, it is that God is not accustomed to speak like this . . . His words end in being clear and unmistakable to those well disposed souls who search with their hearts and apply themselves to meditation on His word, even though it is obscure and difficult. But the sayings of God begin almost always in the form of an insinuation or mysterious call that upsets, and even serves to cause the badly disposed to stumble, and because of this is the cause of the fall, and of the resurrection of many. (Luke 2: 34)

The words of God to men are ordinarily a process of progressive communication that only become sufficiently clear in the end, and this only to souls with good will. It is like the coming of light at dawn: some hazy beginnings and dim rays that do not allow the distance to be viewed or shapes and profiles to be made out, going on to become the full splendor that shows us everything around us in detail.⁵

—“When God wishes to speak, He does it in clear and unequivocal terms.”

Yes, like the ancient prophets in the Old Testament. Read any one of them, and you will see how clearly and unequivocally they are understood from the first reading . . . Yes, as in many other passages of the last

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

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

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

For judgment I came into this world;
That those who are blind, may see;
And those who see, may become blind.

(John 9: 39)

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

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prophecy of the New Testament, the Apocalypse, where whole chapters are still waiting a substantial clarification.

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

—“When He wishes to tell us something, His words do not allow tergiversation or obscureness.”

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

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

Think of Our Lord’s patience as your chance to be saved. Our brother Paul, who is so dear to us, told you this when he wrote to you with the wisdom that is his special gift. He always writes like this when he deals with this sort of subject, and this makes some points in his letter hard to

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

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

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

This was no clear and unmistakable answer, but a very mysterious one. It was sufficiently clear so that certain souls would understand it, and sufficiently obscure so that those without a good disposition toward the light would be confused.

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

understand; these are the points that unlearned and unbalanced people distort, in the same way as they distort the rest of scripture—to their own perdition.

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

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

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

Obscure Matters

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

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

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

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

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something against it, but in order to clear up the matter, with the purpose of evaluating the truth better.

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

I came to the village at night—the days had shortened considerably—and on my arrival the girls were walking in ecstasy. I stayed purposely at a distant place, a place that was not accustomed to be the path of the girls' familiar ecstatic marches. And constantly tortured by doubts, I began to say mentally, "Most Holy Virgin, the number of people who are coming to see this can be seen! And to think that, if it were a lie! . . . How much harm it could do! Our Lady, so that I can see that all that is happening is from you, while being far away as I am, I request that one of the girls come from where she is to give me the crucifix to kiss."

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

I was pondering over this bitterly, when suddenly I saw that the people who had entered the house were beginning to go out rapidly, and behind them was the girl still in ecstasy. That surprised me, having an intuition of what could be the reason. Conchita actually came right toward me, as always holding her head incredibly tilted backwards, which completely prevented her from seeing what was in front and around her. She came to the place where I was hidden; she stopped in front of me, and she gave me the crucifix to kiss three times!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This same man, so hard to satisfy with regard to believing unreservedly, was then able to witness another marvel. The weather continued bad—"the village was all mud"—and he went on the trail of an ecstasy that Jacinta, Loli and Conchita were having together. Conchita was marching

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between the other two and suddenly the crucifix, which she was carrying in her hands over her chest, fell . . . Nevertheless, the march of the three girls continued for some 25 or 30 meters farther on; then Conchita was heard to say, "Oh! What should I pick up? Will you tell me where it is?" Without changing their attitude, the three girls backed up to the point where the little crucifix had dropped.

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

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

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

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

Many were the signs that the Virgin gave me to dissipate my doubts; nevertheless, as you know well, and as Conchita foretold to me, I came later on to doubt more than ever, even to the point of not going up anymore to the village."⁸

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

Conchita foretold it in her diary:

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

—that we were going to contradict one another,

—that our parents would not get along with each other,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Today you faked an ecstasy.”

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

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

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

Mari Cruz' mother also scolded them for their conduct.

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

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

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

She told me then that they only pretended when there were trusted people and residents of the village present. And also, that they had only done it when they knew for certain that the Virgin was going to come later, like a half hour before the apparition. And that the Virgin was accustomed to punish them by coming later than that time. And that she always reproached them.

The text from Conchita’s diary is this:

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

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

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

And later, the Virgin came and we were together.

We always ended up seeing the Virgin.

We never faked the entire ecstasy.

From the preceding, this is clear:

- That there are obscure matters about Garabandal which are more than just subjective opinions and pertain to the actual facts themselves.
- That the last matter that we have mentioned is mainly or almost exclusively the fault of the girls, who at various times treated with levity something that merited tremendous respect. Because of this, they are deserving of rebuke. But we should take this into account: that they did not suspect the importance of what they were doing, having come to such familiarity with the mystery that they easily were able to fall into the mistaken belief that it was theirs, that they could almost play with it. Here was fulfilled the dictum, familiarity breeds contempt.¹⁰

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

10. It appears that an *obscure matter* resulted for some because the girls sought to avoid the questions with which they were so often assailed by the inquisitive. Besides the annoyance

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

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

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

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

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

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

And she smiled.

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

Letters in the Wintertime

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

of such questioning and the outright imprudence of so many, the attitude of the girls could have been brought on by what St. Therese of the Child Jesus wrote in her autobiography, as a result of having confided to some people—there was no other solution—the marvelous intervention of the Virgin to cure her of the unusual disease that she suffered when ten years old:

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

(History of a Soul, end of chapter III)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

November 25th, 1961.

Dear Father José Ramón:

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

Obviously they did not know, nor could they know, how Fr. Valentín was! Officially Fr. Valentín was on vacation. But the vacation had been imposed upon him by the diocesan chancery since the good father was sentenced to undergo a type of forced vacation. This was one of the deci-

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sions that came from the Commission back during the summer,¹⁴ for they accused him of being the instigator of the events.

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

Continuing now with Conchita’s letter:

There were two priests here from Palencia who seemed very good. They were not together. One day one came; and another day, another. My mother asked one of them why they were coming since it was said to be prohibited. He told her that the bishop of Palencia¹⁵ believed and didn’t prohibit them from coming. The priest that we had (Fr. Amador) said that he didn’t like them to come; but they said Mass here. One of them left rosaries for me—for when I would have the apparitions—and he was thinking of returning to get them; you know what I mean.

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

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

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

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

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

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Two days later, on December 27th, Jacinta also began to scribble¹⁷ a letter to Father José Ramón. After referring to something that he had written her about Sister Lucy of Fatima, she wrote:

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

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

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

Respected and Dear Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

Concerning the questions that you've asked me, some of them are difficult to answer, since it's hard to make a judgment on them. But with the protection of the Most Holy Virgin and guided by her, I follow what she indicates to me. I go to pray the rosary every day at six in the morning at the calleja; Jacinta accompanies me. Conchita goes out at seven, and Loli at 8:30, but in the church.¹⁸

From the 19th¹⁹ of November our trances have stopped. We are expecting to have them again: Jacinta, on the 16th of December; Conchita, on her feastday,

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

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

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

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

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

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but not for certain, without doubt. Conchita will see her on January 27th; Loli, on January 13th; and I, on January 16th, God permitting. Besides this, we lead our lives like the other girls: at the classroom, playing, and making our prayers every day . . .

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

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

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

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

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

Shortly after coming to the village, we gathered together in a plastic case everything that we had brought to be kissed by the Virgin: rosaries, medals, crucifixes . . . As soon as we saw Loli, we gave them to her. But she wasn't sure that she was going to have an apparition. This left us somewhat dejected, but we had to resign ourselves. And we prepared to spend the night without sleeping, as we

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

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

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

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

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

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ordinarily did. On seeing that there weren't many of us, Ceferino took pity on us and invited us into his kitchen so we wouldn't suffer so much from the cold.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the feastday of the Immaculate Conception the Virgin came to congratulate me, as she had told me that she was going to come. And when she came, she came smiling very much. She laughed very much.²² The first thing that she said to me was, Happy Feastday. And so the day passed very well . . . But I won't see her again until January 27th.

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

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

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

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

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

Only one celestial visit remained for 1961, the year that had known so many marvels. It occurred on December 16th—the evening before the official prayer of the Church starts the splendid “O” antiphons²⁴ that are the immediate preparation for the feast of the Coming of the Lord.

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

“Today Jacinta saw the Virgin.”

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

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

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

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

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

A Year of Epiphany²⁵

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

Each new day was inaugurated with sacrifice and prayer: breaking away from the comfort and pleasant warmth of their beds to go out into the darkness and cold, searching for early morning contact with heaven. The *calleja*—that had so often known the waiting and the footsteps of the crowds—now welcomed in intimate silence and freezing cold those girls, shivering at times, who were quietly coming to give to God through Mary the first moments of their daily life. Sometimes there were two or three more persons, but no other company or protection than their Guardian Angels.

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

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

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

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

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

Already the Cup is Filling Up

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

Yes, I go every day at six in the morning to the Cuadro; the Virgin told me to pray the rosary every day at this time, up until January 16th, when I'll see her

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

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again. You know that the Virgin wants us to be very good, and to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q. What was the background of the vision?

A. Brilliant light.

Q. What were her eyes like? Did she blink during the conversation?

A. Her eyes were dark, very soft and merciful! Rather large. It seemed as if she didn't look at the face, nor at the body, but at the soul! I don't remember if she blinked; but she did look from one side to the other.

Q. Did she weep sometimes? Or was she only sad?

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

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

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

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

27. This characteristic phenomena of Garabandal will be discussed in the future.

Garabandal's First Winter

A. I never saw her weep, or completely sad.

Q. What was her expression?

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

Q. What did you feel when she looked at you?

A. Many things!

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

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

Q. Did she laugh sometimes, or did she limit herself to smiling?

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

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

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

Q. Did she sometimes carry a rosary or some other noticeable article on her?

A. I saw nothing except the scapular.

Q. What did you feel during the ecstasies?

A. A very great peace and happiness!

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

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

Q. What did you feel after a vision?

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

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

(History of a Soul)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conchita added these lines to her answers:

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

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

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

CHAPTER 13

Lord Where Dwellest Thou?

IN THE FIRST CHAPTER of St. John's gospel, there is an interesting episode.

Again the next day John stood with two of his disciples. And seeing Jesus walking, he said: "Behold the Lamb of God." And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turning and seeing them following Him, said to them: "What are you seeking?" They said to Him: "Master, where dwellest thou?" He said to them: "Come and see". They came and saw where He dwelled; and they stayed with Him. (John 1: 35-39)

As John the Baptist did in his time, Mary also, during her time at Garabandal, was attracting the attention of her disciples to direct it later to . . . to Whom?

During the events of Garabandal, a resplendant Marian Epiphany manifested itself. Soon it became clear that this in itself was not the entire reason for Mary's coming; there was a higher purpose to come forth later.

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The minds of the pupils tutored in the school of Mary, Jesus' first disciple, naturally were led to an understanding and meeting with her Son. Garabandal can only be comprehended by realizing the significance of the axiom:

To Jesus thru Mary

From this, the title of Part Two of this work.

Above all, to Jesus as He is present for us here and now in the Blessed Sacrament.

It is highly significant that the girls, as the first apparition ended, ran to shelter themselves against the walls of the church, and later prayed within it a Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Following this, there was hardly an ecstasy that was not related to the ineffable presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist.¹

And along the same line, the first public message on the night of October 18th brought this out in a simple but very important statement:

“It is necessary to visit the Blessed Sacrament.”

But the Eucharist is not only the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. It is also the Bread of Life, and its *primary reason* is to be the nourishment and nutriment of souls.

“I am the Living Bread, coming down from heaven. Whoever eats of this Bread, will live forever. And the Bread that I give is My Flesh, laid down for the life of the world.” (John 6: 51)

From the start Garabandal began turning the attention of the visionaries and spectators toward Holy Communion . . . For it is in this reception of the Eucharist that a great personal encounter with Christ takes place.

1. A lawyer from Palencia, Luis Navas, went up to Garabandal several times and closely observed everything there. He wrote down in one of his notebooks:

“I asked the girls why they went to the church so often, since it was closed (they were not allowed to enter it in ecstasy), and they answered candidly: Because the Virgin likes to go near the place where her Son Jesus is.”

Instructive answer. Those doubts and ambiguities—heretical or semi-heretical—about the real presence of Christ in the Host reserved after Mass in the tabernacle, doubts which have infiltrated deeply into the mentality of some Catholics in spite of all the explicit teachings of the Supreme Magisterium, are not acceptable to God.

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From the Angel's Hand

The Angel, St. Michael, gave us unconsecrated hosts from the beginning of the apparitions.

We had eaten at the time, and he gave them to us all the same.

This was to teach us to receive Communion.

It was like this for many days.

Evidently there was careful preparation—even in outward details—for something that deserved to be well done. (This preparation could be repeated today, even among the old faithful, for how deficient has become the way of receiving Communion. How careless! How irreverent!) Conchita's reference to eating refers to the Eucharistic fast, which in the days of the apparitions was still three hours.

One day he told us that we were to come on the next morning to the Pines—without eating anything—and that there should be a young girl with us.

And we brought the girl.

And we did as he told us.

The instructions having been completed, something serious and important was to begin, something having great exigency for the spiritual progress of the girls (and not only for them). For some mysterious reason, on this day, as on other important times at Garabandal, the presence of a small child-witness was required. Two six year old girls were always chosen for this function: Sari, the sister of Loli, and Carmen, the sister of Jacinta; we do not know which of the two was present on this occasion.

When we came to the Pines, the Angel appeared to us with a golden chalice.

And he told us, I am going to give you Communion, but today these are consecrated Sacred Hosts.

Say the "I Confess" . . .

And we prayed it, and afterwards he gave us Communion.

And after receiving Communion, he told us to make our thanksgiving to God . . .

And after making our thanksgiving, he told us to pray with him the "Soul of Christ." And we prayed it.

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And he said to us: I will give you Communion tomorrow too. And he left.

So Communion was given according to the traditional ritual of the Catholic Church. The first time that the pastor Father Valentín took down in his notes this type of Communion by the girls, he wrote:

“They say that he does it the same as I do when I give Communion.”

The rite started with an act of purification of the soul through the humble confession of sins; and ended by receiving the Lord within, with the making of an effort at concentration so as to communicate with Him.

This is what has always been sought with the *thanksgiving after Communion*; but unfortunately, for many of the *new hour of the Church*, priests and faithful alike, that is not the way it is today.

The Mass ends; the blessing is received. No reason to stay longer . . . It is finished. That’s enough . . . It can be understood: It is not agreeable to remain before eyes that search out everything, to answer to a Presence that . . . Better not to think of that! Oh! The holy motives for rushing out and the great talk of caring for one’s neighbor!

The Angel wanted the girls to learn to pray a brief prayer as an ending for their Communions. This particular short and fervent prayer has been used in devout areas of Catholicism since the days of St. Ignatius of Loyola. It can be found in many prayerbooks (a rare species of printing that is becoming extinct).

When we told this to the people (receiving Communion from the Angel’s hands) some did not believe it—especially the priests, since they said that an Angel couldn’t consecrate.

And when we saw the Angel again, we told him what the people had said.

And he told us that he had taken Them (the hosts) from the tabernacles, that he had taken Them from the earth, already consecrated.

And afterwards we told this to the people.

And some doubted.

And he gave us Communion for a long time.

Conchita writes this down at the end of the first year of the apparitions. And it is surprising that she does not mention it in the earlier pages, since

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the phenomena of these Communions—to which the term mystical was given to distinguish them from normal Communions—began very early.

“From the beginning,” she tells us; and in the scrambled notes of Father Valentín we find this brief notation, pertaining to the month of July, 1961:

“They said that they received Communion on the 11th, 12th, and 13th.”

This is the first time that he gives dates for this type of Communion. So we can gather from this that it was on July 11th, Tuesday, that the girls first received Communion from the Angel’s hands.

And perhaps this undated paragraph in Fr. Valentín’s notes refers to July 11th:

Conchita and Mari Cruz went at 8 o’clock to receive Communion, and they said that he did it the same as I give Communion (understood, of course, outside of Mass). The other two, Loli and Jacinta, went about noon and received Communion at the *Campuca*, higher than at other times (Probably meaning higher than the usual place of apparitions). And afterwards the Angel showed them where the Virgin was, and the Virgin beckoned them with her hand.

Father Valentín does not tell us where the Communions of Conchita and Mari Cruz took place; but if this refers to the first reception from the Angel’s hands, consulting Conchita’s diary, we would have to conclude that their first Communion took place at the Pines. The reception of the other two girls occurred at the *Campuca*, a small meadow at the end of the calleja, below the Pines, which today has the little chapel of St. Michael located on its right. As a point of interest here stood what was called the *Stone of St. Michael*, because he appeared over this stone when giving Communion to the girls.

Here is a more recent and exact confirmation of this. In the previously mentioned conversation of the painter Isabel de Daganzo with Conchita at the college of Burgos during November of 1967, this remarkable description is found:

ISABEL: I would like to paint an ecstasy of Mari Cruz, since I like her so much.

CONCHITA: Yes, I like her very much too. Mari Cruz is very good. Look. Mari Cruz and I received the first Communion from the Angel at the Pines at 5 in the morning. At 6 on that morning, Loli and Jac-

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inta received Communion close to where the chapel of St. Michael is now—where the Angel’s stone is.

We see that Fr. Valentín and Conchita do not agree on the time. Why this discrepancy? Perhaps it was due to the pastor who had to write down so many things on the run. Or perhaps it refers to Communions received on different days.

The circumstances of this first Mystical Communion at Garabandal are enticing, taking place at the beginning of a long and sunlit day in July, in the freshness of morning as things began to take shape in the emerging dawn light, accompanied by the singing of birds, the heralds of the sun.

*There high toward the sky,
beyond the troubles and cares of men,
in the marvelous landscape of the Pines,
are three angels and two girls.
St Michael brings the Lord . . .
The girls’ guardian angels adore Him . . .
Prostrate on their knees, the girls receive Him.
This is the mystery of our faith!
O Sacrum Convivium.*

When Conchita and Mari Cruz returned from their world of miracles, they could look out over a splendid panorama that would make them feel the truth of the Credo. “I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of what is seen” (spread out now before our eyes!) “and of what is unseen” (how many proofs have we received of its existence!) “and in one Lord, Jesus Christ,” (in whom the two worlds meet, joining them eternally in glory).

From Fr. Valentín’s notes of July, 1961 can be seen the accuracy of Conchita’s terse remark in her diary: “*And he gave us Communion for a long time.*”

Why then, if this began so early and had such importance, did the girl write it down so late, after having spoken of so many other things?

Perhaps this was due to the young writer trying to explain first of all what appeared most interesting, what she liked the most, and what was

most striking for the people: the appearance of the Angel and the Marian Epiphany, with their incredible series of exceptional phenomena.

Regardless, it cannot be doubted that this series of Holy Communion through the Angel's ministry, although it did not occupy the earliest position in the narration, is an integral part of the mystery of Garabandal.

Place for Instruction

This display of small miracles favoring fervent participation in the Holy Eucharist must have had a telling effect in the setting of an ancient Christian village where Holy Communion had been, since time immemorial, something too serious to be received frequently. And much less, every day!² Here the Blessed Sacrament was treated more with reverence than love; and the inhabitants, although believing and religious, ordinarily maintained a respectful distance toward It. The people still remained in *Domine, non sum dignus*—Lord I am not worthy.

The people had to be brought, even if through miracles, toward a greater living of the great Sacrament of our faith. The Word of the Lord has been insisting on this since the beginning: "Amen, amen I tell you, that if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you will not have life in you." (John 6: 53) And besides this, we Christians should not neglect another great reason for reception of the Eucharist mentioned by St. Paul (1 Cor. 11: 28), "Every time that you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the immolation of the Lord, until He returns."

Until He returns. The Eucharistic promotion coming forth through Garabandal has another extremely important purpose: the imminence of

2. The case of Garabandal in this regard is not unusual. I have known many other small towns in sections of León and Castille where the frame of mind was about the same. I could name a little village in Burgos that had the most devout practices, where no one missed Sunday Mass or the rosary that followed it, where at specified hours of the day there was prayer in all the houses, where there was never heard a blasphemy. Nevertheless, its inhabitants, as the most natural thing in the world, received Communion only once a year to fulfill the Easter Duty.

difficult times, the eschatological days when, less than ever, can the faithful remain “alone in the face of peril . . .”

Characteristics of the Eucharistic Proclamation

We can do no more than list them.

- Concerning the location of the extraordinary Communion, we can state that the places where they most frequently—but not exclusively—were received by the girls were: at the Pines, before the doors of the church, next to *St. Michael's Stone* in the *Campuca*.³

- Concerning the time, it was as if the Angel were scrupulously complying with the regulations then existing in the Catholic Church (at that time evening Communion was considered an exception); the morning hours were almost always mentioned by the girls.⁴

- Concerning the ritual, we have seen that Conchita tells us in her diary, and Fr. Valentín in his notes, that it followed the usual form: praying the *I confess*, the reception of the Sacred Host, thanksgiving, and the prayer *Anima Christi (Soul of Christ)*.

There is one fact worth noting. It was observed during these Communion that the Angel always acted as an accessory performer; that is, he

3. Fr. de la Riva, the pastor of Barro, seems to indicate in his *Memorias* that there was a period in which the Angel gave Communion solely to Conchita and Loli. He wrote:

“Conchita received Communion at the Pines, at the Cuadro, near the courtyard of the church; Loli, in the same places, but not at the Pines (at least to my knowledge).

I watched and took photographs of several Communion of this type with Loli, and one with Conchita when she was against the door of the church.

These ecstasies with Communion ordinarily didn't last more than ten minutes.”

4. And sometimes at extremely early hours corresponding to the early morning prayers of the ancient monks. The report that I heard from Loli's mother Julia is worth noting. One night the girl had an apparition in her home when her parents were in bed but not asleep. After a while the girl got up, went to the door, and began to descend the stairs . . .

It was about three in the morning. It was hard for her mother to get up because she was tired and sleepy, but she could not leave her daughter alone. She got out of bed, got dressed, and went outside after her.

In ecstasy Loli went to the church and in the courtyard fell on her knees to receive the Communion that the Angel came to give her.

It had snowed and it was very cold. Julia confessed that on seeing her alone at such an hour of the night, surrounded in complete silence by the dull splendor of the snow, alone at the side of her little girl, that she was out of this world! She felt a strange mixture of emotion and fear.

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acted as an extraordinary minister, to make up for the absence of a priest who could ordinarily give Communion. This absence was very frequent in Garabandal since the pastor lived in Cossío, and it was there that he celebrated Mass most of the time. Although he went up to San Sebastián on almost all the afternoons after the phenomena began, at the time—as has already been indicated—it was not the normal custom to distribute Communion during the evening hours. And sometimes it happened that even though there was a Mass in the village, the girls could not assist at it since they had to go work in the fields. Nor did the many visiting priests provide a solution to the difficulty, since they almost always arrived past noon.

From the manner in which the Angel acted, it becomes clear once again that—according to the designs of God—there is no reason to expect a miraculous intervention to obtain something that we ourselves can procure with the ordinary means at our disposal.

Many examples could be mentioned here to illustrate what has just been said, but the following one should suffice.

Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva, states in his *Memorias*:

I was able to prove that the Angel didn't give Communion to the girls if the parish priest, or another priest with faculties, was present and exercising this ministry in Garabandal. This I noticed as a result of a study that I completed and things that I repeatedly observed. It can be used as an answer to those who ask the question: How is it possible that an Angel acts in a ministry that isn't his own?

In continuing on, Fr. de la Riva explains a very interesting proof, which will not be put down here, but will be put down later, since it merits being reported completely and with special care.

The daughter of Ramón Pifarré, who ran a pharmacy in Barcelona and was one of the best witnesses of the many happenings at Garabandal, related to me how they had witnessed one of Conchita's mystical Communions in June of 1962.

The girl's ecstasy was much the same as usual in these cases. However the spectators' attention was sharply attracted on seeing the girl, some minutes after receiving Communion, but still in ecstasy, laugh . . .

It was necessary to ask her what happened, and the girl explained:

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—“Before leaving, the Angel said to me, ‘You see, I came early today, so that you don’t say that I kept you hungry.’” (At that time the Eucharistic fast was still long and rigid.)

Mrs. Asunción Pifarré told me that it was a little after eight in the morning, and the girl’s mother Aniceta had collected the sheep that were to go up the mountain with Conchita, since that day she had to be a ‘shepherdess’.

I recall that some time later Fr. Valentín came to Maximina Gonzáles’ home where we were staying. He came from Cossío, and asked for Conchita. I told him that she had left. And he was irritated, saying that he didn’t understand this, how an Angel could come to give Communion, knowing that he was going to come and that he could very well give It himself. But I think that the Angel’s attitude in coming early couldn’t have been more thoughtful, looking out for the welfare of the girl who was awaiting a long burdensome day.

Aniceta, Conchita’s mother, who can tell us so many interesting things, has a good recollection of something that she experienced personally.

It occurred during the summer season when she had much work to do in the fields . . . In the morning she set out with Conchita, prepared for a long day’s labor; but before going to the place of work, they went up to the Pines, since Conchita had been advised to go there to receive Communion from the Angel. Withdrawn and silent, they waited in that unforgettable site. Time passed and the Angel did not come. The mother, always in a hurry, began to get impatient. She was not used to spending time without doing anything . . . And then she began to get upset, since there was so much that had to be done! Finally, she said to Conchita, “Well, let’s go. I think that we’ve waited long enough. We are wasting time and today we have a lot of work to do.”

The girl implored: “Wait a little longer, mama! The Angel always does what he says. I don’t know why he is late today . . .”

The mother agreed reluctantly. And while waiting she glanced down toward the village, and with the excellent vision of a country woman, she clearly distinguished the shape of a frail Franciscan knocking at the door of her home. She turned quickly to her daughter, saying: “This explains everything. We are not going to waste any more time here. Look down below. You have someone to give you Communion. That’s the reason the Angel isn’t coming!”

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They went down in a hurry, approached the priest, and accompanied him to the church, where they received Communion from his hands.⁵

On several occasions these Communions thru the ministry of the Angel were the means of important lessons for the girls.

Jacinta will never forget the lesson she received early in the apparitions . . .

One day she, Loli, and Conchita were called to the same location. The three knelt down in a row in front of the Angel; Jacinta was in the middle.

And everything began as usual: some introductory words from the Angel concerning what they were going to do, the “I confess” by the girls, “This is the Lamb of God . . . Lord I am not worthy.”

The Angel gave Communion to the first girl in the row in the usual way. In the meantime, Jacinta, next in line, raised her head, opened her mouth and held out her tongue in preparation to receive. But the Angel—not in the usual way, but as if she were not there—passed by her with the Body of Our Lord to the third girl . . .

Noticing this, the little girl’s eyes opened wide and tears began to stream from them. Everything within her asked a distressed “Why? Why?” She did not understand why the Angel had refused her Communion like this.

The explanation (and the lesson) came immediately. Did she not remember the argument that she had had with her mother? What had the Virgin told them so many times? She had to do more to conquer that fault, that lack of submission, that way of speaking . . . She could not receive the Lord in such a state.

5. This seems to have taken place on the morning of June 20th, 1962, since among Dr. Ortiz’ papers I found a brief note written on June 19th by Eloísa, his sister-in-law:

“On the following morning we accompanied Conchita to the Pines where she waited to receive Communion from the Angel. We prayed while we were waiting . . . A long time dragged by. Her mother went to the side of the hill at the time, and saw a person who appeared to be a priest in front of her home. ‘He seems to be wearing white cords’, she said.”

“On hearing this, Conchita hurried down, and we followed her.”

“Actually it was a Franciscan priest, Fr. Félix Larrazábal, now deceased. He was then superior of a Franciscan house in San Pantaleón in Aras (Santander). We went to the church; he celebrated Mass and gave us Communion. Aniceta commented, “That is the reason we have waited so long. Whenever there’s a priest in the village to give Communion, she doesn’t receive it from the Angel.”

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Jacinta, weeping, recognized her fault. How could she do otherwise? She had to resign herself to the punishment of remaining without the Eucharist, so painful under those circumstances.

When she returned home, her mother knew immediately that something had happened to the girl. She had come back so different from other times!

—“What happened to you?”

—“The Angel didn’t want to give me Communion.” (and tears filled her eyes again)

—“And why is that?”

—“Because of an argument I had with you, one that I can’t remember.”

The mother could not remember either; but things do not pass by so easily before God. Sins do not disappear by a simple forgetting, but by a sincere repentance of the past—strictly necessary for mortal sin—by the sacrament of Penance.⁶

—“The Angel”—Jacinta said—“won’t give me Communion again until I confess.”

Good lesson! We can be sure that her fault did not enter into the category of mortal sin; and consequently, there was no strict necessity for confession. But Communion requires very much, especially in persons highly favored with gifts of grace; these cannot abandon themselves to carelessness, to an attitude of being good more or less; from them is demanded an amendment and a serious effort to be better.

In the light of this episode, which the visionary will never forget, it is not difficult to understand how God looks on certain attitudes or *doctrines* that today are gaining vogue among so many here on earth. “There is no relationship between sacramental Confession and the Eucharist . . . One can receive Communion without going to Confession. This makes sense only in the very rare case of the worst sins, but in ordinary life . . . The necessity of innocence in order to receive Communion must not be exaggerated . . . and in any case, the general absolution, which is given at times in the liturgy, is all that is necessary; anything else is an

6. This was confirmed for me recently by Jacinta’s father, Simon. He noted that on another occasion he had personally observed as an eye-witness of the Mystical Communions of the three girls—Jacinta, Loli, and Conchita—that the Angel left one of them without Communion. This could be seen by the girl’s gestures and actions and it was a punishment for some fault that she had committed.

Lord Where Dweldest Thou?

excess.” It can be observed that from the moment in which the Mass is looked upon almost exclusively as an assembly of the people of God, and Communion as a symbolic meal among brothers, the necessity for such interior purification will not be recognized.

In this point as in so many others, Garabandal comes to the Church in advance, mercifully and salutarily offering beforehand some admonitions from heaven for certain deviations on the earth. Is this not the principal reason that it has encountered such opposition? Garabandal, in its eminent Eucharistic dimension, mysteriously foreshadowed the actual state of Catholicism today. It holds out with striking force the eternal doctrine of our *Mysterium Fidei*, a doctrine which is being attacked by a dangerous crisis, a doctrine whose defense required new documents from the Supreme Magisterium, to culminate in the *Credo of the People of God* that Paul VI proclaimed to the world on June 29th, 1968:

We believe that just as the bread and wine consecrated by the Lord at the Last Supper were changed into His Body and His Blood, which was to be offered for us on the cross; likewise the bread and wine consecrated by the priest are changed into the body and blood of Christ enthroned gloriously in heaven. And we believe that the mysterious presence of the Lord—under what continues to appear to our senses to be the same as before—is a true, real, and substantial presence.

The unique and indivisible existence of the Lord glorious in heaven is not multiplied, but is rendered present by the sacrament in the many places on earth where Mass is celebrated. And this existence remains present—after the sacrifice—in the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, the living heart of all our churches.

And it is our very sweet duty to honor and adore in the blessed Host which our eyes see, the Incarnate Word Whom they cannot see, and Who, without leaving heaven, is made present before us.

I have chosen these high points of our history—the threshold of the second year of the events—to speak of the Eucharistic dimension of Garabandal. Although this dimension was manifested openly during 1961, it came to the forefront above all in 1962 to such a degree as to give the second year a special characteristic, one that for centuries has been described in the ancient axiom of the early Christians:

To Jesus thru Mary

CHAPTER 14

As Winter Passes . . .

IN THE BOOK FROM THE BIBLE entitled *The Song of Songs*, there is a beautiful passage that poetically addresses a tryst for lovers, as winter wanes.

*Arise, make haste,
My love, my dove,
My beautiful one, and come.
For winter is now past,
The rains are over and gone.
Flowers have appeared in our land;
Time for pruning is come;
The song of the dove is heard in our land.*

(2: 10-12)

And it was during the winter . . .

The first part of our story has brought us up to the first winter in Garabandal—a long cold winter of official suspicion and distrust, drenching rain and freezing snow.

The weather itself, joining with everything else, seemed to stand in the way of the mysterious and marvelous visits to the village—not in the way of the Visitor, but in the way of those at her destination. Her presence continued there, but in a reduced way, not according to the rhythm of the good days of before; but as if waiting for something to happen . . .

Characteristic of this first winter were the prayers of penance at inconvenient times, especially in the early hours of the morning, as has already been seen. Following her comments on the Communions from the hands of the Angel, Conchita consigned to her diary:

The Virgin told the four of us, Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz and myself, to go pray the rosary at the Cuadro.

Some days we went at 6 o'clock (in the morning) and on other days, later.

Jacinta and Mari Cruz went at 6 in the morning and at 7; and Loli at no definite time.

Later, since it was not convenient for Mari Cruz to get up so early, she went at 8 o'clock.

And at 6 o'clock like us, Jacinta continued alone, with her mother and people from the village.

During Holy Week, the Virgin told me to go at 5 o'clock in the morning.

And so I went, since the Virgin always wants us to do penance.

The last days of 1961 were sanctified with these penitential prayers; and with them the first weeks of 1962 began to be sanctified.

On January 3rd, Jacinta wrote to the pastor of Barro, Fr. de la Riva:

“At this time, Mari Cruz and I go to pray the rosary to the Virgin. Yesterday we had bad weather in the morning. So much water came down the calleja that we almost couldn't kneel down . . . Now, since there is no snow, everything is going well.”

With her maladroit expression, the girl meant to say that her *dawn rosary* in the dark reveille of the second day of the year had been accompanied by a heavy downpour. The rain had fallen so heavily on the mountains that the water cascading down the calleja hardly left place for those saying their early morning prayers to kneel down.¹

1. Dr. Ricardo Puncernau, a renounced neuro-psychiatrist from Barcelona, writes in his recent leaflet *Psychological Phenomena of Garabandal*:

She Went in Haste to the Mountain

What a picture of penitential morning prayer! What a rosary that was, accompanied by the monotonous drumming of raindrops.

And thus, while winter passed—the harsh winter of the high mountains—the sacred flame of hope remained smoldering in the hearts of the people.

To keep the flame burning in the new year (which was coming with so many unknowns), on its inaugural day, the 1st of January, something happened that could well have served as a sign of the future. Dr. Ortiz² of Santander recounts it:

In the city I met Margarita Huerta,³ who had come from Madrid with a group of people. Three of the girls went into ecstasy. And while they were walking together through the street above the plaza, in the direction of the church, it occurred to one of the people who were following them at a distance: “If this is supernatural, let the girl in the middle come now to give me the crucifix to kiss.”

“Ceferino was a rather rough man due to his straight-forwardness. He told me the following:”

“It was during the winter. There were no visitors in the village. There was a light snowstorm and it was freezing cold. About 3 in the morning I heard Mari Loli get up and get dressed.”

—“Where are you going now?”

—“The Virgin called me to the Cuadro.”

—“You are crazy, being cold as it is.”

—“The Virgin called me to the Cuadro . . .”

—“To see if a wolf will leap on you . . . Do what you want . . . But your Mother and I won’t come with you.”

Mari Loli finished dressing, opened the door of the house and went to the Cuadro, about 200 meters from the village. If I had been sure it was the Virgin, I wouldn’t have left my bed . . . The Virgin would have taken care of her . . . But since we weren’t sure, my wife and I got up and we made our way toward the Cuadro.

We found her in the middle of a snowstorm, on her knees in a trance.

It was hellishly cold.

Expecting to find her frozen, I slapped her cheeks. They were warm, as if she had never left the covers of her bed.

We were there more than an hour, suffering in the cold while she remained very happy, speaking with her Vision. To see it her parents had to do penance.

That is essentially what Ceferino told me one night while we were sitting on a bench in his tavern.

2. This name should be familiar to the reader because of the many times that it has been mentioned in these pages.

3. This woman who was a government worker in Madrid would later become one of the most effective proponents and spreaders of the cause of Garabandal.

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Instantly, the girl withdrew from the others and came to give the crucifix to her to kiss. Only to her! She told us about it later, very excited.

During those icy wintry days of January, an interesting episode occurred. Aniceta described it without remembering the date.

One night, her son Cetuco,⁴ who had been detained by his fiancée's family, came home very late. Conchita had already had the calls, consequently the girl's ecstasy could be expected at any moment . . . Aniceta never left her alone under these circumstances, especially at night; but on this occasion she could not wait up. She asked her son at the time not to go to bed but to remain with his sister, because of what might happen. The young man agreed, although perhaps not with the best grace.

Toward 2:30, Conchita fell into ecstasy and left the house. Cetuco took a flashlight and followed her. It was a white night—because of the heavy snow—and bitterly cold.

Skimming over the snow, Conchita made the difficult path to the Pines in haste . . . Cetuco forgot the cold in his efforts to follow her.

Sometime later, Aniceta, bundled herself up warmly and went out to see if she could join her children. The coldness was stunning; but still more stunning was the complete silence amid the faint brilliance of the snow . . .

When she finally arrived at the Pines, breathing heavily, the woman was struck speechless by the scene before her eyes: there on their knees in the snow were her two children praying. Conchita, absorbed in her vision, was leading the rosary; Cetuco was devoutly responding. What else could Aniceta do but join in their prayer?

After awhile, the girl showed signs that she was getting up to walk. The mother then went ahead on the way down to clear out the path, pushing away the snow in the difficult spots . . . It was a useless precaution, since the girl—on her knees and backwards—slid down over the white surface, as if following an invisibly marked path.

The extraordinary ecstatic march ended behind the mother's house, in the street or alley that months later, would be the scene of the much discussed little miracle of the visible Communion.

4. Cetuco (a nickname of Aniceto) was the second son of Aniceta. He was to die in early youth—with an exemplary death—in a hospital at Burgos in 1966.

She Went in Haste to the Mountain

The sign of penance, piety, and sacrifice that characterized the first winter in Garabandal was not destined to be a temporary thing . . .

On a summer day in 1970, Fr. José Laffineur⁵ was speaking to Jacinta in Garabandal:

FR. LAFFINEUR: Jacinta, on November 30, 1961, Mari Cruz wrote the pastor of Barro, “I go to the Cuadro every day at 6 in the morning to recite the rosary. Jacinta accompanies me. Conchita goes out at 6 o’clock, and Loli at 8:30, but they pray it in the church . . .”

JACINTA: That’s true, Father.

FR. LAFFINEUR: Were you all four faithful, during such a cold winter in Garabandal, in spite of the rain, the snow, the ice?

JACINTA: Yes, Father.⁶

FR. LAFFINEUR: Then why have you not continued doing it until the present?

JACINTA: Because the Virgin told us to obey our parents.

What comes out from this conversation concerning the parent’s influence—legitimate, of course—on the visionaries with respect to their practices of penance and piety, is corroborated by another confession which was recorded from the lips of Mari Cruz’ mother Pilar on July 25th, 1964:

Look. When Father Amador⁷ was present here, he told me that Mari Cruz shouldn’t go to pray in the calleja. And one morning I told my daughter this, that she shouldn’t go to pray at 6 o’clock—that Father Amador had said that she could go, if she wanted, at another hour.

5. This Belgian priest who lived in France was discussed in a previous footnote.

6. Jacinta is accurate according to her father Simon, an honest man of few words. In 1976 he told me:

For 6 months we continued going to the calleja to pray the rosary every day at 6 in the morning. I accompanied the girl with an umbrella.

7. As shown in the 12th chapter, Fr. Amador was the priest whom the diocesan chancery in Santander assigned to the village of San Sebastián de Garabandal in the autumn of 1961. He was their substitute for Fr. Valentín on whom they had imposed a vacation with the intention of curing him of his supposed inclination in favor of the apparitions of the girls.

When did Fr. Amador arrive? I cannot give the exact date. In the notes of Fr. Valentín, there is an intermission that goes from the last days of October, 1961 until January 27, 1962. The day after that, January 28th, we have a note from Dr. Ortiz saying, “Conchita, in her ecstasy at 7:10, was heard to say, ‘Fr. Valentín asked me if the village wants him.’” This can be seen as a very human question, after his exile.

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One day I didn't let her go any more; and she stayed in her bed upset . . . And afterwards she said to me, "Mama, I'm not telling you to go with me. If you don't want to go, don't go. You are not obligated. But I have to go."

On the following day I went to find Fr. Amador, who had just returned from a trip. And I said to him, "Look Fr. Amador, this is what's happening to me with the girl. She told me that if I don't go, she would go alone . . ."

He answered me, "Let her go, let her go."

It is evident that the girls were clearly conscious of what was being asked from them; but that they were encountering difficulties in carrying it out.

They were at the time also adequately instructed about the primary end of their practices of piety and penance. Here is what Dr. Ortiz of Santander, an astute eye-witness, reports:

During one of those days, I asked María Dolores after the ecstasy: "What did the Apparition tell you?"

She responded, "The Virgin told me:"

—"to make sacrifices for the sanctity of priests, so that they may lead many souls on the road to Christ;"

—"that the world is worse each day and needs holy priests, in order that they may make many people return to the right way."

Previously, the Virgin told me to "pray specially for priests so that they may want to remain, so that they may continue to be priests."

The true meaning of these last words surely escaped the girl, since in those days there was only a faint beginning—which she could not have known from her village—of what was soon going to develop into a massive clerical betrayal . . .

Vatican II (which, with its changes and loose atmosphere, would come to be the occasion of this betrayal) was at the time only an expectant dream of a beautiful future for a Church that had decided to update through a thorough renovation. John XXIII's optimism had spread everywhere; and in order to aid him, everywhere there was prayer and work for the success of the great enterprise.

The news had come to the girls at Garabandal too, and they joined as well as they could in the common prayer . . . On January 11th, 1962, Mari Cruz wrote in her scribbly penmanship to the pastor of Barro:

I know that the Virgin wants us to be very good and to visit the Blessed Sacrament. I wish that you would pray to the Virgin so that I may be better every day. When I saw the Virgin, I told her what you wrote to me, so that the Pope and

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those who are with him succeed well in the Council; also I gave it to the others to read, in order that they may do likewise.

In Waiting

At the end of Chapter XII, it was shown that together with the frigid winter season, there was a restriction in the ecstasies. Each girl had her days and had to wait the Virgin's return with a proper disposition. In the letter just quoted, Mari Cruz wrote to Fr. José Ramon:

Yes, I go to pray the rosary everyday, at 6 in the morning. The Virgin told me to pray it everyday at this time, until the 16th, when I will see her again.

The day set aside for Loli was January 13th, and the child waited with great anticipation since she was more accustomed than the others to these favors. (I was not able to obtain any information about what occurred on that day.)

Jacinta's day was January 18th, and it was not a happy one. Doctor Ortiz, who was present, wrote down:

After she had her ecstasy, Jacinta exclaimed, Until February 18th, I will not see her! Inconsolable, she could only repeat, "I will not see her again for a month!"

On that same day, Mari Cruz and Mari Loli were unexpectedly favored, as Doctor Ortiz mentions:

They had an ecstasy at 6 in the evening. They went to the church, and from there to the home of Mari Cruz, holding up various articles to be kissed. Praying the rosary, they went out then to the calleja, where they finished the third mystery. And afterward they went up to the Pines where they finished the rosary. The ecstasy ended about a quarter after eight.

Conchita went long weeks awaiting her day, which was the 27th of January.⁸ A week before it, on January 20th, her aunt Maximina wrote to Dr. Ortiz in Santander:

As you know, Conchita's apparition will be on January 27th. She told me to urge you to come. She wants you to come. Perhaps during these days, she herself will write to you, although she is very negligent in this regard.

8. On January 3rd, Conchita wrote to a niece of Doctor Ortiz:

"I won't see the Most Holy Virgin again until the 27th of January. The time seems very long to me!"

And some weeks later, on January 19th, she says in another letter to the same recipient:

"You tell me to pray for you . . . But every day, when I go to pray, I pray for all the sick, and in particular for you . . . You also tell me that the wait until the 27th to see the Most

From mid-January, the trances began again to multiply, at least for Mari Loli. Maximini writes in her letter:

María Dolores sees her very much. On Wednesday I had Father José Ramón, the priest from Barro, sleeping in my home. At half past three there was a knocking on the door. I got up in a hurry and there was Loli in ecstasy. She gave me the crucifix to kiss, and afterwards gave it to the children.⁹ Then she went upstairs and knelt in front of the picture of my husband. She stayed about five minutes praying for him, that he rest in peace. Afterwards she turned around on her knees and went to give the crucifix to the priest in bed to kiss. She left the room and went to give it to my father. After they left, the priest got up and went to accompany them through the village until it was over.

What Maximina writes in her letter of January 20th concerning Loli's nocturnal visit to her home, coincides amazingly with what the priest from Barro, Fr. José Ramón reports in his *Memorias*. Nevertheless, he definitely situates what happened on a night in August, that is, seven months later than the date mentioned in Maximina's letter. The similarity of the reports is surprising and equally surprising is the disparity in the dates. Is it that one of the writers is mistaken, or does it refer to two different occurrences?¹⁰

The report of Father José Ramón has particular interest because of its copious detail and because it presents Loli's visit at night to Maximina's house as an answer to something that he had requested mentally before going to bed, as a proof of the supernatural truth of those unusual phenomena.

At last, the long-awaited January 27th arrived for Conchita. She had her apparition. If it was an important one for her, we do not know. All we know are the few words that Fr. Valentín wrote down for the day (at least it is in his collection of notes pertaining to January):

Conchita went into ecstasy in her home at 6:30 in the evening. She went out toward the church where she presented to the Vision—for kissing—the medals

Holy Virgin seems long. Well, take note of this! I'm counting all the days that remain. They are so long! And now I only need 9 more."

9. Maximina was the aunt and godmother of Conchita. She had become a widow early in life, having two children from her marriage: a boy and a girl. The boy became a seminarian, and studied in Comillas (Santander).

10. After having written this, I found the following in the *Memorias* of Fr. José Ramón:

"The visit to the room where I was sleeping happened twice: the time that I just mentioned at 3:45 in the morning; and another time equally early at 10 minutes to 4."

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and rosaries that had been entrusted to her for this. Later, in the same state, she returned them to their owners without any mistakes. It ended at 8:20.

Father Valentín then added something interesting:

According to what I was told, since I was already in bed, Mari Loli had an apparition at 2:00 in the morning, and it ended at 2:30. Previously, while in the normal state, they had told her that there was a painter there who wanted to paint the Virgin. Following that, during the vision, the girl was heard to say, “There is a painter here who wants to paint you . . . But so beautiful as you are, how can he do it!”

The painter in question was M. Calderón, well known in Santander.

After this date, the apparitions began again to be the order of the day, with the exception of Jacinta, who had to undergo a month of trial, as had been foretold to her.

Concerning the following day, January 28th, Dr. Ortiz wrote down:

Conchita, in ecstasy, joined with María Dolores at the church door. There they began the rosary, and went from there to the home of Uncle Leoncio. (An old man of the village, who was unconscious and near death) They knelt down beside him and prayed, trying unsuccessfully to make him kiss the crucifix that they carried in their hands. They continued praying, and suddenly the sick man regained his consciousness and answered the prayers, something that astounded all of us.¹¹ The girls gave him the crucifix to kiss again, and he then kissed it. And then he said, “I pray because I believe.” And he lost consciousness again. With great signs of happiness, the girls got up and left.¹²

11. Doctor Ortiz considered it *miraculous*, or close to a miracle, that the old man, so ill and in extremis, would react like this; he was actually in a coma.

12. “Conchita and María Dolores were together in ecstasy for two hours. A man was there who was sick, and furthermore he was deranged. (senile) They went to the place where he was. Look, it was worth seeing how they acted with him. The disturbed man told them that he didn’t want to kiss the crucifix. And as he didn’t want to kiss it, they prayed a Station with him, and also six Our Fathers for all the sick. He prayed well, but they didn’t make him kiss the crucifix, and the girls shed big tears. Afterwards, still in ecstasy, they went outside and went straight to the Pines. They prayed there a while, and came down, and walked once again thru the village, and went back up again. It was already 9:30 at night, completely dark, and if you could have seen where they went—they were astonishing! Afterwards they came down with great speed, and we tried to stay with them . . . but it was a race! You know how they come down, with their heads turned backwards, without seeing anything. They walked again thru the village and went to sing some songs at the home of Mari Cruz, who had gone to bed since she didn’t have an apparition . . .”

(Maximina’s letter to the Pifarré family, dated Jan. 30, 1962)

Children on the March

It can be seen that during those days, God was showing special attention to that old man, who was then at death's door, as if attempting to assist him in his great step toward eternity: facing the meeting he would have with God.

How easily do men forget that we do not end like irrational animals, but that all of us are heading inexorably toward this great encounter, and that we cannot present ourselves there anyway we please. J. Staudinger writes in the introduction to his book *The Holy Priesthood*:

The encounter of the soul with God starts eternity. In that hour, the person stands in total solitude. As helpless as when he came from the Hands of the Creator, he now appears before Him. The Creator and the creature meet for the first time in front of each other, face to face: God alone and the soul alone . . .

The only thing accompanying the person there will be what he has done during his life.

It will always be supreme wisdom to prepare for that hour . . . This is the most holy task of the Church; her special mission toward every human being is to prepare him for that final hour of encounter.

Poor Uncle Leoncio, Jacinta's grandfather, blind and in extremis, stands in our story as a symbol of the frail human being in his final helplessness, when there is nothing to hope for from the world below, and only from the world above can help and comfort come. Attending to the dying will always be the highest work of Christian charity, a thing that the Church and those in the Church, cannot in anyway forget.

And the girls, immersed in the deep mystery of Garabandal, did not forget. The case of Uncle Leoncio was not the only one in this regard. Nor was the episode of January 28th that we have just seen, the only one with him.

We know, for example, that on January 30th, Conchita and Loli were in ecstasy towards 7:20 in the evening, and after having "prayed in the Cuadro, they visited the houses where the sick were, holding up the crucifix to be kissed and praying with them."

And on January 31st, after the rosary ended in the church, Mari Cruz went into ecstasy and

she walked through the village, visiting several houses where she gave the cross to be kissed. And she also went to the house of Jacinta's grandfather, where she was with him about a quarter of an hour, praying and holding up the cross to

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be kissed . . . And a little later, Loli and Conchita did the same, and they were with him for a period of an hour; and they came back to the same place, and sat on the bed.

The old man, semi-conscious, did not respond to the girls' desire for him to kiss the crucifix, and they asked him, "Why don't you kiss it? If you kiss it, the Virgin can restore your sight." To that, the old man replied, "And what would I want my sight for?"

The episode concerning Uncle Leoncio ended a few days later with the end of his stay on earth. Among Fr. Valentín's notes are found these, corresponding to February 8th:

At 9 at night, Mari Loli went out of her home in ecstasy. She went to the home of Leoncio, who was laid out, and she held out the crucifix to be kissed by the persons who were there (almost the whole village). She prayed a station before the body and then left and went into other houses.

Return to Astounding "Normal"

During this time—the end of January and the first weeks of February—Mari Loli, Mari Cruz and Conchita once again had apparitions as before, in the usual way . . . each girl with her own style, and each day with its own story. There was much in common in the activities of the three visionaries and the episodes of each day: holding up the articles to be kissed by the Vision, presenting the crucifix to be kissed by the people around them, visiting the church and also the homes, praying at the Cuadro, going up to the Pines . . . Concerning the latter, there was a remarkable thing that occurred about the 5th of February.

About 8:45 at night, Mari Loli went out of her home in ecstasy. She went toward the Pines, going up by the most difficult way, not by the trails or path, and she did it with extreme ease, without grabbing onto anything and without falling, while all the rest went up almost on their hands and knees, hanging onto the shrubs on the way in order not to roll back down. The girl did this three times. The ecstasy ended at 10:00. (Fr. Valentín's notes)

On January 31st, we have a more detailed story:

At 8:00 in the morning, Conchita went to the Cuadro in the calleja to pray the most holy rosary, remaining there in ecstasy. Then she went through the village, and on passing the fountain, fell backwards, smacking her head hard on the ground. All those present feared that she had severely injured herself; neverthe-

less, when the ecstasy was over, her mother said that they couldn't find even a bruise.

This report from the Police Chief, Alvarez Seco, was confirmed by Fr. de la Riva, who gives us more details:

I was present and I took photographs of the ecstasy at 8:30 in the morning—at the Cuadro, at the door of the church, at the place where Conchita fell backwards, striking the back of her neck hard against a stone on the ground. The sound was very loud; Conchita's mother and some of the people present cried out, thinking that she had broken her neck. At first Conchita, lying on the ground, was serious, listening to the Vision. Then she began to laugh, and Aniceta and the other women were reassured. I then felt the young girl's head and didn't notice anything abnormal. After the ecstasy I felt the neck again, and once again didn't find anything. Astonished, the girl asked me why I was touching her head like this. When I gave her the reason, she merely smiled.

Further information, dated February 1st, was reported by Fr. de la Riva:

Loli was in ecstasy with Conchita in the kitchen. Through the open window, she held out the crucifix to be kissed by the people who were outside . . . This crucifix belonged to a woman who was in the kitchen; she was afraid of losing it since it was a precious relic to her. She continually asked for it back. She became so demanding that Conchita ended up exclaiming, "What an impertinent woman! Give it to her once and for all, so that she will leave!"

The crucifix was taken from Loli's hand and given to the woman who was then very happy. Loli remained without a crucifix in front of the open window, her hands joined on her chest . . . Then she said, "Conchita, the Virgin says that you should ask Father for the crucifix."

I was the only priest present, and this certainly was referring to me.

I then said to myself, "If you don't come to get it yourself, I'm not going to give it to you." And I remained standing there where I was, near to the kitchen entrance, my hands in my pockets.

I don't have the habit of carrying a crucifix with me; but by chance on that day I had a little crucifix in my pocket. Then I grasped it tightly in my right hand, to see what would happen.

Had Conchita heard or rather had she understood what Loli had said? Perhaps, for she didn't ask me anything. Then Loli, still in ecstasy, turned around and made her way toward me.

With an amazing movement of her right hand, with a stunning suppleness and an incredible agility, she put her right hand in the right pocket of my cassock. She opened up my hand, which was tightly clenched on the crucifix, opening it in spite of me, and she seized the crucifix.

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Then I thought to myself, and said in my mind, “Take it, take it! I don’t need further proof.”

My excitement did not stop me from noticing that—while at other times the hands of the girls lost their warmth in ecstasy—this time Loli’s hand maintained its natural warmth.

As a resumé of these times, we can transcribe here the letter that Conchita wrote to the pastor of Barro on February 15th:

Dear Father José Ramón,

Since you’ve left here, we haven’t heard any more about you. We don’t know if you are angry or if you are sick, since there’s a lot of flu here . . .

Today it is snowing; I’m coming now from praying the rosary at the Cuadro, and last night, at 8 o’clock, I had an apparition there. It was snowing very much, but I saw a clear sky. I wasn’t cold; my mother was shaking like a leaf . . .

The apparitions continue in the same way. María Dolores has many—some days more, and others less—but she sees her every day. Mari Cruz saw her every day during the week except for one or two days. Jacinta will see her on the 18th, which will make a month that she hasn’t seen her. Mari Cruz and I have had the apparitions for some time now in the Cuadro, but not every day at the same time. Loli sees her in the village, in the houses, and at the Pines . . . There is nothing more that I can say.

Conchita certainly speaks in a natural and ordinary way about things that are most extraordinary.

A Move Is Planned

The daily flowering of marvelous things in Garabandal seemed to have reached full bloom on February 18th, when Jacinta also was included in the amazing game.

That February 18th (Septuagesima¹³ Sunday in that year), began with some early morning spiritual walks that illustrated and practiced the liturgical texts that were later read during the Mass of the day:

—Day after day must be born the burden of the day’s heat. (Matt. 20: 11)

13. With what is called Septuagesima Sunday begins the long liturgical procession toward Easter. “This time”—reads the French missile—“makes us meditate on our earthly condition: suffering and sinful. It evokes a triple effort:”

The effort of the entire human race which through its long history struggles against evil, while groping for God and trying to build a better world.

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—One should run without giving up, in a way to gain the prize. (1 Cor. 9: 24)

—We should submit ourselves to God, who declares He has a right to do what I choose. (Matt. 20: 15)

Fr. Valentín's notes read:

At 6 in the morning, Mari Cruz and Jacinta went out to pray the rosary at the Cuadro, and there they went into ecstasy. (Jacinta hadn't had an apparition since January 18th, at which time it was foretold that she wouldn't have one until today.) They went down to the village in ecstasy, and they held the crucifix to be kissed by several persons . . . And they returned to the Cuadro, where they came out of it. It lasted 70 minutes.

Such a holy beginning made it easy to continue on devoutly through the ensuing hours of the *Lord's Day* with the morning Mass, the rosary in common at the beginning of the evening . . . And the day had no less a holy ending:

At 6 in the evening, Jacinta and Mari Loli went to the Pines, and there went into ecstasy again. And later they went down to the door of the church, and here they came out of it one after the other, with a minute's difference.

Maximina Gonzalez in a letter on February 19, written to the Pifarré family, confirms the pastor's notes. It is seen that Maximina began the letter on Sunday the 18th, and finished it the next day:

Today, Sunday, at six in the morning, they had an apparition at the Pines and they came down to the village backwards; and this afternoon they will have another . . .

The apparitions continue, good weather or bad. Recently the girls brought the winter! They get up early every morning with the coldness that there is. It is hard for them and obviously hard for the many people with them. For several days now I haven't gone since I have a bad cold. Last night we were at the Pines at an apparition. There were a lot of people and Conchita made the sign of the cross over all of them, one by one . . . and as usual she asked for a miracle . . .

The effort of Christ Who during His public life fought against Satan, and founded the Kingdom of God.

The effort that the Church pursues in each of us through our daily militant battle against the difficulties of life.

She Went in Haste to the Mountain

The course of the Garabandal Mystery, as beautiful as it is unusual, was on the verge of being interrupted during those February days. On Wednesday, February 21st, Father Valentín wrote down:

Today they took Conchita to León.¹⁴

Although this trip had a particular reason for her, the plan or project that had been conceived by several influential people was not limited to her alone. A geographical transplant of all four girls was being contemplated.

On March 1st, Conchita, who had returned from León, wrote to Dr. Ortiz and his wife in Santander:

I asked the Virgin whether I should go see my brother,¹⁵ and she told me to go, that I would have an apparition there too, as I did.

I was in León at the home of Mr. del Valle;¹⁶ I don't know if you know him, or have heard his name mentioned. I had the first ecstasy on Saturday. I don't remember if it was at nine o'clock or nine thirty. Mr. Valle, his younger children, my mother, and the house servants were alone. I also had one on Sunday at 11 or 11:30 at night. At the time some men were there, but since the apparition was late in coming, many of them left . . . They said that on that night I went on my knees to the room of Mr. Valle's daughter, which was on the same floor and whose doors joined mine. And they said that I went to give the crucifix to be kissed by one of his young children who was in bed, and that I recited the rosary. I don't remember anything about the things that I did.

I was also told that I asked the Most Holy Virgin if I could go to college and whether I would see her there. She told me that I would see her the same, although I don't know if I will go where there are Carmelites . . .¹⁷

This attempt to procure a good education in a religious school for the Garabandal visionaries was being considered with the best intentions by Emilio del Valle and others.

14. A beautiful city in the northwest part of the Iberian peninsula holding many claims to glory for services given to the country during the most difficult centuries; it was the capital of the Christian reconquest from the arabs.

15. He was working then in the coal mines of the Hullera Vasco-Leonesa Company in the city of Santa Lucía.

16. This man, Emilio del Valle, was already mentioned in the early parts of this book. But soon he began to appear in the history of Garabandal as someone especially entwined in it, without knowing for what reason he was there.

17. This refers to the *Congregation de Carmelitas de la Caridad* founded in the past century by the holy Joaquina Vedruna. These Carmelites for many years have gone to reputable colleges in León and have contributed much to the education of girls in the city.

To February 27th corresponds what was written by Fr. Valentín:

Conchita went to León, to the home of Emilio del Valle, and there had two apparitions.

Mr. Emilio wanted to put the girls in a school, charging all the expenses to his account; but he met opposition from the girls' parents.

The matter was on the point of being realized, according to what can be deduced from this letter by Maximina González to Dr. Ortiz, dated March 4th:

When I came back, I had three letters from the Pifarré family of Barcelona at my home. They say that down there they are very happy at the thought that the girls come and go when they please. But notice how upset they will be when I tell them that they are trying to take them all (the four visionaries) to school!

Conchita says that she is going to leave either on Friday or Saturday; I don't know if this is correct. I don't even want to ask her about it. We're all very upset. It seems incredible. Mr. Emilio! That he is the one who is taking them! What money will do! Heavens! Those who still don't seem persuaded to leave are María Dolores and Jacinta. They'll persuade them . . .

My sister (Aniceta) told me, when they went on this trip to León, that the Virgin told them that they would come to stop where there were some nuns . . . And that the very first thing they saw in León, after getting out of the car, was a school of Carmelite nuns . . . and that they were the first ones to whom they spoke, without knowing any of them. What a coincidence!

The plan to transplant the girls—very well intentioned, but which might have changed the course of Garabandal—ended uneventfully, and the four girls remained in their own environment and with their own affairs.

And so Father Valentín could write in his notebook:

“The matter of San Sebastián de Garabandal at this time continues about the same. The girls have ecstasies almost every day. I continue going up myself to see them.”

As something unusual in the beautiful monotony of those days, I am putting down here something that occurred on March 3rd, and which Dr. Ortiz reported:

Félix López, a former student of the Seminario Mayor de Derio (Bilbao), who is now the schoolteacher in Garabandal, was meeting with people in Conchita's kitchen. The girl received a letter that she didn't understand, and she requested

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him to translate it. It was in Italian, and Félix, after reading it, said, "By its style, it could well be Padre Pio."¹⁸

Conchita asked him if he knew Padre Pio's address, and on receiving an affirmative answer, asked him to help her compose a letter to answer it and express her appreciation.

Completing the letter, they left it on the kitchen table, unfolded. After awhile, Conchita went into ecstasy and recited the rosary. Returning to her normal state, the teacher said to her:

—"Did you ask the Virgin if the letter was from Father Pío?"

—"Yes, and she gave me a secret answer to send him."

The girl went up to her room and came down later with a paper written by hand. In front of everybody, she put the paper in the envelope which had been addressed by the teacher to Padre Pio, and she sealed it.

The letter that had come to Conchita, without a signature, without a return address, but with an Italian stamp, said this:

My Dear Children,

At 9 o'clock in the morning, the Holy Virgin told me to say to you: "O blessed young girls of San Sebastián de Garabandal! I promise you that I will be with you until the end of the centuries, and you will be with me during the end of the world. And later, united with me in the glory of paradise."

I am sending you a copy of the holy rosary of Fatima, which the Virgin told me to send you. The rosary was composed by the Virgin and should be propagated for the salvation of sinners and preservation of humanity from the terrible punishments with which the Good God is threatening it.

I give you only one counsel: Pray and make others pray, because the world is at the beginning of perdition.

They do not believe in you or in your conversations with the Lady in White . . . They will believe when it will be too late.

Here is something, I repeat, that is very unusual.

It would be helpful to have more information in order to understand what this means. If the letter really did come from Padre Pio, where is the

18. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, a Capuchine from San Giovanni Rotondo in Italy, was known world-wide for his stigmata, reading of consciences, and miracles. He died in September of 1968. The process of his canonization is progressing under the auspices of the hierarchy.

original? Is the translation, that Dr. Ortiz has and which we are copying, accurate?

If so, what can the meaning be of the expression: “I will be with you until the end of the centuries, and you will be with me during the end of the world?”

In the second edition of this book we are able to add something to clarify this intriguing episode.

On February 9, 1975 the people responsible for the magazine *Garabandal* put out by Joey Lomangino, a man well known in Garabandal circles, interviewed Conchita who is now married and living in the United States. The questions and answers were recorded.

Q. Conchita, do you remember anything about the letter that you are said to have received from Padre Pio?

A. You know that I have moments in which I remember many things about the apparitions very well, and I have moments in which I hardly remember anything at all . . .

Concerning what you now ask me, I do remember that I received in the mail a letter addressed to me and the other three girls: Jacinta, Mari Loli and Mari Cruz. I was surprised by what it said; and as it was unsigned, I kept it in my pocket until the time of the apparition. When the Blessed Mother appeared, I showed her the letter . . . and I asked her whom it was from. The Blessed Mother answered that it came from Padre Pio. At the time I didn't know who Padre Pio was and it didn't occur to me to ask her anything more . . .

After the apparition we were talking about the letter, and then a seminarian there told me who Padre Pio was and where he lived. I wrote him, saying that when he made a visit to my country, I would be very pleased to see him . . . He answered in a short letter saying, “Do you think that I can come and go by the chimney?” Being twelve years old I had no idea what a cloister was.

Q. Do you remember any of the contents of the letter that you showed to the Virgin?

A. I don't remember the whole thing well. But I do remember its beginning:

“Dear children of Garabandal, this morning the Most Holy Virgin talked to me about your apparitions . . .”

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I also remember that it said:

“Many people do not believe in your apparitions and that you are speaking with the Blessed Mother. When they believe, it will be too late . . .”

I also remember that the letter said:

“I promise to be with you until the end of the times.”

That is all that I remember now.

Q. *Do you have those two letters?*

A. Yes, I think my mother has them in Spain.

This matter will be better understood further on in Part Three of these books after the reader finishes the chapter entitled, *1963, a Year of Interlude* with the section *Only Three Popes Remain*.

It is clear that the *end of the times* is not the same as the end of the world.

The visionaries of Garabandal could well experience during their lifetime the coming of the “end of the times”, and because of this the Virgin “will be with them”—through special assistance and aid—until that great day comes. Afterwards they will depart from here below to go where she is, and with her will be present “at the end of the world” when our Lord will conclude things with his final judgment to close the tremendous process of time and history.

Days of Lent

In Spain the students look forward to March 7th, since it is a vacation day commemorating the feast of St. Thomas of Aquinas, the patron of students. In 1962 that day also had a strong penitential significance for all the faithful, since it was the beginning of Lent: Ash Wednesday.

The girls had to apply themselves with greater intensity at that time to what the Virgin had told them both for themselves and for others: “There must be much penance . . . There must be many sacrifices . . .”

And the lenten days of Garabandal were permeated with penance during that year of grace, 1962. But in the almost daily ecstasies, there was also a place for the many other things, great and small, that comprised each girl’s life.

For example, Loli met again with the departed Fr. Luis Andreu¹⁹ on March 12th and talked to him for a long time:

What joy it gives me to talk with you! It's like when you were alive. I'm very happy when you come. It's been a long time since we've seen you!"

How sad you would have been if we had gone to school, because we wouldn't be able to see the Virgin anymore!

Look, I want something . . . Do you know what? Perform a MIRACLE, so that they may see that we are speaking with you and the Virgin . . ."

These remarks by Loli were taken from the notes of Fr. Valentín, who also wrote down what happened to Mari Cruz:

At 11:37 at night, I was in her house. She had received a letter from a priest from Villaviciosa (Asturias),²⁰ in which the priest said that he would pay for her board and tuition in a school in that city, under the condition that she would not see the Virgin again, something that could cause problems with the archbishop of Oviedo. The girl hadn't read the letter; but her mother had, who put the letter back in the envelope and told the girl to ask the Virgin what she should reply.

Mari Cruz didn't want to do this, and it disagreed with her to take the letter. Hardly had she taken it in her hand, when she went out to the Calleja, knelt down at the usual place, took the letter—inecstasy—and held it up. Looking at the envelope upside down, she asked, "What should I tell her? That I'm going to continue to see you? That it's a good place? For a long time now, I haven't been seeing you with the other three . . ."

We can only guess what the Virgin the girl; however, it is clear that plans for taking the girls from the village were not coming solely from León.

And it is also clear that Mari Cruz was hurt because she was not included in the ecstasies with the other three girls.

On March 14th, it was Conchita who presented a scene worthy to be filmed because of its elegance. Fr. Valentín reports again:

At 6:30 in the evening, Conchita wanted to be alone and went behind the laundry building, where she was in ecstasy. From there she went up to the Pines, and holding one of the albarcas (wooden shoes) that she was wearing, began to say, "Take the albarcas in your hand, the little shoes with the worn-out laces . . . Go

19. A previous chapter has been dedicated to the death of this Jesuit priest and the first conversations that the Garabandal seers had with him shortly after his death.

20. The Carmelitas de la Caridad also had a college in this city in Asturias. The priest's letter certainly refers to this college.

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find a donkey? Where is one? In the Cuadro?” (She wanted to bless herself.) With the albarca in her hand, she smacked herself in the face many times. Later she exclaimed, “How good it is today! It is night and the sun shines. And also it snows to make saints (snowmen) and go sledding.

In the girls’ ecstatic conversation on March 14th came out again the old petition that the Virgin should perform a great miracle as a sign and finale to everything. Jacinta asked her:

“Come! Perform a miracle! That way the people will believe.”

A letter from Maximina González to Asunción Pifarré, dated March 7, reads:

The other night, Jacinta and Maria Dolores asked for a miracle as usual. “Please, perform a miracle . . . Please! Are you going to perform it? Please, let light shine. Please, since the people don’t believe. Perform a miracle so that everyone will believe . . .

When the ecstasy was over, we told them what they had said to the Virgin. And they said she smiled when they asked for a miracle.

The girls would surely not have insisted so often upon the same request, if they had not repeatedly heard from above that there would finally come a great sign to end all doubts about the supernatural truth of the events. “They will believe. They will believe.” was the prophetic-toned response of the mysterious apparition.

If it were not for this, the statements that Loli made two days later, on March 16th, would not be comprehensible.

On that day she was requesting insistently for the cure of a woman whose sight was failing, and according to the judgment of the doctor, would be lost completely. The girl kept on imploring, finally exclaiming loudly, “Come! Cure this woman, Alicia’s mother, who already does not see out of one eye, and will not see the *miracle that you will make in the sky!*”²¹

* * *

True penance, presupposing a change from within, spontaneously leads to the sacrament of confession. An interesting episode illustrating this happened on the night that ended on March 19th, the feast of St. Joseph.

21. All the previous material was derived from Father Valentín’s notes.

The report of it was signed in Reinosa (Santander) on the 23rd of March, 1962, by a priest who went up to Garabandal with Mr. Matutano:²²

On Sunday, March 18th, the second Sunday of Lent, two priests came to Garabandal with a young boy who was afflicted with severe heart disease, and whose days—according to the doctors—were numbered.

One of the two priests—no one at the time knew who he was—was the renowned Father José Silva, from the *Ciudad de los Muchachos* at Orense. The priests had come disguised as tourists. They walked behind the girls, constantly bothering them. This came to such a point that the Chief of the Civil Guard had to call it to their attention several times—he also didn't recognize them as priests.

When Jacinta went into ecstasy in Conchita's house, they leaned physically on the girl. They were hanging onto her, and holding their ears to her mouth, trying to understand some of what she was saying. The parents of the girls called their attention to this, and on seeing that this accomplished nothing, and that one time they almost made Jacinta fall to the ground, I could not contain myself and I gave a hard shove to the one who was to the right of the girl (this was Father Silva), thinking he was a layman . . . Although perhaps at the time I would have done the same thing, even if I had seen him in a cassock.

During this action Jacinta turned around, and put the crucifix on my lips. Following this, she did the same to the one that I had shoved. The girl continued her walk, but the two of us looked at each other and we understood . . . We gave each other a hug, and together went toward the church. There the two of us wept.

And I asked him to hear my confession. (We were alone, leaning against the doorway.) He told me that he didn't have faculties, but I insisted vehemently, assuring him that I had a true need. He heard my confession and asked why I had performed that act. I answered that at the time, I only thought about defending the girl who was seeing the Most Holy Virgin. He gave me absolution.

Later he asked me to hear his confession, since he said he had a great need, for having abused his position as a priest to go ahead of all those that were following the girl, when his position as a priest obliged him to go behind the last . . . He thanked me for the shove, and told me that up to then he hadn't paid attention to the actual message that the girls came to give us.

Finally, he asked me, as a favor, if I could wake up the parish priest so that he—Father-Silva—could say the dawn Mass. It was not long until the beginning of the next day, March 19th, the feast of St. Joseph. We weren't able to obtain permission, since there was a prohibition from the bishop that didn't allow Mass to be celebrated by visiting priests. But we could receive Communion and make the most beautiful Holy Hour imaginable. It was fantastic. That priest said won-

22. Mr. Matutano was mentioned in an earlier section of this book.

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derful things, and thanked the girls, their parents, and everyone for having made him feel an emotion that, up until then, he had thought didn't exist.

We prayed the holy rosary! Almost all of us holding arms.

This is what I experienced on those unforgettable days in that fortunate little town.

We can complete this report with some details that we owe to the Captain of the Civil Guard, Juan Alvarez Seco. While that unforgettable night vigil of March 18th . . .

. . . was going on to the next day, March 19th, Loli went up to the counter of the tavern in her home in ecstasy, took a pen from a drawer, and holding a card against the wall of the kitchen, wrote on it what the Virgin had told her, "The Virgin congratulates Father José."

As a result of this, the priest involved was deeply moved, since he hadn't told anyone his name, or that he was a priest.

While they were going to ask for permission to celebrate holy Mass, they went to Conchita's house. Father Silva spoke of making a Holy Hour, and the girl asked, "And that, what is it?" Father Silva explained it to her, and it was decided to make the Holy Hour at 1 a.m.

But they didn't have the key to the church. Fr. Valentín was sleeping in the home of Primitiva. Mr. Matutano from Reinosa and I went to ask him for it, since he knew us. I talked to him but he didn't want to give us the key. We returned to Conchita's house and then Maximina said: "Let's go to the church in case it's still open."

About 20 of us went with Conchita and María Dolores. We found the door of the church open, but we didn't have the key to the sacristy, where the key to open the tabernacle was kept. In the meantime, Father Silva found the tabernacle open, although the sacristy was locked!

We were able to make the Holy Hour, sometimes holding arms. Afterwards almost all of us received Communion.

I testify that this was fantastic. And the marques and marquessa of Santa María, Mr. Matutano and others whom I no longer remember felt the same way. Father Silva told us that "Garabandal was absolutely true."

Maximina also gave a report of what happened in a letter that she wrote to Doctor Ortiz on March 21st:

There were two priests. They made a holy hour at three in the morning on Sunday (Actually it was not Sunday, but Monday March 19th. Her confusion, undoubtedly was due to the fact that Monday was also a feastday, honoring St. Joseph.) They asked if any of those present wanted to explain the mysteries of the rosary. Mr. Matutano explained the first one. The people were crying very much! The marquis said that he couldn't speak because of emotion.

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The priests spoke very much . . . And one said, “It would be a disgrace to participate in the apparitions and not meditate.” And he added, “I swear to God that I believe this is true.” They spoke at length.

And so the first feastday of St. Joseph began with a beautiful and edifying Holy Hour.

No one could say that the lenten days of 1962 at Garabandal were not replete with vigils, penance and prayer.

* * *

Those days reached their peak on March 25th. This was the third Sunday of lent, according to that year’s calendar, but also the feast of the Annunciation, according to every year’s calendar. And since it was the feastday of the Annunciation of the Virgin, it was also the feastday of the Incarnation of the Son of God. With all these great feasts combined on a single day, there was reason to expect something special . . .

Simón, Jacinta’s father, said to Dr. Ortiz several days later:

I thought something exceptional would occur that day, since it was such a distinguished feastday. And so it happened.

The three girls, Conchita, Loli and my daughter, who until then had only recited the rosary,²³ began to sing it on that day, and they sang the whole rosary. At the beginning of the apparition, only a few of us were with them, but the people began to come out of their houses, and finally, I think the whole village was there . . .

I felt a tremendous joy, since I know my daughter well—and how bashful she is—and because of this I thought in my mind that she had to be seeing something very great to be singing as she was.

After the rosary ended, the girls continued singing, and we heard these verses:

*Men, women and children,
Pray the holy rosary,
To find holy rest
In the next world
Indecent dress leads²⁴
To eternal fire.*

23. In August, 1961, the girls began singing during their ecstasies. These were either popular religious songs or else original verses that they themselves made up during the ecstasies. What Simón means to say is that it was on March 25th that they sang a complete rosary for the first time.

24. The second verse is from the *Ave Maria* of Fatima. Obviously not all styles of dress lead to eternal fire, but only those—and they are many—that are incompatible with decency.

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*Dress decently,
If you wish to be saved.
The Virgin has warned us
Three times already.
Oh, Virgin of Carmel, how unfortunate,
How unfortunate our death!
Mari Cruz, get up, etc.*²⁵

Simon ended like this:

My joy and excitement were so great on that day, that they couldn't have been greater if I had seen the Virgin myself.

There are more particulars about March 24th and 25th in Garabandal. We have a letter that Maximina began to write to the Pifarré family of Barcelona on March 26th:

The apparitions on Saturday, March 24th were very nice.

Conchita carried an unfolded umbrella since it was snowing and then she went into the houses with the umbrella open. She went in without stumbling anywhere. It was marvelous. They walked throughout the village together—she with the umbrella and Loli. They prayed the whole rosary in ecstasy.

They went to call a woman who was indisposed so that she couldn't go out at night. She was in her bed, and she got up. Mari Loli took her by one arm and Conchita by the other. (Still in ecstasy, they took her half dressed.) First they went to the Cuadro. There they stayed for awhile . . . And Conchita fell full-length like a stone, and still kept the umbrella open. And Loli stayed on her knees. See, they take positions that are beautiful. Afterwards they went down the calleja to other places. We saw the people having great trouble going down; but they went down with tremendous ease . . .

But the greatest thing was on Sunday, the feast of the Annunciation. They began at 9:30 in the evening and they finished at midnight. I almost cannot explain how it went.

They began the rosary singing. Later they mentioned that the Virgin said that all the people should sing . . . Look, we were all singing with violent emotion. They couldn't fake that.

We went to the cemetery singing. There they recited a mystery on their knees. At the gate Conchita stretched her arm through the bars with the crucifix in her

25. We have already mentioned this verse dedicated to Mari Cruz since they sang it for the first time during the *vigils* in August of 1961.

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hand. And it seemed that she was holding it out to be kissed! It was moving, even for the hardest hearts.

Later we went back another time through the village, singing until it ended . . . She sang the *Salve*, the “Let us sing to the love of all loves,” and later other songs that flow from them while in ecstasy. And they said, “Oh, how happy the Virgin is since there are so many people! How she smiles and how she looks at everyone!”

Continuing, Maximina gave some of the verses that the girls composed in ecstasy. One of these is the following:

*Men, women and children,
You know our message.
The Virgin wishes it accomplished,
For the good of all peoples.*

On the next day, March 26th, Maximina wrote to Dr. Ortiz again:

Apparently I mentioned in a previous letter that Conchita was going to leave this week . . . Well, I can say that she doesn't want to leave. It seems that for the present the trip (to the school at León) has been abandoned.

On one of the past nights Jacinta had a very moving ecstasy. It lasted 2 hours and she asked insistently for a miracle. She said, “I don't want to go from the village . . . Look. Do you know what Maximina said? That although they would cut her to pieces, she wouldn't go. I don't want to go either . . . Come. Perform a miracle . . . Call all the people, as you call us, so that they will all come here . . . And once they come, produce a great light . . . Yes, perform a miracle! . . . You are going to perform it? . . . Don't look so serious!”

It was at night—I was not there—and there were only a few people, but they said that those that were there were crying. It was about 8:30, which, in this season is already dark, and they said that they saw her face as if it were daylight.

A young girl, who was very excited, came to tell me about it. She said that she didn't want to see anything more. And it seems also that María Dolores said: “Perform a miracle, so that they don't take us from the village. Tell them that I don't have to go. Come. Tell me again that I don't have to go, since I don't want to go . . . Come, perform a miracle! Good, it's enough of a miracle that now the sun is shining, since when I came here, it was snowing.”

Obviously, during the ecstasies, the sun was always shining.

As Winter Passes was the title of this chapter, and now we find that at the beginning of spring-time the spectacular events of Garabandal are beginning to sprout. And from that mountainland a mysterious supplica-

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tion is being addressed to Him who from on high does not forget the earth, as the ancient biblical prayer refrains:

See, the winter is passed.
The rains are over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth.
The season of joyous song has come.
The song of the dove is heard in our land.
Come then, my love. My lovely one, come.
Show me your face; let me hear your voice;
For your voice is sweet, and your face beautiful.

(Cant. 2: 11-14)

CHAPTER 15

The Ways of God in Garabandal

IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO SAY the ways toward God, rather than the ways of God.

Many souls have found the way toward God at Garabandal. Some have simply found the faith there; others have grown strong in it; and through Garabandal others have gone on to give of themselves generously.

The purpose of Garabandal is more to aid in our salvation than to regale us with visible miracles. This final end of salvation is what can be expected from its mystery.

We have already spoken about this in the first chapter, but we now present it again, giving new examples that occurred during the weeks of reactivation between winter and spring of 1962.

Finding a Vocation

In the early days of 1962, the news of Garabandal was making itself known in the old Castilian city of Segovia. Fr. Ramón María Andreu had been giving retreats for the religious there, and the marquis and marquise of Santa María had given several public talks on the subject.

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Such interest was aroused that in the middle of the winter a bus excursion was organized for the distant village. Among those on the trip was a young woman who until then had certainly not distinguished herself by religious fervor. It was not that this woman led a dissipated life, but rather that she was frivolous and worldly, clashing with the traditional style of that strict Castilian city. She was the first in line for a dance, always ready for amusement, for the beach . . . What was now bringing her to Garabandal in the frigid January of 1962? . . . Even she herself could not explain the reason for her being there.

The excursion group arrived at the place of the apparitions on January 18th, a Thursday. That evening her companions, after gathering information by talking to the people in the village, went to situate themselves in the various settings of the anticipated ecstasies. The young girl tried to squeeze into Ceferino's house; but it was too crowded. She had to remain near the door. Fortunately she found a little bench there against the wall, and she stood on top of it. Thus she was able to observe after a fashion, although from a distance, what she did not have the opportunity to be able to follow up close.

The time for the ecstasy arrived and Loli was in the kitchen, as during so many other ecstasies. The young woman from Segovia had to resign herself to hearing what was going on indirectly, by what was relayed from the spectators in a better position. But even this alone had quite an effect as the atmosphere that normally formed around the ecstasies had a deep religious reverence, even on the part of those most accustomed to it.

In such a climate of silence and waiting, she was able to reflect . . . Withdrawn into herself, she was able to feel in a strange way the frightening proximity of the mystery . . . There came a time when her spirit could not contain itself in that attitude of reverent silence and burst out in prayer: a prayer tremendously obligating:

“Most Holy Virgin, if this is true . . . And God wants something from me . . . I am ready for whatever it is . . . Even to renouncing everything to become a religious! I only ask you, in exchange, for the salvation of . . . whom you know.”

During the terrifying silence following such a prayer, in the depths of her soul there seemed to resound most clearly the answer: “I hear you. I hear you. Yes. Yes.”

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This unexplainable refrain left her trembling with emotion. But it did not take long for uncertainty to settle in. “Who can assure you that this is the voice of God? Couldn’t this have been your imagination? Are you losing your mind?”

Full of distress, she once more raised up an inward request to the compassionate Mother who could well be present there, not far from her.

“Most Holy Virgin, if this is true, if all this comes from you . . . Let the girl come to give me the crucifix to kiss. Let her come to me ahead of everyone else!”

Hardly had the petition been formulated in the hidden recesses of her conscience, when Loli got up off the kitchen floor where she was kneeling. She made her way through the shoving and surprised spectators and went directly toward the young woman, who had some idea of what was going to happen. Indescribable emotion swept over her, but she did not have time to think or do anything. Loli was there in front of her, and without looking at her, Loli raised the crucifix firmly to her lips, and gave it to her to kiss twice. Overcome, the young woman got down from the bench and tried to hide and disappear from the many people who were there; but it was futile. The little visionary followed her, without seeing her, and repeatedly put the sacred image on her lips.

Could God’s answer have been more clear?

But it did not stop there. During the rest of the day, each girl that went out into the street in ecstasy¹ unfailingly went in search of the young woman from Segovia in order to offer her, and to her ahead of anyone else, the figure of the Saviour.

It was a distinction that gave both pleasure and pain. Although it showed the greatest profession of love, it also implied a frightening program of self-renunciation and self-denial.

It would be expected that the young woman in the flush of youth, who was being unequivocally asked to make a total gift of herself, spent the next hours with sentiments never previously felt.

She had come to Garabandal accompanied by her mother; both had found lodging at the house of Piedad, who had furnished them a little

1. In the previous chapter it was shown that Jacinta and Mari Cruz also had apparitions on January 18th.

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room. It was well into the night when they returned and went to bed. But those few hours in bed were not hours meant for sleeping; at least not for the daughter, who did not cease weeping.

The mother, unaware of what had happened in her daughter's conscience, commented on the following day, "Something tremendous must have happened to her . . . She didn't stop sobbing all night long. And I don't recall her ever crying before."

For years now the young woman in this story has lived her consecration to God in a religious order. And she can never forget that her road toward God definitely passed through the faraway, controversial village of San Sebastián de Garabandal.

Encounter with the Faith

Shortly after this woman found her vocation in Garabandal, the time came for Máximo Föeschler to find the Faith. (I write the word with a capital to indicate that this does not refer to a faith, but to the Faith, the Catholic religion, the only one which I consider truly authentic . . . without in any way, showing disrespect toward the others, provided that they are practiced with what we call good faith and good will.)

With the best of good will, Máximo practiced the Protestantism in which he had been brought up by his devout parents. He was German by race and by birth, an engineer by profession. In 1931 he had married a Catholic Spaniard, and had spent many years stationed in Spain, but it had never occurred to him to change his religion. He devoutly lived his Protestant Christianity.

Máximo was stunned by the death of Fr. Luis María Andreu, whom he had known since he was a child. For this reason, one day he decided to go up to Garabandal, with the desire to see the places and the persons that meant so much to the beloved deceased in his last days.

As we have seen in the first part of this book, on Saturday, October 14th, 1961, he arrived for the first time at Garabandal, in spite of an almost tragic automobile accident at the mountainpass of Piedras Luengas.² He did not come alone; his wife accompanied him, together with Fr.

2. Between the provinces of Palencia and Santander. It is one of the highest mountains in the Cantabrian range.

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Ramón Andreu, Mr. and Mrs. Fontaneda from Aguilar de Campoo, and several friends. What he saw and felt on his first visit has already been described: in brief, it did not have much of an effect on him.

But after some months, as if waiting for some mysterious rendezvous, Máximo decided to return to Garabandal. Let us listen to his description:

Fr. Ramón Andreu was beginning the Spiritual Exercises in Loyola on March 19th, 1962. He wanted me to assist at them. Frankly, I was reticent to go, and I wondered what a Protestant could do in a sanctuary like Loyola.

For that reason, I decided to return to Garabandal, hoping for some solution to this.

We came there on Saturday, March 17th, with several friends from Madrid; also with my wife and one of my children. We saw the first ecstasy—with Mari Loli—at 9 at night. And I observed that she was almost entirely concerned with my wife, my son, and also myself. To describe this in detail would be an unending story.

At 6 at night on the following day, Sunday,³ we all assisted at the holy rosary, which for me was really moving.

When we went out, I found Jacinta, whom I had not seen since the early morning of the past October 14th or 15th. I asked her why she hadn't given me the cross to kiss at that time. She didn't answer me. On insisting and telling her that I knew the reason (I thought it was due to my being Protestant), she repeated that she certainly didn't know.

Then I asked when she had last seen the Virgin and she told me, with great sadness, that 5 days had passed without seeing her.

—“But I petitioned during the holy rosary for you to have a vision this very night. I have to leave tomorrow morning, and I need a great sign from the Virgin by means of you.”

Actually, without telling anyone, I had asked that if “this were from the Virgin,” that she would give me an unmistakable and outward demonstration in an ecstasy with Jacinta: “that something would happen to me! And to me alone!”

At 9:30 at night, Mari Loli went into ecstasy in Jacinta's house to tell her that at 12:00 at night she would see the Most Holy Virgin.

And so it was. The girl went out onto the street in an ecstatic march, and every 10 meters she gave the cross to the 8 or 10 of us who were following her. Later I left the group and the girl went toward the church, where she prayed; and there she returned to the normal state again.

Since nothing in particular had happened to me, I thought that Loyola was not my destiny.

But Jacinta announced that there was going to be another vision at 3 in the morning. And still waiting, I went there by her house. At 3 on the dot the trance

3. Liturgically the second Sunday of Lent, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

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began, and as usual she went out on the street. I accompanied her during her trip; but finally I separated from the group and went into Loli's house, where they had a tavern. But toward 3:30 Jacinta came in there in ecstasy, and she made her way toward me thru the many people that were there, gave me the cross to kiss, and made the sign of the cross over me three times. On that occasion no one else had the good fortune of kissing the cross. For me, this was very clearly the sign that I had asked.⁴

I considered that call of the Most Holy Virgin as a definite answer. And on the evening of January 19th, I was in Loyola, beginning the Spiritual Exercises in the house of St. Ignatius.

I had come there with such feeling—having known the Most Holy Virgin for the first time—that I derived the greatest fruits from the days of retreat.

On the third day, while at the holy Mass that they had in the Chapel of the Conversion, on seeing that the others who were making the retreats were receiving Jesus (in Holy Communion), and that I was not, I broke out in tears.

The reader can suspect what happened later. Máximo Föeschler received baptism according to the rite of the Catholic Church on March 31st, 1962, and on the following day, April 1st, with great feeling he received his First Communion.

“I will be eternally grateful”—he confessed—“for all the special graces I received thru the Virgin's mediation, and which actually brought me into the arms of baptism. And I don't know how to give Our Lord and the Most Holy Virgin the thanks that they deserve for the miracle worked in me.”

With his entrance into the Catholic Church, did the affairs of Garabandal end for Máximo?

A great many things happened to me on further visits, which would lengthen this report excessively. I only wish to mention a few:

One day, after Mari Loli had come out of ecstasy, she called me aside and told me what the Most Holy Virgin had said about me. In spite of the timidity that the girls had and though they were 12 years of age at the time, Mari Loli talked a long time to me with the greatest naturalness. She told me about my life, what I had done, and what had happened to me from my early youth until the present date. Absolutely no one in the village could know those details (some, not even my wife!) and many of them came to my memory again, due to hearing them from the girl.

4. Actually what was done by Jacinta corresponded exactly to what Mr. Föeschler had requested secretly in his conscience.

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It occurs to me at this point: Why do some continue to say that all this is the fruit of a game of children, of their ability to deceive, a result of the atmosphere, or mass hysteria, that in all its elements has a natural explanation? Why do they not rather proceed without delay to do a work of charity by illuminating the darkness in those who continue believing in the Miracle, convinced that this is the finger of God?

This reminds me of what St. Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians:

For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the prudence of the prudent I will reject.

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (1: 19-20)

But we are not thinking evil of anyone. All of us are in need of mercy.

Mercy in Discipline

In spite of leafing over and over again through many papers and notes, I am not able to determine the exact date, but I think that it is approximately here, in the final days of March, that something very interesting took place. I came upon this unexpectedly one day in Santander, from the lips of Jacinta. All she remembered was that it was in 1962 at the end of the winter.

It was a cold night. Jacinta wanted to remain awake in the kitchen since an apparition had been foretold for 4 o'clock in the morning; but her father, Simón, told her to go to bed to rest, that he would advise her in time.

The girl resisted, became stubborn, even obstinate. Her father did not permit her to have her way and forced her to obey. Then she went up to her room in a bad mood, crying and protesting. She was afraid of falling asleep and missing the apparition.

And so it happened. After some time she woke up abruptly (her father had made a noise in getting up) and she immediately asked him:

—“Papa, what time is it?”

—“A quarter to six.”

—“You see? I haven't had an apparition on account of you!”

And she began to cry, as much with pain as with regret.

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“You can go now to pray in the *Calleja*,” Simón answered her.

The girl did this; but she waited futilely for a visit to take place as had happened on so many other days at that time.

She returned home unhappier still; and during the days that followed her unhappiness changed into real suffering, on seeing that what she hoped for so much was not coming. Her companions, on the other hand, continued with their ecstasies and apparitions just as before.

Jacinta began to languish. Her parents started to worry seriously as the girl’s mental suffering began to affect her health. Her color became pale, she lost weight, she stopped smiling.

Jacinta had to ask herself, “Why is the Virgin doing this? Will I ever see her again?”

She could not support this last thought. She leaned on her companions whenever they had an apparition and anxiously said to them, “Ask the Virgin why she isn’t coming to me. Ask her if I will see her again. Ask her . . .”

And Loli and Conchita asked and asked . . . But their questions remained unanswered day after day.

Finally, after almost a month, Loli came to Jacinta with important news, “The Virgin told me that you are going to see her on . . .”

For Jacinta that was as if she had suddenly come into the light at the end of a long dark tunnel. She smiled again, her face regained its color, her heart filled with hope.

The longed-for visit came on the day predicted. As soon as Jacinta found herself again before the gracious countenance of Mary, she could not hold back the question, “Why haven’t you come? Why have you kept me so long like this?”

—“For the wrong that you did with your father on that night. How many times do I have to tell you that you must obey your parents, even before obeying me?”

The punishment had been strict, but it had been full of mercy. The Virgin only sought the welfare of her little girls, so full of good will, but also so full of defects. They had to change.

The punishment had lasted a month.

The lesson would last forever.

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Does the case of Mari Cruz have something to do with this mercy in discipline?

Let me state that I do not wish to get involved in explanations as to why she was the least favored of the four girls with regard to the number of ecstasies. But I can not evade the question that comes up from time to time about the possible reason for this undeniable fact.

Is it simply that the plans of God were not the same for all four girls? He allots His gifts gratuitously as He pleases, not always as they are merited. Could it have been that the girl, because of external pressures, was not able to correspond to what was asked of her?

We do not know, nor probably will we ever know. Furthermore, we should not judge rashly. Nevertheless, as a point of illustration, I want to put here what a person from Garabandal wrote to Doctor Ortiz in Santander during the Holy Week of 1962:

With regard to the apparitions, they are the same as always, as you know.

I think Mari Cruz hasn't had more than one apparition in the past month, and that was a small one. She had it on Tuesday morning while she was praying at the Calleja. She was told that the Virgin would return again on Saturday. But, as you know, she went to bed following that, and so didn't have it.

Here is how I interpret this. From the beginning the Virgin has asked for sacrifices.⁵ And Mari Cruz hasn't been making them, since on many days she was in bed at nine o'clock. So how was she going to have an apparition? As you are aware, the other girls, when they were told that they would have one, stayed up until the hour that it happened.

I am putting down these observations and opinions; God alone knows for whom they can be instructive. I do not wish to disparage the girl to whom I refer, nor her parents; they thought they had to act like this, and she believed it was her duty to obey.

5. Another eloquent confirmation of the need for sacrifice mentioned in these lines from Conchita's diary:

During Holy Week, she told me to go out at five in the morning. (to pray the rosary at the Calleja)

And so I went, since the Virgin always wants us to do penance.

Easter Joy

The police chief Juan Alvarez Seco tells of the arrival of a visitor at Garabandal:

I don't remember the date, but I do remember what happened.⁶ I was present in the village on that night and I went to the bar of Ceferino, who came out to meet me, remarking to a woman: "This is the Police Chief, who has been present first hand at many apparitions.: And afterwards he brought her up to me. "This woman is from Barcelona and wants someone to explain some of this to her."

Turning to the woman, I greeted her courteously. And she immediately asked me if I believed in the apparitions. I answered that I did and she recorded it on a tape recorder.

Later she did the same with a cattleherder from the village. He declared sincerely, "Look Señora, I don't know what this is that's happening, but since I have been present at the apparitions, I don't talk as I used to. Before I blasphemed a lot, but I don't do it now."

The woman also questioned a priest⁷ who was there, and recorded his answers. This priest stated confidentially that he believed too.

The woman mentioned here is Mercedes Salisachs of Juncadella, known in Spain above all as a writer. (Some years previous to her visit to Garabandal, she had won the prize *Ciudad de Barcelona* for a novel.) She herself confessed her reasons for coming to the site of the apparitions during these days of April, 1962, in a report that Sánchez-Ventura quoted in his book *Apparitions are not a Myth*.

She began briefly explaining whom her son Miguel was, what he meant to her, and consequently, the terrible pain that had struck her when on October 30th, 1958, with life just beginning—18 years of age—the young man had met death on the highways of France in an automobile accident.

I don't know—she said—what other mothers would have felt in losing a son of Miguel's quality. But I doubt that they could have overcome an emptiness and grief like the one that fell upon me.

His death destroyed the main reason for my life; and on losing him, I felt myself crushed by a horrible darkness.

They told me that I would adjust with time. And, although I would not forget him, his memory would fade away, to remain a pleasant remembrance. They told me that, little by little, I would become accustomed to not seeing him, to not hearing him, and accept my situation without regret.

6. It was on Good Friday of 1962: April 20th.

7. Perhaps this was the Jesuit mentioned later in the woman's narration.

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But time passed and I continued in despair. Although I tried to hide my melancholy, especially so as not to hurt my other four remaining children, as time went by the void increased, together with despondency and suffering.

People used religious arguments to help me. They talked about Christian resignation. They reminded me of Miguel's faith, his exemplary life, and they told me that I should give thanks to God for having taken him in conditions so conducive to the welfare of his soul. But resignation didn't come and all these arguments struck me as inapplicable and inconsistent.

There came a time when doubts against faith revolved over me obsessively. And all that I had previously professed without effort began to waver, leaving me all the time more discouraged. I changed into a different person, without any future except the past, without any hope except to die; but with the feeling that death ended everything, that hope was a great lie, and faith a childish device for holding us in line.

But my doubts were not always strong. At times, without knowing why, hope returned. And if Miguel could see me . . . If the Communion of Saints⁸ were a real thing . . .

At the time I couldn't keep on praying. I was always smashing against a wall of doubt. On one occasion I remember my mother suggested praying the rosary together, and (I am still ashamed of my reaction!) I refused, considering it vulgar.

I needed a sign. Something that could make me realize that life could continue after death.

But the sign didn't come; nor did I seek it. For example, my devotion to the Virgin was practically nil.

Until one day—the feast of the Most Pure Heart of Mary—I instinctively went before an image of the Sorrowful Mother, requesting her to give me a sign if Miguel were saved.

It was not long in coming . . .

From that day onward, I had no more obsessions than to return to God. And five months later, on May 4th, 1958, after a general confession, I came to God finally, with the intention of never separating an instant from Him during the rest of my life.

From that time everything began to change for me. Although my enormous loneliness for Miguel continued, and solitude continued tormenting me, my interior tranquility was great. Praying the rosary stopped appearing vulgar and my devotion to the Virgin increased day by day.

8. The Communion of Saints is one of the most beautiful dogmas of Catholicism. Catholics believe by this that there is an ineffable communication between those who have gone, and those who still remain; and also a mysterious interchange between them, in Christ and for Christ, in the Church and for the Church.

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Then when I heard talk about the girls of Garabandal, I thought of visiting that isolated village not only out of curiosity, but also with the intention of rendering honor to the Virgin, even though the phenomena were open to discussion.

Taking advantage of the absence of my family, who had gone to Suiza, I left Barcelona on Holy Thursday in 1962,⁹ accompanied by José, my driver, and his wife Mercedes.

We arrived at Cossío at noon on Good Friday, and there I met the pastor of Garabandal, Fr. Valentín Marichalar. While we were waiting for a vehical to take us to the village, I used the occasion to converse with him. In spite of his understandable reserve, he finally admitted to me that he was basically convinced that the phenomena occurring there were supernatural, and that the girls were the proper persons, because of their innocence, to receive the Virgin's visits.

It was already two in the afternoon when the car appeared that would transport us to Garabandal. Its driver, Fidel, informed us that Fr. Corta (a Jesuit priest who had come to help Fr. Valentín with the services of Holy Week) would give Communion up there, and that the whole village was congregated in the church.¹⁰

Once in the village, Mercedes was able to establish contact with the visionaries and their families, perhaps through the services of the Police Chief Juan Alvarez Seco to whom, as we have seen, she was introduced by Ceferino at his tavern. She was also helped by the marquis and marquise of Santa María who were staying there again.

That same night—continued Mercedes—I handed Jacinta some objects for her to give the Virgin to kiss, and I made the same request to her that I had made to the other three, “When you see the Virgin, ask her about my son.”

I think Jacinta asked, “And what happened to your son?”

I answered, “He died.”

Everyone had gathered at Mari Loli's house, waiting for the apparition. I gave her a paper, written on both sides, and while giving it, I said to her: “I don't expect an answer. The only thing that interests me is knowing where my son is.” I didn't give his name.

9. In Spain, half the day of Holy Thursday and all of Good Friday are observed as feast-days, and are government holidays.

10. In Garabandal as in so many other villages in Spain (at least at that time), Holy Thursday and Good Friday were days consecrated to the observance of religious devotions; no one missed the liturgical services.

Good Friday services took place at one o'clock in the afternoon, seeking to correspond with the time in which Jesus exhaled His last breath.

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I didn't yet know how the visions took place. Although it had been explained to me, it was difficult to picture their actual happening. Now, after having been in Garabandal several times and having seen so many ecstasies, I still feel that there can be no possible way of describing either the falls of the visionaries, their expressions and motions, or the attitude of respect that, in spite of the character of some of the visitors and the customs of the village, occurred whenever an apparition came.

At first glance, nothing that the girls do seems to have a meaning: their movements, their oscillations, their swift runs, their low-pitched conversations, their insistence on presenting the crucifix to be kissed . . . In summary, everything from the beginning causes wonderment because of its incongruity and appearance of being something without much depth. (There is a priest who, in his report, states that all this is "not very serious" probably being oblivious of the "not very serious" things that happened at Lourdes too.) Nevertheless, one finishes by suspecting that everything that is occurring there has a meaning. The bad part is that, in order to understand it, one has to *live* in the village at least three days. As soon as one familiarizes himself with some of the apparent incongruities, everything becomes clear; the explanation, immediate or delayed, always comes.

In my case, I have to confess that, although I desired much, I expected little. I had envisioned my voyage as one should envision a pilgrimage: ready to face hardships and obstacles.

Waiting, as I said, at Lori's house, we were not long in hearing the characteristic thump of the fall in ecstasy; it came from the upper floor. This caused a general silence, and a little later we saw Mari Lori coming down the stairs, holding the hand of another girl, looking upward with an enraptured expression. I don't think the greatest actress could imitate that expression.

Mari Lori went up to the table that held the objects to be presented to the Virgin, and began to give them to be kissed. I saw how she took my paper, lifted it up, turned it to the other side, and set it down again on the table. Later she went out into the street holding a cross.

In order to better understand this, it should not be forgotten that this was Good Friday, celebrated in such an extraordinary way in Spain. Lori's ecstasy took place at nightfall after an afternoon sanctified first by liturgical services, at which the whole village had assisted, and afterwards, by the way of the cross that many people had made. And Lori's going out on the street coincided with the hour on which, through all the towns of Spain, the traditional processions of Good Friday were in progress, accompanied by tambourines and music from the best orchestras. In Garabandal during that year the processional marches had a very different sign. There were no marching steps, no music, no gatherings; but certainly it

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was lived like no other. Through one or another of the girls, the people participated in the mystery that the other processions could only recall.

Mercedes continues:

The girl's step was light, rhythmic, regular. It appeared that she was walking on smooth and flat pavement; for her there did not exist all the things that we had under our feet: ruts, gravel, stones, rubbish.

As well as I could, I clung onto the arm of the girl that Loli held; but when, after stopping at the door of the church, the visionary undertook the ascent up the hill, I had to let go. I couldn't follow them; I had the feeling that my heart, which was racing, was going to stop at any moment. The slope going up to the Pines was so steep! Exhausted, I rested halfway up the hill waiting for them to come down.

I began to think. The night,¹¹ up until then, had not been too pleasant for me. Whenever the girl had given the crucifix to kiss, she had obviously avoided my lips. The suspicion that, if this were true, it was the Virgin who was refusing my kiss, hurt me deeply.

When the descent finally came, I saw Mari Loli running backwards—her gaze always looking upwards—avoiding the obstacles and obstructions as if she had eyes on the back of her head.

On arriving at the village, she joined Jacinta. They laughed on meeting, and later they presented the crucifix to be kissed, and they walked onwards, holding arms.

Jacinta woke up at the door of the church, but Loli continued to her home still in a trance.

Then I went to search for Jacinta and I questioned her about Miguel. She told me that the Virgin had not answered her question. Dismayed, I went to the place where Loli was, who told me the same.

—“Did she at least read my paper?”

—“Yes, she read it.”

Father Corta was there, and on noticing my dejection, asked the girl if the Virgin would return. *Yes, at 2 or 2:30.* Then Father recommended that I come back to talk about the matter of my son.

At the hour foretold, Mari Loli fell again into ecstasy; she went out of her house and immediately joined with Jacinta, also walking in a trance through the street. They presented the crucifix to be kissed by all those who were there; but again they passed over me, as if avoiding my lips.

And the worst was what they told me on waking up. Both Jacinta and Loli gave me this answer: “The Virgin has answered me; but I can't tell it to you.”

11. It was the night that for centuries had been consecrated to the solitude and sorrows of Mary, who had just seen the death and burial of the most perfect of Sons.

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That outdid everything. I didn't deserve that the Virgin notice me; and Miguel, in spite of everything that I supposed, was in a place . . . that it would be better not to know!¹²

I still had the courage to ask Mari Loli whether the Virgin's answer was good or bad. She was evasive: "I can't . . . I can't . . ." And the expression on her face was truly impenetrable.

Again Fr. Corta tried to help me. (He saw my defeated look, and undoubtedly had pity on me.) He asked the girl, "Could you tell her tomorrow?"

Loli shrugged her shoulders and limited herself to answering, "Perhaps."

Her first day in Garabandal was really becoming a day of testing for Mercedes Salisachs, an actual Good Friday, with its sorrows, its humiliations, its confusions, almost with its agony.

When I awoke (undoubtedly in the early hours of the morning),¹³ I had the impression of being changed into a block of ice. The suspicion that neither God nor the Virgin were on good terms with me left me as defeated as the thought that Miguel could be undergoing punishment . . . although it seemed illogical to doubt Miguel's salvation.

Before going to sleep, I reviewed one by one all the phenomena that I had witnessed during the hours of the day and later throughout the night. And I wanted with all my heart to find some error that would show its falseness; something that would make me see that all this affair at Garabandal was pure superstition. But the more I thought over the events, the more authentic everything seemed. I had to be the one in error! For that reason, undoubtedly, the crucifix hadn't been given to me to kiss.

We do not know if Mercedes made it to sleep that night; but we do know that the next day did not bring her much consolation.

The calendar read: April 21st, Holy Saturday.

Liturgically it was a day full of quiet peace, of holy waiting. The prayer that was recited at each hour of the Divine Office beseeched: "Almighty God, while we piously await the resurrection of Your Son, concede to us, we pray you, to be participants one day in the glory of His resurrection."

For assisting us in difficult times, there is nothing like the support of holy hope, of expectation based on faith.

12. In spite of the present policy of not preaching about hell in the churches, its existence hangs inexorably over every Christian's future, with the possibility of a final fall into absolute disaster.

13. We know that the nights of Garabandal were not made to give pleasure, nor for restful sleep. Ordinarily they consisted of penitential vigils, long periods of prayer, waiting without sleep, and marches with their inconveniences.

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But for the unfortunate woman from Barcelona, this seemed to have ended:

Holy Saturday was no better. In spite of the cordiality that the marquis and his wife, Father Corta, Father Valentín, the Police Chief, and even the mothers of the girls lavished on me, everything in the village seemed hostile. It was undoubtable that all this courtesy was due to the pity and suspicion stemming from the isolation to which the Virgin had sentenced me. But what the people thought mattered the least to me; what hurt me the most was perceiving the continuing disdain coming from above.

Finally I began to have a premonition that what was happening had some relation with the significance of the days that we were celebrating. Could all this have a liturgical meaning? I almost dared not think it, for it seemed too far-fetched.

But what was certain was that after that premonition, the anxiety left me. I resigned myself to everything and submitted myself to the will of God.

That night I ate dinner early, alone in the tavern. Afterwards the Chief of the Civil Guard took me to Conchita's house. Her mother received me politely, and offered me a place next to her daughter.

The heat of the fireplace was stifling, and my physical state was getting worse; but my moral state was improving as each hour went by.

We talked of a thousand things. The most striking thing about the girls is their naturalness in the current of everyday life. They accept the supernatural with a simplicity bordering on the unbelievable. Seeing the Virgin seems to them to be within the reach of everyone; and what is happening seems normal to them.

What really concerns them is observing the incredulity of the people. They ask this question endlessly, "Do you believe? Do you believe that we really see the Virgin?" They probably think that upon this belief depends whether the Virgin will perform the great miracle that they have been predicting since the beginning. Outside of this, they always show signs of great certainty concerning theological matters. In spite of their evident lack of education, the knowledge with which they give out comments is astounding.

When Conchita fell into ecstasy, I had gone out of the kitchen (because of the unbearable heat) and so I couldn't observe exactly how the phenomena occurred. Nevertheless, on going out on the street, I could observe well what happened to Mr. Mándoli,¹⁴ a recent arrival at Garabandal. Although a man of faith, he didn't accept the apparitions. Soon I saw Conchita detour from her path and come right toward us (Mr. Mándoli was at my side) to present him the crucifix. But the man, either embarrassed or as a test, evaded it. Conchita, always with her head thrown backwards so as to make it impossible for her to

14. This man is completely unknown to me.

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see what was ahead, pursued him tenaciously with the cross until she managed to have him kiss it.

Turning then toward me, Mr. Mándoli admitted with feeling that he had petitioned the Virgin that, if this were true, Conchita would seek to make him kiss the crucifix. If my memory doesn't fail me, on that night also, she didn't give it to me to kiss.

Later Conchita joined the other three girls who were walking through the village in ecstasy too. All four held hands and with their customary light step made their way thru the streets, followed by the crowd with flashlights.

I remember that other apparitions (Lourdes and Fatima) had been stationary and quiet. And it seemed as if the actions or movements in the ones which were now presenting themselves could have something to do with the characteristics of our times. It was as though the Virgin, just like John XXIII,¹⁵ wanted to adapt her mercy to the *restlessness* of modern needs. Ecstasies like those at Lourdes or Fatima could have appeared incongruous in our times. The people needed another style. And what the girls of Garabandal demonstrated was well adapted to our ways.

The apparitions were accessible through the girls; everyone could, keeping a distance, participate. Each person, if he took the trouble, was able to take part, although indirectly, in the dialogues that the visionaries held with the apparition. From the beginning—according to the girls—the Virgin showed signs of wanting to approach the spectators; she allowed them to ask questions, answered their prayers, accepted articles to kiss . . . Certainly this gave the impression of wanting to break down barriers.

Nevertheless, I found myself at the time so disconcerted by the ostensible disdain that the Vision was showing toward me that—without thinking of the unquestionable generosity that she was demonstrating to others—I made up my mind definitely not to ask any more questions, or to expect the least sign from the girls.

The woman's reaction, although not perfect, is easily explainable. What had occurred was not what she had expected when she had set out on her pilgrimage.

We do not know at what time the ecstatic processional march, led by the group of visionaries, came to an end; but it must have been before 11:30, since at that hour the solemn pascal vigil services began in the church.

15. It should be taken into consideration that Mercedes Salisach's report was written in the spring of 1962, a period when the popularity of the Pope at the time, John XXIII, had reached its apogee due to innumerable demonstrations of his good-natured personality and by the appearance of speed with which he was preparing the second Vatican Council.

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The streets were then deserted, as were most of the houses; the villagers and visitors had gathered in the sacred precinct to participate in the beautiful liturgy that concluded the Mass of the first pascal alleluias.

When the people left the church, the most beautiful Sunday of the year had begun, the day that celebrated the Resurrection, the true *Day of the Lord*.

There was not much time to rest, at least for this women. Let us return to Mercedes:

The women of the village, following an ancient custom, began to sing the rosary in the streets.¹⁶ In spite of my exhaustion, I felt impelled to follow them. The devotion that one sensed in the atmosphere was really moving. I cannot remember experiencing a more fervent Easter than that one!

The night seemed to get clearer as the rosary went on. The tile roofs shone in the darkness almost like the moon and the stars.

We must have been on the third mystery when the unexpected happened. Someone tapped me lightly on the shoulder. On turning around, I met the marquise of Santa María who was holding Mari Loli's arm. She spoke to me confidentially, "Mari Loli says that she has something to say to you."

At the time I was confused. It didn't occur to me what this could be for. I already had many disappointments and I wasn't expecting anything.

But Rosario Santa María added, "This concerns something that the Virgin told the girl yesterday, with the request not to mention it until after one at night" (that is, until after the pascal vigil).

Mari Loli repeated somewhat bashfully, "Later, later I will tell it . . ."

Bewildered and intrigued, I did not know what to say. But Rosario—who had been with me during my bad times—intervened, "Not later. You are going to tell it right now. You aren't going to let this woman worry like this any longer."

Then Mari Loli and I went apart from the group. I leaned toward her and she whispered a message in my ear, but in a very clear voice: "The Virgin says that your son is in heaven."

What I experienced afterwards, I can't describe. Everything, absolutely everything dissolved in that wonderful statement.

I only remember that I embraced Mari Loli as if I were embracing Miguel. Later I found myself in the arms of Rosario; she was crying too, and was telling me so many things that I couldn't understand. The people gathered around me, and in the throng I vaguely saw Father Valentín, Father Corta, Eduardo Santa

16. This custom seems absolutely admirable to me. Hopefully it will not be abandoned, but rather spread to other areas! Could there be anything more indicated than a rosary at dawn to celebrate and relive that unique dawn of our history when the Son of Mary came forth from the sepulcher?

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María, the chief of the Civil Guard . . . All were looking at me, astonished and excited. Conchita's mother also came, alarmed by the commotion, and wanting to help, exclaimed, "Tell that woman, that if she is crying because she hasn't received the crucifix to kiss, that she shouldn't be disturbed, that during the whole night it hasn't been given to me either."

This must certainly have been a gripping scene since years later the chief of the Civil Guard mentions in his memoirs:

The scene that occurred around the lamppost was imprinted on my heart, and I think that it will never be erased. The same had to happen to the others who were there at the time.

"The rest of the rosary"—continues Mercedes—"was like an ascent to heaven. I remember that I handed my cane to Rosario Santa María and seized Mari Loli's arm; never in my life have I felt so light and so secure. Still crying, we continued with the rosary, walking forward, onwards into the early morning. I think that I prayed more with my eyes than with my lips, since Mari Loli kept repeating, "Don't cry, don't cry." But it was impossible for me not to; I had so many reasons for crying!

I didn't need a flashlight, nor did I look at the ground; holding onto Mari Loli's arm and full of faith in the Virgin, I walked the remainder of the time looking only upwards. Never have I seen a sky so full of stars and so clear! Each star was a smile.

Toward 3 in the morning, we went into the tavern of Loli's father, talking about the things that had occurred on that memorable night. Still bewildered by what had happened to me, I saw that Rosario was whispering to Loli . . . A little later she came toward me, "Mari Loli says that the message she gave you is not complete; but since you started to cry so soon, she wasn't able to continue telling you about it."

Then the girl confided to me what was missing, and what left me still more perplexed.

She also told me that your son is very happy, most happy, and that he is with you every day . . . I know that your son is in heaven! I found this out yesterday when the Virgin told it to me. But I had to keep quiet about it since she said to me, "Do not tell it to the woman until after the Easter Mass tomorrow."

Certainly such finesse could not have come from the young girl . . .

It is easy to understand the reason for this statement. Heaven's response to Mercedes Salisachs' tremendous worry had to be too complicated, in effect, too intermeshed with the liturgical season, to be attributable to the inventive genius of an uneducated young farm girl.

During Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the time of the suffering and annihilation of Our Savior, and also of Mary, the co-redemptorist, this

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woman had to pass through long hours of humiliation and darkness . . . And only after the liturgy proclaimed the first alleluias of the Easter morning Mass, in the most sacred night, did she receive the gift of that unexpected and wonderful joy.

After that moment—continued Mercedes—everything changed for me. Soon the girl fell into ecstasy again. To demonstrate that the game of silence of the previous days was concluded, she immediately came to me and applied the crucifix on my lips, once, twice, three times . . . Then making with it the sign of the cross on my forehead, on my lips, and on my chest, she gave it again to the Virgin to kiss. And to definitively seal everything that she had just confirmed, she offered it to me again. Afterwards, without offering it to anyone else to kiss, she went out on the street.

Outside the house, Ceferino, the girl's father, waved for me to come near. "She was talking about you with the Virgin," he told me. "Briefly, this is what she said: "I told her that she shouldn't cry, that she had to be happy . . . But she didn't pay attention . . . And if she cries again when I tell her about it?""

As soon as the ecstasy was ended, Mari Loli came toward me and whispered that she had another message. She waited until we were alone and then said to me:

—"While I was speaking now with the Virgin, I saw that she was laughing very much; and that she was looking upward. On asking her why she was laughing so much, she answered me, "that at the same time in which she was speaking to me, he was looking at you. And that his joy was great."

—"Mari Loli, to whom are you referring? About . . ."

I didn't get to pronounce his name, for she interrupted:

—"Yes, Miguel. The Virgin told me, "Above all, tell the woman that while I am speaking with you now, Miguel is looking at her, and that he is very happy; he is pleased, very pleased."

—"Tell me, Mari Loli! How did you know that his name was Miguel?"

—"Because I asked the Virgin, 'Who is Miguel?' And she answered me, 'The son of that woman.'"

When this all ended in the early morning, our return to the house where I lodged was like walking on a cloud . . . The city nestled under a sky full of stars. The sun was rising on the other side of the mountain.

Encounter with Mystery

The first Holy Week in Garabandal during the apparitions (April 15th to 22nd) left indelible traces engraved on many hearts.

In the same places and at the same time that Mercedes Salisachs had the personal experiences that have just been mentioned, another distinguished

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visitor to the village was also having his own deeply felt experiences. The visitor was a doctor from the city of Vitoria named José de la Vega. A believer, but not easily aroused, he went up to Garabandal like many others, simply out of curiosity to see what was happening.

What happened there had such an effect on him that he felt it his duty in conscience to make it known. Under his name appeared an article in the newspaper *El Pensamiento Alavés* on April 27th, 1962, during Easter Week:

From the 18th of last June, the Virgin passes almost daily thru the winding streets of a little village lost in the hills of the Picos de Europa.¹⁷ This is what is affirmed by four girls between 11 and 12 years of age, born and brought up high in the Santander mountains, without any more education than grade school and instructions by their parish priest.

The entire village of about 70 families has lived for months in complete disorder. Once or more on almost every day at pre-fixed hours the girls pray, speak to, and kiss the Virgin, and are swept up in deep ecstasy. The simple parents of these young girls are frightened . . .

The Church prudently refrains from giving its opinion. The doctors, even the most incredulous, have recognized that this matter doesn't have any logical explanation. But thousands of believers—coming each day to the village from the most faraway places—find in fervent and tearful faith, the only explanation for the extraordinary events that happen every night at San Sebastián de Garabandal.

I passed the Holy Week among these people. I listened to the inhabitants of the village and to the visitors. I talked with the *girls* before and after their visions.

And as I could find no professional explanation for what I myself had seen, I was forced to believe in a miracle.”

—“Have you seen the Virgin?”—some people asked me.

—“No. I haven't seen her. But I have felt her with my heart and soul.”

A Jesuit Father,¹⁸ who was with me there, said to me:

—“I see you are very skeptical, doctor.”

—“No, Father, that isn't so. I'm completely confused. My most vehement desire would be to feel like the girls and those that accompany them. But you know better than I that faith is a gift that God doesn't concede to everyone in the same way.”

17. For the sake of accuracy, the doctor's statement should be clarified: Garabandal is not in the group of mountains composing the Picos de Europa, although it is near to it in the Peña Sagra chain of mountains to the northeast.

18. Perhaps this was Father Corta who had gone to make the Holy Week in Garabandal.

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Sometime after this conversation, I was able to follow an apparition for the second time and close at hand. It was the dawn of Holy Saturday. It was raining without cease, and the entire village seemed to be covered with mud and stones. With flashlights in our hands, we hurriedly followed one of the visionaries who was running through the streets in ecstasy. With her hands joined, she was holding a crucifix; her head tilted sharply backwards; her eyes fixed on the sky, but smiling. From time to time, she knelt down, prayed, and kissed the cross . . . Half the village and all the visitors, including children, followed her as if hypnotized.

In the little kitchen of her house (where later she talked with us half asleep—it was 4 o'clock in the morning) we succeeded in seeing her enter abruptly into ecstasy, and fall on her knees without burning herself on the hot stones of the blazing fireplace. Later she got up, and as if transported by angels, she began to run through the village. Stumbling in the darkness and splashing in mud up to our ears, we followed after her, unable to stop ourselves.

I asked God ardently for the grace of faith.

In spite of the dim light, we ran through all the little streets of the village. We went to the courtyard of the church, the cemetery, and then to the hill where the Virgin appeared for the first time.¹⁹

The roughness of the way, the blackness of the night, the bad weather, and my flabby condition as a city dweller made me stumble so many times that I fell behind. Finally, I could go no more and decided to wait for them to return. On the contrary, my wife didn't want to stop—in spite of being short of breath—and she continued onward, asking help for my lack of faith . . .

Soon the girl stopped without arriving at the crest of the hill, and came back on the trail down, marching backwards, hardly touching the stones, continuously looking upward and smiling at the sky.

On coming to my level, she stopped again, fell hard on the gravel with her bare knees, raised the cross to the sky and . . . gave it to me to kiss! Then she searched with her hands among the multitude of chains and rosaries that hung from her neck, seeking for a special chain, while whispering to the invisible apparition, "Tell me which is it . . . Is it this one?"

With her hand she raised up the medal to give to the Virgin to kiss in her vision. And we all heard her whisper again, "Tell me whom it belongs to."

And then, without hesitating any more, she turned toward my wife and put the chain around her neck, and without looking, latched the little gold fastener in place. Thrilled and weeping, my wife fell on her knees there, as I did and many of those that were witnessing the unusual scene. The girl had her kiss the medal

19. The doctor certainly is referring to the hill of the Pines; but it should be remembered that the first apparitions, including those of the Virgin, did not take place there, but rather on the narrow road that leads up to the Pines; that is to say, in the *Calleja*, closer to the village than the Pines.

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blessed by the breath of the Virgin, and helped her to get up from the ground with an angelical smile that we will never forget.

Later my turn came. In the same way as with my wife, and with the same or similar words, she put on me my medal that had been kissed by the Virgin . . . I could not contain myself, and tears ran down my cheeks.

At the same time, I found the explanation for everything I had not understood. In the heavenly expression of the girl, I saw a reflection of the Virgin's invisible presence over our heads. On my knees as I was, weeping copiously, I began to ask pardon from God for my lack of faith.

I will return to San Sebastián de Garabandal, as everyone who has come returns. I will bring doctors and friends, and I will ask them to try to explain the mystery of the four village girls from the Montaña. But still more, I will ask God that the feeling I felt on the early morning of Holy Saturday never leave me. It is so beautiful to believe in a miracle!"

The chapter finishes. The woman from Segovia, the Protestant engineer from Germany, the novelist from Barcelona, the doctor from Vitoria . . . These are just a few cases that have come by chance or by providence to our knowledge. How many others are still unknown? How many others will remain forever hidden from human eyes?

But by the few that we know about, we can say that many ways toward God for the help of souls, have passed, and will continue to pass, thru . . .

Garabandal

CHAPTER 16

From the Month of Mary to the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament

WITH THE CONCLUSION OF LENT—so important for Christians, especially during its last weeks—starts the no less important Eastertime.

This season is characterized on the one hand by jubilant celebration of the Resurrection of Christ; on the other hand, by the Church's holy work of bringing souls to Communion with Him through the Eucharist. It is in this that Christ our Pasch now and forever immolates Himself for us as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

In correlation with the Eucharistic theme of the season, the Mystical Communion that the girls received from the Angel became more frequent.

In a letter from Maximina González to Doctor Ortiz in Santander, dated April 20th, 1962, we find this:

On Friday morning¹ I went with Conchita to the Pines, since the Angel gives Communion to her there on many days. After receiving on that day, she said to

1. I have observed repeatedly that Maximina has not been very careful about the dates by

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me, “The Angel told me that in the morning I would see the Virgin at 9 o’clock, and again at midnight.” And since I knew about it, I watched; and according to my watch, at 9 o’clock sharp, she had an apparition. I wasn’t present at the other apparition, but it was at midnight. And on Saturday, the Angel told the hour and he didn’t err.”

In another letter that Maximina sent to the Pifarré family in Barcelona which was dated April 22,² we find information on a very important matter:

It has been a long time since the girls saw the Angel, and yesterday, Tuesday, they talked with the Virgin for a long time. We didn’t hear them, but they were seen to be very happy. And it was due to the Virgin telling them that every day that they didn’t have Mass, the Angel would come to give them Communion. And this made them very happy . . . So now they will see the Angel and the Virgin, since we have very few Masses other than the ones on Sunday. Yesterday the Angel gave them Communion at 5 in the morning. They were seen holding out their tongues and swallowing the Host. Afterwards they prayed a Station. All this while in ecstasy.

And so now I don’t know; perhaps they will have an apparition every day, since in order to receive Communion they have to be in ecstasy. I don’t know if this is the way it will be, since today is the first day that he gave them Communion like this. He hasn’t given It to them since last summer.

Another letter from Maximina to the Pifarré family is dated May 4th:

The Angel gives them Communion every day that there isn’t a Mass, and Mass is on few other days than Sunday. As for still not giving Communion to Mari Cruz, I don’t know why that is. Today Loli and Jacinta received Communion at 6 in the morning, and Conchita at 8 o’clock. Indeed, it is beautiful to see them

which she begins her letters. The good woman—a widow—had many duties since, besides being alone to care for her two small children, she received lodgers in her house requiring room and board; and she had to find a few minutes time between her many occupations to write letters. And besides possible carelessness in writing the date, frequently several days would go by from the time she started the letter until she finished the last sentence.

The Friday about which she is speaking here would seem to be Good Friday according to the date of the letter. (April 20th) It can not be the previous Passiontide Friday (April 13th in that year), from what is seen in another of her letters later on. And so I conclude that despite the date on the letter it refers to Friday of Easter Week, April 27th.

2. I refer the reader to footnote 1, adding that this letter could not have been written completely on April 22th, Easter Sunday. The text that we are reproducing from the original (as we have done with all of Maximina’s letters to the Pifarré family) must have been written on the following Wednesday, April 25th.

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come to the door of the church in ecstasy, kneel down and pray the I confess, and end with a Station. To see this thrills me. Conchita said to the Angel, “You haven’t put on any weight or grown in the past year . . .” Look what innocent things they talk about!

Truly! With the ingenuousness of simple children, they judged the realities of the next world by those that they saw in this one. They were surprised, after not having seen the child Angel for many months, that he was still exactly the same as when they had first met him.

Fr. Valentín’s notes, that begin again on May 12th after a long intermission, mention on many days the occurrence of these Mystical Communions from the hands of the Angel.

We can therefore describe the developments seen at Garabandal in the weeks of spring, 1962, as a continual passage from Mary to the Eucharist, and the converse.³

May 12th: Mari Loli had an apparition at 2 in the morning. She went to Conchita’s house, and then to the house of Jerónimo, who was on his death bed; she gave him the crucifix to kiss. At 8 in the morning, as was the custom, Conchita went with her mother and some people to pray the rosary in the Calleja. She recited it in a normal state. Afterwards she went to the door of the church, where she spoke for a while, and in ecstasy prayed the *Confiteor*, and afterwards a Station, and then she returned to normal. She said “the Angel gave her Communion.” It lasted 15 minutes. (Fr. Valentín’s notes)

The following day, May 13th, was the 45th anniversary of the first apparition at Fatima. Probably no one in Garabandal remembered it; but by chance or providentially, the day was outstanding. Thanks to some notes from Fr. Valentín, we know, for example, that it was unseasonably bad weather. “It rained and it hailed.” Under the rain and hail, at the beginning of the night, Jacinta and Mari Loli traveled through the village, singing songs and praying in ecstasy. Going to the house of Jerónimo, who was still alive, they fulfilled a work of mercy by praying for the dying and consoling the living. And finally they went to the Pines, where they prayed the rosary, and then came down backwards to the village.

3. If the word *Marian* has special meaning in the flow of events at Garabandal, it would be logical to expect a brilliant manifestation with the coming of May, the *Month of Mary*. And so the invitation of the Spanish song ‘*Venid y vamos todos . . .*’ would find special resonance in that location distinguished by the Virgin-Mother, the Queen of Flowers.

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As always the vigils were more frequent in the middle of the night, and at that time Conchita went out into the street in ecstasy, prayed another rosary, and gave the crucifix to be kissed.

Seldom, even in Fatima, have the recommendations of Fatima been fulfilled so exceptionally:

*Do penance.
Say prayers
to implore pardon
for sinners.*

On May 15th, the feastday of St. Isidore, the patron saint of farmers, toward 8 o'clock in the morning . . .

Conchita went to the Calleja as usual to recite the rosary. From there she went to the door of the church, and said that the Angel had given her Communion, and that in the evening she would have an apparition at 9 o'clock.

This is almost the same as was said for the 16th, according to Fr. Valentín's notes:

Today Conchita went to the Pines at 9 in the morning. According to what she said, the Angel gave her Communion.

On May 19th, a Claretian father from Segovia traveled to Garabandal and Fr. Valentín took down his impressions:

The father told me that in one of the apparitions he heard the girl say, "Oh! He isn't a Jesuit? He is from the Immaculate Heart of Mary? (The only way one could be differentiated externally from the other was by the manner of wearing the black cincture.)" He thought that some of the things, taken individually, could be explained; but that the sum of all the things that were happening as a whole would be very difficult to explain humanly.

This father had an injury to his leg, and he said that the Virgin told him that she would not cure him, that he should go to a doctor; he had carried this injury 8 days. Useful information! It is not necessary to seek a miracle to get rid of problems that can normally be solved by natural means.

A week later, on May 26th, Mari Loli and Conchita walked through the village together in ecstasy, praying a rosary that ended with a beautifully sung Salve . . . as could be expected, since it was a Saturday, the day of the week consecrated to the Virgin!

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After the Salve, they made a devout procession to the cemetery. . . something that could be expected from Christians. “Be mindful, Lord, of your children, who have preceded us with the sign of the faith and repose in the sleep of peace.” (Roman Canon of the Mass)⁴

On the last day of May, there was a long rosary through the streets and the singing of the Salve.

There can be no doubt that the month of May, the month of Mary, was something very exceptional at Garabandal. In many places throughout Spain, the *Venid y vamos todos* resounded each evening:

*Most pure Virgin,
Lovelier than the moon,
Turn again toward us,
Prostrate at your feet.*

But surely in none of these places did it resound with the meaning and depth that it had, day after day, in that little village lost in the mountains.

The girls of Garabandal, transported with joy, lived in expectation of seeing their Mother, and she did not fail to use her visits to instruct her children almost continually.

Again it is Maximina giving us information in a letter of May 11th to the Pifarré family:

We make trips thru the village (following the girls in ecstasy) and every night or almost every night they recite a rosary; sometimes they sing it.

One night Mari Loli was heard to say, “There is going to be a chastisement? . . . Oh no! Don’t let it come! Give it to me alone!”

And another night Conchita said, “It’s going to come to Spain? . . . Oh, may it not come, may it not come!”

Later I asked her what this was in the ecstasy, and she told us that she couldn’t say anything.

If Conchita can not say anything, I think that we can certainly say something. Lucy, the sole survivor of Fatima, lived 21 years in Spain as a religious, staying alternately in Tuy and Pontevedra. She was in Spain from 1925 until 1946. During this time she had frequent conversations

4. On the last Saturday of the month, May 26th, Conchita again received Communion from the Angel. Guillermo Freudenthal Miret of Barcelona was present and he was able to take some beautiful pictures.

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with the bishop of Tuy-Vigo who later went on to be archbishop of Valladolid: Bishop Antonio García.

While archbishop in the beginning of 1943, Bishop Antonio received three statements from Lucy on what God wished and asked “from the bishops of Spain” for the welfare of their own and other nations.

The third statement made at Tuy on February 28th is the most extensive and contains a very clear paragraph:

If the bishops of Spain listen to the desires already manifested by our Lord, and begin a true reform of the people and clergy, then it will go well. But if not, she (Russia) will again be the enemy by which God will punish her once more.

Unfortunately our bishops—not all of them, certainly—have been for years giving the impression that they were more interested in promoting social and political changes and democratic freedom than in fulfilling their primary duty: the advancement of the clergy and people in living the faith and leading good moral lives.

We have more information. On Saturday, May 26th, Mari Loli wrote to the pastor of Barro, Fr. José Ramón. The letter, as all those of that period, was a disaster in penmanship and presentation. However, among the words laboriously written down, many of them trivial, there is something that could not be missed:

The apparitions continue the same. We see her almost every day.

You said that I should tell you some of what she told me. Well I cannot say anything; nothing more than what, as you know, she tells us every day:

- “That we should be very good,”
- “And visit the Blessed Sacrament often,”
- “And recite the rosary every day . . .”

(The distribution of the lines and the punctuation were made by me. Mari Loli wrote all these things one after the other in irregular lines and without a single period or comma.)

June, the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus came and continued with similar characteristics.

June the 2nd was a Saturday. A very astute doctor must have been there at the time; at least pertaining to this day there is this notation from Fr. Valentín:

A young doctor from Valladolid (Fernandez Marcos) told me that he didn’t see anything seriously opposed to this being supernatural; and that reasoning with-

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out prejudices, it was very difficult to affirm the opposite . . . It's necessary to be uncomplicated to accept that the phenomena are not normal. Naturally if we seek some "theoretical" explanation to a given fact that we have seen, we will always find it; but only this, the "theoretical" explanation, based on a "hypothetical" argument without concrete and objective findings.

June 13th came; the day that is distinguished by the number of people who honor St. Anthony of Padua or Lisbon,⁵ but in Garabandal it was only distinguished by two not very exceptional things:

In the evening the four girls had an apparition together, something that hadn't happened for some time.

There were no people outside. (Anyhow this is what Father Valentín put down. On that day the people were occupied with St. Anthony.)

On Sunday, June 17th, "there was a man from Palencia"—as Father Valentín writes—"who was somewhat skeptical, and during one of the apparitions said to himself, "If the girl comes back here to give me the crucifix to kiss, I will believe in the truth of this." Immediately the girl made her way through the crowd and gave it to him to kiss."

I set down this detail, not because it is new or unique, since we already have so many others like it, but for the intrinsic value that it contains. There are things about Garabandal that separately could be attributed to natural causes and even, if you wish, diabolical intervention. There is much that the devil can do if God permits him. But we have here something that certainly exceeds the powers and abilities of the devil. There are texts in Scripture from which we see that penetration into the hidden thoughts of a person, and understanding perfectly his secret ideas and thoughts, is the exclusive domain of God.

For example, St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (4: 5), speaking of our inclination to judge, gives this warning: "Judge not before the time: until the Lord comes, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the councils of hearts." As if to say that Christ is the only one capable of knowing the deep secrets of man, and because of this, the only one capable of judging with total justice.

5. St. Anthony of Lisbon, as the Portuguese call him since the saint was born in the capital of that country; Anthony of Padua, as others call him for having died and been buried in that Italian city.

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And in the epistle to the Hebrews (4: 12-13) the paragraph on the great power of the Word of God ends with this proclamation: "Neither is there any creature invisible in His sight: but all things are naked and open to His eyes." He could not proclaim as an eminent divine attribute this knowledge of all man's intimate secrets, if the devil could also penetrate into these secrets.

Then, before so many cases of answers to thoughts or questions that were formulated only in the deepest consciences of the people at Garabandal, could one seriously say that all this had a natural explanation, as the hierarchy repeats? Or that it could be the work of the devil, as others have suggested?

Return of the Angel Nights of the Screams

Revolving around the feast of Corpus Christi in 1962, Garabandal experienced one of the most outstanding times in its history.

This feast honoring the Eucharist is celebrated in Spain with greater external solemnity than any other. The feast was soon to suffer a great eclipse in the days after the Council as a result of certain doctrinal derangements, as a result of a heated fight against triumphalism in the Church, as a result of a tendency in many of the clergy to desecrate, as a result of etc., etc.. But in Garabandal, in the year 1962, it was celebrated as never before.

Three days previously something occurred that seems not to have been sufficiently noted: the active reappearance of St. Michael the Archangel.

We can speak of reappearance, not because he had disappeared completely, but because his presence had been reduced for some time to interventions of a lesser degree: to fleetingly supplying for the absence of a priest in giving Holy Communion to the girls, and accompanying the Virgin from time to time as a silent witness. Now on the contrary, on the evening of the feast of Corpus Christi, he returns to play a role almost as he did in the beginning.

In that year Corpus Christi fell on the 21st of June, a Thursday. On the preceding Monday, June 18th, Fr. Valentín wrote:

In the evening Mari Cruz went to the Cuadro and there was in ecstasy, and afterwards she went through the village. A little later, Jacinta and Mari Loli went outside. They also went to the Cuadro and then fell into ecstasy. They said that they saw the Angel.

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Did Fr. Valentín notice the newness of this? St. Michael comes alone again, and acts alone.⁶

Did Fr. Valentín notice what date it was? June 18th! Exactly one year since the Archangel and the girls had met for the first time in the same place. How many things had happened in the meantime! And many more were still to happen.

On the following day, Tuesday the 19th, he wrote:

At 10:30 (at night) Jacinta, Mari Loli and Mari Cruz were in the Cuadro. Previously Loli and Jacinta had gone there running, and on arriving were in ecstasy. And they said that they saw the Angel, and that he told them to return to the Cuadro at 10:30. Then they went down to the village and later went up with Mari Cruz . . .

The girls cried and said: “Don’t tell us these things! Take us away . . . They should confess! They should get ready!”

Afterward they said that they would put it in writing. (as the Angel had told them to do) It lasted 50 minutes.

In the meantime, what was Conchita doing? Why was she absent during the important activity in the *calleja*? Some notes from Dr. Ortiz clarify this for us:

My sister-in-law, Eloísa (who was passing some time in Garabandal with her daughter), told me that on the evening of June 19th she met with other people in Conchita’s house. Conchita’s mother would not let her go outside since she had a bad knee. Soon the girl went into ecstasy, falling so hard on her knees that she made them bleed. Then Eloísa said to Aniceta:

—“You haven’t accomplished anything by not letting her go out. Look what she has done.”

—“It’s all right with me if she goes out.”

The girl didn’t go out, but in ecstasy as she was, she picked up a piece of paper and holding it by the lower border—in the air!—she began to write on it with a pen. Approaching with flashlights, the people wanted to read what she was writing, and she tried to hide it.

“Don’t look.”—said someone—“She doesn’t want you to.”

Then she went up to her room, changed her pen and continued writing.

When this had ended and she was normal again, Plácido⁷ came into the house, all excited, and exclaimed:

6. That the Angel appeared alone this time seems clear from what Fr. Valentín wrote afterwards: “They said that they would see the Virgin later.”

7. The businessman from Santander, Plácido Ruiloba.

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—“Did you hear the screams that the girls made in the *Calleja*?”

—“No.”

—“They were horrible!”

What happened in the *Calleja* on that night of June 19th, the first *Night of the Screams* (*Noches de los Gritos*) as the people began to call them, must have been very impressive and serious.⁸ We have just seen Fr. Valentín’s notation: “Afterward they said that they would put it in writing.” And so it was actually done; there came out from this a short message dated June 19th, 1962, with the signatures of Mari Loli and Jacinta. (Could this have been the same message that Conchita, at home in ecstasy, was attempting to write on the piece of paper she was holding up in the air?)⁹

I have seen many copies of this message with slight variations. But I am setting down here a photocopy of the text that the girls gave to a trustworthy person, written and signed in their own handwriting. Evidently, this message is a very weak reflection of what they saw and heard on that first night of the screams.

The Virgin told us:¹⁰
That we do not expect the Chastisement;
That without expecting it, it will come;
Since the world has not changed.
And she has already told us twice;
And we do not pay attention to her,
Since the world is getting worse.
And it should change very much.

8. Many years passed before definite information was revealed on the contents of that night.

The magazine *Needles*, now titled *Garabandal* out of New York, in its fall issue of 1977, reported some statements by Jacinta’s American husband (as spokesman for her). According to these statements, what Loli and Jacinta heard during the first night of screams related specially to the Warning. (See further on in Part Three of this book.) And it was on the following night that these two girls and Conchita had visions of the Chastisement.

At the time Jacinta and Loli possibly did not understand the distinction between the Warning and Chastisement, or else they deliberately keep silent about the Warning, since Conchita was the only girl who spoke about the Warning that was going to come before the Miracle—as a result of the vision she had on January 1, 1965.

9. Father Valentín, who was absent, wrote in his memoirs: “Conchita wrote responses for three persons.”

10. It is difficult to determine if it was the Virgin who personally presented all these things to them, or if it was done by the Archangel.

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*And it has not changed at all.
Prepare yourself. Confess,
Because the Chastisement will come soon.
And the world continues the same . . .
I tell you this:
That the world continues the same.
How unfortunate that it does not change!
Soon will come a very great Chastisement,
If it does not change.*

*María Dolores Mazón
Jacinta González*

This is the message faithfully reproduced; the only thing I have added is the punctuation and the distribution into lines to make it easier to understand. (The girls wrote all these things one right after the other without a single comma or period.)

With their poor capacity for expression, they sought with this repetition of ideas to inculcate forcefully the few basic things that they had heard and seen (and in what a way!) in the course of the apparition:

—That the Chastisement (I write this with a capital so that no one will interpret it to be an ordinary chastisement.) announced in the first message of October 18th was inexorably going to come. The reason for this is that only penitential reform could save us from it, and instead of this, what is happening in the world today is a rapid progression down the road of filthiest deviations.

—That only those who prepare themselves by a sincere return to God, together with constant prayer and watching, will be able to face the terrible *test*¹¹ in the proper state.

On the night after the girls' terrifying screams, tears, and broken, incoherent speech, Garabandal could not sleep tranquilly. But the next day was even worse.

Early in the morning arrived Fr. Félix Larrazábal, the superior of the Franciscans of San Pantaleón de Aras (Santander), summoned by Fr.

11. The punishments of God in this world never have the exclusive reason of getting even vindictively. They always come impregnated with mercy, offering an occasion for each one to satisfy for himself and for others by willingly accepting the hardships that come.

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Valentín to perform services for Corpus Christi in the village. A little after his arrival, he went to Conchita's house; but he found no one there.

"We were accompanying"—said the sister-in-law of Dr. Ortiz—"Conchita at the Pines, where she was waiting to receive Communion from the Angel. We were praying and waiting; the time was dragging on. In the meantime her mother went to the edge of the hill and saw in front of her house someone who appeared to be a friar or a priest.

—He seems to be wearing a white cord . . .

Hearing this, Conchita hurried to descend and we followed her. Actually he was a Franciscan father; he celebrated Mass and gave Communion to us. Conchita's mother commented:

—That's the reason that we've waited so long up above! Whenever there's a priest to give Communion, she doesn't receive it from the Angel.

In the evening some devout persons made confessions at the time of the rosary. The majority of the people were working in the fields, which required a lot of labor at that time of the year, especially since the next day was a feastday on which they could not work.

As the evening shadows fell on the village, almost everyone was awaiting what might happen, since all had been startled by what had occurred on the previous night.

"At 1 o'clock at night"—states Eloísa de la Roza Velarde—"I went to Mari Cruz's house to pick up a rosary that I had left, and on the way I heard that the others were already in the Calleja. I returned immediately to search for my daughter, but I didn't find her. Then I hurried to the Calleja, and there she was with Maximina (in whose house we were staying) and many other people, among whom was Fr. Félix Larrazábal.

We know from Fr. Valentín, who wrote down what they said, that the girls . . .

". . . went to the Cuadro as on the previous day, toward 10:30 at night. They said they had seen the Angel who told them that the Virgin would come later, but that the people should stay at a distance . . . that no one should pass beyond the last house in the village. And so everyone did this; but it seems that a Franciscan father—who was surely the only priest present—showed the intent of going to where the girls were. Ceferino blocked his way, saying: 'Here we are all equal.' Afterward, it appears that the girls were heard to cry very hard . . ."

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What Fr. Valentín refers to here as being heard, is well confirmed by the personal experience of Eloisa de la Roza:

The girls let out terrifying screams . . . And they said, “Wait! Wait! . . . Everyone should confess! Oh! Oh!”

The people began to pray and to ask pardon publicly . . .

The priest, who was very excited, prayed in a loud voice, and we all followed him. When he stopped a moment, the girls cried and screamed again in a very anquished manner. They calmed down again when the prayer restarted.¹²

On returning to normality (Father Valentín’s notes say that this remarkable apparition ended at about 2 in the morning), the girls said that they would stay there all night in prayer.

—“And us?” the spectators asked.

—“As you wish.”

I don’t think anyone moved; we prayed with them (Father Valentín said that they prayed many rosaries) until six in the morning.

At that time (there was a beautiful sunrise), Father Larrazábal went toward the church, followed by all the people. And he began a series of confessions. The whole village confessed; and it appears that they were confessions of truly exceptional sincerity and repentance.

How could it have been otherwise, after such preparation, both personal and communal, at the Calleja? The pure love of God will always be of the greatest value and the great measure of every spiritual life. But the holy fear of God should not be neglected, which from ancient times has been shown to be the beginning of wisdom. (Eccl. 1: 16)

The holy fear of God was experienced as never before by the men and women of Garabandal on the two nights of the screams. Months later, the

12. This scene at Garabandal during these latest times of the world (1 John 2: 18) can be compared with the scene of Exodus (17: 8–12), when the Story of Salvation was almost beginning:

The Amalecites came and attacked Israel at Refidim . . . Joshua did as Moses told him and marched out to engage Amalec.

Meanwhile, Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. As long as Moses kept his arms raised, Israel had the advantage; when he let his arms fall, the advantage went to Amalec.

A telling lesson on how our prayer is able to overcome in the face of all types of situations!

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memory of it was still vivid. On September 24th, María Herrero de Gallardo wrote from Santander to her sister, Menchu:

“I spent a long time speaking alone with Jacinta’s mother, and she told me that the night before Corpus Christi had been terrifying . . . The girls ran to the Cuadro. Afterwards they advised the people that they should approach no further than a certain distance, that they shouldn’t go beyond a place in the road from which the girls couldn’t be seen.

Jacinta’s mother told me that she heard them cry with such voices and such horror that she wanted to run toward her daughter to see what was happening; but the people held her back. When the vision ended, the girls came to the place where the people were, and the people saw that the girls were covered with tears. The girls requested the whole village to confess and receive Communion as a horrible thing was going to happen. María (the mother of Jacinta) experienced such fright that she couldn’t sleep.”

Six years later, Pepe Díez, the village stonemason, spoke to a married couple from Asturias in words similar to these that I overheard:

“Look, I don’t want to brag, but I’m a man, it might be said, who doesn’t know fear. I go out to all parts of the village, and over the distant trails in the night just like in the day. I have never been afraid. But on those nights of the screams, with everyone together in the darkness, in silence, hearing the girls’ sobbing and screeches in the distance, I shook so that my knees knocked against each other so much I couldn’t stop them.”

“You can’t imagine what that was. I have never experienced anything like it.”

What could the girls have seen to break out like this with the shrill shrieks and screams that terrified everyone?

María Herrero de Gallardo, in Garabandal several months later, spoke with Loli on Sunday, October 7th, the feast of the Holy Rosary. She questioned Loli, among other things, about what the girls had seen during the feast of Corpus Christi:

“Oh!”—exclaimed the girl—“That was horrible to see. We were really frightened. And I know no words that will explain it.

We saw rivers change into blood . . . Fire fell down from the sky . . . And something much worse still, which I’m not able to reveal now.

The message that we gave at the time said that we don’t expect the Chastisement, but that, without expecting it, it will come . . .

The Virgin asked everyone to confess and receive Communion.”

The girl did not say many words; what her few words said was enough.

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In 1970 Fernando Corteville wrote in issue No 31 of the *L'Impartial* about the messages of the 19th and 23th of June, 1962—up to then unpublished—that Mari Loli had verified and presented to Mrs. Saraco.¹³ Three years previously, these messages had been given to Father Morelos.¹⁴ The girls had received them when they had seen visions of the Chastisement.

13. Mrs. Carmela Saraco is a promoter of the cause of Garabandal in the Boston, U.S.A. area.

14. Father Gustavo Morelos, a Mexican, played a great part in the pro-Garabandal movement following the events. He came to Spain toward the end of 1964, “with the proper authorization of his ecclesiastic superiors,” as he himself stated in writing in 1965, “to study the apparitions of the Most Holy Virgin in the village of San Sebastián de Garabandal.”

First he collected all the information of a negative type that the Commission at Santander could give him, with a result that could be imagined. But later, on dealing directly with the visionaries and on hearing the eyewitnesses, he became convinced that what was occurring in Garabandal could not have any human explanation. Returning to my country, Mexico, I dedicated myself to informing our most excellent prelates . . . with the desire of making known—more than the “events” themselves—the “messages” that the four girls had transmitted to all mankind on behalf of their Vision.

For some time now, due to pressure by the upper ecclesiastical hierarchies (The passionate zeal with which the former bishop from Santander, Bishop Cirarda, attempted to finish with Garabandal between 1968 and 1971 should not be forgotten), he has come to keep silence.

As a tabulation of the actors, the fact can be pointed out here that there was an unusual *procession* of prelates in the Santander diocese from the beginning of the *events* of Garabandal. There were six bishops in the first 11 years. They were the following:

Doroteo Fernández Fernández: initially auxiliary bishop with Monsignor Eguino Trecu and afterwards, apostolic administrator; transferred in 1962 to Badajoz.

Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal: in 1962 took possession of the diocese as the titular bishop of Santander; not much later, for reasons not sufficiently known, he presented his resignation. This was accepted, although he continued for some time at the head of the bishopric as the apostolic administrator.

Vicente Puchol Montis: he entered into Santander as a new bishop in 1965; he came with great hopes: he was rather young and had recently been promoted. On May 8th of 1967, he died tragically in an automobile accident.

Enrique de Cabo: elected vicar head on the death of Bishop Puchol; he was at the head of the diocese a little more than a year. Not long after finishing his service, he died suddenly.

José María Cirarda: in the summer of 1968, he came to Santander as the new bishop; much was expected from him also. In December of 1971 he went to the diocese of Córdoba.

Juan Antonio del Val Gallo: in the winter of 1972, he took possession of the diocese of Santander, to which diocese he belonged and to which he was then returning after a short reign as auxiliary bishop to the archbishop of Seville.

With regard to Garabandal, although all these bishops have officially upheld the nega-

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According to the text that Mrs. Saraco had in her possession (signed by the visionary), Loli said this to Father Morelos:

In spite of seeing the Virgin, (during the ‘night of screams’) we began to see a great multitude of people who were suffering intensely, and screaming with tremendous fear . . .

The Most Holy Virgin explained to us that this great tribulation—which was not the Chastisement—would come because a time would arrive when the Church would give the impression of being on the point of perishing . . . It would pass through a terrible test. We asked the Virgin what this great test was called and she told us that it was Communism.

Then she showed us how the great Chastisement for all mankind would come, and that it would come directly from God . . .

There will come a time when all motors and machines will stop; a terrible wave of heat will strike the earth and men will begin to feel a great thirst. In desperation they will seek water, but this will evaporate from the heat . . . Then almost everyone will despair and they will seek to kill one another . . . But they will lose their strength and fall to the earth. Then it will be understood that it is God alone Who has permitted this.

Then we saw a crowd in the midst of flames. The people ran to hurl themselves into the lakes and seas. But the water seemed to boil and in place of putting out the flames, it seemed to enkindle them even more.

It was so horrible that I asked the Most Holy Virgin to take all the young children with her¹⁵ before all this happened. But the Virgin told us that when it would come, they would all be adults . . .

Loli’s words could be compared to those written in the Apocalypse (16: 8-12) about the effects that would result from the pouring out of the fourth, fifth and sixth chalices . . .

This is startling, shocking. It should make every person reflect on his salvation. But I am afraid for many . . . The charismatics of optimism do not see more in the actual situation of the Church today, in its convulsions than a crisis of growth. They detect with certainty (I don’t know by what

tive position of the Commission, only two have fought openly against it: Bishop Puchol, who thought he had finished with Garabandal; and Bishop Cirarda, who tried to finish it with all his might . . .

I do not question their good intentions; undoubtedly they thought that they were doing God a good service.

15. It might be noted that Loli had little brothers at that time.

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signs.) the coming of a new springtime. And they regard every thing that has just been mentioned as an erroneous prophecy. An erroneous prophecy from outdated medieval prophets of doom.

The true prophets were sent to commuNicate to the people of God, time and time again, what it was necessary for them to know. And it cannot be denied that we have needed—more than once—the sternest warnings and corrections.

The words of the prophecy itself distinguish the false from the true prophet . . . It is clear that the people of God do not like to hear certain matters, even though they are conducive to their salvation, and their *guides* like to hear them even less. It was the same in Israel in the days of Jeremiah the prophet. The insistence on reform by that prophet of doom did not please the Israelites; they preferred instead the pleasant predictors of a prosperous future. But it is well known what then happened.

We can well imagine how the feast of Corpus Christi, the great feast of the Eucharist, was celebrated in Garabandal during that year of grace, 1962, after such a vigil and after such reception of the sacrament of Penance.

No one missed the solemn Mass and almost everyone received Communion. Later, during the procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the cleaned and garlanded streets of the village, there resounded the traditional hymns of homage to the hidden God in the Blessed Sacrament.

As if for the purpose of directing all attention toward the mysteries celebrated on that day, the visionaries did not present any spectacle.

Mari Cruz went to the Cuadro—Father Valentín wrote—she went there in the natural state, and on arriving, knelt down and went into ecstasy; but she didn't say anything . . . The other girls didn't have an apparition.

The following day, Friday, there was no apparition at all. But on the next day, Saturday, June 23rd, there took place the second of the nights of the screams; the second message from Loli and Jacinta¹⁶ bears this date:

16. The reader can notice that Conchita was not taking a significant part in the important events occurring in Garabandal on the feast of Corpus Christi.

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The Virgin has told us:

*That the world continues the same, that it has not
changed at all;*

*That few will see God; so few they are, that it is caus-
ing the Virgin great sorrow.*

How unfortunate that the world does not change!

The Virgin has told us that the Chastisement is coming.

As the world is not changing, the cup is filling up.

*How sorrowful is the Virgin, although she does not
allow us to see it.*

*Since the Virgin loves us so much, she suffers alone,
since she is so good.*

Everyone be good, so that the Virgin will be happy!

*She has told us that those who are good should pray for
those who are evil.*

*Yes, we should pray to God for the world, for those
who do not know Him.*

Be good, be very good.

*María Dolores Mazón, 13 years
Jacinta González, 13 years*

Novena to St. Joseph

It consists in turning to St. Joseph four times a day (it does not matter when or where) and honoring him in the four points of:

1. *His Fidelity to Grace*. Think about this for a minute, give thanks to God and ask thru St. Joseph to be faithful to grace.

2. *His Fidelity to the Interior Life*. Think about this for a minute, give thanks to God and make the request.

3. *His Love of Our Blessed Lady*. Think about this, give thanks and make the request.

4. *His Love for the Holy Child*. Think about this, give thanks and make the request.

Only one point is to be taken for each visit.

N.B. This novena has been found to be so efficacious that the petitioner is advised to be sure that he really wants what he asks.

CHAPTER 17

Eucharistic Miracle or Sacrilegious Fraud?

ABOUT THE SAME TIME as the feast of Corpus Christi on June 22nd, 1962, began an event that has, more than anything else about Garabandal, aroused discussion and doubt: an event that would be named the “Miracle of the Host.”

Returning to Conchita’s diary:

As we had so often insisted that the Virgin and the Angel perform a miracle, on June 22nd,¹ when I was receiving Holy Communion from the Angel, he told me:

I am going to perform a miracle. Not I: God, through my intercession and yours.²

1. We have seen that Fr. Valentín noted on June 22, following the feastday of Corpus Christi: “There were no apparitions.” Was Conchita mistaken then as to the date? Or was this an error of the pastor who at times made his notes from what others told him? Conchita’s short ecstasy to receive Communion could have occurred unnoticed by everyone or almost everyone since the ecstasies for the Mystical Communion were brief and frequently without witnesses.

2. One of Conchita’s maladroit expressions. She should have said by means of us. The Angel told her that she and he would serve as instruments for the accomplishment of a prodigy. Conchita has often improperly used the word intercession.

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And I said:

And what is it going to be?

And he told me:

When I give you Holy Communion, the Sacred Host will be seen on your tongue.

And I thought it over³ and said:

Surely when I receive Communion from you, the Host is seen on my tongue!

And he told me that it wasn't so, that the people around me didn't see It; but that on the day when he would perform the miracle, It would be seen.

And I said to him:

But that's very small!⁴

And he laughed. And that day, after telling me this, he left.

On the following day, as there wasn't a Mass in the village, after reciting a rosary in the Cuadro,⁵ I went to pray a Station at the church.

And before I went inside, the Angel appeared to me, smiling very much, and he spoke to me as usual:

Pray the "I Confess" and consider that you are going to receive God.

And then he gave me Communion.

And he told me to say the "Soul of Christ" with him. And I did it.

When I had made my thanksgiving, I asked the Angel:

And when is the miracle going to be?

And he told me:

The Virgin will tell you that.

And then he left. This apparition was on June 29th.

3. The girl was very surprised by what she had just heard the Angel say. It had never occurred to her that the Sacred Host, so visible to them during their ecstasies, could remain completely invisible to the spectators.

4. The miracle announced by the Angel seemed very small to Conchita; she doubted that it would make an impression. She used the term *milagruco* which signifies a very small miracle in the idiom of her country.

5. Since the preceding winter, on the Virgin's request, the girls had to go every morning to pray the rosary at the *Cuadro*, each one at her own time; the time for Conchita was 8 o'clock in the morning.

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Conchita, who frequently confuses dates in her diary,⁶ seems to incur here an obvious contradiction. She has just told us that the meeting with the Angel was *on the following day* after June 22nd. For this reason, it would not have been June 29th, but June 23rd, which in that year fell on Saturday. This confusion must have been due to the fact that the following Friday, June 29th (feast of the holy apostles Peter and Paul), was the day on which she learned the date of the *little miracle*.

After the Angel told me that he was going to perform a miracle, I told it to the other girls: Loli, Jacinta and Mari Cruz.

I told them that the Angel was going to perform a miracle with us.

At night on that date, while asking the Angel when the miracle would be, the Virgin came.

She came smiling very much as usual.

And I said to her:

The Angel St. Michael told me that through his intercession and mine,⁷ God, Our Lord, was going to perform a miracle.

She didn't say anything to me and I said,

When is the miracle?

And she told me:

On Friday, the 29th,⁸ you will hear a voice that will tell you.

And I said to her:

Whose voice will this be?

And she didn't say anything to me . . .

Friday came, and as the Virgin had told me, I felt a voice while at the Pines which told me:

July 18th would be when the miracle would occur.

The voice that I felt said to me:

The little miracle, as you say.

But let us not go too fast. June 29th, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, has always been held in Spain with great festivities. Falling that year on Friday, as has been indicated, it gave the occasion for a holiday weekend,

6. It should be taken into account that she wrote the diary many months after the episode that she is here relating.

7. Here should be repeated what was said in footnote 2.

8. In the original, crossed out and erased, there perhaps could be read 30, rather than 29; but there is no doubt that Friday was the 29th.

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leaving three days free for vacation, as the people were off work on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. A good occasion for people from the various distant provinces to meet in Garabandal. And actually that is what happened.

An Unforgettable Holiday Weekend

Among the many people who came was a lawyer from Palencia named Luis Navas Carrillo. Not satisfied merely with devoutly living those days, he also made a report of them, which now serves us well for that period of the year 1962:

After passing through the mountain pass at Piedras Luengas and from there viewing on the left the fantastic panorama of the Picos de Europa mountains, we took the narrow and tortuous highway that went down to the rapids of the Nansa River. And it was well into the night when we came to Cossío. It was June 29th.

We began the ascent to Garabandal. The temperature was pleasant and the sky clear. During the way up, I couldn't put out of my mind the memory of another day that was very different—the dark and stormy October 18th that I had experienced in the same place. Today the soft mountain breeze purified our lungs and prepared our spirits for the possible beneficial actions of the Virgin Mary.

In the village, we had time to rest about an hour and a half. Afterward, at nightfall, they told us that the girls were walking through one of the streets, already in ecstasy. We easily found them and joined a group of people who were following them toward the Pines. We lost them from view a little beyond the Cuadro since—according to the instructions that had been given by the Most Holy Virgin, as they said—we all were to stay at a distance.⁹ There we were waiting, a little anguished, since some heard, or thought they heard, faint shrieks, that in the silence of the night and darkness had to remind many of the screams on the night of Corpus Christi.

After awhile the girls appeared and they came down toward us. And they stayed rather close; sufficiently close so that with illumination from a powerful flashlight we were able to observe how they fell and how they got up off the stoney ground. The beams of light from the flashlights that the girls themselves carried, and with which they had gone out of their houses to come to the rendezvous with the Virgin, lent a special charm to the scene. Not far from them,

9. Perhaps it was during the ecstasy at the Pines that Conchita heard the voice that was foretold, telling her the date of the *milagru* (little miracle); or perhaps it was sometime during the day while she was walking alone through the area.

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the father of Mari Loli and the mother of Jacinta could be distinguished slightly in front of the others.

The silence, which seemed a strange echo on that serene and starry night, helped us to meditate.¹⁰

After the ecstasy had ended, the girls showed tears on their faces and serious and sorrowful expressions that contrasted with the joyful continence that they usually had.

The impressions from that first day tempered my spirit so as to understand better this array of things that were beyond reason and the senses, that only could be comprehended by opening wide the eyes of faith.

June 30th, Saturday: This was the most moving of the three days that I spent at the time in Garabandal.

At the beginning of the evening, we were waiting in Conchita's house. Her mother told her to put on her boots, sensing that the time was drawing near. A little later the girl fell into ecstasy, went out from her home, and drawing with her all the strangers and many from the village, went praying the rosary thru the streets and alleys. Some of the decades were recited, others were sung. The voice of the girl in ecstasy, so musical, so full of real, sincere and profound piety, penetrated into us, and immersed us in a sensation of well-being and serenity.

I had never seen the girls walking backwards; but I had heard talk about it, and actually with a certain repugnance bordering on ridicule. Now I can testify that that by its harmony, by its grace and rhythm, appeared to be a thrilling celestial dance.

On the way, the visionary came up to Fidelín's car. She stopped, and made the sign of the cross on the hood and windshield. It occurred to me that perhaps the Virgin wanted to bless and show her approval this way to the only taxi driver who, at the time, was really taking the risk of bringing the people over those dangerous roads.

Not long afterwards, the visionary went to search for Mari Cruz. The door of her house was locked. Conchita knocked on it forcefully and persistently until it was opened. Then she went up the steep staircase, came to the place where her companion was, and put the crucifix on her lips. It appeared that Conchita didn't forget Mari Cruz even during her vision, asking the Virgin to appear to Mari Cruz with the same frequency as with the others.

Afterwards, to my great surprise, she took us to the cemetery, through those solitary and somber trails. In front of the gate, she stopped for awhile and solemnly made the sign of the cross toward the inside, as if imparting a blessing upon the graves.¹¹

10. The affairs of Garabandal always brought those who were watching them, and who were not too frivolous, to this attitude of respect, silence and meditation.

11. Christians realize that the dead are not in the tombs. The dead in the essential part of their being—their soul or their spirit—are in another location. What is in the grave is not

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On returning, she entered the house of her aunt Maximina. And finally came the time for the race, which for me was a genuine novelty. Before starting it, she stopped and extended her arms slightly; she went like a wind through the winding path, without touching the walls, the fences, or the stones that were scattered everywhere—without forgetting the low balconies, against which one could bang his head, as happened to me. We couldn't follow her, much less catch up to her.

When she returned, we all went toward the church, and in the churchyard itself a remarkable rosary concluded what had lasted so long and contained so many incidents. There the *Salve* was sung and the *Credo* recited. My attention was certainly attracted when the girl, after the "Holy Catholic Church" clearly added "Apostolic and Roman." They told me that she only did this when she recited the *Credo* in ecstasy.¹²

Mari Loli had the second vision of that Saturday night. I was there to see the beginning in her home. She went up some almost perpendicular stairs; she began going through different rooms, and right away her father sensed that she was looking for her rubber sandals. He put them near the girl's feet. She had hardly put them on when she fell violently on her knees, and leaned backwards till she struck her head smack against the floor. Her father, Ceferino, told Jacinta, who was present, to ask her:¹³

—"What did that smack on your head do to you?"

We all saw the girl in ecstasy open her lips in a slight smile and answer:

—"What smack?"

A little later, Jacinta went into ecstasy too. The two went into the street and began their march toward the Pines while saying the second rosary of the night. On the hilltop they fell on their knees. Afterwards, they went backwards . . . By their attitude they gave the impression that the weight of the world was laying upon them and crushing them.

The descent from the hill, backwards, was amazing. Instead of coming down by the regular straight way, they took a transverse shortcut, without following any trail, after going over an almost vertical cliff of considerable height. It seemed to me that the figure that they were seeing was moving quite gradually, so that they could glide slowly toward the village.

the *person* but his remains or dust, which deserve great care, and from which afterward will come the restoration and the life after the resurrection.

12. The *Credo* that is ordinarily said outside the Mass is more brief than this; in speaking of the Church, it only says: "I believe in One Holy Catholic Church," without the "Apostolic and Roman." Perhaps the child, inspired from above—and therefore not comprehending the reason—was warning in advance against certain ecumenical attitudes that were going to come and which would lead the Church into confusion.

13. As has already been mentioned in the early chapters, the girl in ecstasy was not able to establish communication with anyone except another visionary in the normal state.

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And down below, I don't think there was a street or alley that didn't see the passage of the night rosary procession. Even the young men singing and drinking in a tavern couldn't avoid it, since the girls entered the tavern and gave them the crucifix to kiss; they certainly took on an attitude of complete respect.¹⁴

During these marches back and forth, Mari Loli lost one of her sandals; a little later, she began to retrace her way back, while walking backwards, until her bare foot touched against the lost sandal. Without lowering her head and without using her hands, she put it on her foot.

Seconds later, graciously raising her arms, she began to run at dizzying speed, avoiding all types of obstacles. Suddenly she stopped beside a stranger of elegant appearance: this was Concepción Zorrilla, a member of the cast of a foreign theatrical company that had performed in Madrid several days previously. This woman, before returning to her native Uruguay, had detoured from the route to Paris, desiring to go up to that remote spot on the Spanish map in search of . . .

What she was searching for—certainly an answer to her doubts and worries—she must have found when the girl in ecstasy, with her gaze upwards and without turning her head toward her, held out her arm, giving her the crucifix to kiss. She refused it two times, but had to give in to the sweet persistence of the girl and put her lips on the sacred image, while big tears ran down from her eyes. She herself confessed later that, if she had held back from the crucifix, she had done it only because she considered herself completely unworthy to give it her kiss.

On the day she left, I had the opportunity of taking her picture with Mari Loli, and I sent it to her so that she could forever remember, in her distant native land, the unforgettable moments of her visit to Garabandal.¹⁵

14. The young men's attitude is not unexpected. Rather negative toward the practice of religion as all those of that age and environment are inclined, they were furthermore habituated to the things that were happening in their village every day; perhaps also, a little tired of them. How could they be expected to renounce all their leisure time!

15. Dr. Puncernau, the neuro-psychiatrist from Barcelona, described his experiences in this case in the pamphlet, *Psychological Phenomena of Garabandal*, but he puts Conchita in the place of Loli:

"In Ceferino's tavern there was a young woman from Uruguay who worked in the *Folies Bergère* of Paris. We soon started up a conversation. She told me that she not only didn't believe in these supposed apparitions, but she didn't believe in anything about religion. She had come to Garabandal simply out of curiosity. After a while I suggested going outside to see what was happening with the visionaries.

We saw them at a distance (being hidden ourselves in the shadows of the house) as they headed toward the little village church, praying the rosary. From our hidden observation point we saw what was happening.

Soon we saw Conchita, in a trance, detach herself from the procession and make her way—walking normally, but with an unusual swiftness—toward us, who were staying hidden in the shadows, leaning against the wall of the house.

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As previously with Conchita's rosary, this one also ended in the courtyard of the church with the singing of a *Salve Maria*.

My curiosity led me to ask why the girls in ecstasy came so often to the church, knowing that for them, in those circumstances, it was always closed. The answer had been given sometime before, through the voice of the girls themselves:

“The reason is that the Virgin likes to go near to where Jesus is.”

In days like these, the presence of priests and religious could not be missing. With regard to their presence, Luis Navas says in his report:

I was greatly pleased to see the deference that the girls held toward priests; it was worthy of St. Teresa of Jesus. There were four priests there in the village on that Saturday, June 30th; and the Virgin had to be happy since, according to the girls: “The Virgin likes priests and people without faith to come.”¹⁶

During Loli's vision in her home, a Passionist Father and a Carmelite Father stayed respectfully on their knees. The girl gently lifted up the two of them, making them stand on their feet. On the following day the Passionist Father told me, “I weigh 78 kilos and on top of that, I used force to make myself stay down;

She was carrying a little crucifix in her hand.

I thought, “She has found out that I am a doctor, and now is coming to make something of it. But how could she have seen me?”

But, no. She headed toward my companion and put the crucifix very forcefully on her lips so that she kissed it once, twice, and a third time.

The Virgin Mary was for the dancers of the *Follies Bergère* too.

Afterwards Conchita, still in the trance, joined the other girls and continued praying the rosary.

My companion, the ballerina, was weeping unstopably, with deep heartfelt sobs, so unconsolable that I thought she was having an attack. I accompanied her to the wooden benches propped against the outside wall of Ceferino's tavern.

The crowd gathered around. I tried to calm her down.

She was finally able to tell that she had thought in her mind, “If it is true that the Virgin is appearing, then let one of the girls come to give me a sign.”

Hardly had I thought this when Conchita came running toward me to give me the crucifix to kiss. I didn't want to kiss it, and I held her hand back. But with exceptional strength she forced the crucifix against my lips, and I had no other choice but to kiss it once, twice, and a third time—I, the unbeliever, the atheist, who believed in nothing. This shook me intensely.

We met days later on the train back to Bilbao. And I know, since we wrote each other several times, that she left the *Folies Bergère* and went back to her family in Uruguay.”

16. As in so many other points, Garabandal was coming in advance to salutariously warn about the imminent crisis of doctrine around the priesthood. The furious desacralization, that so soon would show itself in the clergy and laity could not at that time be foreseen.

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nevertheless, the girl raised me to my feet with the greatest of ease.”¹⁷ The Carmelite Father edified me with his humility and silence. He had come that very afternoon from Burgos and he spent almost his entire stay with the people, distributing and investing scapulars. I felt nostalgic, recalling the month of May in my student years at the Instituto de Burgos.

On Sunday, July 1st, much the same history took place as on the two previous days. Luis Navas tells of it:

On this day we had a longer wait. The first apparition, which was Conchita’s, began at ten at night. The people had left her home, thinking that nothing would happen. I had the good fortune of going out at the time to seek a paralytic girl, whom I had advised to remain at Conchita’s house until the people came to pick her up. There I met Doctor Puncernau from Barcelona.¹⁸ Conchita fell violently on her knees and began the vision. She offered the crucifix to us to kiss; when the doctor’s turn came, the girl did something different: with a single movement of her extended arms, she gave it to him three times to kiss.

Before the vision began, I had complained to Conchita that she had never offered me the crucifix. Because of this, I felt a considerable consolation on seeing how she presented it to me, since I well knew that the girls don’t act by their own volition in giving the crucifix to kiss or in holding up holy cards and rosaries toward the Vision; they do it according to the directions of the Virgin. This helped me to understand something that I had read about Padre Pio, “Many times God makes me forget certain people for whom I had intended expressly to pray, and He presents others to me for whose salvation I should intercede.”

The doctor had handed Conchita a letter in order that she might ask the Virgin for the cure of a patient. On the following day, I saw the girl write the answer she had received; later she gave it to the doctor with the request not to open the letter until he was in the presence of the sick person, who was dying of an incurable illness according to what I heard.

From what Luis Navas described of the second apparition which concerned Loli, this is what seems to have the greatest interest:

The time for giving the crucifix to kiss was thrilling. Kissing it themselves first, as was their custom; then, giving it first to the Virgin and then to the per-

17. Maximina writes about this in her letters to the Pifarré family; but she says Conchita was the one in ecstasy, similar to the misnaming of the visionary in the case of the woman from Uruguay.

18. This doctor, an eminent neuro-psychiatrist, who practiced and taught in the capital of Cataluna, tenaciously studied the affairs of Garabandal and came to the conclusion, repeatedly expressed by him, that “from the medical and scientific point of view, I have found no satisfactory physiological or psychological explanation for these events which have produced such extraordinary phenomena.”

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son . . . When it came to the time for eight persons who had come that day from Cádiz, I was really edified by the reverence and faith with which they kissed the crucifix.

Loli's ecstasy had lasted an hour and twenty minutes. Eighty minutes that seemed to me to be ten! Something very strong must have held my attention to lose the notion of time like this.

After a clear, moonlit night, I awoke to a magnificent dawn. It was the day of departure. I made up my mind once again to keep the resolution made on the previous trip: to recite daily the holy family rosary, remembering in difficult times and lukewarmness the words transmitted from the Virgin by the visionaries: "Hail Marys are the flowers that please her the most."

With a farewell to the Passionist Father and a great desire to return again, we ended our stay at San Sebastián de Garabandal on Monday, July 2nd, 1962.

The News Spreads; Expectation Mounts

Luis Navas Carrillo left Garabandal without knowing anything of the little miracle (*milagruco*) that the Angel had foretold. But on the same day as his departure, Monday, July 2nd, 1962—the anniversary of the first apparition of the Virgin—a person came to the village who was going to be the first to know about it, after the girls.

The first person whom I told that the Angel was going to perform a miracle was a priest: Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva.

And on the same day I told it to Mari Cruz, Loli, and Jacinta too.¹⁹

Conchita does not give the date or the circumstances of her communication; we know them, thanks to the *Memorias* of Fr. de la Riva himself:

On the 2nd of July, 1962, I went up to Garabandal, desiring to spend several days of recuperation.

During the course of the afternoon, I was with the young visionaries at the Pines; they were playing and I was seated next to them, very pleased to note their happiness; they were playing a game called *los tios*.²⁰

Their happiness at this moment was equal to that which they felt, but tried to hide, when they had their famous calls.

19. According to the text, it would seem that Conchita had revealed the date of the miracle first to Fr. José Ramón, then to her companions. But by what follows and by other information available, one arrives at the conclusion that her companions were the first ones notified; afterwards, by mutual agreement, the girls informed Fr. José Ramón.

20. Similar to Hide and Seek.

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Suddenly Conchita came up to me and said unexpectedly:

—“I am going to tell you what the Angel’s miracle consists of.”

Certainly curious, but refusing to show my feelings, I told her that if it was a secret, she shouldn’t reveal it to me . . . She was thoughtful for a few seconds, then she returned to the other three girls, as if to consult them:

—“Shouldn’t he be told?”

All three, from the place where they were playing (near what was called the *Virgin’s Pine*), answered in a single voice:

—“Yes. Yes.”

Then I got up and said to them:

—“Alright, but you are going to tell me separately.”²¹

Conchita spoke first, then her companions. And they all told me the same thing:

—“They are going to see the Host . . .”

On coming down from the Pines, Loli told her father about the news and the nature of the miracle. Learning this, Conchita was very angry:

—“Now”—she said to her mother—“there certainly won’t be a miracle because Loli has mentioned it to her father . . .”

Then I learned of what the miracle that was predicted would consist, and I had the chance to be the first to know about it; but I didn’t know the date on which it would take place. On the eve of July 5th, I returned back to my parish in Barro and Conchita still didn’t know the date.

I think that our brother priest from Barro is in error because we have seen how, during the ecstasy of July 29th, the young girl heard the voice that said to her:

July 18th will be when the miracle would occur . . . the little miracle (milagru) as you say.

At the time the girl still could not reveal the date. This can be seen from her diary:

During the Communion that the Angel gave me, I asked when I would be able to tell that there was going to be a miracle and what it was going to be.

*And he told me in the two weeks before.*²²

21. A very shrewd decision by the priest; thus it was easy for him to discern if it was something fabricated by the girls.

22. Strictly holding to 15 days before, Conchita could have been able to tell Fr. José Ramón the date of the miracle before he left Garabandal on July 5th. Why did she not do it? Was she waiting for some sign to begin spreading the news? Or did she have some other reason for hiding the time from the priest?

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When the apparition ended, the people from the village asked me if the Angel had told me anything about the miracle (since I had already said to the village that the Angel was going to perform a miracle) . . .

But they didn't believe much.

When the day came in which I had to announce the date, I told it to the village and I wrote letters . . .

I have seen the text of some of these letters and they are similar to the one printed in the Mexican edition of Conchita's Diary:

A few words to tell you great news for me, and I think for you also. The Angel told me that he was going to perform a sign; and the sign is that—when I receive Communion—the Host will be seen on me. It is soon, during this month, on the 18th.

For me it really doesn't seem a miracle; since I thought that they always saw it on me. Will they believe then?

This letter is dated July 6th, the day after Fr. de la Riva had left Garabandal. Four days later, Conchita wrote to Dr. Celestino Ortiz in Santander:

Ave María.

San Sebastián, July 10th, 1962

Dear Doctor Celestino,

Just a few words to tell you²³ that the Angel told me that on the 18th of this month they are going to see the Host on my tongue when I receive Communion.

Well, nothing more. I love you.

Conchita González

Mr. Ruiloba had gone up to Garabandal during those days, something that he did frequently. On saying farewell to Conchita, she gave him a letter to give personally to the Reverend Father Francisco Odriozola, the "factotum" of the Commission.

Plácido Ruiloba faithfully fulfilled what was asked of him; and he learned the contents of the letter since the recipient himself, Father Francisco, read it to him. The letter said the same as the others that we know; but it added some lines strongly requesting Father Francisco to come to

23. The girls at this time were disposed to be friendly to everyone, especially those whom they met most frequently there.

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Garabandal on the day foretold . . . “Don’t worry and come, since even the children in the village won’t recognize you.”²⁴

Doctor Ortiz, after having received the letter, used his first free day to go up to Garabandal to better inform himself about what was so tersely written by the girl. He was able to converse alone with her and spoke in this way:

—“Conchita, I don’t know if you understand the importance of all this. A miracle predicted for a fixed date is a very great miracle . . .”²⁵

—“But to me this seems to be a very little miracle. Later the Virgin’s miracle will come, and that will be a MIRACLE! Then there won’t be any doubt.”

—“Maybe. I just don’t believe that the miracle that you mention will happen . . .”

—“You don’t believe? Then do me this favor. You know Father Francisco Odriozola. I’ve written him to come . . . But in case he hasn’t received the letter, you go in person to tell him . . . So that he doesn’t miss coming on July 18th! He will see the miracle. I assure you that nothing will happen to him because here in the village even the little children don’t know him.”

—“Conchita, do you know how distasteful it is for me to tell news like this to a man whom I barely know . . . Besides, he is secretary of the Commission . . . And on top of everything else the village says terrible things about him, since he doesn’t believe in the apparitions . . .”

—“If it is distasteful for you to do what I ask, offer it up to the Virgin!”

As the girl sent out the notices, and the news spread out, and the expectation increased, there was also an increase in the apprehension of some of those who were *responsible*. They trembled before the possibility of a new swarm of people, followed by a dismal disaster. October 18th was still fresh in their memories!

I wrote letters.

24. Because of his actions, Fr. Francisco Odriozola was well aware that the people in the village did not hold him in high esteem. Conchita is trying now to give him confidence, with the indication that sufficient time had passed so that many things would be forgotten.

25. Besides the value that the miracle might have in itself, it had another value of no less quality: that of prophecy.

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But Father Valentín, who doubted that the miracle would happen, told me not to write any more letters, since perhaps it might not happen.

And there was a man in the village, Eustaquio Cuenca,²⁶ who told me the same thing as Father Valentín, that I shouldn't write any more letters.

And I said to them that the Virgin and Angel had told me to predict the miracle.

But the people of the village didn't believe it.²⁷

As can be imagined, on the days before July 18th, which in that year fell on Wednesday—as the previously heralded October 18th had fallen on Wednesday—the influx of visitors to Garabandal began. Many set out on the way, taking advantage of the the previous week-end, and so many came on Saturday, July 14th. Among these was the attorney from Palencia, Luis Navas Carrillo, who this time came accompanied by his aged mother. All were able to assist on that same night at a long, very interesting, and moving ecstasy of Mari Loli . . . But they waited in vain for one to happen to Conchita, who never missed having one on Saturday. When they retired for sleep, it was 5 o'clock Sunday morning. And they had to get up early, since the only Mass of the day, celebrated by Fr. Valentín, had been scheduled for 9 o'clock. They could take, if they were able, a long siesta to make up for the loss of sleep at night.

All Sunday long pilgrims continued to arrive. Luis Navas remembers that at 1 o'clock in the afternoon, while they were waiting for the beginning of the rosary in the church, the fine rain typical of the Cantabrian mountains was falling. In the village appeared a large gathering of people

26. It has already been said that this man was an *indiano* of the village, and different from the others by his better economic situation.

27. The attitude of hard resistance that the people of Garabandal had against the girls' phenomena has been shown enough; their heads were too hard to believe in the truth of those things.

On July 14th, 1962, Luis Navas set out to take down impressions throughout the village "from the greatest number of persons possible." He spent a long time with Mari Cruz' mother who made this revealing statement: "I believe my daughter when she says that she sees the Virgin; but I'm not so sure that she actually does see the Virgin."

In September of 1963, Jacinta's mother, María, said to Fr. Laffineur: "I certainly believe when I see an ecstasy; when the ecstasy is over, I don't believe anymore."

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“who came from Córdoba and other places, also a priest from El Aaiún,²⁸ who accidentally found himself in the neighboring village of Celis.”

The following Monday, July 16th, had a special distinction, since it was the feastday of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The notes of Luis Navas concerning this day read:

We celebrated the feastday of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, but without a Mass, since the Mass on that day took place in the village of Cossío. This made me think of a Communion by the Angel. Since there was no priest to distribute Communion, it could well be expected that the Angel would come as on other occasions to give Communion to the girls.

I went up early to the Pines; there I was enjoying the marvelous view and the pleasant temperature, since it was a sunny day . . . Looking down, I made out one of the visionaries, without being able to distinguish which one of them it was, seated in the Cuadro, together with two or three other persons. I supposed that she was waiting for Communion, and I went down in a hurry . . . It was Mari Loli who was praying her morning rosary; I joined devoutly in the prayer and waited . . . Nothing happened and I went down to the village. I soon learned that Conchita hadn't gone to the Pines, as I had hoped, because she had forgotten and eaten some bread; but that she would go up a few hours later, toward one o'clock.

We accompanied her there. Some clouds began to appear in the sky while we were waiting. We prayed a Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, later an entire rosary. Some birds that were flying back and forth accompanied us with their singing.

As the clouds thickened, the sun gradually faded, as did my hope of being able to see—only one time!—the extraordinary phenomena of the Mystical Communion about which I had heard so much said. Conchita waited standing up, sheltering herself against one of the nine pines there, protecting herself from the humid breeze that began to blow, and which was turning cold. The sky became completely overcast and the Angel didn't appear, in spite of waiting until about four in the afternoon.

Rather disappointed, we went down to the village to eat. And I took a siesta, in anticipation that later, very probably, we would have to pass the night standing up.

The rosary in the church was not at the time for feastdays, but rather at nightfall, as on the working days. Hardly had the girls gone outside, when Mari Loli went into ecstasy near her house, accompanied by Jacinta.

We are familiar with what followed since it has been repeated so many times: walks thru the streets of the village, marvelous ascents and descents

28. A little African town on the Atlantic coast. It was the capital of the Spanish Sahara.

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on the trail to the Pines (frontwards, backwards), prayers, songs, holding out the crucifix to those present . . . As almost always, the episode ended in the church courtyard, and Luis Navas tells us about the ending:

It was a moving scene that penetrated to the depths of my heart when the girls with angelic smiles, completely transfigured by a radiant beauty, raised themselves lightly on their toes, offering their two cheeks to the Vision's kiss. And after this, alternating, each one lifted up the other in her arms effortlessly to reach the mysterious apparition, and again kiss and be kissed.²⁹

Previously during the rosary the girls had recited the Credo; and, as was their custom, whenever they prayed it in ecstasy, they added to the "Catholic Church" the words "Apostolic and Roman." In a similar way, they introduced an innovation in some final invocations. In place of saying "True Apparition of Our Lady, Queen and Patron of the Montaña," they said, "Our Lady and Queen of all Creation."³⁰

This universal title makes me feel that Our Lady is sending a call to all her children. She makes it understood that her messages here do not have a restricted or local character.

There was still more as the night of July 16th wore on. Navas Carrillo terminated his notes like this:

I came to the conclusion that mere curiosity, if it could well be the initial reason for making the trip to Garabandal, soon falls away, since it does not have its proper place there. What is felt here brings one little by little to prayer and sacrifice, to taste the peace and serenity of this little Mount Tabor.³¹

On July 17th, Tuesday, the arrival of pilgrims took on an accelerated pace, as would be expected, and everyone's thoughts were on what was

29. These positions, which undoubtedly were due to the Vision being elevated in front of them when they wished to reach her to give the final kiss, are seen in several photographs taken by the spectators.

30. From the days of the holy bishop of Santander, José Eguino Trecu (†1961), there had been established in the churches of the diocese the practice of concluding the rosary with the invocation "Our Lady of the True Apparition, Queen and Mother of the Montaña, pray for us." This invocation was repeated three times, followed each time by a Hail Mary.

It is due to this bishop that the Virgin, under the title of *La Bien Aparecida* (*The True Apparition*), was proclaimed patroness of Santander, a territory covered with Marian sanctuaries. The sanctuary of Our Lady of the True Apparition is perched on a gorgeous hill overlooking the valley of the Asón River with views of Udalia and Ampuero, and is cared for by a community of Trinitarian fathers. The statue was taken from Santander during the last years of Bishop Eguino Trecu's episcopate to be solemnly crowned in the sanctuary.

31. Mount Tabor in Palestine is considered the mountain of Our Lord's Transfiguration, where His glory was shown to three of His apostles.

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going to happen on the next day . . . according to Conchita's prediction . . .

Our lawyer from Palencia seems to have dedicated the hours of this day to reflecting on the unusual *normality* of the girls who for more than a year had been plunged into the daily *anormality* of most unsettling phenomena:

I spoke to the pastor of the village, and he told me that he had just received a report, completely favorable in this regard, from Doctor Ricardo Puncernau, a psychiatrist from Barcelona. This doctor had associated with the girls for several days, both individually and collectively. He had taken walks with them. He had expressed his doubts and impressions to them, which they always received with friendliness and good nature.

My study was limited to observing them, especially when they played with the other girls. I was pleased at the way Mari Cruz fought with a girl who was bothering her. Actually, she fought with a certain mildness, and only insofar as was necessary to stop the girl's annoying attitude.

In the prayers that they said in the normal state, I didn't notice anything special. I even had the impression that Conchita, for example, did not pronounce the words clearly, especially the Ave Marias, and she reminded me of certain people who pray from the pulpit as if they were in a hurry to finish. With regard to punctuality, that was not a quality that characterized them. Many times I saw them come late to church, sometimes one, sometimes another. I assisted at two of Jacinta's rosaries in the Cuadro at 6 in the morning; and besides the great sacrifice that could be supposed for a girl of her age to get up so early, her prayer had nothing special about it; frequently she opened her mouth and yawned.³²

32. As already was pointed out in another place, only those unfamiliar with the life of the spirit would be scandalized by the girls' weaknesses. A basic tenet in theology is "Grace does not destroy nature." It does not destroy it, nor does it change it . . . suddenly. And the condition of our nature is rather pitiful. The special graces that a soul receives (even those very special graces that could be expected in Garabandal) certainly create a necessity or requirement to change, to go on from better to better; but they do not cause it . . . and souls can respond with various degrees of fidelity. Some might say, "If the apparitions were truly authentic, the girls, after such a long time of close contact with the Virgin, would have to be different than they are."

Actually, the apostles were in close contact with Jesus for a longer period of time—three years—and at the hour of His death, what were they like? If anyone does not know, the Gospel tells the story.

I do not pretend to make saints out of the visionaries since they unquestionably have many faults. I only mean to say that their real and apparent faults and weaknesses cannot be used as a proof against the ecstasies which they said they had, and which so many others were able to observe.

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In summary, it appears that the girls, with the exception of their visions, were not distinguishable from other girls of the village, and didn't show the influence of anything that wasn't natural, something that amazed many people.

It was the same with regard to their daily chores. I remember that one early morning we had gone to bed at 6:00 a.m. in broad daylight; and at 10:00 María Dolores was in church, assisting at Mass. A little later I watched as she made repeated trips from the fields to her home, carrying enormous stacks of hay on her shoulders. I was able to take pictures.

On the evening of July 17th, I noticed that Mari Loli was missing at the rosary. When we left, her mother was walking around searching for her with a worried look. A young boy and I went up to the Pines in case she could be found there following some *call*; but all that was there were the nine trees, like sentinels in the night. After we returned to the village, María Dolores was found in the home of some friends from Aguilar de Campoo where—absorbed in conversation—the time had passed without her noticing it. Her father scolded and punished her; it hurt me to see such chagrin in that little child, the instrument which Our Lady had used to give me so many and such unmerited signs of love. But Loli must have understood her father's reasons; since if her face appeared hurt, no sign of protest or rebellion against the one exercising authority could be found on it.

Awaiting the Hour

This brief notation by Luis Navas Carrillo gives us an idea of the atmosphere in Garabandal on the evening of July 17th, 1962:

“During the day, countless cars had come. The houses were full, making it very difficult to find a bed in which to sleep. Once again many people used the stables for sleeping.”

But many gave up their sleep in order not to miss the scenes on that night, which was almost completely occupied by vigils and ecstasies. Jacinta's came first; later, at 5:15 in the morning, with the first rays of dawn, came Mari Loli's ecstasy. She was initially at the Cuadro, and later made her way toward the church, accompanied by a group of people—Luis Navas among them:

I went ahead to enter the church and I saw a visiting priest, already dressed in the sacred vestments, who was getting the altar ready to say Mass. He couldn't hide the surprise that the unexpected coming of that parade caused him and began to say, “Don't enter! Don't enter!” As if the girl's entrance would bring upon him some grave responsibility!

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His fears ended immediately since the visionary, despite the door being open, stopped at the entrance, and falling on her knees there, came out of the trance. I remember at that time, as on other occasions after the time when the ecclesiastical authorities ordered the church doors closed during the girls' ecstasies, that they stopped at the entrance of the church, and at times were heard to whisper, "Oh, what doesn't the bishop want?" They always adopted an attitude of complete obedience and submission.

The day of July 18th, which began in such an unusual way, continued with a climate much different from other days. For the visitors, there was the special waiting for the miracle foretold by Conchita; for the villagers, there was the special *fiesta*, the principal day of the year, on which they met again with their distant relatives and friends, the day on which all the houses were full of happy people wearing their best clothes and eating lavishly. Officially the feastday was to honor St. Sebastián, martyred by being pierced with arrows, the patron saint of the village. For some time, the feastday had been moved from January 20th, the actual feastday of the saint, to this date in July (a holiday in Spain) in order to allow better weather and opportunity for the arrival of relatives and guests.

Well into the morning—said Luis Navas—we assisted at a chanted high Mass, in which 3 priests officiated;³³ the sermon was preached by a friend of mine from Burgos, who was stationed in San Vicente de la Barquera.³⁴ It was beautiful to see so many Communion, especially with the strangers who had come for the miracle; the Hosts had to be broken into particles.

At noon the festive atmosphere reached its peak. But as the afternoon hours passed, impatience and unrest began to increase among those waiting . . . Nothing was happening, nor were there any signs that something was going to happen!

As time passed—wrote Luis Navas—our restlessness grew, until it came to reach a level of actual anguish as the afternoon wore on.

33. In those days the rite of concelebration had not been established. Solemn High Mass was performed by three persons: the priest who celebrated, a deacon, and a sub-deacon. It was what in the villages was called the Mass of Three, and was celebrated only on great feasts; otherwise, the feasts would not carry so much importance.

34. For many years, the Heart of Mary (Claretian) fathers came to the parish church from that village on the coast of Santander. Frequently some of them traveled around to preach in the villages of the area.

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We blamed the dance³⁵ as the cause of the delay, and perhaps the failure of the prodigy to take place; and full of confusion, we made a multitude of conjectures . . . I personally didn't ask for anything for myself since I had no need of a miracle to believe in the apparitions. However it deeply grieved me that, since what had been predicted was not happening, the good opinions of countless people, principally those who had come for the first time to Garabandal, were being put down together with their faith. I couldn't forget the episode of October 18th, and at that time the girls hadn't predicted any prodigy!

In order to better support his hopes during the anguishing wait, as Mr. Navas wrote:

I kept in my mind that days previously the visionary had addressed a letter to a priest in Santander, Father Odriozola, inviting him to be present when the Angel gave her Communion. She had foretold this fact in unmistakable terms, with firmness and absolute sureness. She didn't mention the hour, and the solar day wouldn't end until 1:20 on our watches;³⁶ but each minute that went by increased my anxiety and made me think of what would happen with that priest whom the girl had so insistently requested to be there. Later, they told me that he had sent a representative in his place . . .

According to the reports made, the person sent by Father Odriozola was an attorney from Santander, Mr. R. M.,³⁷ who comported himself in Garabandal according to the most orthodox line of the Commission:

Toward 5 in the afternoon, he proposed to Conchita that she stop all this . . . That he would give her the broadest pardon on behalf of the bishop . . . That if she wanted to leave for Santander, he himself would take her with great pleasure . . . The marquis of Santa Maria, who was present there in the girl's home, couldn't contain himself and engaged in a heated argument with the lawyer who ended up going away in bad humor.

(A report from another witness)

Conchita's house naturally had to be, on that evening of July 18th, the center of maximum anticipation. Whoever at the time could get in and stay in the house had to be considered as really privileged; the priests eas-

35. The dance was a *sine qua non* with the young men during the village feastday. The people at Garabandal did not know how to stop it, in spite of Conchita's announcement; and it was held, according to custom, rather near to her house.

36. For many years the official time in Spain had been 60 minutes ahead of the solar time, so as to synchronize better with the rest of Europe.

37. This refers to Regino Mateo, born in the land of Reinosa but residing in the Santander capital; he was a lawyer.

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ily obtained such privileges, as would be expected. Paquina de la Roza Velarde, the wife of Dr. Ortiz, remembers that there were present there, besides close relatives of the visionary, a young girl from Aguilar (the daughter of Rafael Fontaneda); a priest from Madrid, Fr. Justo; a Franciscan, Fr. Bravo; a Jesuit from Comillas; and a Dominican priest from Asturias. This Dominican priest—Etelvino González—furnishes us information to help us relive those tense hours of July 18th.

Weeks later, on August 10th, the new bishop of Santander, Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal, wrote to Fr. Etelvino requesting him to answer a questionnaire that he was sending him: a long questionnaire that had been composed by the secretary of the Commission. He charged Fr. Etelvino to proceed with ‘the strictest secrecy’, and at the same time consider ‘the exceptional importance of his describing the facts objectively, with simplicity and briefness’.

The letter was answered by Fr. Etelvino after a month delay, for which he asked pardon.

Of the 41 questions on the questionnaire, he only answered 23, since he did not have direct knowledge on the content of the others.

In order to be as exact and objective as possible, I have tried, in describing this, to limit myself to those details and facts of which I was personally a witness. I have avoided not only reporting what I merely heard, but also as much as possible, mixing my own personal opinion in this.

Before beginning his answers, he confided to the bishops something that had to be his own personal opinion. He mentions . . .

. . . the unhappy impression that it made on me in seeing Conchita surrounded in her home by gifts, and circled by wealthy people who apparently came there frequently and gave the impression of having made Garabandal their domain. I wasn’t the only one to lament this; among the priests and faithful this was mentioned very unfavorably, leading at times to conclusions that were definitely not favorable. Without falling to this extreme, I think that the circumstances to which I am referring prevent a clear visualization of what could be happening at the bottom of these *events*, which seem more and more confusing.³⁸

38. What Father Etelvino speaks about is certainly lamentable, and it is not the only case to be pointed out and regretted. I am sorry to say that some of those who are considered—or consider themselves—as *Garabandalistas* of the first rank have done very poor service to its cause. And I am afraid that it is the same with the girls themselves and their families, at least some of them, who have not always shown sufficiently high example in what concerns unselfishness and detachment in their intentions.

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What this eyewitness then says—which is not favorable—can illustrate to us what was happening around Conchita on the night of July 18th, 1962.

FIRST QUESTION—*Were you in the kitchen of Conchita's home before she went into 'rapture'?*

ANSWER—I passed the evening in Conchita's house, in the kitchen and principally on the second floor,³⁹ in company with several secular priests, a Franciscan priest, a Jesuit priest and a seminarian. During the time immediately prior to the rapture, I was practically absent, except for intervals.

SECOND QUESTION—*What was the mental attitude of the young girl?*

ANSWER—The general tone, during the time that I saw her, was of sureness concerning the accomplishment of the prediction and care in preparing spiritually for it; praying and making us pray; we prayed a Station to the Blessed Sacrament and two rosaries. At the same time, the girl showed herself uncertain over what should be done about a dance that had been organized in front of her home; she wanted to have the music, but indicated weakly that they should stop dancing.”

But from this, one cannot draw a decisive proof against the supernaturality of those unexplainable phenomena; but only the conclusion that, as so many times has happened in the Story of Salvation, the instruments with which God works are not always the best, nor do they immediately lose their natural tendency to fall; especially if they remain in some respects attached to their own selves. The plain people of Garabandal were immersed in phenomena that were so much beyond them. Did they not have the right to expect from their religious guides in the diocese something better and quite different from what they received? Did these guides in this case fulfill their duties with their policies of distrust, remoteness and partial “non-intervention?”

39. Conchita was on this same floor during almost all the afternoon of the feastday according to the testimony given by Father EteIvino González to questions asked by the Commission:

“Conchita stayed upstairs from the middle of the afternoon. In all this time, I believe that she only came down to the kitchen about two times. In her room, on whose balcony she stayed almost all the afternoon, she was accompanied by various friends whose names I do not know. Everyone played; (it is not to be forgotten that it was the afternoon of the village feast) but I noted in her an air as if a little absent. She laughed, she answered the questions with serenity, and wrote on holycards with an admirable facility for composition.

During the afternoon, she was very accessible and agreeable to the priests. She even came one time to tell me, ‘I like the priests to be near to me, bending down (surely in respect for the Lord Whom she was expecting to receive),’ referring to the moment that was awaited.”

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The dancing had a bad effect on many of those who had gone up to the village. Conchita herself reports this:

Next to my house there was a holiday dance.

There were the two things together: some were praying the rosary, and others were dancing.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Some of the people wanted to stop the dancing, since they were afraid that if there were a dance, there wouldn't be a miracle.

And at one time, a man among those who wanted to stop the dancing, Ignacio Rubio, asked me if I wanted the dancing to stop.

I told him that, dance or no dance, the miracle would happen.

And then they didn't discuss the dancing anymore.

Perhaps the man whom Conchita mentions is the same person about whom we have another report:

A spectator, a professor from Granada, asked assistance from someone influential in the village to convince the young boys that the dancing should stop. With this assistance he went up to the boys and offered to pay the musicians to play on the next three Sundays . . .

—“Who told you this?”—someone asked—“Conchita?”

—“Yes.” (Actually Conchita hadn't said this.)

—“Let's go see”—said the young boy, and taking the arm of his questioner, he went in search of the girl:

—“We are coming to see, Conchita. Did the Virgin tell you that we shouldn't dance?”

—“No. Not exactly that. You can dance, but you shouldn't offend God, Our Lord.”⁴¹

The young boy left satisfied, and naturally the dance continued on for some time.

If the few people huddled in Conchita's house were perturbed by this, and were upset because they were waiting in vain during the final hours of July 18th, we can imagine how it must have been with those not present

40. The contrast is notable. What a strange melange men make. And what a melange there is in each man too. The task of life is to put everything in order, above all, interior order, eliminating what prevents us from going to heaven, putting everything that can bring us there in its place.

41. Here is something very important and often very difficult. Unfortunately amusements are so frequently directed to the harmful service of sensuality.

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there who could only learn about what was happening through vague rumors. We have Luis Navas' testimony:

I was in the house of Mari Dolores, together with her father, the marquis of Santa María, a friend of his, and some other persons whom I don't remember. Someone came to tell us that one of the priests who was in Conchita's house had already gone and was leaving the village; and also that they had even locked the house. I could imagine what Conchita's mother was like, after her daughter had not had either the customary apparition on Saturday, or one on Sunday, or Communion from the Angel on Monday, July 16th, the feastday of Our Lady of Mount Carmel . . .

Among ourselves, someone thought that if the Communion didn't take place, it could well be in order to test our faith. Others were of the opinion, on the contrary, that the cause could have been some fault of pride in the girl. And there was not lacking someone to say that he had found all these things of the miracle of the Host very strange from the beginning. But in general we resisted thinking that the visionary had made all this up to try to force the events.

Conchita perfectly sensed the atmosphere that surrounded her:

When night came, the people were upset.

But since the Angel and the Virgin had told me that the miracle would come, I had no fear, since neither the Virgin nor the Angel had ever told me that a thing would happen, and it didn't happen.

The tension of waiting in the circles closest to Conchita is well reflected in this detail that the wife of Doctor Ortiz gives us:

Everyone kept silent. Her brother, seated on the fireplace, had been dozing. Suddenly, he jumped up and said, speaking to Conchita, "I can't bear this anymore. I am going to bed. You have deceived us all terribly!" No one answered. Then the young boy said the same thing again and got up to leave.

—"No! Don't go"—Conchita called to him—"Wait just a little longer."

The girl had to feel that the moment was coming:

At 10 at night, I had a call, and at 12, another, and after . . .

1:40 A.M.

It is beyond all doubt that on the night between July 18th and 19th in 1962, in the village of San Sebastián de Garabandal, something happened that was going to matter very much in the history of the events taking place there.

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We have a brief report that gives this *something* as it happened internally, as further reports will describe it as seen externally.

At two o'clock, the Angel appeared to me in my room.

In my home were my mother Aniceta, my brother Aniceto, and an uncle, Elías, and a cousin, Luciuca, and a person from Aguilar, María del Carmen Fontaneda.

And the Angel was with me for awhile⁴² and he told me, as on other days:

Pray the "I Confess" and think of Whom you are going to receive.

And I did this. And afterwards he gave me Communion.

And after giving me Communion, he told me to say the "Soul of Christ",

And to make my thanksgiving,

And to hold out my tongue with the Sacred Host,

Until he left and the Virgin came.

And I did this.

We cannot designate the exact time that Conchita's ecstasy started. We have just seen that she said, at 2 o'clock, but her chronometric accuracy cannot be trusted. All the witnesses agree that the affair happened some time after July 18th ended, after one o'clock at night. The concordance of information from several witnesses makes it certain that the disputed trance began between 1:30 and 1:40.

A little before it started, Conchita, who had gone down for awhile to the kitchen, went up again to the upper floor. One of the persons there, Dr. Ortiz' wife, says this expressly:

After awhile, Conchita went upstairs again, and a little while later, I saw her come down with her hands joined.

In her room upstairs for almost an hour was a man not easily disposed to religious fervor: Elías González Cuenca. Although he was Conchita's

42. It must be remembered that the long periods of time in ecstasy seemed minutes to the girls.

And it is also to be remembered that they could move long distances in their trances and make long swift walks without losing the sensation of being still in the same place. Since they did not leave the light that enveloped their field of vision, they did not have the normal faculty to sense the change of locations.

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carnal uncle he did not have much faith in his niece, nor did he maintain cordial relations with her family. Let us hear his testimony:⁴³

It was after 12:30. I was drinking beer with someone at Elena's house when we heard a commotion in the crowd. And at the time, I went in its direction and entered her house—to see maliciously if I would see something that I didn't like. She is my niece by blood; but even so, I think that there have been three times that I have gone in there. I was with her in her house about an hour. She, her mother, her brother Cetuco, a little girl and I were praying. And later her mother went down to the kitchen, leaving the four of us alone.⁴⁴

After awhile, her brother said, "Do you see what time it is? It is today already. Nothing!"

And Conchita answered, "The time has not yet passed."

A few minutes later she fell into ecstasy. We were seated on her bed, and she was speaking with us when suddenly she fell there to the side of me against the door."

Soon the girl got up, left her room and began to descend majestically down the stairway. Dr. Ortiz' wife stated:

I saw her go down with her hands joined in front of her chest, her head turned backwards, her mouth slightly open, and with an expression of marvelous happiness!

Father Bravo, a professor from the University of Comillas, a specialist in the spiritual life, looking at the young girl transfigured like this, could only repeat, "How marvelous! How marvelous!"

Those that were in the house intended to follow close to Conchita as she went outside. However they found themselves prevented by the masses of people who were waiting impatiently, and literally threw themselves on top of her, seeking to get the best place for observation.

Dr. Ortiz' wife stated: "I went out on the street and I couldn't follow her."

Uncle Elías said, "I went out after her into the crowd; but they knocked me down."

And they pushed Father Bravo so much that he was almost bowled over; he had to forget being in the first ranks. Miguel, Conchita's brother

43. This was recorded on a magnetic tape recorder.

44. Father Etelvino González had left for a while since after 10:30 Conchita had indicated to those present, "You can go eat if you wish," giving them to understand that what they were expecting was not going to take place for awhile.

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and some other husky young men attempted to protect the girl as she walked.

Luis Navas wrote:

It was 15 or 20 minutes before two in the morning, when just after going out in the street, and no farther than turning a corner to the left—in the place least expected—in front of the house of her friend Olguita, the visionary fell on her knees, and the Communion took place. It was a wet place, hardly agreeable, since at times dirty water from the homes was dumped there.

The visionary was removed from all this, being unaware of her own movements and positions; the only thing that she knew was that:

The Angel appeared to me in my room . . . etc..

It is indisputable that in the girl's open mouth and upon her graciously extended tongue there was seen for some time the white Host of Communion, since testimony of this has been signed and sworn to by many witnesses . . . Although it was in the middle of the night, the scene and the protagonist were suitably illuminated.

Concerning this, there is a report that has special value because of the situation of its proponent and because of the official nature of his testimony. The questions were put in writing by the Commission at Santander through a diocesan prelate, and the answers were also given in writing by the Dominican previously mentioned: Fr. Etelvino González.

Q. *What time was it? Had July 18th passed?*

A. It was exactly a quarter to two in the early morning of July 19th.

Q. *Was there sufficient light?*

A. Yes. There was a full moon. Furthermore, there were many flashlights around the girl even before the object predicted appeared on her tongue. I myself, with my back to her (from a distance of about a meter), on hearing the shout, "The Host!", turned around in front of her, focusing my flashlight on her open mouth.

Q. *Did you see something in her mouth like the Host used for Communion?*

A. Yes. With complete certainty.

Q. *Before it was in the girl's mouth, did you see the Host outside of it, for example, in the hands of the supposed angel, while she was making the sign of the cross, or in the path from the hands of the angel to the mouth of the girl?*

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A. As I had my back turned, trying to hold back the crowd, I didn't see it appear.

Q. *What was the host like?*

A. The object was a white body of the same size and shape as the Hosts used for Communion; perhaps somewhat thicker. It gave the impression of being somewhat spongy and it adhered perfectly to her tongue.

Q. *How long did the phenomena last?*

A. I estimate about 45 seconds; perhaps 60.

Q. *Did you hear the girl speak with the alleged angel? What did he say?*

A. I didn't see or hear her speak.

Q. *What effects did this cause in you?*

A. I distinguished three periods: A) With my back to the girl, on hearing the shout: "The Host! Miracle!" I turned around, not believing it was true. B) On seeing It with my eyes, I was impressed and completely absorbed in the examination of the "Host." C) Finally, I attempted to impose silence and reverence (since there was obviously the presence of the white body with characteristics similar to the Hosts of Communion.)"

Miracle or Fraud?

This *fact* cannot be denied or evaded: that a Host was seen on Conchita's tongue like those used for Communion. But is this fact enough to call it an authentic miracle?

For some, a miracle was unquestionable from the first moment; for others, doubts began immediately and have not yet dissipated.

As men debate about the works of men, they are inclined to debate about the works of God too. And to God this does not seem to matter, since He never takes away all the problems in such a way that disbelief and resistance to belief would be impossible. He never forces us to believe. We are merely given adequate information and sufficient leads to bring us to an attitude of faith based on good, reasonable logic.

Whoever avoids searching into obscure areas ends up finding total security. The rich man of the parable said to the patriarch Abraham, "If Lazarus, risen from the dead, goes to my brothers, they will not refuse his

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testimony.” The patriarch (and it was Jesus Himself who spoke through him) answered: “If they do not accept Moses and the prophets, they will not accept one who has risen from the dead either.”

And so on the night of the milagruco began the doubts, the suspicions, the twisted interpretations.

Conchita was told to remain with her tongue extended after having received the Host, until . . .

. . . the Virgin would come.

And I did it like this.

And when the Virgin came, she told me:

They all still do not believe.

The girl found out the truth of this as soon as she returned to her house, once the long trance had ended. For the trance was long; the Communion was only the beginning.

While many were keeping watch around the girl’s home, hoping for what might happen there (and these were the ones who saw, some well, some not so well, the things just described), others situated themselves in the Calleja, thinking that there, at the site of so many other miraculous happenings, Conchita’s miraculous Communion would transpire.

Among these was Luis Navas; with anticipation he ran toward the Cuadro seeking to secure the best observation point. But there he had to wait, although he tried to do it with resignation:

I expressed—he wrote—my resignation to the Virgin while waiting there, “If we don’t have the good fortune to see the miracle, at least let it be realized!” I didn’t want to think of the consequences that would result from the non-realization of the predicted miracle, or the methods that might be adopted by the Commission, reticent from the start to admit any possibility of the apparitions being supernatural.

When Conchita came to the Cuadro . . . (As we have seen, the Virgin appeared to her after the Communion. Then began an ecstatic march, whose first stop was apparently the Calleja, where the lawyer from Palencia was waiting with the other people). . . . I didn’t know whether she had received Communion. But I noticed that she held her mouth open. I saw this clearly since I found myself in the advantageous position that I had secured previously in case there would take place there, as was probable, the miracle that everyone was awaiting.

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After being there some time, the visionary descended backwards toward the village, and I followed her with difficulty thru the streets, since I had lost my glasses. It was at that time that I learned that she had already received Communion, and how it had occurred. There was nothing more for me to do than ask pardon for having doubted at the last hour, and to accept not having seen anything.

During the ecstasy, the visionary went in front of the church twice,⁴⁵ prayed the rosary through the streets,⁴⁶ visited the cemetery, and on returning from there, had barely passed over the little brook when she knelt down and advanced in this position about 50 meters. Finally she sang the *Salve* and went to conclude the vision where it had begun almost two hours previously, but not before offering the many articles placed on the kitchen table to be kissed.”

45. Luis Navas noted something that particularly attracted his attention: the “open mouth of Conchita”; but he does not give more detail. Nevertheless, there are other testimonies that speak of something very remarkable in this regard.

Félix Gallego, a doctor from Polanco (Santander), tells how he, while going with the girl toward the church after the miracle, saw perfectly a halo of light in the back of her open mouth. That same night, on returning to his home in Polanco, he wrote down a report that days later he gave to Father Valentín for him to take, if it seemed useful, to his superiors at the chancery.

And I myself was able to receive an unequivocal testimony from a woman from Madrid, María Paloma Fernández-Pacheco de Larrauri. She had come to the village in the early morning of July 18th, and was spending the day waiting like so many others . . . When Conchita finally left her house in ecstasy, this woman, who had been waiting a long time outside, could not follow her because of the commotion and the people throwing themselves on top of her. Resigned and silent, she went down another street and was walking aimlessly when she perceived, muffled and far away, the noise of those who were coming with the visionary. Soon above the noise that was breaking the silence of the night, she heard a woman shout excitedly: “Oh! She’s carrying it in her mouth!”

She rushed toward the sound and found there, at the entrance of the church, a spectacle that she will never be able to forget. Within the churchyard in the middle of the people who had arranged themselves in a wide circle, or perhaps rather a rectangle, Conchita was moving in ecstasy. Flashlights were converging on her with their beams of light, but surpassing that light was another light which shone from the mouth of the girl with an unusual resplendence.

Mrs. Paloma succeeded in situating herself well on the left side of the courtyard and was able to observe perfectly, for some minutes, this extraordinary phenomenon in front of her. “It was”—she said—“as if in the center of her wide-open mouth, on the tongue of the child, there were a host or ‘forma’ of concentrated light, around which radiated a little halo of light of a different kind.”

This phenomenon was definitely observed by other persons too, some of whom did not want to talk about it for fear of being considered hysterical or subject to hallucinations.

46. Conchita wrote, “And she told me to pray the rosary, and I prayed it.”

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It was at this time that the girl began to see evidence of what the Virgin had mentioned when she appeared to the girl after Communion: “All still do not believe.”

She was . . . as anyone would be after an extraordinary favor from heaven. We know this thru reliable testimony. The Commission had asked in its questionnaire:

—“Is it true that Conchita, on returning home, smiled and avoided questions? Was she agitated?”

Fr. Etelvino answered:

—“She was calm when I saw her . . . She spoke calmly and happily.”

Among the people in Conchita’s kitchen at the end of the ecstasy was Dr. Ortiz’s wife. She remembers that they were telling the girl:

—“How happy you must be, Conchita! Finally the miracle has come.”

—“Yes, but the Virgin told me that many, in spite of seeing it, do not believe . . . And I think one of these is Plácido.”

At that moment, Plácido arrived. The girl smiled broadly and said to him:

—“You, you don’t believe?”

—“Not much”—the man replied, trying in vain to smile.⁴⁷

Plácido Ruiloba had been pushed away by the crowd and could not see the Host with his own eyes. Afterwards the Franciscan Fr. Justo, who had seen it and was full of doubts, relayed to him what he felt . . .

Dr. Ortiz’s wife heard Fr. Justo speaking to Fr. Bravo:

—I was tempted to take the Host with my hand, to see if it was real . . .

—Didn’t that seem to be tempting God?

A Franciscan father, Father Justo, didn’t believe what he had seen.

And he said to the people that he hadn’t seen it, that it was a lie, that it was I who had done this . . .

In the writings of Luis Navas are these lines:

In the days prior to July 18th Conchita had expressed her concern that many people would not witness the event, and as a consequence wouldn’t believe

47. According to a witness’ report, Plácido said then to Conchita: “Liar! You’ve deceived us!”

Undisturbed, the girl replied with a smile: “The Virgin told me: ‘In spite of everything, some do not believe!’ ”

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it . . . This prediction was verified because some didn't expect it (the presentation of the miracle seemed too much to them), because many didn't see it, and because for other reasons the people in general were rather cold . . . And I think that during the time before the miracle was accomplished everyone doubted, more or less, that it would take place.

Soon the Commission at Santander was deluged with a flood of comments, suspicions, and questions, all coming from the unconvinced.

And it was not hard for the Commission to think that there had been no miracle.

But something had definitely happened, because of which there was no other way out than to seek to offer explanations. The Commission members thought that by seeking evidence against Garabandal they were fulfilling their duty; but the rest of us might think that they did not accomplish another duty, a first and more important one: to be there at the place of the event, following everything that was occurring from the best point of observation.

The Commission members assert their right to speak out publicly and express their opinions on the events. That being the case, the least that could be asked of them would be to be there in the forefront of everyone else in following, observing, and studying the events. It was not this way!

The letter in which Conchita invited them to be present at Garabandal on the 18th of July may or may not have been inspired by God; nevertheless those called had a serious obligation not to lose an occasion (that could well have been of great importance) to bring more light on the complete study that was entrusted to them. Instead of this, initially they showed no concern. Later when collecting information from witnesses, by design they sought only witnesses from whom they expected unfavorable testimony!

What would have happened if the responsible persons in the diocesan chancery had been at the appointed spot on the day fixed by God?

God can perform things very well without man; but the History of Salvation shows us how certain divine designs have gone astray because of the lack of human cooperation. God does not have to yield to our desires . . . How often He could say to us: "Since you attempt to come to the light through your own ways, and not through Mine, you will remain in the darkness!"

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On July 18th, 1962, a thing that could have decisively clarified the mystery of Garabandal ended by leaving it like it was, or perhaps even more obscure. Whose fault was this?

It seems that the official Commission in Santander first of all doubted the actuality of the *fact* of the Host on Conchita's tongue, attributing it to suggestion, madness or the collective hysteria of those who saw it. Afterwards, in the face of irrefutable proofs, especially the photographic pictures that had been taken, they maintained a hypothesis of fraud: "Conchita, aided by others, had put this over with great skill . . ."

In the questionnaire presented weeks later to Fr. Etelvino González, there is a collection of questions from which it can be seen that the Commission took seriously the many things that were said about the peculiar circumstances around the miracle. Their questions themselves clearly reveal this:

- Is it true that Conchita and her cousin Luciuca Fernández González didn't stop laughing nervously and playing with their hands?
- At midnight did you see her write some words to her uncle Elías González Cuenca?
- Is it true that on the back of the paper she drew two feminine figures?
- Did you identify them as Luciuca and Conchita?
- Is it true that on the drawing Luciuca brought her hand to Conchita's mouth?
- Is it true that Conchita avoided being accompanied by the priests present there?
- At 1:20, did her mother tell her to change her dress?
- With regard to this, did Conchita go upstairs?
- Who were the persons there upstairs?
- What purpose could her going upstairs have?
- How long did she delay in coming down?
- On coming down, did she go back into the kitchen?
- Did she come down in rapture?
- Did she have her mouth closed?
- Did she cover it with the crucifix?
- Did you notice anything strange in her mouth?"⁴⁸

48. Naturally, I do not criticize the Commission for trying to bring all the hidden elements out into the open; I criticize their actions for not being open, actions which have given reason to think that they were only interested in confirming adverse points, only calling for testimony and accepting it from those who were able to present something unfavorable.

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We do not know the answers to any of these questions. Fr. Etelvino answered only the ones we have previously mentioned, and refrained from responding to these with excellent reasons:

I don't know because at the time I was absent from the house. At that time I didn't hear anything about the writing or the drawing; I heard about it days later from people who said they had heard it discussed by a priest.

The last question of the Commission was this:

—"Could the possibility of fraud be considered?"

The Dominican father answered simply:

—"I think that's not impossible."

But we can well think that the Commission, with all these questions, had determined not just the simple possibility, but the actual probability that the alleged motions of Conchita had been designed to stage the miracle with the aid of her uncle and cousin. Taking advantage of some of her comings and goings, the girl had secretly put what she had prepared in her mouth, and thereupon the ecstasy began . . .

What is it that they could have prepared? A question of the Commission puts it down specifically:

"The 'host,' could it have been a piece from a game of Bristol, a wafer made from flour, a pharmaceutical product?"

Fr. Etelvino answered:

—"I've never seen a Bristol piece so thick, but it well could have resembled a wafer made of flour"

So many and such labored allegations can be easily torn down, since it was shown that at the moment of the Communion, when the girl opened her mouth and held out her tongue, the tongue appeared completely bare, and then . . .

Several premier witnesses say something overwhelming in this regard; but the Commission has never called them to testify or given any credence to their testimony.

The stonemason of the village, José Díez Contero familiarly called Pepe Díez, enjoyed a privileged position for minutely following the Communion, since he was at Conchita's one side, holding her arm and protecting her, while her brother Miguel was on her other side. And Pepe Díez never tires of explaining—with remarkable forcefulness—how he illuminated

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the girl's mouth with his flashlight very carefully during the time before and after she opened it:

When I saw that she held out her tongue, and that there was nothing at all on it, I had, I think, the worst moment in my life. "Oh heavens!"—I said to myself—"This is terrible. Nothing is seen here!" And on saying this, I lit up the whole interior of her mouth with my flashlight. Suddenly without the girl moving her tongue in the least—in a most unexplainable way—there appeared on top of it, as if suddenly coming forth, a white, round thing, which seemed to grow . . . I don't know how long it lasted; perhaps two or three minutes.

Conchita's brother Miguel, who was on the other side of the girl, was able to make the same meticulous observations that Pepe Díez made. Serafín, her older brother, could not come to Garabandal on July 18th, but he returned a few days later. Miguel went to greet him, and as soon as the two brothers met, the question came up:

—"What happened with the miracle of the Host?"

—I swear it's true. I saw it. I saw perfectly how she held out her tongue, bare without anything on it, and without putting it inside, a white Host suddenly came forth.

—"Are you really sure?"

—"Completely. I swear it was so."

—"Well, it's enough for me that you say it."

A long time later, during one of Fr. Laffineur's stays⁴⁹ in Garabandal, he and Serafín were speaking about the miracle of the Host, and of its closest witnesses . . .

FATHER LAFFINEUR—For me, the real witness is Pepe Díez.

SERAFÍN—"I'm not going to argue about it; but for me, the real witness is Miguel, my brother. Perhaps you don't see it that way, since he's Conchita's brother . . . But look. Out in the fields, in the places where we had to go to work, Miguel and I spoke about this miracle many times. He has always told me that he saw it perfectly; that the miracle was true. He held Conchita by one arm and Pepe Díez held the other when she fell on her knees for the Communion."

49. This Belgian priest who lived in France is already well known to the reader; he died on November 28th, 1970.

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The whole family's honor is at stake in regard to the truth of this happening. Miguel knows it, and considering his character, if he holds it with such firmness against the opinions of so many people, it's because he's very sure there was no fraud.⁵⁰

In spite of this, neither Miguel nor Pepe Díez made a report to the bishop's Commission. Two other of the witnesses did not make a report either: a farmer from the neighboring country, Benjamín Gómez; and an industrial worker from a distant city, Alejandro Damians.

The first of these, Benjamín Gómez, was not given to religious fervor as he admitted:⁵¹

Prior to being in Garabandal, I was not what I am now. Let us not say that I didn't believe in God, since sometimes I thought about those things; but I put it aside, as if it had no importance. Was it my age? Was it my weak head? The fact is that now I feel differently. And this change began here.⁵² In my opinion, things have happened here that are divine—that are not of this world.

Benjamín Gómez was a native of Liébana; but he had lived for years in Pesués, downstream from Puente Nansa. News had soon come to him of the unusual things that were happening in San Sebastián de Garabandal. And one day he finally decided to go up to the place. At the beginning, he did not attract attention by doing this—there were so many who were going up! But it did not take long until the townspeople began to talk about his devotion and started making jokes about him, and at times harassed him—even the pastor, who was opposed to Garabandal.

Garabandal attracted him. But that did not change the deficiency in his practice of religion:

In spite of coming, I was still holding back, and missing Mass on Sunday didn't matter to me . . . until it came to July 18th.

50. Father Laffineur's statement was given in a conference at Saragossa on December 8th, 1968.

51. Benjamin Gómez has spoken many times with almost the same words about his extraordinary experience at Garabandal. Here we are following the report that was recorded on a tape recorder by a man in Santander.

52. The event of July 18th left a definite mark on Benjamin. His religious life prior to this could be well described by what he himself said: "I went 23 years without going to confession . . . I didn't concern myself with God except to blaspheme Him . . ."

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I remember it well. After midnight, many people began to leave; I was glad they went, since it would be easier to see. It was well past one o'clock, and I was waiting near Conchita's house when the young girl came out. A little later she fell on her knees in ecstasy, and I was able to be very near to her, and to see everything at my leisure.

The young girl opened her mouth, but in no hurry. She was in no hurry for anything there. She opened her mouth, I say, and I set myself to watch with all my attention. I committed the rudeness of not allowing others to see. I recognized this, but I wanted to check everything well . . . I looked into her open mouth again and again; and neither on the top of her mouth, nor beneath her tongue, nor in any part of her mouth could anything be seen. There was nothing there at all!

The tongue was like this, without anything; and then the Host appeared suddenly, and was seen by everyone for some time, sufficient time so that all who were there could see. I saw it well.

The color could not be compared with anything. It seemed most like snow when the sun rises and gives it splendor in the blinding light. But it was not quite that way; it was white, like I have never seen anything whiter . . . I stayed still and continued to watch. Finally she closed her mouth and left the place still in ecstasy.

I swear before God and all the saints that what I say is true.

We have what Alejandro Damians from Barcelona experienced and put down in writing. First of all he tells about the unusual circumstances on starting out on his journey, which only was decided on at the last hour on Monday, July 16th. Concerning these circumstances, Mr. Damians says there was . . .

. . . a detail which was destined to be of the greatest importance. Before leaving Barcelona, my cousin lent me a friend's movie camera, giving me brief instructions on how it should be operated, since my knowledge in these things was absolutely nil.

I passed almost all of July 18th near to Conchita's house with my wife, a friend, several priests, and some other people.

Two circumstances joined together to cause doubt as to whether or not the hoped-for prodigy would take place: the atmosphere of fiesta that reigned in the village and the presence of priests. (It was known that normally the Angel did not come to give Communion if there were priests in the village who could do it.)

And so, between doubts, wishful thinking, boredom and hope, the long day went by. The discouragement and the lack of belief were general when we saw that, by the clock, July 18th had ended without anything happening. But toward 1:00 at night, after some had started to leave the village, there spread the news

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that, according to the solar time, the day would not end until 1:25 in the morning.⁵³

A little later they asked those of us who were in Conchita's house to leave, and I stayed at the door in company with a friend of the family to prevent the entrance of other people. From my place of watching I held in my view the kitchen and the stairway that led to the upper floor, where Conchita was.

There the ecstasy took place; but we didn't learn about it until we saw her coming down the stairway with that classical attitude in which her features are softened and embellished in an extraordinary way.

As she stepped out the door, the waiting crowd opened just enough space to permit her passage, and immediately closed in around her like an overflowing river. I saw people fall on the ground and get stepped on by the others. To my knowledge, no one was injured. But the sight of that fantastic multitude on the run, pushing one another, couldn't have been more terrifying.⁵⁴

I also had intended to follow Conchita; but five or six meters of heads were between the two of us. From time to time I distinguished her by the light from the flashlights, but without good visibility. She had barely gone outside when she

53. It seems that there has been excessive attention put on determining if the moment of the miracle fell or did not fall within the chronological limits of July 18th. Those who are in favor of the miracle have made some distinctions between official time and sun time. Those who are opposed, like the Commission, saw the hour as one more proof of deceit. In the questionnaire sent to Father Etelvino González, there was a double question: "What hour was it? Had July 18th already passed?" I would ask if it had not occurred to the Commission that this difficulty of the time, rather than being opposed, speaks in favor of the authenticity of the miracle. If the affair had been staged by the girl and her accomplices, they would have taken great care to keep within the limitations of the announcement so that no one could have anything to criticize, and the scene would have occurred definitely within the time predicted. The actual happening shows that neither the will of the girl, nor the impatience of those who surrounded her, had any effect.

In this episode at Garabandal, similar to what has so often occurred in the Bible, things and sayings have to be understood according to common opinion. And in the understanding of people who do not live by a clock, the days are separated simply by the night; the day itself begins with getting up in the morning and lasts until going to bed again.

54. In this near riot, the Commission wanted to find further proofs against Garabandal, as another question of their questionnaire shows:

"Was the climate of shoving, rushing, jostling, etc. proper for a Eucharistic event?"

Fr. Etelvino responded without much perspective:

"No. It seems to me it would be rather improper for several reasons."

I would remind both him and the members of the Commission about what so often occurred around Jesus; for example, in the episode of the woman with the hemorrhage. (Luke 8: 33-45)

Certainly reverence and proper decorum are required for a proper relationship with God; but this is not easy to be maintained when strong feelings pull on people. Fortunately God is more understanding than men.

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turned to the left. Then she swerved to the left again. And right there in the center of the street, which is rather wide, she fell suddenly on her knees.

Her fall was so unexpected that the thrust of the crowd, by the force of inertia, pushed the people several meters beyond her. Thus, unexpectedly, I saw myself suddenly to the right and less than half a meter from her face. I firmly withstood the shoving of those coming from behind, and I succeeded in not being displaced from the privileged place in which I had fallen.

There was a relative calm. I should point out that, slightly before the middle of the night, the clouds previously covering the sky dissipated. And a multitude of stars began to shine around the moon. By their light and the numerous flashlights that lit up the street, I could clearly see Conchita with her mouth open and tongue extended, in the normal position for receiving Communion. She was more beautiful than ever! Her expression, her gestures, far from provoking laughter or being ridiculous, were of impressive and moving mysticism.

Soon, without being able to say how, without Conchita having changed her position or expression in the least, the Sacred Host appeared on her tongue.

It is impossible to describe the sensation that I felt at that moment! And that I still feel today on remembering it. It was something that engorged the heart in the chest, overflowing it with sweetness, and that made the eyes water with an almost uncontainable need to cry.⁵⁵

Later they told me that Conchita had been immobile some two minutes, with the Sacred Host on her tongue, until she swallowed it normally. And then she kissed the crucifix that she carried in her hand.

I was unaware of the time that passed by. I only remember, as if in a dream, the voices that were shouting for me to stoop down. And I also remember feeling a hard whack on my head.

Then I remembered that I was carrying the motion picture camera around my neck. And without paying attention to the complaints, I remained standing, focused the camera, pressed the trigger, and filmed the last moments of Conchita's Communion. I had never before taken a picture; I barely remembered my cousin's instructions. It seemed doubtful that anything would result from this.

55. I recently heard the impression of another qualified witness: Pepe Díez.

He told me that what he has always described about the miracle of the host is the actual thing that he personally observed very close up . . . But he also said that whenever he described it, it seemed that what he said did not actually correspond to the reality, since everything that he could say did not come close to what there was; it was only a pale reflection.

He could find no words to express what he had experienced.

While observing the thing on that night, he was neither nervous nor excited, but in control of himself and engaged only in observing with the greatest attention. It was only when it was all over that he felt a tremendous sensation: the thrill of experiencing something that could not be repeated in his lifetime.

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And furthermore, there was—I noticed this later—the fact that the visibility was totally inadequate, since I had to operate by light from flashlights.

When the roll came back from being developed, I found myself with almost a new miracle: on the film appeared 79 photographs filming the scene. The showing of the people surrounding me had caused me to be unsuccessful in centering the picture well on many of the frames; but several had taken the picture with complete accuracy.⁵⁶

I don't know what most people think of all these things, nor the decision that the Church will adopt. The only thing of which I can be sure—and I hold this without any kind of doubt—is that on July 18th, 1962, in San Sebastián de Garabandal, two miracles occurred. The first, Conchita's Communion, displayed a supernatural character of enormous proportions; the second, very small, showed proof of the infinite condescension of the Virgin toward me, because only through her condescension was I able to be present so close to the prodigy and have it clearly impressed on my film.

God is Here!

We see then, that there are formal statements from the closest witnesses in favor of the authenticity of the miracle of July 18th. These declarations are not only uncategorical affirmations of the actuality of the miracle, but they also furnish us with some interior experiences that are of great value in judging its origin.

We have seen what Pepe Díez said and continues to say.

And also what Benjamín Gómez confesses without human respect, "For myself, there was the place that I truly believed in God!"

Alejandro Damians continues his report:

When Conchita got up after having received Communion and continued on her way, I couldn't follow her. I had no strength. I withdrew to a corner and there remained entirely alone, leaning on a wall, holding onto the motion picture camera with the little strength that I had left.

I don't know how long I was there. When a calm relaxation replaced the tenseness in my muscles caused by the excitement, I set out walking through the village, with slow steps, without a fixed aim.

These words describe a lot, but they are not the only ones available to aid us in assessing some of the extraordinary interior experiences that Mr. Damians had on that unforgettable night.

56. Some of these pictures are well known since they have appeared in various publications about Garabandal.

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On the same night, in the same place as Alejandro Damians, as close to Conchita as he was, better prepared and more ready than him to film the whole scene, was a man who had come from Paris expressly to do this. He was Doctor Caux,⁵⁷ of great professional prestige among French movie makers. What he felt in Garabandal on that night, in contrast to what Mr. Damians felt, we can estimate through a conversation that took place between them a year later, on August 15th, 1963.

DR. CAUX—So you were the one who made the film of Conchita's Communion . . . How glad I am to meet you, to talk about that day! Do you mind if I ask some questions?

MR. DAMIANS—I'm glad to meet you too. Ask whatever you want.

DR. CAUX—I read your report closely; but I would like more information.

MR. DAMIANS—You might know that—although the report is complete—there is something that I couldn't put down: what I felt within, I wasn't able to describe.

DR. CAUX—Tell me, were you watching all the time?

MR. DAMIANS—From the time I saw myself next to the girl, I didn't look at anything else except her. I can swear that I didn't take my eyes off her tongue for a moment. Obviously I could have blinked, but as you know, that is a matter of a slight fraction of a second. And I saw how—with a speed too fast for the human eye—the Host formed on her tongue. To explain it better, I might say without the passing of a split second.

DR. CAUX—Why didn't you film it from the beginning?

MR. DAMIANS—I was struck speechless; stupified! When I came to myself—I don't know if it actually was this way, since I wasn't able to remember how I filmed it—I took the camera and, in a hurry, was able to take the last seconds of the miracle.

DR. CAUX—Did it occur to you to touch the Host?

MR. DAMIANS—No.

DR. CAUX—Was the girl's tongue in the normal position?

MR. DAMIANS—I would say that it was held out more than it would ordinarily be extended for receiving Communion.

57. I have the address and telephone number of this man.

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DR. CAUX—Now permit me a question that I've wanted to ask for a long time: Did you feel at that moment a joy so tremendous, so beyond this world, that you couldn't compare it with anything else, that you wouldn't exchange it for anything, even for a thousand million pesetas, for example?

MR. DAMIANS—That's a question that I've been asked more than once, and almost with the same words. I certainly wouldn't exchange the happiness that I felt during those moments for a thousand million pesetas, nor for anything in the world. It was a joy so intense, so profound, that I can't explain it, nor can I compare it with anything. It was something exceptional! Something for which I'd give my life, and which didn't allow me later to follow the girl's ecstasy, or to go with my wife or with anyone; I was only able to take shelter in a corner and sob in silence.

DR. CAUX—I'm delighted to hear this! Actually that is what I suspected. There still remain two things that I'd like very much to know: What was the reason for such a great joy? And were you in the state of grace at the time? Pardon my forwardness; don't answer if you don't want to.

MR. DAMIANS—I'll answer gladly. I was in grace with God; and my enormous emotion wasn't caused by the miracle itself, or by seeing the girl with the white object on her tongue. (Some said that the Host had a cross in the center; others, that the cross was double; I didn't see any of this.)

I'm going to tell something great: the thing that I did see, and that had a tremendous effect on me, was finding myself with the Living and True God. I wouldn't exchange anything in the world for this. If God wants me to see the Miracle that is predicted, I'll be delighted; but if it is not that way, what can I say? I see that it would be difficult for anything in the world to make an impression like the one I had in SEEING HIM during that solemn and magnificent moment in my life.

DR. CAUX—You don't know how happy you make me, on the one hand, and how miserable on the other. I felt the same as you, but in reverse!

Listen to this. I came all prepared to film the affair; I had everything completely ready. And everything went bad for me and I

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wasn't able to film anything. Only at the last moment, in the last fraction of a second, did I manage to see the Host, which was disappearing, being swallowed by the girl. At that moment, I was struck by a terrible pain, a horrible pain that overwhelmed me! The pain of a God that I had come to catch a glimpse of and Who was going away from me . . .

It was only at that moment that I thought—I had not thought about it before—that I was in mortal sin. I wept like you, but from pain! I understood what sin was and what hell was . . . It was useless for my wife to try to console me; nor could I explain anything, nor could she understand me. That pain was something too great to share or be solaced.⁵⁸

Because of this, I believe that only if God permits me to see the miracle—now that I try to always be in His grace—will there depart from me this pain so profound that I think it's going to kill me, and which still continues piercing my heart. On that night in Garabandal, I even had the impression that the people were avoiding me, as if they saw my sins!

MR. DAMIANS—I understand everything, my friend. I have to tell you that on that day it wasn't only your impression that the people didn't like you; it was the truth. The village thought that you had come with a woman who wasn't your wife; and they even asked me to find a way to throw you out. Now I understand why God didn't permit them to do it. You suffered more pain by staying than you would have by being roughly expelled.

DR. CAUX—You're right. I'd have really preferred that to have happened. But now I know what God is, and what He wants of me, what the hell is of not seeing God and how this pain—I would give more than my whole fortune to avoid it—was relieved in confession, and now again with the hope of seeing the Miracle some day.

Whatever people say, and although many ridicule me, I cannot abandon the service of the Garabandal cause, to which I owe something as profound as it is unknown and terribly magnificent, some-

58. To understand something both about the joy of Mr. Damians and the suffering of Dr. Caux, the teaching of Catholic theology has to be taken into account:

- That heaven consists above all in the joy of the perfect vision of God.
- That hell is above all the horrible existence in having lost God forever.

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thing that I hope will depart from me, and be eased on the day of the Miracle. The view of hell moves me to try to move the world myself, announcing what has happened and what is going to happen, so that it can be saved. My family were the first to think that I was crazy, although now they don't think that way. But I assure you that nothing that anyone thinks of me matters; the only thing that matters to me is God."

This conversation between the man from Barcelona and the doctor from Paris has extraordinary value for its theological implications and scope. Unfortunately, we will have to omit commenting on it here, so as not to lengthen the chapter unduly. However, I want to add what was said in a letter written in April of 1970 by María Teresa Le Pelletier de Glatigny:

One afternoon in Paris, Doctor Caux told us confidentially what he had felt on that night in Garabandal. Among other things, he told me how at the exact moment of the miracle, he had lived and experienced what human words could not convey: what it is to lose God—the true pain of hell. At the same time, he was filled with all the horror of being in mortal sin. "Pray for me, Señora"—he told me at the end—"in order that I may never fall again into sin, now that I have experienced its terrible meaning."

This page from the story of Garabandal is of superlative worth to anyone who looks at it. Nevertheless, by an assembly of circumstances that can not be explained, a thick cloud of doubt and suspicion has hovered permanently over the event.

The Diocesan Commission Says NO

Mr. Damians wrote at the end of his report, "I don't know what most people think of all these things, nor the decision the Church will adopt."

The Church has still not adopted a decision. But those who said they were acting in the name and with the powers of the Church immediately took a stance: not to admit the actuality of the miracle. As a consequence, there was no other way for them to explain what had happened than to say it was the result of a well-staged fraud.

The principal perpetrator of the fraud could be none other than Conchita. But she could not have done it alone. Immediately the accomplices

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appeared: her uncle Elías and her cousin Luciuca. Some of those who were in Garabandal on that night began to signal them out; and the Commission, with its propensity for negative positions, did not hesitate in taking their point of view.

It did not matter that some of these people, whose testimony in the beginning contributed to confuse the issue, later retracted their testimony.

For example, Fr. Justo wrote to Conchita from his residence two or three days later:

I saw the Host on your tongue perfectly; but I was disturbed by not having seen it from the beginning. On leaving your home and going behind you, with the intention of not missing a thing, I had the misfortune of falling and of being jostled by a large number of people. When I recovered from the shock and wanted to get near you, the Host was already in your mouth.

The devil tempted me and I came to think evil . . . Afterwards, having spent some sleepless nights, I have come to think more evenly. And now I am once again sure that it is God Who gives you His protection.

The favorable testimonies that could have been taken from many persons who had seen everything meant nothing to the Commission.

Doctor Ortiz compiled the names and addresses of some 26 witnesses. And Father Valentín took statements from some more. In his notes, Doctor Ortiz wrote:

Everyone agrees that the Host was of an exceptional whiteness. And some added that it seemed somewhat thicker than normal. Those who saw the event from the beginning, expressed it like this: "It was as if suddenly the Host came forth from her tongue." They said too that the Miracle was not followed by cries or shouts, but only by some minutes of silence until the girl, still in ecstasy, left the place.

It is pointless to show the ridiculousness of the suspicions against Uncle Elías. The people from Garabandal never took them seriously since they knew what this man was: the least suited for such a thing. Nevertheless Plácido Ruiloba, to dissipate better every doubt, submitted him later to an interrogation that was recorded on a tape recorder. (It took place in Santander, in the home of a woman born in Garabandal.) Whoever hears or reads the dialogue between the educated man from the city and the uneducated man from the village will see the complete inconsistency of the accusations and suspicions that were heaped on Uncle Elías.

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It is not surprising that Uncle Elías, by this time having had enough, replied to a remark from Mr. Ruiloba: “The first thing that they should do” (referring to the priests who had talked like this about him) “is take off their cassocks.” Who would have thought at the time that not many years later Uncle Elías’ strong words would become a reality?

In spite of all this, trusting fully in some of the witnesses (which did not fulfill their duty to observe the matter directly), the Commission has continued in the opinion that the miracle of July 18th, 1962, did not happen.

Sometime later one of those who had been there in Garabandal met Fr. Francisco Odriozola in Santander. He mentioned how much he had been surprised that Fr. Odriozola had not come to witness a thing so important. He who was called the “factotum” of the Commission replied that he had done well in not going, since it was only a fraud: the visionary had taken the pretext of changing her skirt and blouse to put some hosts in her mouth and then had performed the comedy of the miracle.

“How could you say such a thing if you weren’t present?” the amazed questioner exclaimed.

For a response, Fr. Odriozola spun around and walked away.⁵⁹

Time has passed, but he has not changed his opinion.

In the early part of May, 1963, François Henri, a Frenchman from Paris who had come previously to Garabandal with Dr. Caux, came again. He told Conchita that in Santander he had spoken with the Commission members and that Fr. Francisco Odriozola had pointed out to him: “The miracle of the host was pure fraud. Conchita went out of her house already carrying on her tongue a piece of bread that she had prepared.”

The girl was grieved. She then wrote a letter for Fr. Odriozola, and handed it to the Frenchman to deliver personally:⁶⁰

The Frenchman told me that you think that I put the Host on my tongue. And that later I fell on my knees. And that I stuck out my tongue to show the Host.

59. Episode published by A. Corteville in *L’Impartial*, September–October, 1970.

60. Maximina González wrote a letter on May 3rd, 1963 to the Pifarré family:

“A Frenchman has been in my house for 6 days now. He is a very good man and has come several times. He is very interested in the apparitions. On his way here he spoke with one of the Commission members at Santander; it seems to me it was the secretary. Conchita sent the following card to this Commission member, whose name is Francisco Odriozola . . .”

The copy that Maximina gives matches exactly with the text given in this book.

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And that before that I was alone in my room . . . I had gone to change my dress. And during all the time that I was upstairs, my mother, my two brothers, a cousin, an uncle and one of the Fontanedas were present. And I was upstairs a quarter of an hour, and the Angel appeared to me. And afterward I went out on the street with many people and priests.

It isn't true that I put the Host on my tongue. What a responsibility for me that would be before God! Doesn't it seem that I would have to have some schooling to think that up? And furthermore, I would have to think that the people would observe me. And I wouldn't be smart enough to do a thing like that.

And so St. Michael was the one who put the visible Host on my tongue for the people. And on that day I didn't fake the ecstasy either.⁶¹

Obviously on July 18th, 1962, Garabandal, the site of so many events and actualities in the History of Salvation, soon became converted into a sign of contradiction. (Luke 2: 34) Some would consider the *milagruco* decisively favorable; but others . . .

In his *Memorias* Father José Ramón García de la Riva condensed his impressions of that day like this:

No member of the Commission came to the place; the delegate who took their place saw nothing since the commotion prevented him. Who would be surprised? God alone can name the conditions. And the conditions put down were not followed by those who were called. Those who should have been there, were not.

As a result of this event, there spread out the rumor that all had been a fraud.

One cannot evade here a comparison with the distant echo of another story of long ago:

“Some of the guards came into the city and told the chief priests all the things that had been done (after the Resurrection of Jesus) . . . And being assembled together with the ancients, taking counsel, they gave a great sum of money to the soldiers, saying: ‘Say his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep . . .’ And this word was spread abroad among the Jews even unto this day.” (Matt. 28: 11–15)

And so July 18th, 1962, the day that had seemed destined to be decisive in the history of Garabandal, ended in many respects as a miserable failure.

61. With this, Conchita alludes also to the fact, known and admitted by her, that sometimes the girls had the frivolousness to fake part of an ecstasy.

CHAPTER 18

After the 18th of July

THE *MIRACLE OF THE HOST* left marks in people's minds, and a trail of changes in their lives.

Some were more suspicious than ever about Garabandal. (We have already seen the opinion that the Commission made.) Conversely, others believed more than ever in it.

Now for the first time, or at least with an intensity previously unknown, a regrettable thing came about. The village divided into opposing opinions. Hostility, even antagonism, developed between the parents of the visionaries.

Explosion of Opinions

Concerning the days that followed immediately after July 18th, we have a valuable store of information in the notes taken by the lawyer from Palencia, Luis Navas Carrillo. Although he speaks with great prudence and delicateness, it is not hard to detect the attitude of the village in his remarks:

After 11:00 on the morning of Thursday, July 19th, a sunny and warm day, I left for Torrelavega to take my mother and sister to the train.

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In the village only a few still remained from the great number of strangers who had come for July 18th. There were two young girls from Reinoso camping near Conchita's house, a teacher from Cadiz with his wife and two daughters, and perhaps a few more.

During the trip to Torrelavega, we were of course exchanging opinions about all that had happened. I was preoccupied with the tremendous effect that the apparitions had made on my mother, and I tried to convince her that she shouldn't get so worked up and heated in defending their credibility. Nevertheless, I felt a joy in seeing her stirred so much, telling about the many things that had left a mark in her heart, an old heart of 70 years, but which still maintained its good sense. Listening to her, tears filled our eyes, for she spoke in words favorable toward everything that she had seen and heard. And who can resist the person who lives and breathes what he says?

Loli's father was waiting for me at the Hostal Gloria in Torrelavega. We stayed for dinner and returned together to the village. There we met the pastor, Father Valentín, who was going to Santander to report to the bishop everything that had happened on the previous day.

We got back at nightfall in sufficient time to be present at the first apparition, the only one of the day, which was his daughter's . . . She kept us up until after 4:30 in the morning . . . And at six o'clock, when I had barely fallen asleep, Jacinta's father called me to pray the rosary at the *calleja*. The girl was waiting there, seated on the rocks. We prayed the rosary in silence and solitude. And then we went to the church, in front of whose doors, still locked, we said the prayers for a Visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Then I understood the sacrifice that was entailed for a girl like Jacinta to get up every day at six in the morning to go to the *cuadro* and pray the first rosary of the day there. Although in the beginning this had been a command from the Virgin, it had not been commanded for months, and still the girl continued coming just to please the Blue and White Lady.

Among the various things that Mr. Navas wrote down in his notes on July 20th, Friday, I do not want to omit these:

After eating, so as to be prepared for what could happen during the night, I took a long nap. (I had adapted my sleeping hours to the girls.) The room in which I was reposing was like a cave; it was chilly and had none of the flies that were so numerous in the village due to the cattle. I had the feeling of being in a catacomb, in an atmosphere of great recollection and devotion, worthy of the Spiritual Exercises, with an interior joy, under the loving glance and direction of the *Queen and Mistress of Heaven and Earth*, according to the title that the visionaries had given her in their ecstasies.

During the day, while discussing with the people her unfulfilled hope of receiving Communion that day from the hands of the Angel, Conchita said:

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“How unfortunate that the Angel didn’t come!” And responding to people about the reason for her receiving Communion more frequently than the others, she replied, “Because I’m the worst of all.” They told me that this answer was given to her by the Angel when the girl had insisted on knowing the reason for the difference.

On July 21st, Saturday, when we had barely slept an hour, Jacinta’s father woke me up again by knocking on the window of my room. It was getting to be 6:00 o’clock and the girl was going to the *cuadro* to pray the customary dawn rosary. We also went there, accompanied by an old woman. We found Jacinta seated; she had placed some paper on top of the rocks to avoid the wetness from the heavy rainfall.

As on the previous day, we went to the church after finishing the rosary. In the courtyard we prayed a Visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament . . .”

The day passed without notable episodes, until 1:00 at night when the first ecstasy occurred. It was Loli’s, in the kitchen of her home. The lawyer from Palencia described it:

It was something marvelous. I couldn’t imagine anything comparable. The silence was absolute and the attention complete. The girl offered the Vision whatever had been deposited on the table for this purpose. I had put there a collection of holycards bought in Cabezón de la Sal, and the theme of which was the titles of the litany. With greater dexterity than a card player, the girl opened the holycards in a fan and held them up very graciously like that to be kissed by the Vision . . . She was completely transfigured. Her face was radiant and full of light; the expression didn’t belong to her, but to an angel. It seemed as if she were radiating a supernatural halo and we were all immersed in a sensation of serenity and peace, as if being under the gaze of Our Lady.

Concerning Conchita’s ecstasy, which followed Loli’s, Luis Navas writes:

She went out of her house and through the various streets of the village; she made a complete circle around the church; she went to the cemetery and knelt at the gate. We went with her to the *cuadro*, and from there she descended backwards in a marvelous ecstatic dance. The rosary was recited and later we sang the Salve. The voice of the visionary didn’t belong to this world. There were still other trips through the village. The girl’s expression was held constantly in an ineffable smile, very different from the almost ironical quality that she had many times out of the ecstasies.

Toward the end, when she began giving back the chains and medals, she noticed that she had dropped a medal. She asked the Vision about it and was astonished at the response she received, since she was heard to say, “But how could I lose it near the church if I haven’t gone out of the house?” After the

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ecstasy she was also astonished in seeing us all perspiring, while she had no sign of exertion or fatigue. And the affair had lasted until 4:30 in the morning! We went to bed happy since the Virgin had presented us a night which for me was happier and richer in the interior life than July 18th itself.¹

Luis Navas used Sunday, July 22nd to speak at leisure with the four girls:

They were the ones who brought up the subject of the miracle on July 18th. I noticed that some of them, especially Jacinta, had still not spoken about it to their companion Conchita. And I was surprised at the attitude that was then adopted. Jacinta, a timid girl, soon showed herself harsh, always taking the initiative and displaying in her speech a series of judgments and opinions that surely were those beginning to be circulated thru the village. And so there came to my knowledge some of what the people thought and what they usually were careful not to mention in the presence of strangers.

While Jacinta was stating the remarks that were running thru the village concerning the disputed Communion of the Angel, she gave me the impression that she was identifying with those remarks, or at least partially accepted them, since she took on a very personal tone in what she said. Loli hardly opened her mouth. Mari Cruz enclosed herself in her habitual silence. And Conchita merely smiled before these absurdities reflecting the bad disposition and bitterness of ignorant people inclined to suspicion. And all this, even though some of the villagers had been able to be present up close to the Communion, not leaving them room for doubt.

It pained me that these open cracks in the friendship between the families of the visionaries existed, and were coming to the surface like this, and that they were also having an effect on the girls themselves. Several times I mentioned in the houses there that the Virgin wanted the four girls to be united, and that they couldn't be separated . . .

They were humanizing the realm of the supernatural that was rising up from the apparitions with proofs and signs more evident each day. This made me remember the scene of the Gospel in which the mother of the sons of Zebedee

1. Dr. Puncernau writes in his pamphlet about another night at Garabandal:

“I went out on the streets. It was a cold, starry night. For a person from Barcelona, the stars shone with unusual brilliance.

I thought that the Mother of Heaven truly watched over and protected with open arms the inhabitants and visitors at Garabandal.

Passing thru the dark and lonely streets of the village, I also had the feeling of being protected.

In spite of the masses of people who came to Garabandal, no unpleasant accident ever occurred that I know about.”

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asked Christ to reserve the first two places in His kingdom for her sons. Here also, each family was endeavoring to make their daughter stand out as if distinguished by special signs as proof of the predilection of the Vision and the people for her. Perhaps Jacinta was irritated by the distinction that this supposed for Conchita, if the event of the miraculous Communion is regarded with the eyes of the flesh, and not those of the spirit and faith.

Luis Navas ended this dialogue, which he said was “characterized by a sharpness that was unusual in Jacinta”, with words that were conciliatory and Christian in sentiment.

This episode is revealing, not only for showing the atmosphere existing in the village after that memorable day, but also for illustrating once again the co-existence of high divine gifts with low human weaknesses. These must displease God; but He has infinite patience, waiting for souls to overcome their faults.

The multitude of supernatural favors that the visionaries at Garabandal received from God did not substantially change their human nature, strongly influenced by the bad inclinations that we call vices or capital sins. Their failures should have urged them to a moral fight against their inclinations. The girls were certainly not free from them, and outflows of their weak human nature would inexorably appear on more than one occasion.

We should not then be surprised that a certain feeling of envy was shown with regard to the marked distinction that Conchita had on July 18th. And making it worse were the parents’ village rivalries and their neighbors’ vicious comments.

On Monday, July 23rd, writes Luis Navas:

After 10:00 in the morning I was sitting at the door of Mari Loli’s house. And she told me that right after the visit that she had made following her morning rosary, she had received Communion near the church door from the hands of the Angel. I didn’t expect this because for some time only Conchita had been receiving Communion like this . . . She also told me that she had asked the Angel for the reason why he had not given Communion to them too on July 18th, since the people of the village had commented that certainly it had been due to their being bad. The Angel answered that it wasn’t so.

Jacinta arrived shortly afterwards, and Mari Loli told her about the Communion. My attention was drawn when Jacinta didn’t answer and continued into the interior of the store in search of bread, leaving her best friend deserted.

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Of the things that Mr. Navas Carrillo continued to write, I am only putting down those that have the greatest interest for us:

Observing the ecstasies of the girls produces different effects in people. While it makes some more fervent, it almost scandalizes others, confirming their disbelief.²

I have been informed of another very meaningful episode that occurred some time later. Loli's newest little brother had just been born. One day she fell into ecstasy near to him, and was heard to speak about him, showing astonishment at one time. "How? So very little and already in mortal sin?"

She didn't put the crucifix on his lips until the child was baptized.³

One day the girls, speaking about the sins that most offend God, put in second place those that were committed in marriage. They used words whose significance was certainly beyond their rudimentary education.

On that Monday, July 23rd, Luis Navas said farewell to Garabandal. The result of his stay he expressed in this way:

Fortified by pure air, both spiritual and material, my continued meditations led me to accept with internal joy the troubles of this life, and also to look without excessive fear at death, which, at the end of everything, is no more than a frontier . . .

I felt a burning desire (and I petitioned the Mother of God and Our Mother many times) to be truly good, not halfway; for example, correcting my brusqueness, my stubbornness, my obstinacy, which together with a frankness that is sometimes excessive, are the origin of much discourtesy and many disagreements. Trying to defend the truth, I haven't always been charitable. And I need to be convinced that, if charity is given, sanctity is earned.

It would be magnificent if every pilgrimage to Garabandal produced the same effects!

2. This can be considered with the prophecy about Jesus. "Behold this child"—the aged Simeon told Mary at the Presentation in the Temple—"is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted." (Luke 2: 34)

3. Once again Garabandal comes ahead of its time to indicate deviations that would soon show themselves openly in the Church.

And today no one can be unaware—just a few years after Loli's ecstasy—what at that time only the most learned could have perceived: the attack by the new theology on the old Christian dogma concerning original sin. This attack has not stopped in spite of the unequivocal words of Paul VI that proclaimed again in the *Credo of the People of God* (June 29th, 1968) what has always been believed by the Roman Catholic Church about original sin.

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* * *

On the following Wednesday, July 25th, all over Spain there was a big celebration: the feastday of its patron and Father in the Faith, the Apostle St. James. It was the second time during the apparitions that this holyday took place in Garabandal. Would something happen on this day?

Leafing through a mixed-up stack of references and testimonies referring to this time, I found this statement from María Herrero de Gallardo, who wrote down what she heard from Father Valentín months later:

You see, Señora, that at times I tell you things that I don't tell anyone else, since I know that you receive them well and think about them, while many others find them ridiculous.

For example, I remember the feastday of St. James the Apostle. It was almost midnight and about twenty people were watching the girls' ecstasy. At times I looked at the sky, a beautiful summer sky covered with stars, with here and there a little white cloud drifting by. Suddenly—I saw this with my own eyes, and the persons that I mentioned also saw it—our patron St. James appeared on a beautiful white horse, like the tradition described in Spanish history. For a few minutes he seemed to make a path across the sky, disappearing at times behind white clouds and reappearing again. It was really wonderful.

I find no great difficulty in accepting that this happened. And I would point out further how opportune would be a new appearance and intervention of the Defender of the Spanish Main, when once again it is the hour of a great battle for the faith of its people against many enemies within and without. If he was needed so much in the days of horses and swords, he is needed much more today against enemies wielding more sinister weapons in the heart of the land dedicated to the apostle called the Son of Thunder.⁴

Expert Witnesses

Three days later, on Sunday, July 28th, there came to Garabandal for the first time, an illustrious priest from Madrid: Father Enrique Valcarce

4. Mark 3: 17.

5. A cardinal for many years in the diocese of Madrid with important functions and duties there, this priest came from the area of Leon in Bierzo, where his brother was a parish priest.

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Alfayate.⁵ He made a digest of his observations in a report that he wrote later in Comillas and that bears the date of July 30th, 1962.

In it he describes a most remarkable experience: his own participation in one of the girls' ecstatic marches:

After the rosary, I remained praying for a while in the church. Suddenly Dr. Ortiz came in and told me to go outside if I wanted to see the girls in ecstasy. I went out immediately. They were walking with the people behind them. I pushed my way through and managed to join Mari Loli and Conchita, who were walking together, holding arms. Later I was told that the other two, Jacinta and Mari Cruz, were going in the same way with another group of people down a different street.⁶

The phenomena as a whole were for me something tremendous and amazing. The fast walk over really rough terrain, almost inaccessible, strewn with the worst obstacles . . . running at times at incredible speeds, both forwards and backwards, as if the girls had wings on their feet . . . with their heads tilted sharply backwards, with their eyes unblinking and fixed constantly on the alleged vision . . .

The trip was made while singing the holy rosary (the girls leading and the people in the village following) except for the Our Fathers and certain ejaculations which the girls said with great devotion, very slowly and with deep feeling. Furthermore their singing was beautifully intoned, with dulcet voices and excellent harmony.

The walk lasted from about 10:15 at night until after 11:30. During almost all this time, I was able to go with them, hanging on either to Loli's or Conchita's arm. By holding on this way, I was able to follow them in spite of many

6. On August 2nd, Maximina wrote a letter to the Pifarré family:

"Saturday (July 22) was extremely moving. There were many people and the four girls had an apparition. They went separated in pairs. As there were so many people, it was better that way: some in one direction and others in another. The four girls sang the rosary together—in different places. While we were with Loli and Conchita at the Pines, the singing of the people going with the other two girls through the village could be heard perfectly. All were singing at the same time up above and down below. Look, it made a marvelous sensation. It seemed that I saw Dr. Ortiz singing with all his might. Good, we all sing whatever we can."

7. It should be pointed out that Father Enrique Valcarce was advanced in both years and kilograms and was not exactly in shape for an obstacle course. Only when he was hanging onto the girls did he feel extremely light.

—"Heavens, Reverend Father"—someone said—"be careful on these streets at such speed, or you'll kill yourself."

—"Don't worry"—he answered—"I feel as though I have lost 40 years."

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obstacles, running swiftly and with a strange sensation of security. The falls and stumbles that I made at times always happened to me when I let go of the girls.⁷

The end of it all took place at the church doors, which were locked. First of all Loli raised Conchita in her arms, higher than Loli herself, and then Conchita did the same with Mari Loli. After kneeling down and suddenly recovering their normal state, they looked around with a smile, which later they shared with all of us.

To these experiences on Saturday, Fr. Enrique added those of the following Sunday, July 29th, which he also spent in Garabandal. On Father Valentín's request he celebrated Mass in the village at 9:00 in the morning.

And the personal impression of his experiences he wrote down in a report at Comillas:

The rivalry displayed against Conchita by the other three didn't make a good impression on me.⁸ Nor the prefixing of the time for the ecstasy; nor the fact of the walks, seemingly senseless,⁹ around the church, to the Pines from the church, and from the church to the Pines or the cemetery, through the streets of the village, time and time again.¹⁰

Nevertheless, taken as a whole, everything that I have tried to describe was truly exceptional and amazing. It is certain that it is not a product of disease,

8. Father Enrique put down in his report:

I had the good luck that the first persons whom I met were the alleged visionaries. I had just heard that on that day, Saturday, July 28th, Mari Loli had received Communion from the hands of an angel, and only she. Meeting then with Conchita, I immediately told her that I had learned that Mari Loli had received Communion. Right away she answered me with a certain air of reproach: "I myself receive many more times than anyone else; I—almost every day; they—very few times."

If the report of Father Enrique reproduces faithfully the words and tone of Conchita, it should be recognized that the girl was still far from perfection, like Jesus' disciples who, even at the time of the Last Supper, were disputing among themselves "which of them was the greatest." (Luke 22: 24)

9. At the time of making his report, it seemed this way to Father Enrique; but it should be pointed out that he had different feelings when he was taking part in these things.

10. It is easy to answer these and the other difficulties of Father Enrique, understandable in someone with only brief experience with Garabandal. Those who have attentively followed it from the beginning can certainly see clearer in the matters that were obscure to him.

After the 18th of July

either psychiatric or organic. It seems to me, therefore, that the facts do not have a natural explanation.

The girls show an expression of great beauty when they are in ecstasy, an expression frequently angelic (for example, with Mari Loli). But in the normal state, they are quite withdrawn, and very taciturn.

The remarks that I have just made should not be taken out of proportion. The very matter of the rivalry that I thought was found between Conchita and the other girls is a good proof that this is not an act concocted by the four girls together. What leaves me the most confused is the matter of the senseless walks, which seem to be without basis.

But I recognize that I lack material for judgment so as to take a definitive position. I would have to go many times to the village and observe everything more minutely.

Therefore, if no medical explanation can be found for these phenomena, I consequently reject the explanation saying it was an act concocted either by the girls themselves, or by third parties. But I don't go so far as to say it is a supernatural phenomena due to Our Lady.

Then, what is it? "I don't know."

If the illustrious priest from Madrid left Garabandal without knowing the cause of it, or without venturing to express his opinion, it was not the same with two visitors who arrived in the village at the very time he was leaving. Their names should be mentioned, since they comprise part of this enigmatic story. They were Dr. Richardo Puncernau, a reputed neurologist from Barcelona, and Fr. Luis López Retenaga, a professor of theology in the diocesan Seminary of San Sebastián.

I cannot give the exact dates of their arrivals; but certainly they were in Garabandal in the early days of August, 1962; and for the neurologist, it was not the first visit, although perhaps it was the first for the priest.

The attorney Luis Navas left Garabandal on July 23rd and was not planing to return until Saturday, August 11th, to be there for the feast of the Assumption. But he returned a week earlier as he explained:

I was with my in-laws in Santander. I aroused their curiosity first, and then their interest in Garabandal, in such a way that we agreed to return there on Saturday, August 4th. On that day, after having enjoyed a beautiful and sunny morning at the beach, we ate and set out for San Sebastián de Garabandal.

I was very happy to renew friendships there that had been formed during the apparitions. Dr. Puncernau was there, having come from Barcelona, this time with his wife and oldest son. I signal him out from the rest because of his posi-

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tion as the neurologist who prepared a complete report for the pastor about the visionaries' irrefutable normalness before and after their ecstasies. Also I met many priests and religious there, among whom was one from the province of San Sebastián who had the intention of informing the bishop of his diocese about all these things.

This priest from the Basque province of San Sebastián undoubtedly was Fr. Luis López Retenaga, although Mr. Navas does not mention his name.¹¹

As on other occasions, the people had hardly gone outside after the rosary on that Saturday, Our Lady's day, when Conchita and María Dolores were in ecstasy at the very door of the church. I was very happy about this since I hadn't seen them together in ecstasy since that famous October 18th of the previous year, the day of the message; although on that occasion, the four girls had been together.

They went out holding hands, as if Mari Loli were letting herself be docilely led by her older sister, obeying the suggestions of the Vision.

What the attorney goes on to narrate coincides with what Fr. Enrique Valcarce wrote in his report about the happenings of the previous Saturday. From this we can see that within the almost continual variations of the phenomena, there was a certain uniformity of procedure.

From the pastor Fr. Valentín we have some brief notes that compliment those of Luis Navas and Maximina González, helping us to better re-create in our minds the atmosphere at Garabandal during the early days of August, 1962:

11. I do not want to pass over the appearance of Fr. Luis Retenaga in Garabandal since he was to assume an important role in the observation and judgment of these phenomena. Perhaps it could be said that he was for the events of 1962 what Fr. Ramón María Andreu was for those of 1961.

He was soon able to capture the confidence of the seers and their families, which assured him a privileged place for following the events near at hand.

As a fruit of his observations and reflections, he composed a long three part report addressed to Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal, the bishop of Santander at the time. The first part was completed in San Sebastián on December 18th, 1962; the second, in the same city on April 6th, 1963; and the third on September 9th of the same year. We will refer several times to this report in what is still left of our story.

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August 3rd. At 4:00 in the morning, Loli went into ecstasy in her home. There were many people from Barcelona, Madrid, Santander . . . a diocesan priest, a Claretian Father and a Jesuit. She gave the articles to be kissed to the Vision, and afterwards she returned them to their owners. She didn't leave her home.

August 4th. At 9:30, after the rosary, the four girls went into ecstasy. They went toward the *cuadro*. Later they went to the Pines praying the rosary. During the Hail Mary, they said, "Hail Mary, Mother of God and Our Mother."¹² They descended backwards toward the church; they walked around it. It lasted about an hour. There were two professors from San Sebastián, a Claretian priest, a Jesuit—Father Alba, from Barcelona—and Father José Ramón."¹³

And so at the beginning of the second August of apparitions in Garabandal we see that the phenomena continued without eclipse. And the questions continued . . . without answers. The inquisitive came and went, but also those who seriously sought to understand the reasons and the explanations for all these things.

The memory of July 18th lingered on, the day of the Miracle of the Host.

12. Fr. Valentín was struck by the addition of our Mother to the recitation of the Hail Mary. And he was not the only one—Luis Navas, the lawyer from Palencia, who was present that day, wrote:

"We had never heard them say it this way, 'Mother of God and our Mother.' The village priest took note of this very interesting detail that so much reflects the maternal character of the Virgin. The visionaries' way of speaking, with their even-pitched, soft, delicate, melodious voices filled our souls with tranquility, as though we were feeling Our Lady above our heads."

We can understand Mr. Navas' sentiments. But if the new form of the Hail Mary was a novelty to him, certainly it was not to Fr. Valentín, unless it was due to the tone and the persistence of the girls, since "Mother of God and our Mother" was heard for the first time in Garabandal on August 1st of the previous year, as has been mentioned.

13. We already know one of these two professors at San Sebastián: Fr. José Ramón, the pastor of Barro. As for the Jesuit from Barcelona, Fr. Alba, it could be said that he was a distinguished apostle, deeply appreciated in religious and spiritual circles in the city of Ciudad Condal. Who then was the Claretian father that Fr. Valentín mentions? Certainly it was the missionary father spoken of in Maximina's letter; in another report the name of Fr. Ellacuría has been seen.

As can be seen, a fine contingent of visiting priests.

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Now we see better that the unequivocally predicted miracle or milagruco came mainly to call attention to the most important treasure that we have in our Christian and ecclesiastical heritage: “the actual presence of the God-man among us as our daily nourishment.”

However, as so often occurs in the affairs of God, this served also as a test, as the means “for the fall and for the rise of many.” (Luke 2: 34)

CHAPTER 19

The Unsearchable Ways of God

FOR MORE THAN A YEAR, on the steep mountain at Garabandal, strange and incomprehensible affairs were transpiring . . . disturbing to the wise and prudent. (Luke 10: 21)

They could not understand the purpose of this.

They could not understand why this was taking place there.

If God wanted to communicate something, He could do it in a more direct and simple manner, without such a barrage of strange affairs.

And He could do it soon.

The hope and expectation were taking too long. And there were reasons for not accepting as coming from God—Who is the Light—this melange of phenomena that even after such a long time were not clear as to its plan or purpose.

Things of God—think the learned—necessarily have to be more intelligible. They walk on the terrain of reason. But for the learned and unlearned alike, this proclamation from God was written in the Old Testament centuries ago:

*My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor your ways My ways, says the Lord.*

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*For as the heavens are exalted above the earth,
So are My ways exalted above your ways,
And My thoughts above your thoughts. (Is. 55: 8-9)*

And with the coming of the Word into the world, the situation did not change. In the middle of the New Testament stands this formidable statement from the greatest preacher of the Gospel:

*Oh, the depth of the riches
Of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!
How incomprehensible are His judgments,
And how unsearchable His ways. (Rom. 11: 33)*

Today it is often said that the important thing is the Bible; that is everything.

All right, but is the Bible a series of lessons logically co-ordinated, perfectly explained, and easily intelligible? If there are broad ways, they are those of the Bible, that is to say, the ways of the History of Salvation.

If there are ways of confusion, they are those of God in the course of that History.

In attempting to explain to people what the Bible was, a scriptural scholar wrote in a popular review:

Open the Holy Book, what do we find there? Many think they will find sublime ideas and marvelous theories concerning God, man, and the world. What a disillusion! Next to exciting stories, we find others very trivial, harsh, and unacceptable to our mentality.

All these texts confuse us. Why? Because of the inaccurate idea of God's revelation to us. We imagine God as a type of theology professor, as a preacher who speaks well and says elegant things.

God reveals Himself to us, coming down to meet us, walking with us, adapting himself to our steps—even our stumblings, falls, ignorance. Jesus spoke to His disciples of things that you cannot understand now; the Spirit of Truth will give you the understanding of everything later.

These words express better than any theory the pedagogy always used by God in His revelation. He knows that it is not possible to give everything in the first lesson. Such love! He adapts Himself to us. When we were children, He spoke to us as children. That is to say, He limited Himself to being at our side, without us even noticing Him. And He does not hurry to take away our stubbornness. The Bible is the history of the perennial association and conversation between God and man.

(El Santo—January, 1972)

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It seems to me that it is not difficult to understand the Virgin's association and conversation with us—through the girls—which has been the basis of the amazing story of Garabandal.

Mysterious Monotony

During the whole month of August, 1962, the second August at Garabandal during the apparitions, the marvelous and upsetting monotony continued.

The monotony consisted in what was occurring there, what had never occurred anywhere else: ecstasies, prayers, inimitable songs, walks of an astounding grace and agility¹ to the Pines, to the graveyard, thru the streets of the village, around the church . . .

Fr. Valentín's notes and other people's reports narrate essentially the same thing throughout the month of August. But from time to time came forth an interesting and revealing point. For example:

August 18th. During an apparition on that day, Saturday, Conchita said to the Virgin, "You pray very much! To Whom do you pray? . . . To Jesus? You pray to Him? . . . Even though He is your Son! Why? . . . Who is God?² . . . Oh! Only one God."

1. There are numerous testimonies about the amazing mobility during the ecstatic marches. José Luis González Quevedo, born in Santander and for many years a resident of New York, went several times to see the ecstasies during the first summer of the events in 1961. He was so impressed that he cannot forget what he experienced there in spite of the long time that has since passed.

On one afternoon he was accompanying Conchita in ecstasy. Suddenly the girl rushed forward like a flash in a direction that would have taken her straight to a crash against a wall he saw in the background. This man, who was then young and athletic, raced after her to catch her and stop her in time; but he could not reach her, nor was his intervention necessary. He told me:

"When there were only a few centimeters left before smashing and hurting herself against the wall, the girl, who couldn't see ahead of her because of the position of her head, stopped abruptly, unexplainably. And I arrived in time to see her smiling broadly with a marvelous expression . . . It was something that I could never forget."

2. We have another response here in anticipation of the deviations and errors that were then secretly developing with regard to the Faith, and which only after the Council would come into the open concerning a dogma so fundamental to Christianity as the Divinity of Christ. The Holy See finally had to intervene—perhaps somewhat too late—with a document from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, published in March of 1972.

As in so many other matters, also in regard to the Divinity of Christ, the *new theologies* of today have succeeded in repopularizing the old heresies.

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She said too: “Why don’t you let Mari Cruz see you? See how sad she is! Be with me half the time and with Mari Cruz the other half.”

But I do not want to pass over a letter that Maximina González wrote to Dr. Ortiz on the following Sunday, which is dated simply August, 1962:³

. . . I didn’t hear it personally, but some of those who were there heard it, among them a priest. And it was on one of those nights that Conchita came to my home, where I was lodging some people from Catalana.⁴ My children were sleeping on a mattress laid on the floor, and I had put chairs around it so that no one would see them like this. Conchita came in ecstasy and went into the downstairs rooms and made the sign of the cross over the beds. And then she went where some children of the people from Catalana were sleeping and she gave them the crucifix to kiss.

Then Conchita left; but she stopped on the stairway and said a few things. And later she let out a laugh and turned around and went straight toward where I had hidden my children. (I was perspiring with dread that they would be seen on the floor like that.) She made her way through the chairs and fell on her knees next to the children. She spoke for a while and at that time she was heard to say, “Oh! So he is going to be a priest?”

And she gave the cross to both of them, but to the little boy she made a cross at his feet—only the little boy.

I mentioned this yesterday, Saturday, to a missionary priest from Bilbao who was in my home for a while. And he told me that the cross that Conchita made at the feet of the little boy was something very mysterious . . . ⁵ I don’t know how he explained it to me, but I’m very happy. Fr. Luis Retenaga prayed for the child and blessed him many times; and it could be that the Virgin heard him, since my son from his youth has been saying that he wants to be a priest. May God will it! May he be a good one.⁶

3. By one of Maximina’s letters to the Pifarrés in Barcelona, we can situate the date since it is dated “Monday, August 20”, and begins like this: “Asunción, if you could have seen what happened last night!”

4. Maximina used to provide lodging in her home for the visitors to Garabandal. This time she over-committed herself to such a point that there were no beds left for her own daughter and son to sleep in.

5. I do not understand the explanation of the missionary father (who surely was the *Claretian* that Father Valentin mentions in his notes, since those of the congregation founded by St. Anthony Claret are officially called *Missionary Sons of the Heart of Mary*). But it well might be related to the ancient words of Isaiah (52: 7), repeated later by Nahum (2: 1), and finally applied by St. Paul (Romans 10: 15) to the Church and the preachers of the Gospel, to the traveling missionaries: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things”

6. This desire of a good Christian mother like Maximina is understandable; and also her concern for his being good, for there is nothing more lamentable than a priest unfaithful to his calling.

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Today, Sunday, Conchita and Loli fell into ecstasy on going out from the rosary, which was at night.⁷ They walked like this for some time. Jacinta and Mari Cruz walked by themselves since they went into ecstasy a little later. And afterwards the four joined together, went up together to the Pines, and came down backwards. If you could have seen how they descended through the worst paths! It was very dark. Everyone was coming down with great difficulty, while they came down without stumbling. They walked through the whole village backwards, praying two rosaries. It lasted a long time. Last night Mari Cruz' ecstasy lasted a very long time; they said about two and a half hours.

We have some brief notes from Fr. Valentín that compliment those of Luis Navas and Maximina González, helping us to better re-create in our minds the atmosphere at Garabandal during the early part of August, 1962:

August 22nd. The four fell into ecstasy; first Loli and Conchita; afterwards, Jacinta; and finally, Mari Cruz. The latter, on coming down from the Pines, went to the house of Daniela (who was in bed, with her leg in bad condition, impossible for her to walk). And she gave the crucifix to her to kiss. Daniela jumped from the bed and said that she was cured. I think that there was some suggestion, but she jumped up and went up the stairs as if she had nothing wrong. We will see what happens tomorrow.

Fr. Valentín did not hide his disbelief that this was really a miraculous cure. However Fr. de la Riva added to the words of the Garabandal pastor some words of his own:

I was at the village, and I heard the joyful shouts of the people who had seen what had happened, and were discussing it as if it were a miracle. I was able to see later that there was no natural explanation for what happened. Daniela went to have an x-ray taken of herself and a complete cure was reported. She is now married and has children, which wouldn't have been possible with the disease she had in her hip.

The boy to whom this refers, Pepe Luis, after starting his studies at the seminary near to Fr. Retenaga in Rentería (Guipuzcoa), continued for some years at Comillas (Santander).

After this, prior to being ordained, he did leave the seminary. During his first Christmas vacation in 1964, his cousin Conchita wrote him a beautiful prayer entitled *The Prayer of a Young Seminarian*. The students in our seminaries today could be inspired by the letter and the spirit of this prayer.

7. Normally the rosary was said at a different time on Sundays than during the weekdays, when it was recited at nightfall after the people had returned from work. On Sundays it was said at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Maximina notes this; and she should know, since she was the one who ordinarily led it.

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As the month was about to end, on Wednesday, August 29th, something occurred that seems very important, although Fr. Valentín dispatches with it in a few words:

“Loli had an apparition in her home at 5:30. She gave the articles to the Vision to be kissed. An Anglican woman was very much moved.⁸ She wanted to be baptized.”⁹

The visitors to Garabandal were numerous during the month of August, since it is a vacation month and the Santander area is a traditional resort area during the summertime.

We know from Fr. Valentín, for example, that on August 8th, besides the two priests from San Sebastián previously mentioned, there were many people from Asturias in the village. On the 12th there were two Monsignors from Oviedo: Monsignor Novalín and Monsignor Rafael Somo-hano. On the 15th, feast of the Annunciation, an Augustinian and a Franciscan priest and two nuns were there; on the 16th, three priests from Palencia; on the 17th, 200 visitors, among whom were the son of Carrero Blanco (the Spanish Vice-president), another son of the mayor of Madrid, Count Santa Marta de Babío, two religious brothers of Martín Artajo, Mr. Alberto, secretary of the Attorney General and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Javier, who held a high position in the prestigious *Editorial Católica*.

Among the many qualified visitors in Garabandal during those days, we have to single out the pastor from Barro, Fr. de la Riva. His stay was a long one and he sought to use all his time to the maximum. A page from his *Memorias* tells us his experiences during those days:

I went down every day to Cossío to celebrate the Mass.¹⁰ Then I would go back up to the village again and ask where I could find the young visionary that I

8. The Anglican Church originated in the 16th century during the rise of Protestantism when Henry VIII, king of England, broke away from the Papacy in Rome. The Anglican Church was imposed with force as the official religion, and although it had its hierarchy and *ecclesiastical* organization, it recognized the king as its supreme head.

9. Meaning with the Catholic rite, since it is supposed that she had already been baptized in the Anglican Church.

10. In order to dissuade the priests from going to Garabandal, they were not permitted to celebrate Mass in the village church; and we know how difficult was the road to Cossío.

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wanted to see. Then I took the road leading to the pasture where she was working.¹¹ In the evening I returned to the village. At nightfall there was the rosary in the church, then the apparitions, often very lengthy. All this greatly exhausted me.

This exhaustion that was wearing him down led him one afternoon, perhaps on August 11th,¹² Saturday, to refrain from accompanying the visionaries in their ecstatic marches. On going outside after the rosary, instead of following Jacinta who was marching at the time through the village in a trance, he accompanied the girl's mother to her home and there began to eat dinner. After dinner, with its anecdotes of the apparitions, Fr. de la Riva went to Maximina's home where he was lodging and went to bed.

I was a little sad—he said—for not having gone to the apparitions that day like the other villagers and the visitors . . . In a brief prayer before going to bed, I asked the Virgin to give me a sign that she wasn't angry with me for not going to the apparitions after the rosary. And I fell asleep like a log.

After several hours, I heard someone running and the voice of Nandín (Fernando, Loli's brother) saying, "Maximina, open up! Loli is here." I turned on the light, looked at my watch, and saw that it was a quarter to four in the morning. I said to myself, "It has to be almost an hour that Loli is in ecstasy."¹³

In the meantime, people were knocking at the door of my room. I sat up quickly on the bed and said, "Come in." The door opened with a bang and Loli appeared in ecstasy. She fell on her knees and began to crawl on them, little by little, toward the wall that was facing me. This made me greatly wonder since I still didn't know that, when the girls visited the homes in ecstasy, almost the first thing that they did was to pray for the departed from the family. On the wall in front of me was a large photograph of Maximina and her husband who had been dead for years. Kneeling under the photograph, Loli prayed for some time.

Then she pivoted and on her knees went toward my bed. With the crucifix that she held in her hand, she first made the sign of the cross over the pillow, and then she put it on my lips while smiling. She continued smiling, turned

11. These stables were generally a long way from the village and reached by steep and difficult trails.

12. I name this date since according to the notes of Fr. Valentín there were three seminarians in the village on this day. Fr. José Ramón, who gives no date in his report says nevertheless: "I asked a seminarian from Balboa . . ."

13. The seminarian told Fr. José Ramón that Loli had predicted an apparition for 3 o'clock.

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around and began to make her way toward the door, still on her knees. When she came to the doorway, she stood up and went out that way.

Then I said to myself, “The Virgin is in the village . . . and you are still in bed!” I dressed quickly and ran toward the church. On passing by Loli’s house, I noticed that the girl was in the kitchen still in ecstasy.

Naturally Fr. de la Riva went inside, and soon became aware that the girl was then speaking about what had happened in Maximina’s house.

After the ecstasy, there were two questions: the first, to find out why the trance had begun much later than the hour predicted (which had been at 3:00 o’clock); and the second, to explain the reason why Loli went unexpectedly to Maximina’s house.

Loli answered the first question by saying that “The Virgin had wished this way to show her displeasure”, because on that night some women had joked about the apparitions. They had asked the girl if the Virgin painted her nails, if she combed her hair, if she wore a bracelet . . .

No one could answer the second question adequately. Ceferino could only say that his daughter, without his understanding the reason, “immediately on being in ecstasy, at about 3:45 in the morning, had gone running toward Maximina’s house.”

“Then I was aware”—declared Fr. de la Riva—“that the Virgin had deigned to hear my petition, giving me the *sign* that I had requested.”

And the proof was not for his benefit alone.

The Eucharist in the Forefront

It is unquestionable that if Garabandal began as an exceptional *Marian Epiphany*, it soon revealed itself also as an attempt to promote Eucharistic devotion. And in this regard, it can be recognized that it was coming just at the right time, since surrounding the *Mysterium Fidei*, the Eucharist, there was then beginning to sprout the enormous crisis of doctrine and devotion that is so well known to everyone today.

This Eucharistic dimension of Garabandal had a special importance during the second year, 1962, as the reader may have noticed.

Among the many episodes that took place almost monotonously in the mystery of Garabandal during the month of August, there was a Mystical Communion on Monday, August 6th. This was not the only day for

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these Communion. From Fr. Valentín's notes, we know about other days in August on which they occurred. Furthermore, the priest's notes on August 2nd specifically state: "Conchita says that from the 18th of July, whenever there isn't a Mass; and Loli too". This sentence cannot be interpreted in any other way than that Conchita and Loli ordinarily were receiving Communion from the hands of the Angel whenever they were not receiving it from the hands of a priest. If such Communion passed unnoticed many times in the village, it was due to the time and place in which they occurred.

Before returning to August 6th, let us see what happened on the previous day, Sunday, that Fr. Valentín described in his notes:

Today Conchita came to Mass after the Sanctus and came up then to receive Communion. Since she had missed the Mass and it was a day of obligation, I didn't give her Communion. I did the same with a man from Catalan and two seminarians; but I finally gave it to the seminarians, since they told me that they were going to hear Mass in the evening.

What could be thought of the pastor's attitude? He is correct, provided that Conchita was culpable of being late—something which Fr. Valentín had no way of knowing—or if it was something habitual with her. And was this the case? I do not know; but I have an article written by Mr. González-Gay of Santander:¹⁴

On the previous night the girls had been in ecstasy for a long time, causing them to retire very late for sleep. (Father Valentín himself corroborates this, noting: "At four in the morning Conchita and Loli had an apparition; it lasted 45 minutes.") The pastor rang the bell at eight o'clock. Conchita and her mother, who didn't hear the bell, came into the church when the Mass was already past the Offertory. At the proper time, Conchita went with the other people to receive Communion, kneeling down at the Communion rail. But Father Valentín skipped over her twice while distributing the Sacred Host. He didn't want to give her Communion since he had seen that she had come late for Mass. Two big tears rolled out of the girl's eyes, and she returned to her place. The holy Mass ended, and going outside, she ran from the church in the direction of the Pines . . .

14. In a short series of articles entitled 'What hasn't been written about Garabandal' that appeared in the weekly *QuéPasa* (Madrid) during 1968.

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This was the incident of Sunday, August 5th; but the episode that really interests us pertains to the following day, Monday. Fr. Valentín starts his brief annotation like this:

August 6th. Today I said Mass at nine in the morning. Loli and Jacinta received Communion. Conchita was not at Mass, but at 11:30 she went to the Pines¹⁵ where there were three brothers of St. John of God.¹⁶

Since a report was made by these three brothers let us examine it:

Arriving from various areas, we had joined some other Brothers in our house at Celorio (Asturias),¹⁷ to make the Spiritual Exercises which were to begin in the afternoon or evening on Monday, the 6th of August. During supper on Sunday, August 5th, four of us brothers decided to go up to San Sebastián de Garabandal. When the hour to leave arrived on August 6th, Brother Juan Bosco called the other three. One of them came to the door and said, "I'm not going. I'm backing out."¹⁸

The three of us left for Llanes at once . . . We arrived at Cossío about 9:00 in the morning. From there six kilometers of very bad road separated us from San Sebastián de Garabandal. We began inquiring about a way to go up as quickly as possible. And a storekeeper advised us that Fidelín, a young taxi driver, would be arriving sooner or later with a group of people who were coming down from San Sebastián de Garabandal. Soon we saw them. There was a psy-

15. Fr. Valentín's note seems inaccurate. But it should not be judged too quickly. I found this in a letter from Maximina to the Pifarré family, dated August 7:

"The pastor said that on Monday the Mass would be at 11:00. Afterwards it was changed and he came to say it at 9:00. We didn't know it, and since the bells aren't heard well here, we missed the Mass; and the pastor doesn't like to give Communion if it is not during the Mass."

16. Although St. John of God was born in Portugal, it was in Granada that he became known for his heroic charity toward the sick, especially the mentally ill. Here began the Order of Hospitolar, so blessed and specialized in the care of the mentally ill, crippled, and retarded children.

The brothers mentioned in this episode were, according to their religious names: Brother Luis Gonzaga, Brother Juan Bosco, and Brother Miguel of the Saints.

17. Celorio is a beautiful little coastal village in the district of Llanes. It had a famous seashore monastery from which there still remains a church (now the parochial church) and also some buildings which have been used for years as a retreat house. Not far from the retreat house is the property belonging to the Brothers of St. John of God.

Celorio is the neighboring parish to Barro, the parish of Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva.

18. A small piece of information which everyone can interpret as he wishes: a few years later, the same one who backed out of his promise to go to Garabandal, also backed out of his religious promises, leaving the order.

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chiatrist from Barcelona with his family, who spoke favorably about the phenomena.

We came into San Sebastián de Garabandal about 10:15. The taxi stopped near the house of Mari Cruz, one of the visionaries. She was on her balcony with her older sister. We indicated that we wanted to speak with her. And after a while, at the suggestion of her sister, she came down toward us. She greeted us timidly, and immediately we began our questions . . .

At the end of about ten minutes, Jacinta came out on the street. She greeted us with an angelical smile. And we began to besiege her with questions too. We took several photographs of the girls, and then some men from Andaluca arrived and joined the conversation. Without our noticing it, the girls withdrew.

The men from Andaluca insistently urged us to stay for the night, since that was the time for the apparitions. We didn't know what to do. And seeing the perplexity we had because of our lack of permission and the requirements of our schedule (that same night we had to begin our retreat), the taxi driver voluntarily offered to take us to Celorio in his taxi. Everything having been arranged like this, we set out to go up the hill where the apparitions took place.

But prior to this a priest appeared, a native of Beasañan (Guipúzcoa), who was spending several days in San Sebastián de Garabandal. This priest, according to what the people from Andaluca had informed us, had been the object of a grace from the Most Holy Virgin through the mediation of Conchita (one of the visionaries). We greeted him and suggested that he tell us what had happened to him on the previous night. His answer was: "Come and see." He was very excited and he left.¹⁹

Finally, we went up to the Pines. It is a pleasant place. Once there, we peacefully began to eat some sandwiches.

Just after eating, a girl about 14 years of age appeared, accompanied by three other little girls of approximately 2, 5, and 6 years of age. We asked her if she was Conchita and with total simplicity and frankness, she answered: "Yes." Surprised and happy, we began to accost her with one question after another.

It occurred to us to offer her one of our sandwiches, and what was our surprise on hearing her answer:

—"No, since I have to receive Communion here."

19. This is what happened to that priest, according to a letter from Mazimina to the Pifarre family on the 7th:

"This Sunday (August 5th) there were also some priests here from San Sebastian. And one, by his appearance, was rather sick. And it seemed that he was going to go to Germany since it is said that there is a great shortage of priests there." (for the Spanish immigrants) And Conchita said in ecstasy: "The Virgin told me that you will be cured. This priest was very moved. After the ecstasy she repeated this again, that the place didn't matter, that wherever he was, there would be many souls to save."

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We were perplexed and intrigued. We asked her how that was going to be. She answered with the same naturalness as at the beginning:

—“Because the Angel is going to give me Communion, since I couldn’t receive it in the parish church.”²⁰

Between doubt and joy—since perhaps we were going to be witnesses of something supernatural—we asked her if she was sure that the Angel was going to come, since we were there. And she answered with an awesome sureness,

—“Yes.”

After that, we continued to harass her with questions related, as would be expected, to her visions and the things that had happened to her. And she answered everything with such simplicity that we were amazed, since she spoke

20. I think that Conchita’s words are a good answer to the surprise that Father Valentín mentions in his notes on Monday, August 6th, 1962:

“I don’t understand this: the girl has always said that the Angel only gives Communion when there isn’t a priest in the village.” (He had been there and celebrated Mass at 9 in the morning, a Mass at which Conchita did not assist.)

It seems obvious that if the Angel came to give Communion as a substitute for the priest, he could do it not only when there was no priest in the village; but also when there was one and the visionaries thru no fault of their own could not come to the church to utilize the priest’s services. We have information from the pastor from Barro, who was present, about what happened on this day:

“The pastor, Fr. Valentín, had authorized the abbot Retenaga and also another priest and myself to celebrate Mass in the village church on condition that the doors would be closed. The abbot Retenaga celebrated the first Mass; I celebrated the second; then I served the Mass of my colleague. It occurred to me to ask the Virgin for the grace that Conchita could receive Communion on that day. And if we weren’t able to give her Communion ourselves, I added to myself, ‘that the Angel would bring it to her.’ The girls had a real desire of receiving Communion; but due to their occupations, they couldn’t always receive it.”

“I then noticed that there were some people talking outside the church. Their number increased. They tried to get in, but finding the door closed, they stayed where they were, talking to each other under the overhang.”

Under such conditions, how could he get out of the church to advise Conchita? Father José Ramón mentions how he arranged to leave furtively and ran to Conchita’s house. Continuing his report:

“I arrived while her mother was cooking the hot food that Conchita had to bring to her brothers in the mountains for their lunch. I asked to see Conchita and her mother answered in a sharp tone:”

—“You priests, you are going to spoil my daughter. Look, I don’t know how long she has been at the Pines with some priests, when she ought to be on the road taking lunch to her brothers. By now they should be really hungry.”

—“I want to tell Conchita that if she wishes to receive Communion, she can do it now . . .”

—“Receive Communion, receive Communion! Duty before devotion! One thing above all. She should already be over there with her brothers!”

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of events that were truly extraordinary. The conversation lasted about an hour and a half.

She told us many things, among them that she had written to several people, by order of the Most Holy Virgin, without ever having seen or known them. She told us that she had spoken with a dead Jesuit priest in four languages: German, French, English and Greek. (This priest died on the day after he had a vision of the Most Holy Virgin.) She told us how the Virgin had kissed them, how she indicated at times if a word had a “b” or a “v”.²¹

We shot some photographs with her and the three girls that she had brought along. Afterwards came a few seconds of silence, and we saw that she was walking toward the place where the Angel was accustomed to appear. We noticed her going away, and one of us exclaimed, “Look! She’s going away.” She heard this. She looked at us with a pleasant smile. And taking a few more steps, she fell on her knees, turning her head backwards, forming an angle—it seemed to us—of about 60 degrees. And joining her hands in the position for receiving Communion, she went into ecstasy.

Facing this scene, two of us automatically fell on our knees, one at the side of Conchita, and the other about three steps in front of her. The third, who was carrying a camera, used it to take snapshots. The one at her side got up to observe her expression, her eyes, mouth, gestures, etc.. We saw that once on her knees and in the position described, she made the sign of the cross in a very slow and devout way, as she whispered some words and struck her chest three times. This finished, she opened her mouth and with devotion held out her tongue in the customary way of receiving Communion. And later, as she slowly closed her mouth, those at her side heard a noise as if something was passing down her throat.

She remained a few seconds in the same position as at the beginning and whispered something that we didn’t understand. During this, she turned around on her knees, and still keeping the same position, turned toward Brother Luis. Somewhat frightened, he drew back from her; but seeing that the girl followed him on her knees, he stopped.

Then the girl took his scapular in her hands, stood on her feet, and lifting it up in a most solemn way, made as though to present it to someone. Lowering the scapular, she fell on her knees again, and still in the same position, was motionless for a few seconds. A little later she went toward Brother Miguel, also on her knees, and repeated the same performance as before. Going on, she went to Brother Juan Bosco. But before the girl took Brother Juan Bosco’s scapular, Brother Miguel tied them both together—his and Brother Juan’s. However the girl, still looking upwards, separated them, and taking Brother Juan Bosco’s scapular, did the same as with the previous ones.

21. Spoken Spanish makes no distinction between a ‘v’ and a ‘b’, pronouncing them both like a ‘b’.

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The whole performance finished, the girl knelt down again at the place where she had begun the ecstasy. She stayed there for a few seconds, whispering words that we weren't able to hear. She made the sign of the cross, and got up on her feet very naturally. And in the normal state, she smiled at us, put back a ribbon that had fallen from her hair as a consequence of the ecstatic position and . . .

We began immediately to question her:

—“You have received Communion?”

—“Yes.”

—“Why did you take our scapulars and lift them up?”

—“The Angel asked me to do it so that he could kiss them.”

—“Did you speak with the Angel?”

—“Yes.”

—“What did he tell you? Did he tell you anything about us?”

—“The Angel knows that you are here. And he told me that he had brought me here because of you. And he also told me that the Lord and the Virgin were pleased with you.”

—“Did he tell you something for any of us?”

—“Yes. He gave me a message for each of you.”

—“Then tell it to us.”

—“No, I have to tell it first to the Virgin, because the Angel told me to tell it to the Virgin before you.”

—“Then you will tell us?”

—“Yes, yes.”

—“And the first of the scapulars that you held up—do you know whom it belonged to?”

—“The first belonged to Brother Luis.”

—“And the second?”

—“To Brother Miguel.”

—“And the third?”

—“To Brother Juan.”

She said this thinking a little beforehand, as if trying to remember. We were aware that we had told her our names rapidly before the ecstasy. On asking her which Angel usually gave her Communion, and on hearing that it was St. Michael, we took advantage of this to point out Brother Miguel's name, and right afterwards our other two names, so that she could pray for us.

—“What did the Angel look like?”

—“He had a blue cloak, pink wings and slightly long hair with the ends curled up. While saying this, she made a gesture with her hair, to give us a more graphic description.”

During the conversation, both before and after the ecstasy, she continually called us ‘Fathers’. When the ecstasy was over, after one of the times that she called us ‘Fathers’ again, we indicated that we were Brothers. On hearing this, she exclaimed, “Oh! That's the reason the Angel told me ‘the Brothers.’ And at

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the time I told him that you weren't my brothers, and the Angel smiled. Now it's all clear."

We started going back toward the village. The topic of the messages came up again:

—"Is the message for us grave?"

—"And what is 'grave'?"

—"Well, is it good or bad?"

—"No, no. It's good."

—"But are you really going to tell us?"

—"Yes, yes. Really."

We noticed that we hadn't given her our address. On passing down the slope situated between the Pines and the village, the girl told us, "They say that I come down backwards through here, through these stones."

Coming to the village, we took a light lunch and returned to our residence, giving thanks to the Lord for that which filled our souls with such joy.²²

Conchita got back to her home with the three brothers of St. John of God (whom everyone thought were priests) at the time when her mother was speaking in the sharp way that we saw with the pastor from Barro. As soon as Conchita came up to her mother, she began to get a scolding for being late. Conchita could only answer, submissively, with her head down.

—"It was due to the Angel giving me Communion."

—"The Angel! The Angel! Good thing it was that way. But get going, since it's time that your brothers have lunch."

Neither ecstasies nor apparitions freed them, or any of the other inhabitants of Garabandal, from the hard work of gaining their daily bread. But

22. The thrill of that August Monday did not easily fade from the memory of the three fortunate brothers. Even on August 12th, Brother Miguel of the Saints at the Psychiatric Institute of Mondragón wrote to Conchita like this:

"Dear Conchita:

Since so many people pass through over there, I don't know if you still remember Brother Miguel of the Saints. I am one of the three brothers of St. John of God who were there on the past August 6th, and were witnesses of the time that the Archangel St. Michael gave you Communion.

What moments were those! As time passes, I am more impressed each day by what my eyes saw . . .

Greetings to your mother. Tell her that everything that is happening with you can be from no place but heaven. Through some things that have happened, I see in a clear manner that the hand of the Most Holy Virgin is there. We await hearing from you."

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that other bread should also be remembered, no less necessary, the bread which one does not gain by the sweat of one's brow.

In the synagogue at Capharnum, on the day after the most spectacular of His miracles—the multiplication of the loaves of bread—Jesus was facing the multitudes of Israel, who no sooner hoped than they were disappointed:

Amen I say to you, you seek Me, not because you have seen signs, but because you have eaten of the loaves and have been filled. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for that which endures until life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you. (John 6: 26-27)

In Garabandal, with the display of Communion from the Angel's hands, God came to inculcate the same doctrine again. And a state of affairs would develop that He would have to condemn three years later with a denunciation truly prophetic:

The Eucharist:

It is being given less and less importance.

The Angel at Garabandal came to tell each son of the Church what many centuries previously the Angel of Israel had said to the fleeing prophet Elias:

Arise, eat;

for you have a great way to go.

(III Kings 19: 7)

CHAPTER 20

A Miracle on the Horizon

IF THE MONTH OF AUGUST during the second year in Garabandal was marked with a special Eucharistic sign by repeated Mystical Communion, the following month of September will pass into history as the month of the great prophecy. What was foretold for the future of Garabandal in that month would forevermore be the principal expectation of those who believe that the events were supernatural.

The month began brilliantly. September 1st was a Saturday, the day dedicated to Mary.

After the rosary in the evening, at nine o'clock (we are extracting this from Father Valentín's journal) Conchita fell into ecstasy at the doors of the church. Two minutes later Loli and Jacinta went into a trance; and two minutes later, Mari Cruz too. At this period it was very unusual for the four girls to have an ecstasy on the same day and at the same time. In the ecstatic walk, Conchita went alone; Mari Cruz went alone too; Jacinta and Loli were together; a large crowd accompanied and followed them.

First they went to the Pines where they prayed a rosary. They continued praying on the way down, backwards. Loli, Jacinta and Conchita

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were together. Mari Cruz followed alone the entire time, which was for her about 45 minutes. They went to the cemetery. They made circles around the church.

All this, though interesting, was nothing outstanding and what we could call the normal routine of Garabandal.

But three days later something new, of great proportion, occurred.

Recorded on Tape

September 4th, 1962 was a Tuesday. According to Fr. Valentín's annotations, toward 11:00 in the morning Conchita fell into ecstasy at the door of the church, and there received Communion from the hand of the Angel; somewhat later, the same thing happened to Loli.

The afternoon passed; the night began, and at 1:30 Conchita had an ecstasy again. She went to the graveyard, made her way through the streets of the village, prayed the rosary, sang the Salve. On entering her home, she fell on her knees and said farewell to the Vision. As she was speaking, a person near to her—not satisfied with just hearing what the girl was saying—held a microphone to her lips. What he recorded from this confirmed afterwards what his ears had not understood well.

You say there's going to be a miracle? . . . And the miracle is going to be that? . . . And the Virgin will be seen? . . . And when? . . . So long away? . . . With me alone . . . No. I don't want that . . . Don't do that! Perform it with the four . . .

Such words could not but cause repercussions, and soon began to be the foremost reason for comments and expectation.

Five days later, on Sunday, September 9th, Dr. Ortiz in Santander noted in his agenda concerning Garabandal:

My wife and I with her cousin María López-Dóriga were at Maximina's house. Conchita came to present a gift as we were beginning to eat. We invited her, and soon Maximina, began talking in jest:

—“We already know your secret . . . That there is going to be a miracle! You can't deny it, since it has been recorded on tape.”

Conchita smiled, and after a moment of silence said, “Yes, there's going to be a miracle. The Virgin told me, and it's going to be very great . . .”

—“When will it be?”

—“I don't know.”

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—“Then none of us will see it.”

—“Everyone will see it who is here. And the Pope, from wherever he is. And also Padre Pio. Everyday I pray that the miracle will be with everybody. But don’t say anything to anyone.”

—“Not even to Fr. Andreu and Fr. Retenaga?”

—“Well . . . to them . . . yes.”

On that very night of September 9th, as it progressed into the early morning of September 10th, Conchita was heard again (and this was recorded on a tape recorder too):

When you perform the miracle, perform it with all (the four of us). I don’t want to be alone by myself. Look! With everyone, do you want that? You aren’t telling me? Should I tell it so that she will know?¹

This matter is useful to alert those who believe in Garabandal and encourage them to keep watching.

Naturally those who came to the village, especially if they belonged to the circle related to the girls’ families, soon noticed what was in the air.

On September 24th from Hotel Real in Santander, María Herrero de Gallardo wrote to her sister in Madrid to tell her about her last visits to the site of the apparitions:

The other day, while in Conchita’s house, there was a very interesting conversation, with 2 psychiatrists and 3 priests² present . . . Fr. Valentín told me that Conchita, according to his words, had to tell him something under the secret of confession, because of which—he added laughing—he couldn’t tell me anything about it. What I know for certain is that the next proof (of the truth of the apparitions) is going to be, according to what the girls say, much greater than the day of Conchita’s visible Communion.

Two weeks later on October 7th, she wrote her sister another letter from Santander:

1. I do not know to what this could refer: perhaps to Loli who seemed destined to share many things.

2. Concerning the three priests, María Herrero says: “Jesuit, Passionist, and pastor.” From the notes of Dr. Ortiz, it comes out that the Jesuit was Fr. Argila and the pastor Fr. Antonio Yllensa Borrás of San Cucufate. It seems that both came with Dr. Puncernau and were considering, according to Fr. Valentín, “bringing information to the archbishop of Barcelona.” The Passionist had to be Fr. Eliseo, whom the lawyer Luis Navas speaks about in his report.

Of the psychiatrists, the only one we know for sure is the previously mentioned Dr. Ricardo Puncernau.

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Friday, two days ago, I was back in Garabandal again. No one was there . . . And during all the time that I spent there, the girls and their mothers told me about such marvels that it seemed a bottomless well from which they were pulling up, little by little, a multitude of things. How I profited by it and how I remembered you! We went to see Conchita at the time she was going outside for the rosary with her mother . . . Two women who were coming with me hung on to her and I wasn't able to ask her anything on the way to church. I took Aniceta by the arm and tried to question her about when the announced miracle was going to be.

—"I don't know. Possibly Conchita doesn't know either . . . What I can tell you is that the other time (July 28th) she told me: 'Mama, there's going to be a little miracle.' And today she told me: 'There's going to be a very great miracle!'"

And so from the information that I have been able to gather, it was in September, 1962, that the prediction of the great miracle was made for the first time in a clear and open way. A miracle which, for what later began to be said about it and because of its outstanding singularity, soon began to be called "The Miracle."

The first announcements about it reported:

- That it was going to be "very great".
- That everyone in Garabandal when it was performed would see it.
- That the Pope would see it "wherever he would be", and "also Padre Pio."

But Conchita, who seemed to be the only seer who had anything to do with the Miracle, still did not know the date on which it would take place.

And for the moment, the news of the Miracle could not be unrestrictedly divulged. We have heard the girl's words in Maximina's house in front of Dr. Ortiz and his wife, and what she told Fr. Valentín Marichalar under the secret of confession.

But the news was not shrouded in total secrecy. Perhaps Loli's questions during her ecstasy on Monday, September 17th refer to this; and also Conchita's on September 18th:

LOLI: Yes, should I write today? . . . Most Holy Virgin, then should I tell it? . . . When can it be said? . . . He's waiting for me to tell him by letter or when I see him . . . Good, I'll tell it . . .

CONCHITA: Can I tell it to Father Valentín tomorrow? . . . In confession? . . . To whom else can I tell it? . . . To the bishop? . . . Did Loli

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tell it to Father Andreu? . . . Do I tell it to him? . . . No? . . .
When? . . .

Perhaps the person to whom Loli communicated the announcement was Fr. José Ramón de la Riva, since among his papers I have seen a small holycard of the Virgin with these lines on its back, written in poor penmanship:

San Sebastián, October 8th, 1962

The Virgin told us there is going to be a miracle.

With all my love,
María Dolores Mazón
(For Father José Ramón)

The prediction of the Miracle is unmistakably confirmed by these lines from Conchita's diary:³

*The Most Holy Virgin has foretold to me a great Miracle,
that God Our Lord is going to perform through her intercession.
As the chastisement is very great, as we merit;
the Miracle also is immeasurably great, as the world needs.*

Among the Marvels

We have previously seen how María Herrero de Gallardo wrote in her letter of "such marvels that it seemed to be a bottomless well from which they were pulling up a multitude of things."

If the Miracle was the news of September, it was not the only thing of interest in that month. It is certain that the days of September, 1962 were some of the most eventful in the astounding evolution of Garabandal. This can be gathered from reading Fr. Valentín's notes for the month.

• *The Visionaries' Mystical Communion*s. Conchita and Loli received Communion from the Angel on all, or almost all, of the days on which they could not receive it from a priest. Mrs. Herrero de Gallardo wrote about one of these Communion's in a letter dated September 24th:

3. According to my information, the girl began the diary in September of 1962, and ended it in the spring of 1963.

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The day that I was there, Conchita received Communion at 2:30 in the afternoon in front of the church door. A Jesuit from Catalána, who saw it, told me about it. It had pleased him very much because the body, the hands, the eyes . . . had a manner of moving that was completely opposite to the agitated gesticulations of hysteria . . .⁴

This Jesuit priest must have been Fr. Argila (whom Dr. Ortiz mentions), and he must have come from Barcelona with the pastor of San Cucufate, Fr. Antonio Yllensa Borrás, and the neuropsychiatrist Dr. Richardo Puncernau. Fr. Valentín calls him P. Aguilar in his notes and says that on Saturday, September 22nd, he saw a Mystical Communion for the first time, and that “he was very much impressed”.

Luis Navas, the lawyer from Palencia tells us of the same effect it had on him when he was finally able to view a Communion of this type on October 2nd, after ardently longing for it:

A little before 6:30 in the morning, we set out for the church. It was still dark. A meter and a half from the doors, Loli fell on her knees and went into a trance. This was something that impressed me more than anything else I have seen in the visionaries. The devotion in making the sign of the cross, the drama of the tongue extending and then withdrawing, the movement of the throat as if she were swallowing something . . . The prayer of thanksgiving . . . Everything seemed so dramatic to me, as if deserving the greatest respect.

Speaking of this type of Communion, Fr. Valentín wrote in his notes on September 10th:

The ecstasy usually lasts only a few minutes, but it is moving. The girl falls on her knees, very quietly says the “Confiteor”, makes the sign of the cross, joins her hands on her chest, holds out her tongue; and it is seen perfectly how she

4. We have another valuable observation from a specialist in the matter (Dr. Puncernau):
“The entrance and the departure from the trance merits special attention.

They said that they had three calls . . .

They said, “I have already had one call . . . I’ve had two calls” . . . The length of time between the calls was extremely variable.

One time when I knew that they had two calls, I managed to talk with them, attempting to distract them . . . And especially to make them talk about something that interested them. At times in the middle of a word, they fell lighting fast on their knees, in the state of trance—in spite of being observed to be interested in what they were discussing.

This drew my attention. This is not the normal way to enter into a hypnotic trance, especially if the person has not been conditioned to a sign or signal. Among the spectators I was never able to find such a sign. Or even to know of what it could consist.”

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swallows. She makes the sign of the cross again, and is heard to say in a low voice, “Soul of Christ, sanctify me . . .” Once again she makes the sign of the cross and is back in the normal state. It seems the prayers after Communion are said by the Angel.

What the pastor notes on September 22nd is interesting:

The girls always keep the fast until the hour that they receive Communion—the fast according to the old custom. (without eating or drinking anything after 12:00 midnight)

- *Waiting for the Ecstasies.* As has already been shown, when the Virgin was the one who was going to appear, the ecstasies were always preceded with three mysterious calls . . . We find observations about these calls in Fr. Valentín’s notes on September 6th:

The children were accustomed to wait until 10:30 at night. If by that hour they hadn’t received the first call, they went to bed. However, if they received a call before going to bed, then they would wait up for the apparition until the time it came, even though they fell asleep. They didn’t want to go to sleep, since the Virgin had told them that they should wait up and make sacrifices . . . In other things, they each led a normal life at home and helped their mothers.⁵

On the night of September 5th, Fr. Valentín told Loli that it was very late, that it would be better not to wait for an apparition. But she answered that the calls were unmistakable, that the apparition would come, and that because of this, although she was half asleep, she did not want to go to bed. And so the penance of waiting night after night was no small one, either for the girls themselves or for their families and those who accompanied them.

Evidently, the wonderful phenomena of Garabandal were not given as free entertainment . . . In the notes of Fr. Valentin (Monday, Sept. 24) appear these lines:

The girls led a life of true sacrifice. Conchita’s mother told me that her daughter slept better on a chair than in her bed, because she spent the night sitting down, waiting for the apparition like all of us. She slept with her head leaning on the wall. And the next day she didn’t fail to walk to work. The four girls worked, swept, cleaned, went to the river to wash, and did everything like the other girls. Because of this, they were seen very little on working days; but on

5. God never calls any of those on earth—a time for merit—to a life of easy convenience.

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Sundays they played in the streets like the other young children in the village. In spite of the little that they slept and rested, they looked strong and healthy . . .

Besides the marvelous *normalness* that extended throughout September, there were some days that had their own particular note.

For example, there was the night that bridged September 5th to September 6th, Wednesday to Thursday. There were many people from Barcelona, Madrid, Bilbao, Santander, and Seville. But probably the person with the most special invitation from heaven was an English Protestant (Anglican), who had been there once before. She was watching the ecstasy that Loli was having in her home when suddenly the girl, in a very special way, gave her the cross to kiss several times, and one of the times she left it applied to her lips for some time. “Barbara”—read Fr. Valentín’s notes—“was blanched white, very excited. When the ecstasy was over, I spoke to her. She was sure that all this was the work of the Virgin, and she was already disposed to become a Catholic.”

That night when she passed by the English woman in ecstasy, Conchita also stopped very significantly and gave her the cross to kiss.

On the night of September 7th to the 8th, Loli had an apparition alone, toward 3:45 in the early morning. During the ecstasy, among other things she was heard to say, “Is it the feastday of the Virgin of Health? Is it your feastday?” The village had a little chapel dedicated to Mary under the title of The Virgin of Health, and its celebration (like so many other of Mary’s titles and appellations) was on September 8th, the feastday of the Nativity of Our Lady.

When Loli’s ecstasy ended—as we read in Fr. Valentín’s notes—we met Jacinta and her brothers who were going to the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Light, which is six hours of hiking by foot on trails across the mountains.⁶ They carried a flashlight for illumination. The first thing that they did was to pray a rosary in the Cuadro. (Jacinta prayed there every day at six in the morning.) Jacinta was full of joy, and was making the sacrifice of getting up early in the morning and the long hike to ask the Virgin to return to see her soon . . . She and Mari Cruz are the ones who see the Virgin the least. Later I learned that Mari Cruz also had gone to another sanctuary to request the same . . .

September 16th, Sunday, was memorable and *instructive*. We read in Fr. Valentín’s journal:

6. This hermitage or sanctuary of Mary was on the other side of the Peña Sagra Mountains, on the slope facing Liébana.

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There was a man in the village who was half-crazy, and he was doing ridiculous things that could have been very wrongly interpreted by the visitors who didn't know his mental condition. He had been in an insane asylum for a year, and now he was staying here. This was causing trouble and annoyance, and he had to be sent away.

During the ecstasy on that day, Loli and Conchita went to the house where this disturbed man called Alfonso was. And with a crucifix they made a cross there on the pillow on his bed. And while passing by him, they gave him the crucifix to kiss several times. The disturbed man was struck to his knees.

That night Fr. Anzizu⁷ commented: What a lesson in charity the girls gave us. Everyone who had been talking about the necessity of throwing the insane man from the village was touched; above all, the Cardinal's secretary, Fr. Guillermo Hausschildt, who had thought of refusing him Communion. He said: "It is clear the Virgin wanted to give us a lesson."

Conchita was asked why she had gone to the place where the deranged man was and had repeatedly given him the crucifix to kiss. And she answered, The Virgin told us: "You despise him; but I love him."

A response like this put us down, making us see our great lack of charity.

Perhaps the words that Conchita was heard to say during the ecstasy had some relation with this unforgettable lesson from the Mother of God: "When you come down here to earth, why do you come? To save the world" Surely mental cases are not the only ones who need salvation; nor are they the cases that need it the most.

The neuropsychiatrist from Barcelona, Dr. Puncernau, who had carefully studied the girls previously, continued his studies and examinations during these days. He discussed his findings with a colleague, the pediatrician from Santander, Dr. Ortiz, who wrote:

Jacinta's father asked me to please be present; and it was no wonder, since they had had enough of doctors' inquisitions.

I asked Puncernau for his conclusions.

He answered, "I have no doubt about the complete normality of the girls; since the facts can't be attributed to any illness. With regard to this matter, this is the third time that I have come to Garabandal with the intention of studying

7. The two priests mentioned here came from Argentina, accompanying Cardinal Caggiano (Archbishop of Rosario, who was journeying at the time to Rome to participate in the coming Ecumenical Council). These priests took advantage of their passage through Spain to take a trip to Garabandal. The impression that they received there could not have been better, especially for Fr. Anzizu. He openly declared his intention of speaking in Rome about the extraordinary phenomena.

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the visionaries. If I would have seen anything suspicious, I would have said it immediately.”

In that we were in agreement.

On several of these days, the girls’ words and phrases were recorded on tape. Although many of the words had only insignificant meaning, at times others came forth of greater scope:

Most Holy Virgin, let me not abandon you! Let me love you all my life! Oh! That I may never leave you. That I may love you always, always, until death. Most Holy Virgin, do not refuse us help.

(Loli, on the night of September 12th–13th)

What is heaven like? . . . In heaven there are no chairs? . . . Do they walk there? . . . Is there fire in purgatory? . . . Do they come out burned? . . . One cannot enter into heaven even with a very little sin? . . . How can they paint you so ugly, since you are so beautiful? . . .

(Conchita, September 25th)

Does the conversion of sinners cost much? . . . I pray so that many come and be converted, and the good become better . . . Is it better to be a nun or a wife? . . . If you wish, make it so that I may be at 14 years—they say that at 16, one cannot . . . Ease the pain of my brother,⁸ who suffers much from his stomach—don’t take it away.

(Conchita on the same date)

A Torch Dies out

The Light of Garabandal came from the start through four reflectors. But in the month of September, 1962, one of them would fade out.

During these days the youngest of the four visionaries, Mari Cruz González, stopped having apparitions.

8. It seems clear that Conchita was asking to be able to enter the convent at 14 years of age. And she was asking for a special grace, since she had learned that there was nothing that could be done until 16 years of age, as someone had told her. Canon Law fixes this age of 16 years as the minimum for being able to take religious vows.

The brother about whom she speaks in this last petition was Aniceto—familiarily called Cetuco—who was suffering from the pains of an illness that a few years later would bring him to his death, an exemplary death at the hospital in Burgos, lovingly cared for by his only sister, Conchita.

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She had one on September 1st, as has been noted, and it must have been important, judging from its duration: 45 minutes. But on the other days the girl had to wait in vain. It was mentioned how she had made a little pilgrimage to implore the Virgin to visit her again.

Perhaps as a result of this pressing supplication, the Virgin returned, since we see in Fr. Valentín's journal:

September 18th: In the morning, Loli and Conchita received Communion from the hands of the Angel. In the afternoon at 5:30, the other two girls had an apparition. They came together in the street, traveled through the village, prayed the rosary, went up to the Pines, and descended backwards; it ended at the church doors. I asked Loli why the Angel didn't give Communion to Mari Cruz and Jacinta. And she told me that she didn't know, that perhaps they were better and for that reason, didn't need it.

September 18th had to be the last gleam of light from the lamp of Mari Cruz,⁹ since from that time on it appears to have been definitely extinguished. María Herrero de Gallardo, writes from Santander on October 7th:

I went to Mari Cruz' house to bring her some cakes, and she told me that a month had passed without seeing the Virgin . . .

And Dr. Ortiz, who went up one more time to Garabandal with Plácido Ruiloba on Saturday, November 24th, notes on this day:

9. A few days latter, Dr. Puncernau paid special attention to Mari Cruz:

I gave her my wedding ring to give the Virgin to kiss, as was the custom to do.

She was very pleased and put my ring on one of her fingers.

Three days passed and Mari Cruz didn't have an apparition, nor did she enter into a trance. On the night before I had to leave I said to her, "You'll have to give back my ring, since this morning at 3 I have to leave."

—"Let me have it a little longer . . . Perhaps I will have an apparition tonight." I left it with her.

The other three entered into ecstasy. The three girls went walking in a trance, holding arms. Mari Cruz approached, she took the arm of one of the others, raised her head and walked like this ten or twelve steps to see if the trance would take her too. But there was no trance. She detached herself sorrowfully. Without saying a word she returned the ring and went away with her head held low.

I have to say though that the ring was kissed on another occasion, during one of Conchita's ecstasies. I mention this so that it can be seen that the ecstasies came when they came . . . not when the girls wanted them to come.

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The three girls were singing in ecstasy at Mari Cruz's door. They were asking that she see the Virgin again . . . I asked Mari Cruz, in front of her mother, if she was continuing to go up to say the rosary in the Cuadro at six in the morning.

—“No, now I pray it in the house.”

—But didn't the Virgin tell you to pray it there in the Calleja?

—“Yes.”

—Why don't you do it then?

Without letting the girl speak, her mother quickly intervened to say that she hadn't stopped her, that she hadn't said anything . . .

I insisted, glancing at Mari Cruz . . .

—“Then who stopped you from going there? Why don't you go?”

The girl blushed, but she didn't answer.

Later I was with Jacinta, and I asked her the same, if she was still going to the Calleja . . .

—“Yes, I go every day at six in the morning. I have never stopped doing it. One day it occurred to me to ask the Virgin if I could change the hour. She told me yes, that I could change it. But later I preferred to continue as before, so that the same thing doesn't happen to me that happened to Mari Cruz.”

—What happened to Mari Cruz?

—“In September she stopped praying the rosary in the Calleja as the Virgin had told her, and since that time she hasn't seen her again!”

The flame from Mari Cruz was definitely out. Was this something that had to happen according to God's plans, without anyone's fault? Was it someone's fault? If there was fault, whose was it? The girl's? Her parents or family? I know of no one who is in a position to give a competent answer to these questions. Let us leave them then to the judgment of God and not meddle in what is above our competence. But this does not mean that we should renounce thinking about the matter, seeking to find, as Jacinta seems to have done, a salutarious lesson . . .

Jacinta herself should have feared at the time that her own light was going to be extinguished.

The month of September had begun well for her since on the first and second days she was seen in ecstasy beside her companions. But an entire week followed without an apparition, and poor Jacinta, although silently resigned, had to be consumed with desire, anxiety and worry. And so on the early morning of September 8th she undertook with her brothers the difficult pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Light, as we have seen.

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The pilgrimage seems to have had an immediate effect, since on the following day, September 9th, Fr. Valentín mentions:

On going out from the rosary at 8:30 at night, Conchita and Jacinta went into ecstasy; they went to Loli's home, holding arms . . . But this was an isolated favor, since on October 7th, he notes again: Jacinta hasn't had an apparition for more than 20 days.

How this affected the girl can be gathered from these sentences found in a letter from María Herrero, written in Santander on October 7th:

On returning from Mari Cruz's home, I met Jacinta, thin and sad. She told me that 26 days had passed without seeing the Virgin, since the Nativity of Mary. I don't think she ever went so long without seeing her. I gave her the cakes. She took them; but she remained for some time with them in her hands, as if not knowing what to do, with an expression of sorrow that appalled me.

In Jacinta's case, as a great consolation for her, all this was only a frightening test. On October 8th, Fr. Valentín notes:

Jacinta had an apparition, after a month of not having one. And he adds later: She also had one on October 9th, 11th, 13th and 14th.

Maximina writes on her part to Eloísa de la Roza Velarde, Dr. Ortiz' sister-in-law, in a letter dated November 8th:

The apparitions continue as usual. I see nothing extraordinary at present. Loli continues having apparitions every day, ordinarily at 4:00 or 5:00 in the early morning. Conchita has ones that are known about on four days of the week (Tuesday and Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday), frequently also at the same hour of the morning, and she almost always goes outside on the street. Jacinta also has apparitions on many days. But Mari Cruz has not had one for many months.

The mystery of Garabandal was continuing its march . . . Almost monotonously, disturbing many, inspiring some. How would it end?

One of the protagonists was already out of the picture. Another had long eclipses between apparitions.

But the affair, as a whole, was not diminishing, but rather seemed to be getting stronger, even taking on new force.

How would it conclude?

How long would it last?

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What would its final outcome be!

For now, one important thing is known for certain:

*There would be a miracle,
an exceptional miracle.
Dawn was on the horizon.*

CHAPTER 21

The Bells of the Last Council

DURING THE AUTUMN DAYS of 1962, the main topic of conversation in the Catholic Church—and also in other Churches called Christian—was the inauguration of the Ecumenical Council that His Holiness John XXIII had convoked.¹

It was to be called Vatican II because of the site of its celebration; it was to be the most ecumenical of all those celebrated until then, both by the number and by the variety of its participants.²

1. On the 25th of January, 1959, in the basilica of St. Paul outside the walls, John XXIII publicly announced his proposition to convoke a new Ecumenical Council. Then he immediately began with the preparations—preparations that were foreseen to be long and complicated.

There was first a period anti-preparatory, which lasted a little more than a year. Following this on June 5th, 1960 began the preparation properly called, with the formation of Commissions, Sub-Commissions and Secretariats. Finally, on December 25th, 1961, the Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis* convoked the Council for the fall of 1962. The exact date of the opening was fixed a little later for October 11th, the feast of the Maternity of Mary.

2. Approximately 3,000 Fathers of the Council, bishops for the most part, came to Rome—men of every race, language and condition. Without the spectacular development in the means of communication during the past decades, the assembly of such a widely dispersed congregation would not have been possible.

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The proceeding had enormous expectation; it was being accompanied with enormous hope . . . And so anticipation for the Council was resounding throughout the world long before the heavy bronze bells of St. Peter's rang out their symphony over Rome on the morning of October 11th.³

Garabandal could not withdraw from the impact of such an event. Because of this, attention to what was being prepared in Rome intertwined at the mountain village with the course of its own proper affairs that were so marvelous all the time, so unusual from time to time. From the latter, we know some particularly intriguing happenings which still have not been made clear.

Strange Phenomena

In a letter that María Herrero wrote to her sister on September 24th, this sentence can be read:

I told you on the phone about the fire; they have taken the earth to analyze it.

From this brief remark, we have no idea of what she was referring to; but fortunately this woman used the occasion to send a report in French to the Holy Office at Rome about information that she had heard from Fr. Valentín:

One day there were many people in Garabandal. Some of the visitors made a fire under the Pines to cook or keep warm. They left, thinking that they had put out the fire. Days passed, and that fire could not be extinguished, in spite of doing everything that was possible to put it out.

I myself, on coming to the village during those days, could notice the strange brilliance that was there above the Pines. It was because of this that I asked the pastor about it. And Father Valentín explained to me the origin of the phenomena and what had been done to end it. He added that the thing had lasted for weeks; and that seen from afar, it seemed during the day to be a column of smoke and during the night a diffuse brilliance.

There were not lacking the learned in geology—he concluded, smiling with a certain gracious slyness—who were determined to give an explanation for the phenomena. We will see. For the moment, they have taken some samples of this earth that burns to examine them in the laboratory.

3. It has already been mentioned that the solemn opening of the Council took place on this day.

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This is all that I can say about this undeniable and curious phenomena; and this is rather little, since I was not able to obtain more information. Some passages from the bible come to mind here:

*And the Lord went before them to show the way,
by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire:
that He might be the guide of their journey at both times.
There never failed the pillar of the cloud by day,
nor the pillar of fire by night, before the people.*

(Exodus 13: 21-22)

*And I will show wonders in heaven:
and on earth blood and fire and columns of smoke.*

(Joel 2: 30)

Every person can have his own considerations about this . . . One thing is certain: in Holy Scripture, the column of smoke and the column of fire, the dark cloud and the devouring flame, are always used in connection with manifestations of the Divine Presence.

And I might add that these were not the only cases of unexplainable fire reported in Garabandal. The people there speak about what had mysteriously happened to a man in the village on a night that he was passing by the Pines; and also about what happened to the son of Simón and María on an early morning before dawn when he was going down toward Cossío to catch a bus.

Mrs. Herrero de Gallardo was speaking with Mr. Illera (a person well known in Santander) in the Hotel Real of that city, on September 2nd, 1965. From his lips she heard this utterance:

I'm not the person to say if the events of Garabandal are true or false; that's the task of the Church. But I'm able to give testimony of what I've seen, since I followed the things that were happening there in 1961 and 1962 with great interest. What I'm going to tell you now took place in 1964, when the apparitions had already ended.⁴

I had gone up to the village and was walking back and forth when suddenly, in a completely clear and cloudless sky, a very thick black cloud came forth and hovered above the Pines. I was looking at it, very astounded—not knowing how

4. The apparitions did not end until November of 1965; but an almost complete eclipse occurred after the winter of 1963.

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to explain where it had come from. The cloud seemed to grow bigger, became darker, more threatening . . .

I was looking at it, very astonished on my part, when suddenly the cloud broke in half. And as if coming forth from within it, appeared a little brilliance, or if you will, a little white cloud, very bright, which increased in size, and increased in size again, until it engulfed and made the imposing black cloud disappear. For a length of time that I could not say for certain—several minutes anyhow—the brilliant white cloud stayed there, crowning the Pines; and suddenly, unexplainably, disappeared, leaving a sky as blue and transparent as though nothing had passed through it.

The fact seems undeniable, and it could be a basis for many comments and interpretations. Was all this a prophetic announcement of something that was going to happen? And if so, to whose future was it referring? That of Garabandal, so despised by some clerics, so rejected by many bishops? Or the Church after the Council, according to some revealing words of Paul VI that we will quote later.⁵

Concerning this enigma, only God can give satisfactory answers.

Congregation at Rome Siege at Garabandal

In the village, the final days of September were used to prepare for the coming Council. We know this from the writings of Luis Navas, the attorney from Palencia, who came again on Tuesday, September 25th. His first night there was a night of vigil, particularly difficult. And so he took advantage of the following day to sleep:

I awoke at 3:00 in the afternoon. I used the afternoon to arrange my notes, and towards 7 o'clock I headed toward the church, since the time for the rosary was coming.

There was a sermon at the end; the pastor had enjoined Father Eliseo⁶ to preach for several days on the Council. I remember on that day he spoke to us about the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and he said that He would come forth in our souls as a fountain of living water that flowed to eternal life.

5. Homily on the feastday of St. Peter, given in the Vatican basilica on June 29th, 1972.

6. This seems to have been a Passionist Father, that is, a member of the Congregation of the Passion founded in 1720 by St. Paul of the Cross.

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With the Council being discussed in their environment, and since the girls talked in their ecstasies about the things that drew their attention each day, it is no wonder that Conchita was heard to say in a trance:

The Council, is it the greatest of all? . . . Will it be a success? . . . How good! . . . That way they will know you better, and you will be very happy . . . Why do they paint you so ugly, when you are so beautiful?⁷

It would be extremely interesting to know the words that came from the Vision in those intervals of silence that separated the girl's questions and statements. Perhaps we could know that way how God appraised the activities and the end result—at that time unforeseeable—of the last Council of the Church. Today, many years later, the people's opinions are tremendously different. Some think that the Council was the starting-point of an authentic Church, of a Church that finally found itself. For them only the postcouncilar has value. Others say, or at least think, that the Council has provoked the worst revolution and the greatest crisis in the history of the Church.

What the girl said concerning the Council was not all questions; there was an exclamation which lends itself to diverse interpretations: "How good! . . . That way they will know you better, and you will be very happy . . ."

From this, I presume that the Virgin was saying something about what was going to happen in the Council with regard to her.

From the beginning it was planned to dedicate a complete document to the subject of the Virgin Mary. The document was in time elaborated by the Commission in charge, and in time given to each one of the Councilar Fathers for his prior study. But before the time for its debate came to the assembly itself, there came a decision to . . .

7. The words that follow were transcribed by Louis Navas from a tape recording made by a Basque priest who was in Garabandal on those days. (Fr. Valentín places the girl's ecstasy on the morning of September 26th.)

"The whole night (between the 25th and 26th) they passed in vigil at Conchita's home, until six in the morning. And when at that time a priest—there were six from outside the diocese—was reciting the *Angeles*, the girl fell on her knees and presented the crucifix to be kissed, starting with all the priests. She went outside into the village, she went to the Cuadro. It lasted about an hour. She was heard to say something about the Council . . ."

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On October 24th, 1963, during the second session of the Council, the dogmatic constitution of the Church was being debated. The question was brought to the floor as to whether a whole conciliar document should be dedicated to the Virgin, proper to her and her alone, or whether just a chapter should be dedicated to her within the dogmatic constitution that was then being debated.

The unexpected question caused a great reaction, and was vigorously debated with unusual vehemence. Five days later, on October 29th the decision came by vote. By a narrow margin the majority decided that there would not be a conciliar document to speak about the Virgin alone; what the Council allotted to her was a chapter within the dogmatic constitution on the Church.

In Garabandal one year before this, on the early September morning about which we have been speaking, well could the virgin talk to Conchita about what the Council was thinking of doing for her, and also of what would actually take place. There would be no more than a chapter for her; but although brief, it would be substantial, and as a consequence, a good basis for excellent Marian instruction. Perhaps it was this that made the girl exclaim: "How good! That way they will know you better and you will be very happy."

Nevertheless, there has been a feeling in certain Catholic circles that the Council was the origin of a chill or halt in traditional Marian devotion. Does this feeling correspond to reality? There are many who affirm it does. Is such a feeling without basis? Others maintain it is. And there are some who say that a chill or halt had to come, and that it was coming at the right time.

Let us return to our story, where we find ourselves still in the days in which the Council was not a *fait accompli*; when it was for the hierarchy only a matter of preparation and conjecture; and for the faithful, expectation, prayer and hope.

During the last days of September and early days of October, 1962, an ancient saying was re-enacted: All roads lead to Rome. All the roads saw the passage of Catholic bishops with their retinue answering the call of St. Peter's successor.

The Bishop of Santander was leaving for Rome too. But before departing, on a day as distinguished as October 7th, the feastday of the Most

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Holy Rosary, he signed his name to a new “Nota” on Garabandal, influenced by the Commission. It pronounced the following:

The Special Commission, which has studied the events that have been happening in the village of San Sebastián de Garabandal, ratifies its previous declarations, judging that the phenomena lack all sign of supernatural character and have a natural explanation.

As a consequence, and with our desire that all the people of our diocese be properly informed, and that all who have any connection with the events have secure direction, in fulfillment of our pastoral obligation, and making use of our authority:

1) We confirm in all its statements the official *Notas* of this bishopric of Santander dated on August 26th and October 24th of 1961.

2) We prohibit all priests, both in the diocese and outside the diocese, and all religious, even those exempt, from going to the location mentioned without express permission from the diocesan chancery.

3) We repeat to all the faithful the warning that they should abstain from fomenting the atmosphere created by the display of those events; and because of this, they should refrain from going to the village for this reason.

In a question of such seriousness, we hope that you will all be prompt in complying with these regulations.

*Eugenio, Bishop of Santander*⁸

It can be seen how the Commission in charge of Garabandal continues singing the same song in the same key. “The phenomena lack all sign of supernatural character, and have a natural explanation.” Brilliant deduction! A double affirmation that the Commission pretends to impose, without ever giving evidence or explanations. The members of the Commission would demand that we trust absolutely in their word, that is to say, in their competence and authority.

We would be glad to do so, if there were not so many indications of the inadequate way of procedure in which they carried out this matter. We would do so if we did not have the evaluations of others; who as for quality are on the same plane as they; and as for quantity leave them far

8. Bishop Eugenio Beita Aldazábal was the new titular bishop. It had been several months since he had succeeded the apostolic administrator Bishop Doroteo Fernández as head of the diocese. And so Bishop Beita was the second of the bishops from Santander who had to face the question of Garabandal. With what result? On being nominated for the bishopric of Santander, a long and fruitful episcopate was expected, perhaps due to the holy memory of Bishop José Iguino Treco; but the hopes did not last long.

behind. And furthermore, these others have followed the progression of the phenomena much closer at hand and with greater attention.

We can observe that if the official evaluation of the phenomena continues on the same key, the disciplinary pronouncements are accentuating in hostility. What Doroteo Fernández stated in his last *Nota* of October 24th, 1961: “The priests should abstain absolutely from whatever could contribute to creating confusion among the Christian people,” is changed in this first *Nota* from the new bishop to: “We prohibit all the priests . . . from going to the location mentioned.” The 1961 statement: “The faithful should not let themselves be seduced by every wind of doctrine,” has progressed into: “They should abstain from fomenting the atmosphere . . . They should refrain from going to the village.”⁹

With such pronouncements began the siege of Garabandal. Or perhaps it could be said that they were coming to close in the circle already existing, since for many months, there had existed a situation very much like a state of siege.

The effects of that third episcopal *Nota*—the first by Bishop Beitia—certainly did not give complete satisfaction to the Commission; but it was sufficiently derogatory so that there could be noted a considerable drop in the number of visitors and interested people coming to the village. On the back of a postcard, which was dated October 25th, Mari Loli wrote to the pastor of Barro:

Many less people are coming than came before the publication of the *Nota* from the bishop; but every day someone comes.

And Fr. Luis López Retenaga, from the seminary of San Sebastián, remarks in a report written two months later:

The *Nota* from the bishopric of Santander on October 7th has plunged many eyewitnesses of the phenomena into unusual confusion, since they had come to the conclusion that the phenomena were caused by supernatural intervention. It

9. I do not know what the priest from Santander feared for the faithful who were going there. The testimonies that we have indicate that the visitors never suffered any peril. Here is what Luis Navas says on Friday, September 28th, 1962:

“It was a day of thick fog at the base of the mountains, which was degenerating into rain. In the afternoon we assisted at the rosary and Father Elísio spoke to us about the Virgin. At that time I had no desire to be at Lourdes or Fatima. I had the sensation of being under the direct influence, immediate and maternal, of Our Lady.”

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has instilled in them an interior struggle, in which the conclusions of their reason have to yield to the requirements of a life of faith.

This statement from the distinguished priest seems a little exaggerated to me. No life of faith coerces us to share the opinion of the diocesan chancery in matters not defined—in this case, not definable—where different points of view can be held for different reasons.

What is obliged by a life of faith is to comply with what is legitimately commanded. Neither priests nor faithful have any obligation to think like their bishop in what refers to Garabandal; but they do have an obligation to obey the specific regulations that, within his authority, he establishes.

The harsh episcopal *Nota* produced the result intended. In Spain during those days, when a bishop spoke, it was as if he spoke with the voice of infallibility. A bishop was, for a vast majority of people, the Church itself. As a consequence, the matter of Garabandal was placed in a situation of suspect and quarantine.

But what importance did this have? In Rome they were turning on all the lights: the Catholic spectacle of the century was about to begin.

The night of October 10th, the great vigil, was a night of waiting and excitement. I do not know if the pope slept much, or if those responsible for the Council slept well that night.

But I do know that far from the Eternal City, in little Garabandal, poor and now suspect, a vigil was being held on that night too. An excerpt from the *Memorias* of the pastor of Barro summarizes it:

I was passing the night of October 10th to 11th in a vigil in Conchita's kitchen. On the 10th, the press had published the *Nota* of the bishop, signed on October 7th.

I had come to Garabandal with the Spanish ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Alberto Mestas. That night we were waiting in the kitchen of the house. For amusement during the long vigil, we were playing 'educational questions' with Conchita. "Let's see who comes the closest to giving the time the Virgin will come," she said. Each of us gave a time; Conchita herself gave hers. For my part, I said it would be 8 o'clock in the morning, since that was the time when the Council was going to start.

Everyone's time was passing, even Conchita's. And everyone was succumbing to sleep; some even retired. I decided to stay awake, intending to advise the others when the girl's ecstasy came. And actually sleep didn't come to me that night . . .

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Conchita's radio was playing, and when it began to broadcast the solemn ceremony of the inauguration of the Council with the procession of the Councilary Fathers, I noticed that the girl started to go into ecstasy. As I had foreseen, the trance coincided exactly with the time for the Council . . .

But it was not only this great event that was discussed in those minutes of converse with heaven. After the ecstasy, the visionary was questioned. Had she asked the Virgin any questions? Yes, she had asked "why the bishop had given the *Nota* that had come in the newspaper on the previous day."

—And what did the Virgin answer?

—"The Virgin didn't answer, she only smiled."

Perhaps the pretensions of some, the fears of others had made her smile . . . The pretensions of those seeking to end this, the fears of those who were thinking that this could end . . . How many of our activities make God laugh! Indulgently, and at times not so indulgently. "Why have the gentiles raged: and the people devised vain things? . . . He that dwells in heaven shall laugh at them: and the Lord shall deride them." (Psalms 2: 1-5)

Well could it be that the Virgin smiled on that occasion, seeing the future of Garabandal, above and beyond all the episcopal *Notas*, so full of zeal.

Would she be smiling also, viewing the future of the Church, beyond the grand and sometimes agitated conciliar sessions?

We do not know. But we do know that the Holy Father certainly smiled at that time, and with unbounded optimism, before the unparalleled change that he expected in the Church as a result of the Council. On that Tuesday morning at the inaugural ceremony, October 11th, 1962, the feast of the Maternity of Mary, John XXIII spoke to the Fathers of the Council:

Venerable Brothers: Today the Holy Church rejoices, because by virtue of a special gift from the Divine Providence, the longed for day of the solemn inauguration of Ecumenical Council Vatican II has come.

It seems necessary for us to say that we do not think as prophets of doom who only foretell catastrophic events . . .

Here we are united, in this Vatican Basilica, at a turning point in the history of the Church, where heaven and earth are united in these difficult times . . . The Council now starting appears in the Church as a guide promising a brilliant

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light. Now it is only the dawn, the first announcement of the day to come. With what joy our heart is filled!

Certainly good words and good sentiments. Years later, what we now have in the Church, does it correspond to what an optimistic pontiff was expecting from the Council on its inaugural day?

I do not know how to answer that. And within the Church, many conflicting opinions are found.

The immediate successor to that pontiff, Pope Paul VI himself, bursts forth in praise of the Council's work as he laments the many things that have occurred in the time after the Council . . .

Among his complaints, certainly none is more disturbing and more spontaneous than that of June 29th, 1972 on the feastday of St. Peter:

We regret to have to stave off the wave of profanation, desacralization, and secularization which arises, which oppresses, which seeks to confound and surpass religious sentiment, and even make it disappear . . .

If one were to ask us what the Church is today, could one compare calmly its situation with the words that Paul has left us in heritage?¹⁰ Can we be calm?

It was believed that after the Council would come a day of sunshine for the Church. What has come is a day of clouds, of storms, of darkness, of groping, of uncertainty . . . We predicted ecumenism, and each day we separate more one from another. We are digging abysses, instead of filling them.

How could this have occurred? We confide to you our thought: a power has intervened, an adverse power. We have mentioned his name: the devil . . .

It is said that a satanic breath has entered through a crack in the Temple of God. There are doubts, uncertainties, problems, restlessness, dissatisfaction, confrontation. People do not have confidence in the Church. They have more confidence in the first worldly prophet who speaks through a newspaper or social movement . . . to follow him . . . Doubt has entered into our conscience, and it has entered across windows that should have been open to the light. Doubt has come with respect to everything that exists, to everything that we know . . .

All this was unforeseeable on that morning of October, 1962, when in Rome the bells of St. Peter's were ringing joyously, and in Garabandal the young girl was asking the Virgin about the Council.

10. This refers to words from the first epistle of St. Peter (2: 9) that he had mentioned at the beginning of his homily.

Yes, completely unforeseeable . . . to men; but not to Her who was coming to that lost mountain village because she saw what was going to come.

A New Miracle

In spite of the episcopal quasi-interdict¹¹ that bore down on the phenomena and the location that served for the scenario, the flame was not quenched.

The girls, influenced by the Virgin, respected the ordinances of legitimate authority better than anyone else. We read in an excerpt from Fr. López Retenaga:

Although they were aware of the *Nota* from the bishop, they continued to have the unalterable peace that characterized them; and this peace was aligned with a clear understanding of the obedience that was required from others. I have a letter from Conchita in which she points out the presence of four priests in the village, making it known that—although she was pleased in seeing the priests there—it would have been better for them to obey the bishop.”

Yes, the girls showed themselves totally submissive to legitimate authority; but they had no reason to share that authority’s opinion on the events. It was evident to them that what was happening did not depend on them, nor on anything or anyone that they knew. Everyone who talked to them could observe this. María Herrero de Gallardo, for example, was speaking with Loli on the vigil of that same October 7th on which the bishop of Santander, before leaving for Rome, put his signature on the official *Nota* that we have just mentioned. During this conversation, the woman asked the girl:

—“Tell me, Loli. Which Virgin do you see?”

—“There’s only one Virgin”—replied the girl—“although she can have different names, like the Virgin of Mount Carmel, the Virgin of the Rosary, the Virgin of the Pillar . . .”

—“Well then, which Virgin do you see?”

11. The “interdict” is one of the grave penalties that the Church formerly used to punish major trespasses of its members.

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Loli described once again the Virgin that she and her companions had seen so many times, and concluded with enthusiasm:

—“But there is nothing like her eyes. They are not like anything or anyone in the world. I’m not able to describe them, I can only say that they are so very beautiful that one cannot do anything except look at them.”

Hours after this conversation, toward 1:30 in the night, Loli’s ecstasy came. María Herrero de Gallardo observed:

She fell on her knees there in the kitchen, leaning against the left wall. Her face was truly transfigured, and her hair fell on her shoulders in a very lovely way. Her eyes were absorbed, looking up toward the ceiling where stacks of garlic, onions, and sausages were hanging.¹² It was a totally domestic scene, but nevertheless, full of charm and supernatural elevation.

During the ecstasy, as on so many other occasions, Loli stood up and was presenting many articles that the visitors had placed there for the Virgin’s kiss. On that night there was special attention to Mass missals. Let us listen again to María de Gallardo:

It was thrilling to see how the Apparition seemed to be kissing these missals page by page, pausing specially on some of them. She also kissed the holycards that were in them . . . We learned later that the Virgin had spoken to the girl about the owners of the articles that she was kissing, even giving some personal messages, as in the case of a young Mexican who was there, for whom there was something about the death of his father . . .

When the long ecstasy ended, I came up to Loli and told her:

—“Loli, when you were turning the pages of the missal, you turned them rather hurriedly. I’m afraid that the Virgin kissed them rather in a hurry too.”

—“Oh no!”—the girl replied at once, very energetically—“The Most Holy Virgin didn’t do it in a hurry. She does everything well.”

Magnificent praise! The highest there could be. Could there be something superior in moral quality to doing what has to be done always in the way it should be done?

In considering the Virgin’s style of doing things, Loli could only repeat what had long ago been said of Jesus’ style by the multitudes from Gallilee who had seen Him act: “Full of admiration, they exclaimed: He does all things well!” (Mark 7: 37)

12. I do not think that anyone will be surprised by these things hanging in the kitchen of a village house.

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The girls had no reason to doubt the genuineness and origin of what was happening to them; but the witnesses were not satisfied and wanted a spectacular miracle.

Amid predictions, waiting and hoping for the miracle, the weeks of the second autumn slipped by.

On October 25th, 1962, Thursday, a fortnight after the inauguration of the Council, Loli wrote to Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva on the post-card previously mentioned: "We already know the date of the miracle; but I'm not able to tell about it; when I can, I'll tell it."

And on October 30th, there is a resumé in the brief notes of Fr. Valentín:

After the rosary, the three (*Loli, Jacinta, and Conchita*) fell into ecstasy, and as usual went to the Pines. They came down on their knees most of the way, praying the rosary . . . On the 30th, they gave a written card to their parents upon which they foretold what comprised the miracle that the Virgin was going to perform. And for days they have been talking about it.¹³

On November 2nd, Friday and the day dedicated to the departed (All Souls Day), Dr. Celestino Ortiz, his wife, a brother of hers called Fernando, and their friend Plácido Ruiloba were in Conchita's house in Gara-

13. Thanks to Maximina's letter (from the many written to the Pifarré family in Barcelona that Mrs. Asunción Pifarré treasures), we can know exactly when the prediction of Loli and Jacinta's "miracle" first began. The letter dated October 10th starts like this:

Today there was a notice read in all the churches of the diocese that no priest or religious should come to the village: a notice put out by the bishop saying this is not true.

And perhaps it is a coincidence that today I am writing to the bishop and yesterday Jacinta and Loli said that there was going to be a miracle very soon. They didn't know that the bishop had given this order. Jacinta has gone over a month without an apparition and hasn't said more about the miracle than Conchita . . . They say that it is going to be very soon; they certainly will say the day. It is to be seen if I am given time enough to advise you! As I find out, I'll tell you . . . So we don't all miss seeing the miracle clearly! Loli's mother said that it was going to be during the Council. I don't know if that is what she heard from Loli . . .

Twelve days later, on October 22nd, Maximina wrote another letter:

"Well Asunción, everything remains the same concerning the apparition. Now I am going to tell you (but don't you tell anyone) what Conchita told me. She said that Loli and Jacinta's miracle was going to be very soon, that to see this miracle the girls would have to be seen too. But Conchita's miracle is different. It's going to be very great, and everyone who is here will see it, even though they don't see her . . . The other two girls told me that theirs probably would be no later than a month.

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bandal. They were discussing the bishop's return to Santander. Then Conchita intervened:

—“The Virgin told me that I can tell the bishop, Fr. Valentín, and my mother about the miracle.”

—“Have you already told it to the bishop?”

—“No . . . But . . . Do you want to take it to him?”

Those present showed indecision. Finally Plácido said: “Yes, I'll go with it. Why not!” And actually, on the following day, November 3rd, Plácido Ruiloba presented himself at the bishop's residence in Santander with a rather bulky envelope that Conchita had entrusted to him. He wanted to give it to the bishop with his own hand, but in order not to have to wait too long or annoy the bishop, he ended up giving it to his personal secretary Father Diego, for him to forward it on.

Twenty days later, Dr. Celestino Ortiz and Mr. Plácido Ruiloba returned again to the village. On the night of the 24th to the 25th there were several ecstasies that Mr. Ruiloba recorded on his tape recorder. On the last with Conchita, at six in the morning, there were things concerning the miracle that the girl later confirmed in the normal state:

- That the miracle will be at 8:30 in the evening, as on the first apparition.
- That it would last a quarter of an hour.
- That it would be seen in the sky, and so clearly, that there would be no doubt that it was coming from God.
- That the sick who came with faith on that day would be cured.¹⁴

“After the ecstasy”—said Dr. Ortiz—“the girl was radiant with joy. We insisted that she tell us the day of the miracle; but she said that the time hadn't come, and that we should have patience. She could only say the date eight days in advance, but that the miracle would definitely come, since the Virgin had said it, and she could not lie.”

14. I have further confirmation of this from Maximina's letter to the Pifarré family on November 25th:

“At seven-thirty this morning, Conchita had an apparition. And the Virgin told her that the Miracle would be at eight-thirty in the evening, and that the sick would be cured, and that all of us in the village would see the Miracle, even though we were away from it, provided that we were in sight of the village, since Conchita's Miracle, as I already told you, will be seen in the sky . . .

We are white with snow, and if you could see how the girls walk on their knees to get to the Pines, backwards, through all the ruts and all the snow! It worries me to see them; and furthermore, it is snowing very much with a terrible freezing wind.”

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These remarks from the two men from Santander are confirmed by what can be read in the notes of Fr. Valentín:

In the early hours of the morning (November 25th), Conchita had an ecstasy in which she said that her miracle¹⁵ would take place at 8:30 in the evening, the same hour on which the first apparition of the Angel had occurred on June 18th, 1961. She said also that during her miracle the sick would be cured.

Stories with a Message

If the miracle drew much attention during those autumn days in 1962, it did not slow down the march of events. Neither the natural nor the supernatural life can be lived only with expectation.

The weather was stormy on the night of November 4th. In Loli's house there was a vigil, waiting for the time of the apparition. Toward 3:00 in the morning, the wind began to blow fiercely; there was threat of a rain-storm. At that time Loli's mother told her to gather the laundry that had been left hanging outside. Loli was inclined to obey; but there could clearly be seen in her the resistance or dread that was caused by having to go out of the house at that hour. She was heading toward the door with a flashlight shining in her hand when she fell into ecstasy. She made the sign of the cross repeatedly, held out the crucifix to be kissed by those in the area, and went outside. A little later, and still in ecstasy, she returned to the house with the laundry gathered up.

As soon as she came out of the trance, she was asked what had happened. And the girl explained that it had been very hard for her to obey her mother with regard to the laundry, since she was afraid to go out alone . . . The Virgin had seen two things: her good will, and her fear. And She had come to accompany her, as a Mother.

This story gives a basis for many considerations: the Virgin's goodness; the convenience of relying on God for all our needs, even the smallest; how it pleases God when we do our duties in spite of difficulties and our natural repugnance . . .

During the vigil on that night, a conversation took place in front of Loli concerning peculiar phenomena that appeared at first glance to be super-

15. Note the expression her miracle. For some time Loli and Jacinta had been speaking on their part of a miracle, and it did not coincide with the one announced by Conchita. Further on we will return to this topic.

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natural, yet could have a natural explanation due to hidden abilities that the human mind might have . . . When it was finished, someone asked the girl if the conversation had made her doubt that she was really seeing the Virgin:

“Oh no! I’m certain that I’m really seeing the Virgin. What has been said doesn’t disturb me.”

A few days, or rather a few nights afterward (on the morning of November 8th), Loli was asked what she felt when kissing the Virgin.

“It is difficult to explain . . . I don’t feel the warmth of the Virgin on my lips or any other sensation of her face. I only notice that my lips come to her and from there they can go no further . . . but it is marvelous.”¹⁶

During the month of November, the girls were naturally concerned about the faithful departed. Because of this, they visited the cemetery in ecstasy. Conchita was especially outstanding in this. To illustrate, here is an excerpt from Maximina’s letter to Dr. Ortiz on Nov. 6, 1962:

The apparitions, as you know, continue as usual. Now on many days the rosary is sung thru the village. Conchita goes to the cemetery very often, and the other day she and María Dolores went. They walked singing the rosary—now they’ve told us to all sing it—and we went with them to the cemetery. There they stopped singing it and recited it with great devotion. They had never entered within, but on that day, Conchita opened the gate and we went in. Oh! You couldn’t understand how great was the respect that inspired in us!

First they went to the place where Conchita’s father was. They knelt down with tremendous devotion, placing the cross on the ground; and afterwards, they gave it to the Virgin to kiss. What the one girl did, the other did also. Afterwards, they went to the tomb of my husband. They also knelt down . . . This affected me . . . From there they came to me and gave me the crucifix to kiss many times. Then they went to another tomb. And then to the place where my mother . . . You know how they hold their heads in ecstasy without seeing anything. And how they found the graves!

We don’t know what this means. I can only say that my husband, in the two years that he was with me, was very good to me. And my mother suffered very much in this world. She was very devoted to the Virgin. I almost always saw her with the habit of Our Lady of Sorrows;¹⁷ and while living, I never saw her in a

16. These details are taken from the notes of Fr. Valentín and Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva.

17. In the Spanish towns at the time, people frequently promised to wear the habit for a specified time. These promises were made as an act of penance and devotion to obtain special graces by the intercession of a saint or the Virgin Mary. The habits worn most fre-

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quarrel with anyone. So we don't know what the girls' going to their places in the cemetery means . . .

Witnessing the things done by the girls in those November days were some people from France who were in Garabandal for the first time, and who worked very hard afterwards in defense of its authenticity. Among them was Father Materne Laffineur—at times also called José—well known by the pen name of Doctor Bonance. What they observed at the time can be found in the widely read book *L'Etoile dans la Montagne* (Star on the Mountain):

During the days of November in 1962 when we watched the group ecstasies, they started after the recitation of the rosary in the church.

The book goes on to describe one of the ecstasies in detail:

As soon as they left with the spectators to return home, the rapture caught three of them: Conchita, Mari Dolores and Jacinta. The three young girls ran through the village, holding on to each other's arms with crucifixes in their hands. With their faces looking upward, they seemed unusually beautiful by the illumination from the flashlights. Absolutely insensible to what was around them, unconscious even that they were moving, the girls were followed by the townspeople who recited the rosary with them or sang hymns.

They went up swiftly to the Pines which overlook the village, and descended backwards down the incredibly rocky trail, their faces always looking upwards, risking being killed a hundred times!

Returning to the church, they made a circle around it, and suddenly let out an astonishing laugh—a laugh that was luminous, and at the same time like the tingling of little bells, a laugh that scandalized us at first . . . How could one actually laugh in the presence of the Virgin, even with a laugh so beautiful?

Up to five times on that night, they set out across the village, always in ecstasy, drawing with them the gathering crowd. They made a stop at the cemetery, undoubtedly out of compassion for the souls in purgatory.

Then, after a last detour in front of the closed door of the church, they lifted each other up to give a kiss to the Virgin, whom they were seeing above them, and to receive her kiss. Finally, they fell on their knees more sharply than at the start. Without a transition, they became abruptly the simple and smiling children that we knew. The mysterious reflection that transfigured their faces in ecstasy had disappeared . . . Later we asked Conchita the reason for the laugh that had disturbed us:

quently in honor of the Virgin were those of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (brown) and those of Our Lady of Sorrows (black).

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—“Because the Virgin herself laughed!”

—“Why?”

—“Because we were singing so badly!”

That was correct; our tape recorders testified to it!

If by this report from the French witnesses, we can get an idea of what the group ecstasies were like at that time; by another report of theirs, we can picture what the individual ecstasies were:

One morning in her home, having recited the Angelus,¹⁸ Conchita fell suddenly on her knees. She was transformed with a glowing beauty, supra-terrestrial. Her face, naturally pleasant, was as if refined; a type of interior light glowed from it. She seemed to be nothing more than love, drawn toward Her who was attracting the girl’s gaze above her. Nevertheless, her body had a weight so extraordinary that one of the watchers, a muscular man, taking her under the elbows, couldn’t lift her up!

On standing up by herself, she held the crucifix in her hand, and made a majestic sign of the cross on herself; then she presented the crucifix to be kissed by Our Lady and then held it to the lips of each of us.

Then without looking around her, she went upstairs, gave the Virgin to kiss—on Her request—a statue of the Infant Jesus of Prague, and came back down to the kitchen. It is impossible to describe the attitude of the young girl, her eyes raised up, not looking at the steps that she was descending with a majesty that one could call the comportment of a queen.

The apparition stopped as it had begun, abruptly. The child then approached one of the people present¹⁹ and told her: “The Virgin gave me a message for you.” Then she went to look for a holycard on which she wrote several words

18. The recitation of the Angelus seemed especially indicated to precede the apparition. We have seen Fr. Valentín’s notation on September 26th:

“At six in the morning, when a priest—there were five from outside the dioceses—was reciting the Angelus, the girl (*Conchita*) fell on her knees in ecstasy . . .”

And from the following month, October, there is a reference from María Herrero de Gallardo:

“I was alone with another person in Conchita’s house, since all the others had gone to see Loli’s ecstasy. Conchita was waiting impatiently at the time, since she already had two *calls*” . . . “At 2:30 in the morning I said to the girl, ‘Let’s pray the Angelus.’ She said to me, ‘You say it.’ The three of us got down on our knees and I began, ‘The Angel of the Lord announced unto Mary’ . . . We finished the prayer and repeated three times the Glory be to the Father. On finishing the third Gloria, Conchita fell in ecstasy.

The same thing occurred in front of me on at least three occasions, which makes me think that the Angelus must be a prayer especially pleasing to the Virgin.”

19. This probably refers to Baroness María Theresa Le Pelletier de Glatigny, a collaborator with Father Laffineur.

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that corresponded to the stranger's intimate problems, problems absolutely unknown to the child. (*L'Etoile dans la Montagne*)

Pleasure and Penance

The same French people to whom we are indebted for the previous reports, help us again with some brief notes to understand better how the exceptional mystery was lived in Garabandal during the days of November, 1962:

When the Virgin announced her visit like this (by calls), neither the parents nor the visionaries went to bed. We passed the evenings with Conchita, her mother, her brother Serafín, and other visitors . . . Who could describe the charm of those evenings, of those nights of waiting, interspersed with prayers, hymns and conversation, as each one thanked the Virgin for her infinite delicateness.

It is easy to understand why the vigils caused such *pleasure* for those who experienced them as an isolated and amazing novelty in their lives. But the people for whom the vigils were intermixed with the routine of life for a long time, felt increasing weariness augment night after night . . .

As an aid to understand better the penances entailed in these nights at Garabandal during that season, here is an excerpt from a letter that Maximina wrote on November 22nd to Dr. Ortiz' sister-in-law Eloísa de la Roza Velarde:

On Saturday we went up to the Pines, praying the rosary in pouring rain . . . Later we went to the cemetery, and there we were stuck in mud up to our ears. On Sunday, the same thing: we went up to the Pines. Everything was covered with snow; the people were sliding and rolling down, but they went up anyhow! Later the girls went down backwards on their knees, thru all the snow and the roughest places; later, to the cemetery, under the hail and with a bitter wind . . . On Tuesday, the same thing, and thru the same places. On Wednesday it was a better night, but freezing cold . . .

Dr. Ortiz confided to me what the daughter of Tiva (Primitiva), a resident of Garabandal, told him:

On the night of December 1st, I had a very painful toothache, on account of which I had not gone to bed. On this night at 3:00 in the morning, I heard a noise in Jacinta's house. I looked out and saw the girl go outside in ecstasy on that infernal night of ice and rain. I felt sorry for her and went down to keep her company. At the time I got there, María, her mother, was going out of the house

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in a very bad mood, while saying, “A night like this, another one like this . . . I’m not going to allow her again. I’ll barricade the door shut . . .”

In the street we met María Dolores, in ecstasy too, and completely alone. Then I went to tell her mother, Julia. The two girls joined together with the three of us behind them. We went up to the Pines twice, praying the rosary; as usual we ran through the village . . . The night was really stormy, and María’s bad mood didn’t leave her. Julia tried to calm her, “Woman, what are we going to do? These are the affairs of God . . . Today I have to console you; other times you have consoled me . . .”

The penitential aspect that these *charming* vigils in Garabandal had acquired could not be denied. Conchita wrote to Fr. José Ramón, the pastor of Barro, on November 29th:

I have just received your letter, which I’m going to answer, although I didn’t think I would be writing you now, since I have to sleep! Yesterday I had two apparitions and the last one at 4 o’clock in the morning; and so I didn’t sleep at all.

It was no wonder that the girls occasionally made minor complaints such as that which Luis Navas heard from Conchita:

Why don’t you let me eat? Before you prevented me from sleeping, now also from eating. In heaven, obviously, it isn’t necessary to eat . . . with seeing God! . . . But since I don’t see God, I have to eat.

Although the visionaries certainly were practicing penance, miraculously the penance did not affect their physical or psychological health in the slightest way. Doctor Ortiz wrote at the end of September:

I am amazed by the girls, that in spite of passing the majority of nights without sleep—as a consequence without sufficient rest for the body—their general and psychological state is better all the time.²⁰

20. Maximina, in a letter to the Pifarré family on December 27th, also describes this fact:

“Look. If this isn’t true, how do the girls do everything that they do these days when the weather is very bad and freezing? And up to now none of them have become sick. How is it possible that night after night for more than a year now they have been able to endure such cold and loss of sleep?”

We can picture those winter nights at Garabandal from Maximina’s letter to the Pifarrés on December 13th:

“This morning at 5:15 I heard a knocking on the door of the house. I got up and went out. There was Conchita in ecstasy with her mother, her brother, and three other women . . . We went outside; we went through the whole village praying the rosary. Then we sang the Salve and several songs as usual. Look, our lips were freezing. I carried an umbrella, but I couldn’t hold it up because of the cold and the weight of the snow. It was

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In the autumn of 1962, important matters for the Church were happening in the Council at Rome. But perhaps more important for the Church were those that were happening in poor Garabandal of “the apparitions.”

Only God can measure things that are immeasurable by human standards.

a terrible morning, snowing with thunder and a wind that blew snow into our faces and on our legs, making us shiver.”

CHAPTER 22

Toward the End

1 962 WAS A YEAR crammed with events in the process of Garabandal. There were innumerable apparitions by the Virgin, numerous Mystical Communions, certain exceptional episodes like the nights of the “gritos” or screams, the Miracle of the Host on July 18th, and furthermore the increasing predictions of a great Miracle.

It was the Miracle that was beginning to appear as the finale of the whole process. On the one hand, it would come to put a definite seal of authenticity on the origin of so many and such extraordinary phenomena; on the other hand, it would come to give the last opportunity for salvation before the great catastrophe.

With the Miracle in sight, one could begin looking for a final outcome, since certainly no one could think that these phenomena would continue like this indefinitely.

And so the Miracle was being discussed more and more in the statements of the girls and was increasing in importance in the hopes of the pilgrims.

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More News, More Expectation

The winter of 1963 began on the heights of Garabandal without an interruption in the normal march of the apparitions. The three girls who remained—Jacinta, Loli, and Conchita—were accustomed to have their ecstasies individually. But at times the three joined together, and the ecstatic march that resulted was singularly beautiful. In Fr. Valentín's notes of December 3rd, 1962, there is this excerpt:

Today our attention was attracted by their way of walking. A total synchronization of movements was observed. The three held their step perfectly, in the manner of a military march. They only lost the rhythm when they had to avoid some difficult obstacle, or on the rare occasions when they stumbled; but immediately they regained the cadence. Loli attracted the most attention because she has a natural tendency to walk with shorter steps than the other two, probably because she is much smaller.

On this day, Conchita came out of ecstasy before the other two;¹ and it was observed that, while the other two continued in their rhythmic step, perfectly synchronized, Conchita began to walk in her normal way. There was also another unusual thing on this day. We had always seen that when the three girls marched in ecstasy, Conchita infallibly occupied the center position. Today it

1. In Garabandal during these December days was a man from Barcelona named Francisco Clapes Maymó, who was kind enough to send me a copy of his notes from this period. In the notes pertaining to the night between December 2nd and 3rd, I see Fr. Valentín's statements confirmed:

Conchita ended the ecstasy first, and she continued holding the arms of Jacinta and María Dolores. (Loli)

María Dolores had an expression of sorrow.

Ceferino, who was listening beside María Dolores in ecstasy, said that from what he had heard this was diabolical, and they were discussing this . . .

Conchita said the meeting that they had in ecstasy in a room of her house was not diabolical, but from the Virgin.

This meeting took place on the previous afternoon, December 2, and we know of it from the testimony of this same Mr. Clapes Maymó:

At 6:20 in the afternoon Conchita fell into ecstasy while playing, and on seeing her, María Dolores and Jacinta had an ecstasy too.

They didn't say the rosary. They made tours through the village, coming to the church several times. At the beginning of the ecstasy the three entered Conchita's house, went up to her room, making signs so that no one would follow them. They were upstairs for awhile. We don't know what they did or said. (It might be asked whether this private audience might not have been for the Virgin to reveal the date of the Miracle.)

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was not like this; she constantly occupied a position on the side. Jacinta went in the center, Loli at the left, and Conchita at the right.

December 6th was a Tuesday, the day before the vigil of the Immaculate Conception. Long before dusk had settled, toward 5:30, Conchita had an ecstasy that lasted 90 minutes. When it was over, the girl made two important announcements with regard to the Miracle:

- 1) One day, a little before the Miracle will be performed, something will happen that will cause many people to stop believing in the apparitions of Garabandal. The doubts and desertions will not be due to an excessive delay of the Miracle.
- 2) On the day of the Miracle, the note that she signed in Santander (stating the apparitions were not authentic) would disappear.²

Two days later came the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the most solemn Marian feast and the one best observed in Spain. Furthermore, it was Conchita's nameday. Almost at the beginning of the day, at 3 o'clock in the morning, the girl was favored with an ecstasy. Part of what she said in conversation with the apparition was recorded on a tape recorder. Some of her phrases had an astounding childishness, if it is taken into account that she was approaching her 14th birthday. For example, with regard to the Child whom the Virgin brought this time:

Today they brought a child to me that doesn't seem like the one that you bring . . . And how long since you've come with the Child! He hasn't grown at all! Look, He's the same as He was . . . Where has He been? Where has He been? . . . Oh! When the Child doesn't come, where does He stay? In heaven! In a cradle? . . . Oh! But you can't be here and there!

Interspersed with these childish remarks and other unintelligible expressions, there also were heard words obviously related to the Miracle.

2. This refers to the paper that she signed—on pressure from Dr. Piñal—when she was taken to the capital at Santander at the end of July, 1961. (See chapter VI of Part One.)

The information about December 6th was taken from the notes of Fr. Valentín.

Mr. Clapes Maymó gives his version as an eye-witness:

Conchita had an ecstasy that went from 5:35 to 6:40 in the morning . . .

When she was normal again, she said that the paper the doctor in Santander had made her sign—stating that the apparitions were false and that she was insane—would disappear by the Virgin's command.

She said too that just before the Miracle almost no one would believe in Garabandal . . .

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But they did not spell out anything new, leaving up in the air any explanation that might have been given by the mysterious conversationalist.

The same kind of thing occurred in the ecstasy that Jacinta had almost immediately afterward. There were similar childish questions as:

Do you sometimes shiver there when snow comes like this? . . . But the snow comes from there up above.

Together with these remarks, there were other points of interest that could not be completely understood:

I want that day to come, to be part of it . . . You know why I want that day to come? My father doesn't believe . . . Oh! After the Miracle comes, will the people believe? . . . A week is enough? . . . When will the people see you?³

The topic of the Miracle filled the air in Garabandal in those final weeks of 1962. Fr. Valentín's notes, which end during these days, give as almost the last piece of information:

"On this day of December 15th, Conchita told Mercedes Salisachs that a totally paralyzed man would be cured on the day of the Miracle, wherever he was."⁴

In an atmosphere like this, what produced the tremendous crisis that abruptly dashed the hopes and annihilated most of the enthusiasm?

3. A young woman from Madrid, Paloma Fernandez-Pacheco, was present that day in Garabandal with her husband Mr. de Larrauri. She wrote me several observations:

"The child about whom Conchita talked in ecstasy was the Child Jesus of the Nativity that I brought. I myself took the reel of tape that recorded the conversation to the NO-DO laboratories. It was rather long, and at times the Virgin's voice seemed to be heard. At NO-DO they told me that the tape had two voices on it. But that they were not at the same volume, as they were very different in tone and pitch. (I don't remember well the technical words they used.) They were amazed . . ."

4. Clapes Maymó also confirms this information. On the morning of December 10:

"Conchita had an ecstasy between 5:27 and 5:37. (ten minutes) Accompanying her were Mrs. (Mercedes) Salisachs, a lady friend, Felix (An ex-seminarian from Bilbao), a young child from Colunga (Asturias) and Mrs. Salisachs' chauffeur . . . She said that a paralyzed child—known by this woman—for whom she had asked Conchita to pray, would be cured wherever he was." (on the day of the Miracle)

Weariness & Disillusion

On December 28th, Maximina wrote to Eloísa de la Roza Velarde, the sister-in-law of Dr. Ortiz. Together with complaints about the absence of liturgical services for Christmas,⁵ there was a brief remark about the situation:

The apparitions continue as usual; but we haven't learned more about the miracle. (She mentions the sentiments of two people from Asturias who were staying in her house because of a sign that they received, and then she continues.) This caused no effect on those who are here since we have done all this. We hope to see something greater and I don't know when we'll see it, since it seems that the girls don't say anything about the miracle. It seems, according to what we have heard, that Loli and Jacinta's miracle is going to be this year. But it remains to be seen if it will be this year. The main thing is that it will be! Since we are afraid that it will not be. Conchita says that hers won't be delayed . . .

From these lines and from other references of this period, it can be clearly seen that at the end of 1962 rumors were circulating of two predicted miracles. One miracle was being forecast by Conchita in her statements; another, by Loli and Jacinta in their remarks, foretelling a different miracle.⁶ It appears that Loli and Jacinta were talking about *their*

5. "On Christmas Day, we didn't have a midnight Mass or a dawn Mass; that is, we had none, either at night or during the day. So we didn't know it was Christmas. Father Valentín didn't come up because of bad weather."

But if the celebration of Mass was lacking on Christmas Day for the people of Garabandal, the special favor of God was not lacking, and it came through its visionaries.

Maximina wrote:

"On Christmas Eve, Jacinta and Loli were at the Pines at 12:00 at night. And the weather was very bad that night, snowing and very cold. Conchita spent all night in her kitchen, and at 4:00 in the morning went in ecstasy to the Pines, and from there came down a good part of the way on her knees on top of the snow, and later she went to the cemetery . . ."

6. It is certain that in the last months of 1962 the people were waiting for two miracles that had been predicted separately: one—more immediate—that of Loli and Jacinta; the other, that of Conchita.

Jacinta and Loli spoke definitely of their miracle; but there are reasons to question whether it had initially been their idea.

I finally was able to speak with Jacinta in Santander on November 10th, 1973. I questioned her on the matter, and from her words, these things were brought out clearly:

1) The Virgin had never clearly promised her a miracle. Whenever she had petitioned the Virgin "so that the people would believe", as an answer she had only obtained silence and a vague "They will believe. They will believe."

2) That it was Conchita who put in her mind and Loli's the idea of an imminent mira-

miracle as if it were to be very near; and the people, either because they heard this, or because they misunderstood, were convinced that the miracle would happen before the year ended.⁷

But the year did end and what was hoped for did not materialize. Oppressive dejection and bitter disenchantment began to descend on the parents, the townspeople, and the pilgrims. Not only because the miracle had not been performed on the date that they expected, but also because of the fear that it would never be performed. “The main thing is that it will be!”—we have heard Maximina say—“Since we fear that it will not be.”

And this was the beginning of the great crisis of the winter of 1963.

Unquestionably we now find ourselves before one of the most complicated and least clear of the episodes about Garabandal.

I have tried to bring it clearly into the open; but this has not been possible for two reasons: 1) Because of the lack of sufficient testimonies and written reports. 2) Because I was not able to investigate on the site, speaking with the visionaries and the villagers, due to the closed and ill-natured opposition of Bishop Cirarda.

But if it is not possible to bring it out clearly into the open, at least it can be partially brought out.

In February of 1963, Fr. Luis López Retenaga made another visit to Garabandal lasting three days, from the 22nd to the 24th. Afterwards he dictated a report for the prevailing bishop of Santander, Bishop Beitia Aldazábal (the visit to the site of the apparitions had been made with the bishop’s express authorization), and in that report we find some very valuable information:

This is the fourth time that I have visited the mountain village . . . During my previous visit, in the final months of the past year, I heard of rumors that were

cle in which the two of them would take part. And in this sense and because of Conchita’s words they spoke of their miracle.

It is hard to explain what Conchita sought in staging this.

7. From October to December, Maximina’s frequent letters to the Pifarré family touch time and again on the subject of “Jacinta and Loli’s miracle” . . . It was presented as being so imminent—from what the girls said—that Maximina repeatedly expressed her fear that she would not be able to warn them in time to make the trip from Barcelona to Garabandal. (At the time there was no telephone in the village that she could use.) At times she even held back mailing the letters she had written during those days, thinking the girls might tell her the date at any moment . . .

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circulating with regard to the realization, rather imminent, of a miracle predicted by Loli and Jacinta.

It was not possible in those circumstances to check personally on the accuracy of such predictions. But I know that at the beginning of the month of January of the present year, seeing that the hoped-for miracle predicted by the two girls was not crystallizing into reality, the hopes of many people were seen to fall. Not only the families but also the majority of the villagers felt themselves cheated and humiliated.

Subject to the rough manners and the extreme attitudes that are characteristic of the masses, the people changed the admiration that they felt for the girls into an attitude of rejection and distrust, converting them into a continuous object of their complaints. Such an attitude was directed principally against Conchita, who always has been considered as the most responsible, or culpable of the four . . .

These lines help us to understand the feeling in the village at the beginning of 1963; but we would also like to know how such a situation came about. And this is what Fr. López Retenaga says:

Conchita mentioned to me that on returning one day from Cabezón de la Sal, Loli and Jacinta were speaking of a miracle that had occurred to them and which consisted in burying a statue of the Virgin in order to tell the people later when they were in ecstasy, "Dig here and you will find a Virgin."

Conchita took it for a joke, and continuing in the same line of jesting,⁸ she spoke of some magic powders that had the power to suspend whoever took them up in the air . . . The three girls then tried the marvelous powders, which were nothing more than dentifrice.⁹ Only Loli, perhaps because of the mixture of the marvelous and ingenuousness in which she had been involved for the preceding year and a half, seemed to take the thing seriously, and tried the powders with the hope of seeing herself suspended in the air.

Conchita assured me that her involvement in this incident was no more than this: a practical joke.¹⁰

8. Conchita has always shown a good sense of humor.

9. What Fr. Retenaga says here is confirmed by some lines from Conchita's letter to the daughter of Eloísa de la Roza, on February 18th:

"You know what has happened . . . Well there's trouble here now. Some of those who believed in the apparitions now believe nothing, due to the problems there have been lately. And furthermore, do you know the cause of this mess? Because of some toothpowder that I gave Loli and Jacinta, telling them it would raise them up in the air . . ."

10. Fr. Retenaga records Conchita's version like this, giving her a better appearance than her companions. But I was finally able to record Jacinta's version, and according to it the affair was somewhat different. She told me that Conchita was the real inventor of the plan to bury a statue, etc., in the accomplishment of which she wanted to drag in the other two,

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But the joke, as has been pointed out, brought many disagreeable consequences.

It is difficult to understand the whole matter with proper perspective. But if with regard to the dental powders we can admit that it all was due to Conchita's practical joke (to which the others did not catch on), we cannot be so indulgent before the affair of burying the statue . . .

How could these girls calmly think up such a deceitful scheme?

Objectively: They had to recognize their actions were not right and honest, if not absolutely reproachable.

Subjectively: What degree of culpability did they have?

For me it is impossible to say, for lack of sufficient information for judgment.

But I am inclined to think that, at least on the part of Loli and Jacinta, it was another display of the regrettable and almost unconscious frivolousness that they had shown in the previous year with their faked ecstasies.

Fr. Luis López Retenaga seems to think the same way in his report:

I have to point out, that whoever judges the psychology of the girls, basing it on the maturity of judgment and reflection proper to an adult, well-educated person, will encounter many problems. I have already noted in my first report, as a general appraisal, the noticeable psychological backwardness of the girls as compared to girls of the same age from our industrial towns and cities. Together with their candid and ingenuous psychology, the girls have for a year and a half been presenting to the Vision things varying from the most purile pranks to the most serious and urgent problems brought by the spectators. The spectators were seeking more to find the marvelous and striking than to adhere to the demands of the message proclaimed by the girls . . . And I think that in the mixture of these two psychological worlds, that of the girls and that of the crowds, is the explanation as to how there could come about things ranging from jokes up to the expectation of a great miracle.

Together with the constant pressures by the crowds on the subconscious state of the girls—habituated to experiencing the supernatural as

remaining herself very clearly on the sidelines. And if Loli and Jacinta did not carry through with the plan, it was due to fear of the possible presence or intervention of the devil.

And with regard to the powders, I am afraid that this was not such an innocent *joke* as Conchita wanted Fr. Retenaga to believe . . . Anyhow the other two took it so seriously that Loli got sick to her stomach due to the repeated doses that she ingested with the hope of rising up into the air.

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something of everyday life—there were also other pressures that disturbed the pure flow of the events of Garabandal.

Fr. Retenaga adds something further here: “A certain long standing antagonism between the families of the girls.”

This was the situation. Conchita was coming, little by little, but progressively more each day, into the forefront of attention. Perhaps the families and the friends of the other girls—because of village envies which we know about—were annoyed in a thousand ways, bringing them unconsciously to a certain desire not to be less: If Conchita had her miracle, why should not they likewise have theirs?

To this should be added, it seems to me, the urge to find an end or conclusion to all this. The families had to feel rather tired of the unending series of phenomena that had already lost much of their first excitement, but which were continuing to be a constant reason for preoccupation during the day and for loss of sleep at night. How and when was this going to end? For it seemed to be coming to the time when it was going to end. And that it should terminate in something that was worth the trouble.

“To those who are here”—remarked Maximina in her letter—“this doesn’t make any impression, since we have done all this. We hope to see something greater . . .”

Perhaps at the time, the children thought to confront the situation by the announcement of a miracle. Since the Virgin had given them to understand with her repeated, “They will believe, they will believe,” that something marvelous was going to occur, why not speak about it with her (and even put pressure on her) by predicting a prodigy which could not wait?¹¹

I do not seek to justify the girls, but only to clarify the circumstances that could have lessened, perhaps substantially, their responsibility in a procedure that merits being condemned.

11. It appears that talk about the proximate miracle began during the second half of October, since on October 25th, Maximina wrote to the Dr. Ortiz’ sister-in-law:

“It is seen that there is going to be a miracle: that of Loli and Jacinta. They already know the date, but have not told us yet. It’s going to be very soon, and I believe it’s going to be that they will be raised up in the air . . . Conchita’s is going to be—if it is true what they say—something very great. Everyone in the village will see it. Conchita’s miracle may take place in the sky.”

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Well then, if what they sought was to force an outcome, they obtained it. However the outcome that came was certainly very different from what they would have imagined.

After 19 Months, the Final Period?

We must return now, in these high points of our story, to Conchita's diary, which helped us so much in the beginning, but which is not of equal service for the second half of 1962. She says on the final pages:

At the beginning of it all, the Virgin told the four of us—Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz, and myself—that:

—we would contradict each other,

—that our families wouldn't get along well,

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

Obviously we were very surprised that she told us these things.

And everything that the Virgin told us at the beginning happened during the month of January, 1963.

We came to contradict each other.

And we even denied that we had seen the Virgin.

We even went one day to confess it.

But we felt inside that the Angel and the Most Holy Virgin had appeared to us, since they had brought a peace and internal joy to our souls, and a great desire to love them with our whole hearts.

For their smile and their speech and what they told us made us love them, love them very much, and give ourselves completely to them.

When we went to confession, it was without thinking about it, without believing that it was a sin.

We went because the parish priest told us that we should go to confession.

And we, I don't know how it was, well . . .

We doubted a little, but a doubt of a type that seems from the devil, who wants us to deny the Virgin.

And afterwards, we told our parents that we hadn't seen the Virgin; but that the calls and the Miracle of the Sacred Host were true.

In my heart, I was surprised to say these things.

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But my conscience was completely calm about having seen the Most Holy Virgin.

And the parish priest, Father Valentín Marichalar, gave us ten rosaries and five Our Fathers for penance.

And after we had said this, in a few days the Virgin appeared to us again.

We have extensive material here in Conchita's words describing a precise, long-standing prophecy, which finally is fulfilled.

We are facing the development of the so-called denials (negations) of the girls. But more than denials or negations, we might speak of tremendous doubts or darkneses, which they were not capable of interpreting or of expressing. The whole process has been long and complicated. Its herald breeze appeared in Mari Cruz, who for some time—and much more since the total cessation of her ecstasies in the previous September—found herself in a special situation. On this follows now the storm of negations in January of 1963, during which the remaining visionaries are implicated. Conchita and her two companions will soon recover from this, as we will see later on. But in August of 1966, a new tempest of confusion in the girls concerning the apparitions will blast forth.

The events will then be publicly denounced by the newly appointed Bishop Puchol, who personally disliked this affair,¹² in a questionable *Nota* on March 17th, 1967:

“There have been no apparitions. There has been no message. All the events that happened have a natural explanation.”

As now we are relating the facts, and are still in January of 1963, I do not wish to comment on the contents of that *Nota*, the circumstances that preceded its composition, or the consequences that followed it. The day will come to bring everything into the open. What I want to say here is that such a phenomena of doubts and negations is not some thing exclu-

12. Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal, who three years previously had entered the bishop's house at Santander, was relieved of his pastoral duties on his own request in 1965. Vicente Puchol Montis succeeded him as bishop in August, 1965.

When the nomination was publicized, a Madrid canon wrote to Fr. Lucio Rodrigo of the Pontifical University at Comillas, warning him that “Garabandal had a great enemy in the new bishop”, as he turned out to be.

Bishop Puchol died tragically in an automobile accident on May 8th, the feast of the apparition of St. Michael the Archangel at Mount Gargano in Italy.

sive to Garabandal,¹³ nor is it substantial evidence against the truth of the events.

Let us return to the first negations of the visionaries in January of 1963. It can immediately be seen that they clearly showed wavering and hesitation. The girls themselves did not understand what was happening, and were surprised by what they had said—in such contrast with what they personally felt. It could be said that a strange and mysterious force—Conchita names it: the devil—brought them to express something that did not agree with their most undeniable experiences.¹⁴

The priest from the seminary in San Sebastián, Father Luis López Rete-naga, in his third report to Bishop Beitia, gave his impressions of what he perceived in the girls during the Holy Week of 1963:

In the face of the joke that was converted into “the miracle that failed,” they saw themselves pressured by their families and many people (to admit that all had been a lie). This pressure was seen by them as an argument from authority, and they fell into real doubts concerning the origin of what had happened to them . . . Conchita, in the general uncertainty and trusting in the people as knowing more than she, in spite of her internal conviction of having seen a mar-

13. For example, it is known that the venerable Father Hoyos—the Spanish Jesuit associated with the apparitions and promises of the Sacred Heart of Jesus—sometime after the phenomenon had happened to him, fell into such doubts and scruples concerning the authenticity of his apparitions that he came to believe to his dismay that he was the greatest deceiver in the world, a sinner not meriting pardon. And a similar thing happened to Bernadette Soubirous, the seer from Lourdes, during her convent life at Nevers; but the Church certainly knew how to evaluate Bernadette’s doubts or negations, elevating her to the supreme honor of the altars, after a long process according to ecclesiastical law.

I believe, referring to the masters of mystical theology, that it is not difficult to explain the contradictions of the seers at Garabandal, nor is it hard to understand what value should be attributed to them.

14. We can speak also of pressures that are not attributable to the action of the devil. In the beginning of April, Luis Navas was once again at Garabandal; he was upset by this new situation, so different from what he had experienced there on previous occasions. Trying to find an explanation, he began speaking to various people; and after being with Loli, “he drew”—he said—“the conclusion that Ceferino had put pressure on his daughter when the miracle did not come in September as he expected . . .”

Actually, Ceferino was always one of the hardest to convince with regard to believing personally in the truth of the phenomena. Not that he did not understand them, nor that he could not explain them; but to believe in them was something different. In his case, as in the other families of the visionaries, could well be said what Jesus mentioned in his day: “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, and among his own kindred, and in his own house.” (Mark 6: 4)

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velous being, ended up declaring to the pastor too that all had been a lie, except the miracle of the Host . . .

It is clear that these days of January were tremendously painful for the visionaries because of their own internal sufferings and the troubles and discords which developed in their families due to the general confusion.

Certainly because they were not completely responsible for what they said, the Virgin did not completely withdraw her favors: “And after we had said this, in a few days the Virgin appeared to us again.”

But the process had been set in motion and complications were developing internally and externally.

And Ceferino, Loli’s father, had told a commission of doctors to come; their names were Alejandro Gasca, Félix Gallego and Celestino Ortiz.

And on the night that they came, they began to question Mari Cruz, Jacinta and Loli, and their parents¹⁵ about the reason that they were saying that they weren’t seeing the Virgin . . .

And I don’t know what they thought.

What I do know is that they said that I performed the miracle of the Host,

And they explained it their way.

Obviously they didn’t know what they were saying at the time.

And they allowed themselves to be controlled by the devil.

And after that day, they didn’t have any more apparitions.

I had apparitions on the same night, and until the 20th of January.

After that I didn’t see her again.

As can be seen, we are in an important period concerning Garabandal. After so many months of being enveloped in light, there comes a complete

15. Dr. Alejandro Gasca was in practice at Santander; later he held an important post in the Health Department at Saragossa. Dr. Félix Gallego was practicing at Requejada Polanco near Torrelavega. As for Dr. Ortiz, he is already well known to the reader.

There are reasons to believe that in the answers that the three doctors received there came out strongly the “long standing antagonism” between the families of the visionaries that Fr. Luis López Retenaga mentioned in his report.

The major attack was, as usual, against Conchita. Some looked at her hostilely because they believed that she had inspired or was the one principally responsible for all this; others, because they resented her role as the leading figure.

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eclipse, perhaps final. And it seems that the girls and their families are not without fault. Now things can return to tranquility. Now there is nothing to occupy them: neither the miracle that they were awaiting with such impatience, nor the apparitions which they formerly had so surely. There was little except the memory of what had existed . . . And the message to be fulfilled.

When did the complete cutting off of the ecstasies and apparitions occur?

The date for Conchita we know, since she herself mentions it in her diary; her last day was: the 20th of January. We can notice the peculiar fact that this was the feastday of Saint Sebastián the martyr, the patron of the village, from whose name the parish is titled. In that year it was on a Sunday.

For Jacinta and Loli, we only know for certain that it was slightly before that, as Conchita also tells us in the same place. Examining some letters from Maximina, which Doctor Ortiz gave me, I have come to the conclusion that the last day for them was between January 8th and 16th, since in a letter dated on the 8th of January she speaks normally of the apparitions and in another, dated on January 16th, she describes a new situation.

We read on January 8th:

The miracle, which apparently was going to be so soon, is taking a long time. But don't be worried since they think the same thing. They say that it won't be delayed. The date has still not passed. Now they go very often to the Pines. Every night Conchita comes down the entire hill and a good part of the path backwards on her knees; she always goes alone now. The other two go together, holding arms. Every night that they go, they come down backwards too. Loli, you know, has an apparition every night; but she only goes outside on the nights that the other girl goes out . . .

And she says on January 16th:

You know everything that is happening . . . Conchita is the only one who sees the Virgin. That is certain; the others deny that they see her. This is so you will be informed . . .

We are also informed of the effects that were caused in the village by this unexpected turn of events. We have some information in Maximina's letters; the one from the 16th says:

Here there are families who are very happy, since this thing is uncertain. You know, there is a lot of jealousy. And there are other families who believe more

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than ever. I say that she is my niece and I believe in her. The poor child couldn't lie. But I believe very little in the apparitions. Heavens! Doesn't it seem, if this doesn't happen, that it's going to be the ruin of many people? You can imagine how much trouble there is around here . . .

And another letter dated February 11th to the same recipient, Eloísa de la Roza Velarda, reads:

Since the apparitions aren't seen anymore, there is nothing in particular around here. I came to doubt everything completely; today I am once again convinced that there was something here . . .

During these days, Conchita wrote a postcard to María Herrero de Galardo, which was received in Madrid on February 18th, and in it is said:

You ask me if it's true that we don't have apparitions. Yes, it has been some time since we have had them . . . I don't know when the Virgin will appear to me again, since she didn't say good-bye, nor did she say anything to us. Here the people are very discouraged.¹⁶

And so then, 1962, the second year of Garabandal—so important, so filled with events—came unexpectedly to the crisis of January, 1963.

If Garabandal seemed to be marked from the beginning by hugh question marks, this abrupt shutting off of the proceedings—“She didn't say good-bye, nor did she say anything to us.”—leaves us hanging more than ever, with all conceivable answers up in the air.

But this painful finale cannot make us forget that 1962 was a year of marvels¹⁷ whose marks remain in hundreds of persons who had the good

16. Jacinta also stated that the Virgin stopped appearing to her in January of 1963, “without saying goodbye or giving an explanation.”

But of those visits, of which she now has only a vague recollection, there still remain wonderful memories.

In her visits, the Virgin had listened and talked with a marvelous delicateness and gentleness. The girls had never seen her with a severe look or the least sign of irritation. Whenever she came, after listening with smiling patience and intense interest, she used her turn to speak in instructing the girls, little by little, in the elements of the spiritual life. Jacinta remembers most of all, besides the instructions on prayer and the manner of praying, the things that she told them about the priesthood and priests. “I believe that struck me the most and left in my mind such esteem and veneration for them that I'm not able to explain it.”

17. And there has come to us an astounding prediction.

On the night of December 19th to the 20th, Wednesday to Thursday, there was something very important, according to the notes of Mr. Clapes Maymó:

“Conchita had an ecstasy from 3:15 to 5:15. It began in her house. Mrs. Salisachs, Nati, her mother, and her brother Serafin were present. She went out from the house, went

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fortune to see them, in many more who did not see them but who believe in them with all their heart.¹⁸

All these marvels had one single purpose: to awaken our attention toward the incomprehensible mystery of . . .

Emmanuel: God with us

through the village, went up to the Cuadro and came down backwards, went to the cemetery, to the house of Mari Cruz . . .

During the ecstasy she was heard to say, “Mercedes (Salisachs) said that Saint Malachy had prophesied about the Popes and that only two are left . . .”

After the ecstasy, Conchita told us the Virgin’s response: “After the present (John the 23rd) there were still three; after that there would be no more.”

18. Fr. Retenaga, in composing this first report on Garabandal in December of 1962, resumés the Christian scope of the phenomena:

“What the girls ask of our world today in the name of the Virgin is “more prayer, more penance, more Eucharistic life.”

This latter—more Eucharistic life—characterizes the second year at Garabandal, as the Marian Epiphany seemed to characterize the first year.

We have seen how the girls’ visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the Mystical Communion increased. I do not know when the last Mystical Communion occurred; but I do know the last time Conchita was waiting for one. It was on the first Friday of January, 1963, as Maximina explained in her letter that day to Dr. Ortiz. After praying the rosary early in the morning at the *calleja*, as she did every day, Conchita and her relatives went down to the church to pray a Station to the Blessed Sacrament. In the courtyard, the girl had an apparition, and minutes later, began to cry.

“We asked her”—Maximina wrote—“why she was crying, and she told us: ‘Because the Angel didn’t give me Communion.’”

—But today is First Friday and the pastor will come to say Mass in the village!

—“That’s true. I forgot that. And the Angel didn’t tell me anything . . .”

Here we have another little proof, since if she would have said that the Angel had given her Communion, we would have known right away that she was lying.”

The good woman is referring to a thing that was well known and repeated: the Angel only came to give Communion when there were no priests there who could give It.

Part III

Maranatha—O Lord, Come

(1963–1965)

CHAPTER 23

A Year of Interlude

WITH THE CRISIS that erupted in January of this year began the first of the long parentheses in the amazing unfolding of the Garabandal mystery.

The course of the apparitions abruptly stops, without the girls knowing the reason, without the Virgin giving them the least explanation, without even a word of farewell. As Conchita wrote on February 18th to María Herrero de Gallardo:

“It has been some time since we have had an apparition . . . I don’t know when She will return, because She didn’t say goodbye; nor did She tell us anything.”

All that had filled the village during months and months—over a year and a half—was thus strangely shut off, with only something very indefinite hanging in the air: the promise and the hope of a great final Miracle.

Certainly no one would have imagined that the affairs of Garabandal could last indefinitely. But to end like this? The long and impressive display of phenomena did not match with such a poor conclusion. And problems were augmenting since, if it had been difficult to understand what

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was happening at the time it was going on, it was more difficult to understand what had happened when it was over.

Long Weeks of Dismay

The crisis of January 1963 closed what might be called the first phase of Garabandal, an astounding and unforgettable phase, in which the Virgin appeared to want to live in the secluded village, associating day and night with the simple children, who were *her children*: the visionaries, the people who lived there, the innumerable pilgrims.

Now was to come an intermission—and a long one—that would last throughout 1963 and 1964. The girls and their supporters had to live almost exclusively from memories and hopes: memories of so many things that had been, hopes of many others that could still be.

And at the time, for many weeks, what reigned was dismay.

It was mentioned in the preceding chapter; but there are additional points to add.

On February 13th Conchita wrote to Fr. de la Riva, the pastor of Barro:

I have just received your letter which I am now answering. It's true that the atmosphere today in the village is very different from what it was when you were here. Hardly anyone believes. My mother doesn't; neither does my aunt Maximina. Nor does the whole village . . . To me that doesn't matter, since I have seen Her. They aren't going to make me believe otherwise. Concerning the miracle, I'm like you—waiting for it . . .

What she said about Maximina was correct;¹ but it seems that deep inside the good woman was recovering, because during these same dates she wrote a letter to the sister-in-law of Dr. Ortiz, Eloísa de la Roza:

Around here, as the apparitions aren't coming back, there's nothing in particular. I had come to doubt everything completely; but today I am once again convinced that there was something here . . .

1. The letters to the Pifarré family eloquently reflect her sorrow and dismay:

“Dear Asunción: Here I am, loaded down with troubles and problems.” (January 11)

“I received your letter, and writing you caused me tremendous sorrow, not being able to say what I feel . . . It seems to me that nothing here has been from God; I don't know what it is . . . I already told you in another letter what happened with Loli and Jacinta, that for a long time they didn't have an apparition. Well, now it's come about that Conchita for the past eight days isn't having apparitions either. Do you think the Virgin is going to part without saying anything? The apparition has gone, but they don't know if she will return.

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The crisis of disillusion involved the girls also, as has been mentioned; but they also recovered rapidly, judging from what Conchita wrote in her diary:

Now Loli and Jacinta have come back to reality, to believing that they have seen the Most Holy Virgin.

Really, how could they not believe?

This brought them back together with a new frame of mind and a better relationship. Maximina, in the letter just mentioned, writes:

You know, with all the trouble there was among the children, they are now very friendly. It can be seen that they seem to like each other very much. At the present time, they are running past where I am, very content and happy.

How long did the visionaries' recovery last? On March 7th when Conchita writes again to Fr. de la Riva, she begins by apologizing for her delay in answering him and then says:

As I don't see the Virgin now, I don't know what to write. Some priests have been here, and on Friday a priest is supposed to come for confession.² I miss you very much. Do you still believe so much? I don't believe anything. How does that strike you? . . .

I have the impression that beginning in January 1963 the doubts and negations in Conchita, Mari Loli and Jacinta followed a strange line of discontinuity. They appeared and disappeared in a continuous succession of phases. No sooner had the dark and obscure days come, than other days arrived in which they believed they saw everything clearly. What was evident was that they were not, nor could they be, the same girls that they had been in Garabandal during the first stage, in the happy days of the two previous years.

Mari Cruz continued a path of separation and negation very different from the others. In January, when the crisis of other girls came about, she hardened in her attitude and began to say openly that she had never seen anything, that the apparitions were a lie . . .

I don't believe anything. All this is nothing, and there's no one here who believes . . ." (January 28)

2. We know that this was the Franciscan priest Félix Larrazábal, since Conchita says in a letter to the daughter of Eloísa de la Roza Velarde on March 9th: "He was the one who was here when we were screaming on the feast of Corpus Christi."

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In the final pages of her diary, Conchita writes:

Mari Cruz still continues saying that she hasn't seen the Most Holy Virgin.

As her attitude since then has been so obstinate and so sustained, it is not surprising that this visionary has been particularly utilized by the enemies of Garabandal to discredit it.³ We cannot then, ignore . . .

The Case of Mari Cruz

Many things have been said about the possible causes of her persistent negative attitude. But, in one way or another, they almost always end up pointing to an inner state of resentment or bitterness against the other visionaries or their families. This could be blamed on the odious distinctions that many of those who most frequented the village made between the girls. I am obliged to treat this distasteful topic; I do not want to spend too much time on it; I only want to bring out information that could clarify it. This information makes me think that the negative attitude of the visionary in question, rather than being the fruit of an interior animosity, was the result of heavy pressures put on her.

Fr. Retenaga writes in his second report to Bishop Beitia on April 6th, 1963:

Months before the confused situation that came about last January, there was already a rather general feeling that this girl had prevented the apparitions. And the reason is that every sign of heavenly origin cannot come to destroy the law, but to perfect it.⁴ Because of this, the apparitions could not override the need for the girls to obey their parents.

A curious thing in this regard was told me by Ceferino, Loli's father: "During the times that I seriously told my daughter to go to bed without waiting for the hour scheduled for the apparition, the apparition didn't occur, although the girl had received calls. On the contrary, when I didn't really oblige her, since I was speaking in jest or only wanted to test her, then the apparition didn't fail . . ."

3. A Jesuit priest from a neighboring parish distinguished himself in this; he is now an ex-jesuit and an ex-priest.

4. An allusion to what Jesus proclaimed at the start of his Sermon on the Mountain. (Matt. 5: 17-18)

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The village, in its simplicity, had an underlying religious attitude. Within this atmosphere, and making reference to the case of Mari Cruz, I have heard opinions explaining what had happened to the child as due to a lack of deep religion in her parents. They, without bad will but lacking great faith, had more or less unconsciously opposed the designs of God, perhaps to avoid the troubles that situations like those of Garabandal always bring with them.

A visitor to the village wrote me last February 5th that Mari Cruz had denied that she had seen the Virgin: but—the visitor added—his attention had been strongly attracted to the fact that Mari Cruz, while denying, was constantly looking fixedly at her mother. While she was disputing the ecstasies that she herself had witnessed, her mother interrupted to try to explain them as arising from illness . . .

During my last visit to the village, the *fiesta del gallo*⁵ was going on, consisting of a special luncheon that the children from the village—boys for one part and girls for another—had organized on the Sunday of the carnival.

I took advantage of the occasion to be with Mari Cruz, who, after some resistance, permitted me to talk with her. The marked nervousness of the girl contrasted visibly with the naturalness and spontaneity with which Conchita, Loli, and Jacinta had previously spoken to me.

To the question whether she had seen the Most Holy Virgin, she responded nervously: “No, it was a lie . . .”

—“Could you now endure those ecstasies that you sometimes had up to two hours long, in which they pinched you, etc.?”

—“I don’t know.”

—“Were you sick, as your mother says?”

—“No, Señor.”

—“Why did you look so fixedly at your mother when I asked you if you had seen the Virgin?”

—“I don’t know.”

—“Several times after the ecstasies, the pastor with other priests and doctors questioned the four of you separately, one after the other. All of you agreed exactly on the details that you gave concerning the vision . . .

5. In that year it fell on February 24th.

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How can you explain this, if now you say that you have never seen the Most Holy Virgin.”

Response: complete silence.

—“If you haven’t seen the Virgin, as you say now, then the four of you had to agree to fake false ecstasies. And you must have practiced many times to do it as well as you did it, no?”

—“No, Señor. We never did that.”

—“Well, there is another thing: Were you afraid of going to jail for telling lies?”

The face of the girl contorted in a long nervous laugh. Finally she said: “Yes, Señor . . .” She hesitated again and concluded, with an obvious desire of getting out of this: “I was afraid, because I was telling a lie, and they could have found us out.”

Anyone who can read needs no help to perceive the underlying basis of this dialogue. The girl was trying to maintain a position that she did not feel, but which she was forced to hold. Once again she was between the sword and the wall: the wall was the facts that could not be put down or forgotten; the sword was strong pressure that forced her to go against everything that she felt.

At times Mari Cruz said that “Fear forced her to take ecstasies day after day . . .” But anyone who knows Garabandal well, knows that this statement does not stand up against two irrefutable facts:

First, that she often went for weeks with the desire of having an apparition during the times that her companions were having them without her.

Secondly, that several times she was surprised in ecstasy in places where there was not a single spectator to incite her to fake an ecstasy.

Fr. Retenaga concluded:

During my last sojourn in San Sebastián de Garabandal, my attention was forcefully called to the fact that Conchita, Loli and Jacinta confessed and then received Communion on those days, while Mari Cruz didn’t confess or receive Communion.

Although this cannot be given too much importance, it can be an indication. Not long after the interview with Mari Cruz, another episode occurred that was reported in *L’Etoile dans la Montagne*:

One day in March, 1963, we found ourselves in a little store at the village, in company of a Spanish friend, a lawyer. After awhile Mari Cruz came. She

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stopped at the entrance and gave us a look full of sadness. She was then 13 years old. Her face was pale, drawn . . . She repeated: “No, I have never seen the Virgin.” She did not make a motion and her monotonous voice seemed to be coming from another world.

Our Spanish friend, for a considerable time, besieged her with questions and comments without success. He didn’t draw anything out of her besides the “No, I have never seen the Virgin,” that she repeated endlessly, and always in the same tone.

Finally she left without saluting us, which is very unusual in the village of Garabandal, where the people always show themselves so courteous. Our friend, the lawyer, could not prevent himself from saying, “We have just seen a phantom; that was not Mari Cruz who spoke.”

New Phenomena: Locutions

The raging waves of the great disillusion that were dashing against Garabandal during the winter of 1963 reached also, as we have seen, the one who seemed the most secure of the four: Conchita. Not only with regard to the truth of what had occurred, but also with regard to the fulfillment of what she had predicted.

I had doubted a little that the Miracle would come.

And one day, while in my room, doubting if the Miracle would really come, I heard a voice that said:

“Conchita, do not doubt that my Son will perform a Miracle.”

I felt this inside; but as clear as if it came through my ears; or even clearer.

It was without words.

It left me a peace . . . A joy!

More than when I see Her.

And the first person to whom I told this was Plácido.⁶

And later he told it to the others.

They are called locutions.

And they could be called a voice of joy, a voice of happiness, a voice of peace.

6. Plácido Ruiloba, a businessman from the capital of Santander, whose name comes up many times in this story.

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*And then, I didn't doubt anything again.
But the days passed.
And the voice didn't return.
That made me suffer.
But I understand: how could God go on giving me such happiness
so often, without meriting it?
The locutions did me much good.
Much, very much.
Because it was as if the Most Holy Virgin were within me.
What happiness!
I prefer the locution more than the apparitions, since during the
locution, I have her in my very self.
Oh! What happiness, with the Most Holy Virgin within me!
And what shame, to be so bad!
But that is the world.*

These sentences were almost the last in Conchita's unfinished diary. They bring out new⁷ phenomena that came to supplant and extend the apparitions. They differed from the apparitions not only in content, but also in frequency: the locutions occurred on few occasions.

The first locution, which Conchita mentions in her diary, took place in March of 1963, at the beginning of Lent. There was a month lapse before another occurred.

At the end of the month, again I heard that voice of interior happiness without words, in the church.

The adolescent girl—having just had her 14th birthday—was at that time living a period of special fervor. In Maximina's letter of February 11th, it can be read:

Conchita, when she is home, (that is, not working in the fields) spends almost the whole day in church. In the morning she goes there to pray a rosary and some women go with her; in the afternoon she goes to spend most of the day there. She doesn't know what it is to get weary. The other day I asked her, "What do you like most: to play or to be in church?" And she said to me, "I like both things very much."⁸

7. New in the affairs of Garabandal; but very ancient in the course of Catholic mysticism.

8. A sincere and most human answer, which reveals how normal Conchita was. What 14 year old girl would not like to amuse herself, with the world just beginning to spread open before

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An interval of one month between locutions seemed to become routine,⁹ since on November 28th of that same year, Conchita wrote to María Herrero de Gallardo:

You say that I should tell you things about the Virgin. What am I going to tell you, if I don't see her now? Only that I talk to her once each month. I still haven't spoken with her this month. Tomorrow or the day after, she will speak to me.

María de Gallardo added a note that said: "On the following day, November 29th, she had the locution that she was expecting."

* * *

But we are indebted to Fr. Retenaga for the best information on the Garabandal locutions. Quoting from his third report, finished in September of 1963:

I traveled to Garabandal to aid the parish priest during the past Holy Week.¹⁰ In Santander, I had already heard rumors that were circulating among the people concerning Conchita's and Loli's new and extraordinary phenomena.

Julia González, Loli's mother, talked to me about a conversation she had in March with her daughter concerning the new phenomena that Loli didn't know how to explain.

During Holy Week, the girls talked to me repeatedly about the internal visions that they appeared to be having. I was able to examine Conchita and Loli separately, and I came to the conclusion that this concerned *locutions*, as later I informed Bishop Beitia of Santander in a conversation with him on April 17th.

Conchita told me that the new phenomena had already happened to her several times. On asking her to explain it better, she told me, "I hear something; yet I hear it without hearing."

The new phenomena began in March, when she had been suffering since the past January due to the absence of the Virgin. Assailed by many people's doubts, she also had begun to waver. And one day on her knees at home, with considerable anguish she heard the Virgin say (without speaking): "Do not doubt that my Son will perform a miracle." After that time her confidence with respect to

her? Merit is in knowing how to renounce at times the desire for pleasure out of higher motives, so as to attend to matters that are more important, although less pleasurable. Here again is seen the theological axiom that "Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it."

9. This was confirmed by Maximina's letter of July 7th to Mrs. Asunción Pifarré:

"I don't know if I've told you that Conchita and Loli have locutions—which is something like talking to the Virgin without seeing her . . . They told me that they feel a great joy when they have these locutions. I think that they have them once a month."

10. In that year it fell between the 7th and 14th of April.

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the miracle¹¹ was evident in the unalterable peace that she now enjoys. She confessed to me that at the same time she heard without hearing other things for the good of her own soul and the souls of others.

The mystics have described their difficulties in explaining the high spiritual communications that they receive from God. In Conchita and Loli the matter was complicated by their poor vocabulary. Their education was very limited, especially with regard to religion. During the time of the apparitions, they still asked what the word council meant; and several times they asked me about words that seemed very ordinary to all of us. Living without a resident priest in the village had made it difficult for their religious formation. Today, the minds of the girls are much more enlightened than previously; but they stumble with great difficulty in describing their interior experiences.

In my first investigation I noticed that Conchita didn't know that the same phenomenon had been given to Loli. (And likewise Loli didn't know about Conchita.) But both, when separated, coincided with each other in their answers to me. Both insisted that neither their feelings nor their imagination had played any part in what had happened to them.

Not satisfied with the first examination, on returning from Garabandal to my quarters, I composed a list of questions and took advantage of Conchita's trip to Lourdes¹² to complete my information. Later (in the month of July) I continued questioning her; and afterward, apart from her, I questioned Loli.

11. A letter that Conchita wrote to Father Odriozola in the early days of May ended this way:

"I am certain also that the Miracle will come, since the Virgin told me, and also the date of the Miracle, and in what it will consist . . . I am as certain that the Miracle will come as I am that two and two equal four."

12. This trip, arranged by Fr. Retenaga, had its story. On May 9th Conchita wrote to Fr. José Ramón, the pastor of Barro:

"I still don't know if we are going to Lourdes. My mother thinks we won't go, since she prayed that if this were true, that we would go; and if it were a lie, we would stay. And she thinks that we won't go."

Seven days later, on May 16th, another letter was addressed to the same person:

"Yesterday I received your card, and I am responding to tell you that today I am leaving (for Rentería or San Sebastián to join there with the pilgrims from the diocese of Guipuzcoana) to go on Saturday to Lourdes."

We have the testimony of Father Retenaga on Conchita's attitude during her first visit to Lourdes:

"Among the 1,300 Spanish pilgrims who were wandering enthusiastically in the locale where the apparitions had taken place, amid the religious emotion aroused in them by being near the grotto during the baths for the sick, before the devotion felt during the Benediction of the sick with the Blessed Sacrament, before the striking spectacle of the candlelight procession, etc., I can assure you that Conchita, though 14 years old, was the person who gave me the greatest impression of equilibrium, prudence and calmness, with a piety based more on the tranquil security of faith and virtue than on the passing fluctuation of emotion. If she

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Following are the most interesting answers to Fr. Retenaga's questionnaire:

To the question as to whether the interior voices had been heard by their physical ears, the two girls responded definitely: "No, Señor."

Also they absolutely rejected any suggestion that it could have been their imagination or that they could have been dreaming. Opposing this latter idea, Conchita stated: "It was during the day", and Loli: "It was when I was wide awake."

They denied likewise that they could have these interior voices when they wanted . . . "Listen, Lolita"—Fr. Retenaga said—"since Jesus is in the tabernacle and you receive Him every day, holding Him that way, you are able to hear His words whenever you want, isn't that right?"

"Oh! No, Señor. If I could hear His words whenever I wanted, I would be hearing them all the time."

Conchita said that her locutions always came when she was in prayer: sometimes in her home, but ordinarily in the church. Loli said the same thing, declaring that twice she heard them in her room unexpectedly; another time, while she was praying at the Cuadro in the calleja; and the rest of the time in the church, one of these times after receiving Holy Communion.

Most interesting was the response to Fr. Retenaga's question as to whether they would choose an apparition, a Communion, or a locution. "Communion!" They responded without hesitation.

"Understand"—noted Father Retenaga—"the words of that answer, taking into account the state of happiness and the effects that followed for them from the apparitions and locutions, in contrast with the aridity and dryness that so often accompanied their Communions."

During their locutions, many things must have been discussed by the visionaries that we will never know. This is clear from some of the remarks made by Father Retenaga:

One day Conchita told me that she gave a reply to a man who wasn't a Catholic; she also took another reply—which she was required to keep secret—to a young man who overtly didn't believe in God or in priests.¹³ And with regard to her-

were afflicted by any psychiatric illness, as has been said on occasion and repeated, could she have remained like that? Would she not have fallen inevitably into an ecstasy?"

13. Things like this were the basis for people to think that Conchita read consciences. On November 8th, 1966, Conchita mentioned to the Mother Superior of the school at Burgos:

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self, she had been told secrets concerning her actual life and her future, but she didn't specify what they were, since she lacked express permission from the Virgin.

But still more expressive was what happened to Loli:

I had asked Loli to put some things in writing . . . I was speaking with her on the afternoon of July 25th when she told me that very morning she had wanted to write what I had asked her, and she was all set to begin. But a force from above held back her arm. At the same time she was told in a locution: "Do not write anything for him right now."

I hid my astonishment and told her that it was natural for her not to write anything about it, since what she wanted to tell me had slipped her mind. She answered that she remembered everything perfectly, but that she wasn't able to write because of the force from above that held back her arm . . . And that she had many other things that she couldn't mention either.

From these incidents, it can be seen that we still do not know a considerable portion of what actually happened in Garabandal . . . Is that surprising? Everything there was of such extraordinary proportions, both in duration and in intensity.

The Most Holy Virgin was the first to intervene in the locutions that extended throughout 1963; later Our Lord took part.

The locutions of the Virgin were imbued with her magnificent maternal attitude. In the locution of July 25th that was mentioned—the feast of St. James the Apostle, Patron Saint of Spain—the Virgin called Loli's attention to an attitude of the girl that could well be defined as a fault of vanity. "Change your way"—she said—"and do not do it again." With regard to this, here is an interesting dialogue:

FATHER RETENAGA.—After that reprimand, were you hurt, like a child who is disciplined by his parents?

LOLI.—No, Señor.

FATHER RETENAGA.—Then, you didn't take it seriously?

LOLI.—No, Señor. I can't explain it; but what I felt was a mixture of pain and consolation, or confidence, since there is no mother who is

"I think back many times to what happened in my village. There were those who came there because they believed that I read consciences. This made me laugh. How was I going to read consciences? The Virgin advised me about the things that I told some people at the time."

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so understanding and good as the one we have in heaven, the Most Holy Virgin . . .

The locutions of Jesus had their own particular singularity. Conchita points this out in the last lines of her diary:

*But I like even more to have Jesus within me . . .
—Jesus, who gives me the cross to purify me,
—and also to see if with my crosses I can do something for the
world.*

Two and a half years later, she said to Sister María Nieves at her school in Burgos (November 9th, 1966): “The apparitions and locutions of the Virgin fill me with happiness; but the locutions of Jesus are even better . . . They seem to be something superior.”

We have an illustration of these locutions, since one day Conchita wrote down in front of Father Retenaga, who was in Garabandal at the time, what she heard that very day¹⁴ after having received Communion during the Mass he celebrated on July 10th, 1963:

(Though not part of *Conchita’s Diary*, the girl wrote this shortly after her unfinished diary and its importance dictates the heavy print given to it here.)

I was making my thanksgiving and praying for things. He answered me . . .

I asked Him to give me a cross since I was living without suffering—except the suffering of not having a cross.

And he answered: Yes. I will give it to you.

And with much feeling, I went on praying . . .

And I said to Him, Why is the Miracle coming? . . . To convert many people?

He answered, To convert the whole world.

—Will Russia be converted?

—It also will be converted; and so everyone will love Our Hearts.¹⁵

14. The version given here basically follows the text from Fr. Retenaga’s letter; logical punctuations and separations were put in so that the contents can be better understood.

15. Here the word hearts is used for persons. Conchita translates in her common vocabulary what she had received intellectually in a locution; in ordinary common Spanish expres-

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—Will the chastisement come afterwards?

(He didn't answer me.)

—Why do you come to my poor heart, without my meriting it?

—I certainly do not come for you; I come for all.

—When the miracle comes, will it be as if I were the only one who had seen the Virgin?

—He answered me, By your sacrifices, your patience, I will allow you to intercede for the accomplishment of the miracle.

And I said to Him: Wouldn't it be better for me to be with all the others; or if not, that You don't use any of us to intercede?

—No.

—Will I go to heaven?

—You should love much and pray to Our Hearts.

—When will You give me a cross?

(He didn't answer me.)

—What will I be?

(He didn't answer me; He only told me that everywhere that I would be, I would have much to suffer.)

—Am I going to die soon?

—You have to stay on the earth to help the world.

—I am very small. I couldn't help in anything.

—With your prayers and sufferings, you will help the world.¹⁶

—When does one go to heaven? . . . when one dies?

—One never dies.

(I thought that we didn't go to heaven until we were resurrected.)¹⁷

sion the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the same as *Jesus*, just as the *Immaculate Heart of Mary* is the same as *The Virgin Mary*.

What is meant in the text of the locution is that mankind will have a new and better attitude towards Jesus and Mary after the general conversion brought on by the miracle.

16. What Conchita says is useful for all persons of good will. All can and should do something . . . “Oh Mystery truly tremendous that is never sufficiently pondered!”—exclaimed Pius XII in his encyclical “*Mystici Corporis*”—“That the salvation of some souls depends upon the prayers and voluntary sacrifices of others.”

17. Death for the Christian is not the final ending of everything, but rather the passing from the present state into another very different state—which can be extremely marvelous or extremely horrible. The soul enters immediately into the new state; the body has to wait for the resurrection.

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I asked Him if St. Peter were at the gate of heaven to receive us; and He told me No.¹⁸

While I was in this conversation, in this prayer with God, I felt myself out of the world.

Jesus also told me that now His Heart should be loved.

Concerning priests, He told me that I must pray much:

- *so that they would be holy and fulfill their duties;*
- *so that they would make others better;*
- *so that they would make Me known to those who do not know Me;*
- *so that they would make Me loved by those who know Me and do not love Me.*

This leaf from the history of the *locutions* in Garabandal is magnificent . . . What material for reflection!

But if this page from Conchita's life is well known, not so well known is a page from Loli's, which is equally valuable and instructive, and gives us new light concerning the mystical phenomena with which the two visionaries were favored in 1963. It is reported in a letter to Fr. Retenaga, dated October 13th, 1963:

Reverend Father Luis,

So that you see that I do what I promise, I am going to tell you a few things . . .

The Virgin has made me know when a priest is in sin. She has helped me to know that he needs many prayers and sacrifices.¹⁹

18. Conchita expresses ingenuously the common belief—heard in so many jokes—that St. Peter is the gatekeeper of heaven. This belief has no more basis than being the erroneous interpretation of the words spoken by Jesus to his apostle during the episode at Caesarea Philippi. (Matt. 16: 19)

Reading the text of this locution shows well the truth of what Conchita said later to the Mother Superior in the school at Burgos:

“The Lord is very serious, and when He speaks to me, He seems concerned for everyone. The Virgin, as if more for me . . .” (Nov. 17, 1966)

However the Virgin's style was not that different:

“When we spoke about things too personal, she didn't answer us; she was very concerned about the others.”

(April 21st, 1967)

19. There are numerous incidents demonstrating that Garabandal has always given preferential importance and solicitude for priests, antecedent to the greatest crisis in the priesthood that the Church has ever known.

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Also she has given me to understand the Crucifixion in the Holy Mass,²⁰ since I comprehend the humility, the sacrifice for the world.

She has also made me recognize when a person needs prayers to be said for him. And one time she told me about a person who didn't pray the rosary, and that person told me to write a note for him. And in it I wrote down that he should pray the rosary. And he then began to cry and said to me, "Who told you that I don't pray the rosary?" And later he wrote and told me that since that day he had not missed saying it.

Well, Father, on another time I will tell you more, because now I am writing from my bed, since tomorrow I have to gather hay in the pasture, which is a long way from the village, and I have to get up early . . .

Today is another day and I am going to see if I have more time to write. Well, I spoke with the Virgin in a locution and asked her to give me a cross to suffer for priests. She told me to bear everything with patience²¹ and to be humble, which was what pleased God the most.

And I said to her, "Am I going to die soon?"

And she said to me, "No. You have to remain in the world to suffer. In whatever place you are, you will suffer."

And I said to her, "Let my parents believe!"²²

And she said to me, "They do not believe, so that you will have more to suffer. Suffer with patience."

She also told me, "Pray the rosary every day."

She told me, "Pray for priests, since there are some who need more sacrifices for them every day."

And again I said to her, "Why don't my parents believe?"

And she said to me, "Because you have to suffer. You have much to suffer in this world."

And I said to her, "What sacrifices should I make?"

She said to me, "You have to be more obedient."

I told her that one time I was going down the road, and suddenly a man with long hair appeared to me in a long coat, and said to me, "I am hungry." And as I was carrying my lunch in my hand, I gave it to him. And suddenly he disappeared, without my knowing how. And I was very frightened. And I said to her, "Who was that man?" And she smiled and didn't tell me.

20. Also in advance of the time when the primary meaning of the Catholic Mass, that of sacrifice—the sacrifice of the Cross—would be forgotten or lost by most people, the Virgin would come to repeat this lesson.

21. The Curé d'Ars used to repeat: "One hour of patience is worth more before God than several days of penance."

22. It is known that Loli's parents, especially Ceferino, held the greatest doubt about the truth of what was happening to their daughter; and she found this to be a heavy cross.

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I'm not writing more. Don't say that I don't write much.²³ Goodbye.

María Dolores Mazón

This letter does not require learned commentaries, but it should be re-read.

It is evident that any similarity between the instruction that the Virgin gave her children at Garabandal and that which is now given to many children by our new theologians, is purely coincidental.

No wonder. Today what is stressed is the importance of the individual, while in the school of Mary, the main focus has always been on the ancient pattern of giving oneself to God and denying one's very self.

It could be said that the phenomena of locutions filled 1963, Garabandal's third year. But there was something else that made a much more spectacular mark: an unequivocal prediction of immeasurable importance:

Only Three Popes Remain!

In the early days of June, not only what is called the Catholic world, but the entire world was closely following what was happening in the pope's chamber at the Vatican.

There struggling in his last agony, was the one who had captured more swiftly and amply than anyone before, the admiration of almost everyone, and the love of a great many.

The final curtain was inexorably descending on Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the man called Pope John XXIII.

And the world was watching breathlessly for many days as he painfully died.

On June 3rd came the sudden notice that at last the flame had gone out. The Pope was dead.

As in so many other belfries throughout the world, the crude rustic bells in the church tower in Garabandal tolled for his death.

But beneath the clanging bells at Garabandal, a comment was made, very different from those made in other parts of the world.

* * *

23. This letter is exceptionally long. I have seen many letters written by the visionaries, and I can verify that almost all of them were very short.

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The sound from the belltower came to the little kitchen where the widow Aniceta González and her daughter Conchita were on that afternoon.

—“Listen; they are ringing the bells!”—the daughter exclaimed immediately.

—“It’s for the Pope—said the mother.”

—“Certainly . . . Now only three remain.”

Surprised, Aniceta raised her head:

—“What are you saying?”

—“What I heard. That only three popes remain.”

—“And where did you pick that up?”

—“I didn’t pick it up; the Virgin told it to me.”

It would be helpful if Conchita would have explained to us when and how she heard this. But even lacking her explanation, we have sufficient reason to think that this occurred during the locutions, and presumably during the month of May, the month of Mary:

In a locution, since the apparitions had ceased since January, as described, and in their place were the locutions.

During the month of May, since these locutions were occurring at intervals approximately once per month, and during the locution in May she had talked about the Pope with his terminal illness.

Aniceta, amazed by what she had heard, reacted logically:

—Then, you mean that the end of the world is coming?

—“The Virgin didn’t tell me ‘the end of the world,’ but ‘the end of the times.’”

—“Aren’t they the same?”

—“I don’t know.”²⁴

News of this amazing prediction soon spread out; it was not shouted aloud, but spoken quietly from person to person.

24. Maximina, Conchita’s aunt and godmother, was present on the scene, judging from her letter which I saw in the Pifarré collection, dated June 5:

On the day that the Holy Father died, when it was mentioned here that he died, I was with Conchita and she said: “Oh, now only three more remain!”

Slightly irritated, her mother spoke to her like this: “What do you know?”

And she answered with great conviction, “Well, I know, since the Virgin told me this.”

Her mother didn’t like her to say things like this since, although it could be seen that she believed, you know she always had the fear that this wasn’t true . . .

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During those days Paquina de la Roza Velarde (Dr. Ortiz' wife) was in the village. One morning a funeral mass for the dead pope was to be said in the parish church, and the bells began to ring early in the morning. Paquina, Maximina, another woman and Conchita, after having prayed the rosary in the Calleja (How delightful were those rosaries in the silence and freshness of the morning!) made their way to the church. On their way they were speaking of the current news:

—“Perhaps with the pope's death, the Council²⁵ will end too, since . . .”

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

—“Well, I agree that another pope will come; but as for the Council . . . Perhaps the new pope won't think like John XXIII.”

—“Another pope will come and the Council will continue.”

—“You seem to be very certain of that; but I don't see it so certain. It could well happen otherwise.”

—“I'm telling you, and I repeat: another pope will come and the Council will continue. And I also tell you that only three popes remain . . .”

Dr. Ortiz' wife quickly recovered from her surprise and responded to Conchita:

—“Oh, you are saying that from the prophecy of St. Malachi . . .”

—“St. Malachi? That's the first time I heard of that. The Virgin told me that after this Pope (John XXIII) there remain only three; and afterwards, the end of the times.”

—“Do you mean the end of the world is coming?”

—“The Virgin told me, ‘the end of the times.’”

—“That isn't the same?”

—“I don't know.”

This episode is historically accurate²⁶ and Conchita's statement cannot be taken for a simple, offhand remark, since she subsequently repeated it very seriously in the same words.

25. Vatican II, convoked and inaugurated by John XXIII, had only finished one session (October—December, 1962) during which it had taken a direction that certainly was not what its planners had intended. The Council had just begun, and it was expected to continue, but all this depended on what the new Pope would decide.

26. Conchita spoke again about the three Popes that remained and the end of the times. It happened in Maximina's house during the First Communion dinner of her son, Pepe Luis,

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One time she told it to the eminent professor Father Lucio Rodrigo²⁷ at the Pontifical University in Comillas. This Father, on the occasion of a visit by Conchita and her mother,²⁸ asked the young girl if she had really said what had been attributed to her.

Conchita told him, “Yes Father. It’s true. The Virgin told me that after John XXIII only three popes remain, and this one, (Paul VI) is the first of those three.”

In October of 1966, Conchita became a boarder in the college that the teaching sisters of the Immaculate Conception have at Burgos. On November 1st, the Feast of All Saints, she talked confidentially with the director of the center, Mother Nieves García. Among other things, she said this, which the religious sister wrote down very carefully:

“One day I said to the Virgin, ‘Will the end of the world be during the time of these events?’”

“And she told me, ‘No, the end of the times.’”

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

If it cannot be accepted that Conchita invented such a definite and promising prediction, neither could it be held that the prophecy of St. Malachi suggested it to her. First, because she was completely unaware of it; and secondly, because this prophecy and her prediction do not agree.

This prophecy concerning the popes, that is so talked about today, came out in 1595. A Benedictine monk from Belgium, Arnold de Wion,

to which Mrs. Ortiz was invited. Conchita repeated the same thing, without being able to give the explanations that the listeners’ curiosity desired.

27. † March 30th, 1973. On his deathbed he declared that he had received an unequivocal sign from heaven about the truth of Garabandal.

28. For some time Aniceta and Conchita traveled regularly to the seminary at Comillas—taking advantage of the cars of friends and acquaintances—to have their confessions heard by this priest.

Father Rodrigo wrote to Father Andreu on November 13th, 1965:

“A fortnight ago on Tuesday, the pastor of Barro brought Aniceta and Conchita to me . . . While I was alone with Conchita, she confirmed that the Virgin had told her on the death of John XXIII that there only remain three Popes (counting the present) until the end of the times.”

In this letter there is another interesting thing:

“She (Conchita) also told me: ‘As the people were talking about trips to space, I asked the Virgin if there were persons living out there, and she told me: ‘Yes’, but she didn’t add anything more.’”

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published at the time a voluminous work under the title of *Lignum Vitae*. It was a type of general biography of the great personages in his order. In this work were listed a series of 111 divisions or titles in latin, which he reported as coming from an Irish saint of the twelfth century: St. Malachi, Archbishop of Armagh. These divisions tended to correspond, one after the other, to the popes that came after Innocent II, who died in 1143.

The authenticity of this enormous prophecy has been discussed endlessly; authenticity in a double sense: in whether it can be truly attributed to the saint, and in whether it really was inspired from above. I doubt if the question will ever be resolved. But there is something that strikes the reader: the amazing accuracy with which many of the *titles* describe the popes to which they correspond.

According to the prophecy of St. Malachi, after John XXIII there must still be five more popes. There are five more titles after his, ending with the name of the last successor of St. Peter. Conchita, on the other hand, speaks of only three. The discrepancy could be only an apparent one if, as some think, a new schism arises in the church, with the elevation of anti-popes. To these could correspond some of these last titles that seem to be in series,²⁹ attributing some to the legitimate popes and others to the false, or anti-popes.

The title of the last pope is given in these words, which if they are true, are shocking in their poignant sobriety:

In persecutione extrema Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae, sedebit Petrus Romanus, qui pascet oves in multis tribulationibus; quibus transactis, civitas septicollis diruetur, et Judex tremendus judicabit populum suum. Finis.

“In the final persecution of the Holy Roman Church, Peter the Roman will reign, who will pasture his sheep among multiple tribulations. When these have passed, the city of the seven hills will be destroyed, and the terrible judge will judge his people. Finis.”

29. The four divisions that follow John XXIII are:

Flos florum = Flower of flowers.

De medietate lunae = Half of the moon.

De labore solis = From the work of the sun.

De gloria olivae = From the glory of the olive branch.

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Related to the succession of John XXIII and the possibility of the anti-popes is an episode which curiously is not mentioned either in Fr. Valentin's notes or in the reports of the best-known witnesses of Garabandal.

On the suggestion of the pastor from Barro, who had his part in the episode, I wrote to Margarita Huerta in Madrid, asking for details. She answered on June 18th, 1973

“Yes, I was in Garabandal during the visit of the false pope, Clement XV. But I can't remember the date; possibly it was during 1963, as you suggest, or perhaps in 1964; I do remember that it was during my summer vacation, between July and August.

(Concerning the year, there is no room for question. The November, 1972 issue of 'La Verité,' the magazine of Clement XV, contains an interview of the pseudo-pope with a reporter in which the pseudo-pope said, "I was in Garabandal on August 2nd, 1963."³⁰ (just two months after the death of Pope John)

He rode into the village in a big limousine, accompanied by two young laymen of about 21 years of age, and another one over 30 years old who seemed to be married. (According to Fr. de la Riva, those that accompanied him wore smart uniforms.) He wore an impeccable white cassock, and a similar white skullcap on his head, a ring like bishops wear, and on his chest there was a large cross hanging from a long chain. On seeing him, the people gathered around him immediately, thinking naturally that he was an important character. He gave his ring to kiss and all looked at him with the greatest respect.

(Perhaps this reception was the basis for what he believed of himself . . . And what he told the reporter from Amsterdam, "I was received as the true pope. I was taken by the people of the village to the places of the apparitions. It was a triumphal hosanna. As I didn't know the visionaries or their messages, I felt really surprised by such enthusiasm." The

30. Surely this August 2 is a printer's error, and should be August 22. A letter from Conchita to Father Laffineur makes me think this way:

“San Sebastián de Garabandal August 23, 1963

Just a few words to tell you that yesterday a car came to the village with a man accompanied by two others. He was dressed in white and carried a large cross on his chest, also a skullcap and ring. He was French.

He came saying that he was the Pope chosen by God; that Paul VI was elected only by the cardinals. He also said that from the time he was 35 years old, he saw the Virgin and also God, Who was the one who told him to come here . . .”

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poor man had to believe that God had spoken there in his favor . . . But his euphoria was not destined to last long.)

“As neither he nor his companions spoke anything but French, my friend and I began to act as intermediaries. He told me that he had come to visit Garabandal by order of the departed John XXIII, who had confided to him the mission of investigating the events occurring there . . . At the time, I succeeded in getting away from him for a few moments and I went to where Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva had separated himself from the crowd’s commotion. I relayed his declarations to the priest and he told me, ‘Go and ask him to show you the document that he brings from Rome.’”

“When I asked him for it, he answered me, ‘No. I don’t carry any document; John XXIII gave me the order verbally.’”

I went to tell this to Fr. José Ramón and he said to me, “I don’t like the sound of this. Only God can know who this character is! Furthermore I don’t want to know anything about this matter; I’m not looking for trouble.” And he walked away.

Amused, people came in increasing numbers to see the curious personage, and all thought that they were in front of an important figure of the Church. He then manifested his intention of celebrating Mass for everyone there up high at the Pines, since he carried a portable altar and had permission to celebrate Mass in all places. But Margarita Huerta dissuaded him, making him see that would not cause a good impression on the people, since everyone knew of the Bishop of Santander’s prohibitions . . . The man was somewhat dismayed, and apologized for personally being unaware of such prohibitions, although for him, they didn’t obligate in any way.

Margarita could not know that, at the same time in a separate conversation, two of his accomplices were telling her friend Fracasado that he was the authentic Pope, the Pope “Flos florum” predicted by the prophet St. Malachi to follow John XXIII. And that it was he, Clement XV, and not the false Pope Paul VI, who should be obeyed.

Frustrated with regard to saying Mass, Clement XV expressed to Margarita another desire: to talk with the girls of the apparitions. Immediately someone went to find them, but the girls, for whatever reason (perhaps someone had alerted them to this suspicious personality), did not want to come.

Clement XV was irritated, and so at the time Margarita tried to soothe over the situation:

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Understand that the Bishop of Santander has prohibited priests and religious from coming here without written permission. And as you don't carry any certificate, either your own or from Rome, the people have started to look at you with suspicion.

Then he asked me to find a house for him where he could eat and sleep. I took them to Tiva's house and they invited me to eat with them; I accepted the invitation. Before ending, Clement XV still insisted on his desire of talking with the girls; he said to the oldest of those accompanying him, "Why don't you go with this woman to Conchita's house and tell her to come here?" The man answered without even looking at him, "I? Why should I go? In no way will I go." Clement XV remained without saying a word.

Finally they went to sleep. And on the next day, very early in the morning, they got away from the village in their limousine.

This sudden getaway had its reason. On the proceeding afternoon, as soon as rumors about this character wanting to pass himself off as the real Pope had come to his ears, Fr. de la Riva went to Ceferino, the Mayor of the village, to tell him this person's stay would bring many troubles and problems to everyone. Then Ceferino went up to Clement XV to make him know, that if he did not immediately get out of the village, he would be turned over to the commandant of the Civil Guard at Puente Nansa.

The warning had its effect. Clement XV dispensed with his pontifical air. Asking Ceferino not to do anything, he said they would leave right away, and would he permit them only to rest there that night.

This is the actual history of the episode that Clement XV experienced at Garabandal, and that nine years later in Amsterdam he encapsuled before a reporter in the words we have just seen, "I was received like the true pope. I was taken by the people of the village to the places of the apparitions. It was a triumphal hosanna . . . I felt really surprised by such enthusiasm."

How is such self-suggestion possible? Or perhaps it is not self-suggestion . . .

In another place in this book, Conchita's statement to the Mother at the college at Burgos on November 12th, 1966 was mentioned,

"You know Father Collin? Now he is passing for a pope. He was in my village. He wanted to talk with me, but my mother didn't let him. Finally they threw him out of the village . . . Well, when I was in Rome, (January, 1966) they showed me a picture in a magazine on which I appeared next to him, and it was written there that he had been with me, and many other lies."

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Obviously, Clement XV wanted to exploit the events of Garabandal to his advantage, just as he has always tried to make people believe that the famous Secret of Fatima was in his favor.³¹

We have seen how Conchita repeated that she had heard that, after the last pope, there would not come the end of the world, but rather the end of the times. What is the difference?

31. But who is this individual?

His name is Michael Collin and he is a fallen-away, former Catholic priest from France.

In the interview just mentioned, he himself resuméd the most important times of his life: “I was baptized in Béchy where I was born. I was ordained a priest by Cardinal Liénart in Lille. On April 28th, 1935, I was consecrated Bishop by Our Lord at Vaux-le-Metz; and finally, Pope, by God Himself in Sorrento, on October, 7, 1950.”

If such direct interventions from heaven to promote him do not seem peculiar, certainly his pathway to being elected is, as he himself describes it:

“From my childhood, the Lord made me know that I had to help the world and save it.”

“And when 16 years old, He clearly confided to me the mission of “saving the world.” When I made my First Communion, Jesus tole me privately, “Miguel, you will be a priest one day; afterwards, bishop; finally, Pope.”

“From those years, the Lord appeared to me and also the Virgin. When I was still small, I thought that everyone saw them as I. When I didn’t understand His words very well, He said to me, “Everything will become clear; we must hope.”

“And for a long time I doubted like this. But now that I have seen the Most Holy Virgin, clothed in black, shedding tears and asking me to accomplish my mission, I have put all my doubts aside. I will fight until the day on which God reigns on earth as in heaven . . .”

“In 1950, God Himself consecrated me Pope in Sorrento. It was on October 7th, the feast of the Most Holy Rosary. From four until eight in the morning, I was in communication with Him . . . And I descended from St. Peter in a direct spiritual line, through Pius XII . . .”

“To save the world from an immense deluge, moral and material, and to make straight the Church, which is walking toward the abyss; here is the reason and purpose for my life. And so we have an answer to the secret of Fatima, which announced a “miraculous Pope” to bring this mission to an end.”

What got in the way to prevent him from doing this? Miguel-Clemente XV tells us point blank: “Paul VI, friend of Satan . . . On the death of John XXIII, he himself declared, ‘I don’t want to be Pope; there is a French man who is already designated.’ He knew the secret of Fatima, since Pius XII had spoken to him about it. But later he preferred to be a usurpator, and with his lamentable past . . .”

And so from Pope Clement’s words, it is easy to understand our misfortune. And it will be much worse:

“The nations will be destroyed by an atomic war without precedent, if Clement XV does not officially take over the direction of the Church.”

Clement XV has spoken!

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This is a difficult question, which would require many pages for clarification. We will only make some brief considerations here, so that the matter will not be completely obscure.

If by end of the world is understood the annihilation of the cosmic world that we are acquainted with, we could well say that the end of the world will never come, since the world will not be destroyed, but substantially changed. To speak therefore of the end of the world is to refer to that final point in history when the existence of man as he is at present will be changed into another way, very different and much better.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth were gone . . . And death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away. And He that sat on the throne said: Behold I make all things new. (Ap. 21: 1-5)

Such a substantial change would certainly comprise a tremendous display of upheaval and destruction; since for man, the worker of iniquity (Matt. 13: 41) the change from the temporary state to the permanent will not be smooth.

But the present heavens and earth, by the same word are kept in store, reserved for fire on the day of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men . . . But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burned up. (II Peter 3: 7-10)

To all this we refer when we speak of the end of the world. If the expression, end of the times does not mean the same, then it would have to refer to something prior to it and of exceptional importance. What would this be? That is the question.

TIME certainly will not end until the finish of the present form of existence; an existence that is transitory, subject to succession and change; because of this, the end of time will coincide with the end of the world.

But "the times" may well not be the same thing as "time" . . .

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Jesus, in His eschatological discourse,³² according to the version of St. Luke (21: 24) said about the coming ruin of the Jewish city: “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword; and shall be led away captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the gentiles;³³ until the times of the nations be fulfilled.”

Thus the first chosen people, Israel, will remain dispersed and their capital, the Holy City, abandoned by God as in the grand captivity of Babylon. The gentiles who embrace the faith will then replace the unfaithful Jewish nation as the nation of God. Such a situation will last for a long time: the times of the nations. These *times* will be fulfilled when the time comes for Israel once again thru a massive conversion to Christianity. The effects of such a conversion would have enormous significance, according to St. Paul:

Have the Jews fallen forever, or have they just stumbled? Obviously they have not fallen forever. But by their fall, salvation has come to the gentiles . . . For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their reception be, but resurrection from the dead! (Romans 11: 11-15)

History then will take a spectacular turn, unforeseeable and bewildering. Truly there will be *new times*. Is this being heralded by Garabandal for the near future? Can the end of the times, which is predicted to follow John XXIII's third successor, be the consummation of the times of the nations, that will pave the way for Israel's great new epoch in the service of God and mankind?

I would be inclined to say yes,³⁴ if it were not for a serious difficulty: the prediction that the third successor of John XXIII would be the last

32. It is called this since it speaks of the last events, referring to the final consummation of man's history. The theological study that deals with the last things of the world has received the name of Eschatology (from the Greek word 'eschatos' meaning last).

33. For the Jews, the gentiles comprise all other peoples and nations that are not descendents of Abraham, the chosen one of God.

The Israelites, sons and heirs of the promise, constitute a nation completely separate; the others are the common masses. Because of this, the word gentile, rather than having a religious signification, indicates the condition of being part of the masses.

34. Perhaps the fact of presenting herself at Garabandal as Our Lady of Mount Carmel, apart from its theological and mystical meaning (see the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* by St.

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pope. It is hard to understand how the Church could exist without a head or a ruler. If there were no head, would not Our Lord have to appear to us, to achieve by His second coming the work which began with His first? That would be the Parusia.³⁵

Or would He proceed to the great consummation supposed by the Last Universal Judgment, in which case, the end of the times would be practically the same thing as the end of the world.

Or would He only change the present state of things in such a way as to prepare the final path for the great consummation. Perhaps St. Paul refers to this when he says:

For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. And when all things shall be subdued under Him, then the Son Himself must be subject also to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15: 25-28)

There is also another possibility: in speaking of the three last popes, this could refer to their reigning in Rome like their predecessors. Only in this would they be the last, since perhaps there could later be some extra-Roman pontiffs. Can this possibility be excluded?

The more I think about it, the more I favor the last hypothesis.

The Catholic Church originated in Jerusalem where Saint Peter had his seat. Following the falling away of Israel after the Jews put the Messiah to

John of the Cross), has also a mysterious reference to the nearness of eschatological times. Mount Carmel has been closely associated with devotion to the Virgin from the remotest times; but it is also closely associated with the history of Israel (in the decisive hours of the Alliance) and with the activities of the great prophet of the old testament, Elias.

By appearing under her ancient title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in these modern times of the world, does the Virgin want to indicate that she will take decisive action so that the mass conversion of the Jews—that has been waiting for almost two millenniums now—will be accomplished, fulfilling that way the times of the nations?

Does she want to point out the imminence of the final times when, according to the Apocolypse (11: 3-6) the man of Mount Carmel, Elias, will make his last acts as preacher and witness of the Lord?

There are times in which I think I find a certain mimemonic likeness between the sound of the word Garabandal and the sound of the hebrew or arab word for Carmel. It is almost as if there were two Carmels: one from the east, and one from the west, both chosen as locations for salvation by the presence of the Virgin.

35. Parusia is a biblical and theological term to designate the solemn manifestation of Christ at the end of time.

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death and violently rejected his works, Saint Peter went to find a place among the nations, the gentile people, and his seat was established in Rome which was then the undeniable head of the gentile world.

The succession of Saint Peter was then perpetuated in the Bishop of Rome who was the Pope of the Church and the Head of the Episcopal College. From that time the same person was both Bishop of Rome and Head of the Church.

But if Rome would perish or disappear, there would be no more bishops belonging to it. And if Jerusalem would become a converted Israel, a Christian one, a Holy City as had so often been predicted by the biblical prophecies, it would become the city of the great King. Here the word of the Lord would save all peoples and the successor of Saint Peter, the Vicar of Christ, would situate himself. The center of the Church would thus return to its origin.

Rome is called Babylon in passages of the New Testament (1 Peter 5: 13) and there are many things in the 17th and 19th chapters of the Apocalypse about its destiny . . .

Concise and explicit is the final paragraph of the famous prophecy of Saint Malachy on the popes: “In the last persecution of the Holy Roman Church the throne will be held by Peter the Roman, who will tend his sheep in the midst of tribulations. When these have passed, the City of the Seven Hills will be destroyed, and the terrible judge will judge his people.”

Mysteries! Mysteries! Mysteries!

But we should not ignore that Garabandal, from the days of 1963, has proclaimed that we are entering into decisive times, perhaps the last that will be marked by the arms of the great clock of history.

With the Miracle in Sight

A magnificent opportunity, prior to the coming epoch of the final times, will be the Miracle that is being foretold more and more.

Fr. Retenaga, in composing his second report in April, 1963, resumés what he has heard on the topic like this:

“Conchita affirms:

- That she knew about the miracle since October, 1961.
- That the Virgin first told it to her alone; but that she told it to the other three later.

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- That it will be on Thursday, at 8:30 in the evening, and will last about a quarter of an hour.
- That on that day there would be an ecclesiastical event, and the miracle would come after that event, on the same day.
- That she would announce the miracle to the world eight days in advance.
- That, besides those that were in the village, the Pope and Padre Pio³⁶ would see the miracle. The Virgin did not specifically say which Pope.
- That the sick who were there would be cured, including sinners, since according to the Virgin, “they were her children too.”

There is a tape recorded by Plácido Ruiloba in Garabandal on January 16th, 1963. He was questioning Conchita about a letter that the girl had written to the Bishop:

- “Did you write down the date of the miracle?”
- “No, since at the time I didn’t know it.”
- “Since when have you known it? Since the past week?”

36. After Conchita’s prediction, Padre Pio’s death in September, 1968 caused great dismay among the Garabandalistas, since they all counted on the famous Capuchin from Pietrelcina being alive and present on the day of the Miracle. Many explanations have been given attempting to correlate Conchita’s prediction with the fact of his death.

Now we have some reliable information on this matter.

Conchita was dismayed also by the notice of the death of Padre Pio, who was expected to “see the miracle”. But several weeks after his death, as dusk settled at Garabandal on October 16, 1968, a telegram from Lourdes arrived, carrying the name of a woman in Rome whom Conchita knew. The telegram urged her to depart immediately by car to receive something on behalf of Padre Pio . . .

Fr. Combe, a French parish priest from Chazay d’Azergues in the diocese of Lyon and a great promoter of the cause of Garabandal, was in Garabandal that day. He and his inseparable collaborator B. L. Ellos took Conchita and Aniceta in their car and set out that night for Lourdes. There on the morning of October 17, Conchita received “on behalf of Padre Pio” a short written message and a large section of the veil that had covered Padre Pio’s face after his death. Carrying these presents was the Italian Capuchin Fr. B. (surely Fr. P. Bernardino Cennamo). Fr. B. had been very close to Padre Pio and his secretary Fr. Pellegrino who had signed this message that Padre Pio spoke to him a month before his death. In the message appeared the date “August 22, 1968”

Conchita took advantage of this meeting to ask, “Why did the Virgin tell me that Padre Pio would see the Miracle?”

Father B: “Padre Pio saw it before his death. He himself told us.”

These and other details about the connection between Conchita and Padre Pio can be seen in the French leaflet *Conchita Parle du Padre Pio* that Fr. Combe published.

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—“No, since this week. I told the Bishop about what it was going to consist, and other things . . . But not the date.”³⁷

I admit that I do not know the exact meaning of Conchita’s remark about not knowing the date. The reader can make his own judgment from another passage of the recorded conversation:

“And what does your brother Serafín say about this?”

—“He says that if the Miracle is not sure, that I should clearly say the truth; that he will take me away from here and bring me wherever I want. But how could Serafín think like this since I told him the date yesterday?”

—“Well”—responded Serafín who was present there—“you didn’t tell me anything like the date. You told me a thing, a happening, which if it occurs will let me know the Miracle is coming.”

Serafín himself, after reading about this in the first edition of this book, gave me some clarifications when we were in his little hotel in May of 1976.

During the winter of 1963, (the time of the crisis discussed in Part Two, and prior to the denials of the other girls), he felt that as the eldest brother and the *man* of the house, he should take a stand concerning Conchita.

So one night while the family was in the kitchen of the house, he said to Conchita, “You will have to tell us once and for all what this is all about; we can’t go on like this. And don’t be afraid of what will happen . . . I’m ready to take you away from the village and bring you anywhere you want. If you want to go to school, we can arrange that too . . . But we have to know the truth. All these things about the apparitions: Are they true, or are they something that you made up?”

Conchita replied that it was true, that she had seen the Virgin, that it wasn’t something that the girls made up, and that there was no reason to leave the village . . .

The matter remained that way during the night.

But the next day, while Serafín was in the kitchen and his sister upstairs, he heard her call him, “Serafín! Come up a minute.”

37. I found this information in one of Maximina’s letters to the Pifarré family, dated December 15:

“Look, Asunción, don’t tell this to anyone. But today Conchita came to my house and told me, ‘Look, Aunt, don’t tell this to my mother, but today the Angel told me the date of the Miracle.’ No one except she and her oldest brother know this.”

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The man told me he felt as if his heart missed a beat as he thought, “There it is! She has finally made up her mind. She must have thought about this all night long and is going to tell me that it has all been a fraud.”

—“What do you want?” He asked her on arriving upstairs.

—“So that you can see that all this is true, the Virgin has told me to tell you this . . .”

And she talked to him about the Miracle, and explained in what it was going to consist. Later Conchita wrote it down briefly on the back of a holy card of the Child Jesus, which Serafín keeps concealed and which none of the family have seen. And she told him that it would occur when a definite event in the Church took place, and she also explained it to him. Only in this way does Serafín know the date of the miracle.

Later Serafín and I discussed the following excerpt from a leaflet written by Dr. Puncernau:

During one of my trips to the pastures, I was alone with Serafín and we were eating in the barn. After eating, I tried to draw him out since it was said that he knew from Conchita when the Warning would be.

I drew the conclusion that if he knew, he didn’t want to say. The only thing that I got definitely from him was that it would be preceded by a special happening in the Church. After many questions and answers, it seemed clear to me from his vague remarks that it would be something like a schism. That is the way I understood it.

—“And what do you say about Dr. Puncernau’s opinion?” I asked Serafín.

—“He is free to think what he wants. But I don’t think I gave him reasons for such an opinion.”

—“But will this happening actually be a schism in the Church?”

—“I have nothing to say.”

During that May of 1976, I spoke also with Jacinta’s mother, María. She told me that she had heard repeatedly from her daughter that affairs were going to go very bad for the Church, that the Eucharist would constantly be given less importance, that many priests would become worse and worse, and that wickedness would spread everywhere.

It can be noticed that Dr. Puncernau does not speak of the Miracle, but of the Warning. Is this a mistake? Perhaps not.

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On a day in September of 1963, some French people were invited to eat dinner with Conchita in a house near the girl's home. She was devouring pastries with the healthy appetite of girls of her age. Someone jokingly asked her about the sacrifices and penance mentioned in the message. Conchita accepted the joke in good humor and laughed. But suddenly she became quiet and seemed to concentrate; her face lit up; and with her hands joined on her chest, she began to speak:

“The Miracle will be on the feastday of a young martyr of the Eucharist, a boy who carried Communion to persecuted Christians. His companions, on seeing him pass by, wanted to force him to stay and take part in their games. Infuriated by his resistance, they ended up hurling stones at him until he was left almost dead. Later a Christian soldier came, who recognized him and carried him in his arms.”

One of those present exclaimed: “Oh, that's St. Tarcisius!”

Conchita, without saying a word, as if she hadn't heard, turned back to her pastries.

After dinner ended and Conchita had left, those at the table exchanged their impressions. The oldest in the group concluded: “It seems that Conchita saw this scene in an ecstasy, but without understanding what martyr it was. I don't think she even knows his name.” (*L'Etoile dans la Montagne*)

Many think that this description of the young martyr adequately points out the day on which the Miracle will occur; and that it is only a matter of glancing at the calendar. However, since Conchita did not tell us the date clearly, she obviously seeks to keep it a secret. By industriously sifting through material and searching through files, we will not be able to discover it. The mystery will never be revealed by mere human ingenuity. The important thing is to know how to wait and be prepared.

One More Apparition

The year 1963 closed at Garabandal with a new visit from the Mother of Heaven. Once again she allowed herself to be seen, but only by Conchita.

It occurred on December 8th, a grand day in Spain, where the feast of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated so solemnly. And it was a big day for Conchita, since it was her nameday.

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Long before the first rays of dawn had broken over the icy mountains, a mysterious restlessness—or perhaps a holy emotion—awoke the young girl. She rose and called her mother. Soon the two of them went out on the street leading to the church. Silence and darkness had settled over the village; nothing was moving, nothing could be heard. It was 5:30 in the morning.

Before the closed doors of the church, Conchita fell on her knees in ecstasy. The temperature was freezing, not conducive to arousing fervor; but the visionary was transported from her locale. Aniceta alone was there as a witness. She heard her daughter conversing with someone, but it was not possible to understand the dialogue at the time.

Later she learned some of what had happened, when Conchita decided to speak:

“The Virgin began by congratulating me on my feastday. And after congratulating me, she said:

—“You will not be happy on earth, but you will be in heaven.”

Afterward, she told me some things . . . She spoke to me about future happenings . . .

—“Can they be known?”

—“No, she told me not to reveal them.”³⁸

It appears that the Virgin had been making these mysterious communications to Conchita for some time, according to Maximina’s letter from the previous November 10th, in which she writes to Eloísa de la Roza:

Conchita told me about the last locution which she had 10 or 15 days ago—I don’t remember exactly what day it was. She told me there was a locution about which she couldn’t say anything to anyone, not even in confession. I asked her if it was something good, and she told me that the Virgin never says anything bad.

And so amid prophecy, hidden secrets, and expectation, 1963, Garabandal’s third year slipped away.

It had begun with a tremendous upheaval, discouraging many and purifying others.

38. *L’Etoile dans la Montagne*.

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Then came months of calm and suspense.
Its days closed with words encased in mystery.
But there were some words that are very clear for every one:

You will not be happy on earth, but you will be in heaven.

CHAPTER 24

1964: Another Year of Interlude

IF NOT MUCH IS known about Garabandal during 1963, even less is known about 1964.

The tenor of 1964 was very similar to the previous year. The visionaries continued without apparitions. At least, there are no reports of any, except for what later will be mentioned at the end of the year. In their place were the locutions, as is seen by what Maximina wrote to Dr. Ortiz in Santander in a letter dated March 9th:

During the last days of February—I don't remember which day—Conchita had a locution. The Virgin gave her a message for some woman. I don't know what it was. She didn't tell me.

Concerning the girl's advancing spirituality, we have testimony from Maximina, who wrote to the Pifarré family on February 4th:

I have no doubt about this matter here, since I've heard things said by Conchita that I don't know how to explain—I can't even understand her conversation. The other day she told me that the only cross that she can have is not to love

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Jesus enough. She said that all the others, great as they may seem to us, have little importance. She told me this many times.

In another letter to the same family, dated March 23rd, she remarks:

Conchita continues having a locution every month. She is very fervent. Today she said that she wants the day to come for her to go to the convent. For she would like to go there now. If you could see how good this is . . . The world doesn't attract her at the present; although as is natural, she amuses herself, but always with the young children, and especially with my daughter and those of her age.

The Return of Father Luis Andreu

Perhaps it was during the locution in February that once again was felt the presence of the departed Fr. Luis Andreu, the first death of Garabandal. On the 27th of that month Conchita wrote to his brother, Fr. Ramón:

You asked me in your letter how we saw Fr. Luis at the Pines. We saw him looking up, saying, "Miracle!" His face was blanched and perspiring, yet at the same time, it had an expression of pleasure.¹ And the Virgin told us at the time that he was seeing her and the miracle that Our Lord was going to perform.

We have spoken with him about 10 or 11 times.

I have learned in a locution with the Virgin that I have to speak with him again.

When did this new conversation between Conchita and the departed Jesuit occur? I cannot give a definite date. But perhaps it occurred more than once, since midway through the year the visionary wrote again concerning him, and mentioned astounding things in a letter addressed again to his brother, Fr. Ramón, dated August 2nd, 1964:

On July 18th,² I had a locution, and during the locution I was told that on the day after the Miracle, they would take your brother from his tomb and find his body incorrupt.

1. Father's Luis' trance—the only trance mentioned at Garabandal in which anyone besides the girls took part—occurred on the evening of August 8th, 1961. See Chapter VIII of Part One.

2. On this day the village celebrated its principal feastday. Two years previously the miracle of the Host had occurred on this date.

Between Doubt and Hope

In the meantime, what was happening in the thoughts and feelings of the people? The witnesses who put together the book, *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*, say optimistically:

All the evidence indicates that the entire year of 1964 was a period of secret meditation and personal retreat for the visionaries. For the people of the mountains and for the entire world alerted by the diffusion of the message, these twelve months were a halt for reflection and examination of conscience concerning one's responsibilities. Speaking humanly, one might say that during that year, heaven permitted the earth to catch its breath.

The village was changing its appearance. The same book tells us:

Land, houses, and even stables were being bought by Spaniards outside the village.³ The bricklayers were busy.

The interior of the church was remodeled⁴ . . . "Thanks to the generosity of an American," people said.

And the attitude of the village changed along with the external changes.

Peace and harmony were only on the surface. Only the old women, with their wrinkled and withered faces still kept the benevolent look and smile of before. The seers' families were seen with thinly disguised envy. With regard to the apparitions, discord reigned in place of yesterday's harmony.

Many wavered, finding the wait too long, since the celebrated Miracle didn't seem to be coming. The same men and women who had untiringly followed the four girls in their ecstasies, now showed themselves incapable, except for some silent old people and a few solid souls, to hold on to what they had so many times seen, heard and touched.

The people with an inordinate appetite for miraculous phenomena, had now fallen into spiritual blindness, a form of hardness of heart that could only amaze the visitor. If one were to ask them, "What about the apparitions? they would answer, Oh Señor! That was nothing."

A good example of this attitude was the statement made to Fr. Laffneur by Jacinta's mother, María: "Yes, I believed when an ecstasy was in front of me; but when the ecstasy ended, I didn't believe any more . . . I will believe forever if the miracle happens." Admirable sentiment of faith!

3. Maximina's letter to the Pifarrés on June 7 says: "They have bought so much land around here!"

4. "They have remodeled the church. The altar is beautiful." (Maximina's letter of November 11)

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Another example of the people's attitude was recorded in the book, *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*. The Spanish lawyer, who was the interpreter for the book's authors, was going down from Garabandal toward Cossío on a blistering day. On the way he met a woman of the village coming up in the scorching sun and stopped to talk with her:

—Well, Señora, how is it going?”

—“It's hot, Señor.”

—“Yes, it certainly is. But I mean in regard to the apparitions.”

—“Oh!”

—“Yes, what do they think at Garabandal?”

—“Oh! They don't think anything.”

—“Why not anything? I myself saw the ecstasies. And you?”

—“Oh! The ecstasies! At the beginning they were true . . . but now!”

—“True at the beginning, and not true now?”

—“Yes, at the beginning they were true. I'll prove it to you.” (She mentioned to the lawyer something very personal that had occurred to her and her husband during one of Loli's ecstasies.) “Then it was the Virgin who appeared. Why doesn't she start appearing again?”

This conversation on the way from Cossío to Garabandal tells the story . . .

And one might wonder if the poor village people were really responsible for their ignorance because of the neglect in which they had been left by their spiritual guides. But such a frame of mind deserved a lesson, and heaven gave it with its silence during the two long interludes of 1963 and 1964.

Even the privileges of the girls seemed to be completely interrupted during the middle of 1964. Maximina wrote to the Pifarrés on June 7th:

Conchita says that she doesn't have locutions now. I don't know if this is true, or if she wants to hide them, but she is happy as ever.

Throughout August the situation continued the same. Maximina wrote again on August 15th:

“There is nothing new here at present.”

The people from the village were constantly fluctuating between doubt and hope. Most of them had more doubt than hope.

It was the people from outside the village who kept the torch of Garabandal burning bright. We have many testimonies of this in Maximina's letters.

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For his enthusiastic convictions in favor of the events, Fr. Luis López Retenaga distinguished himself. The village “was a delight for him.” He went up to Garabandal whenever he could, almost always accompanied by another priest friend, and stayed there whenever possible.

As to how the visitors acted during that year, we can gather from Maximina’s lines on the feast of the Assumption:

Today on the feast day of our Lady there were many people in the village. I had a French woman in my home for over a month. She is very virtuous and doesn’t cause me any trouble. The people are coming and they all seem to believe. Many priests have come too. An English priest stayed a whole month here; another from Llanes (Asturias), ten days; and also several French priests have come. Many French people came this year and they all seem to be very convinced about what is happening here.

Those who went up to the village knew that there had been an arrest in the apparitions and the phenomena; but they hoped, they went searching. What did they hope for? What were they searching for? Besides personal encounter with the world of the divine, they were certainly looking for a proper finale to all this that had promised so much . . . and had been so strangely interrupted . . .

CHAPTER 25

Before the Finale

BEFORE 1964 WAS OVER, Garabandal entered into a phase of reactivation: something that now, from a perspective of the passing years, could be described in the jargon of sports as the final stretch or the last lap.

On December 8th, feastday of the Immaculate Conception and thus Conchita's nameday, the girl received the singular favor of another visit with the Mother of Heaven. A month later, on January 12th, 1965, she spoke about it briefly to Father Laffineur: On the day of the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin congratulated me on my feastday; and she told me that I would see the Angel St. Michael on the coming June 18th.

A few days later, on January 24th, she wrote again to this priest (whom she familiarly called Grandfather): I do not remember whether I mentioned in my last letter that on June 18th I was going to see the Angel St. Michael. The Virgin told me this during a locution on my feastday, the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

And so, with the announcement of the return of St. Michael, the year 1965 began. This had great portent, since the great Archangel was not for minor matters; and his visit, announced so far in advance, certainly could

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not be of the routine type. He, who had come four years previously to start everything in motion, could well return now to bring it to a close.

The importance of the coming year was marked out right from its first day.

It was the holiday evening of January 1st, and daylight was fading. Two shepherd children from the village, Joaquina (12 years of age) and Urbano (9 years), were tending their herd of sheep, which they were leading over the little flat area by the Pines.

On coming to the Pines, the children stood staring open-mouthed, discovering Conchita solitary and enraptured beneath a pine tree. How many times had a similar scene been seen there and in the village!

They observed her as closely as the wandering of their sheep permitted. The visionary, with her gaze fixed upwards, appeared to be in mysterious conversation, since she was speaking and listening.¹

Only later, piece by piece, was learned some segments of the many things that occurred during that exceptional trance.

Conchita wrote Father Laffneur in her letter of January 12th: On January 1st I saw the Virgin at the Pines.

She said nothing about the vision. However, in another letter of February 2nd, while answering the priest's questions, she explained more:

The Virgin seems to be the same age as the first time that I saw her. (July 2nd, 1961) The same as in these past years: about 18 years old.

She wears a white robe and a sky blue cloak.

A prodigious light, which doesn't hurt the eyes, radiates from her and surrounds her completely.

Apart from the ecstasy that I am going to have on June 18th, I don't know whether the apparitions will begin again, either for me or for the four of us.

1. I finally saw a confirmation of this in a letter from Maximena to the Pifarré family, dated March 8th:

"I think I have already written you about this; namely that on December 8, the feastday of the Immaculate Conception, Conchita had a locution. And she said that the Virgin told her that on June 18th she would have an apparition with the Angel. She doesn't know what he will say or whether she will be alone or with all the other girls. Also on January 1st Conchita had an apparition with the Virgin at the Pines, and it lasted a long time. (She often goes to pray at the Pines.) Two shepherd children, a boy and a girl, found her there in ecstasy. They were the ones who later talked about it; if they had not, perhaps she wouldn't have mentioned it. She came to my house when the ecstasy was over, and she looked very excited, although very happy . . .

I don't write as much as before, since now there is nothing special to write about."

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The Virgin will give a new message, since she said: “Hardly any attention was given to the other. (that of October 18th, 1961)” The Virgin is going to give, therefore, a final message.

What Conchita says here to the promoter of the cause of Garabandal in France and other countries is no small matter. But there was still more to say. And finally she did say it; or rather said some of it! But months later.

The occasion was Fr. Laffineur’s stay in Garabandal to watch the predicted visit of the Angel in June of that year. On the day after the apparition, June 19th, this priest was in Conchita’s house, speaking of course of what had happened. And at one time, she said to him: After so long a time, the Virgin has spoken to me about so many things! But she hasn’t told me to talk or keep quiet about many of them. Because of this, many times I don’t know what to do, being afraid of making a mistake . . .

I’m going to give in writing the warning that I received during the apparition of January 1st, when I was alone at the Pines.

A Warning for the Whole World

What Conchita wrote was this:

The Warning, that the Virgin is going to send us, will be like a punishment: to bring the good closer to God, and to warn the others either to convert, or receive what they deserve.

I’m not going to reveal what the Warning consists of. The Virgin didn’t say that I should tell it. And concerning this, there is nothing more to be said.

God wishes that, due to the Warning, we would amend our lives and commit less sins against Him!

Fr. Laffineur, having read these words, asked Conchita if the Warning would cause people to die. She then added this remark: Dying will not be caused by the Warning itself, but by the effect that we will have on seeing and feeling it.

If the information written by Conchita for Fr. Laffineur was brief and delayed, it was not the same with what she said to her aunt and god-mother, Maximina González. She spoke to her aunt when she was still under the effect of what she had just learned at the Pines on January 1st:

Before the Miracle, there will be a Warning, so that the world can amend its ways.

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Hearing this, Maximina wanted to know more. The niece explained the Warning to her the best she could. From those explanations, the aunt remembered the following, which she wrote down:

She told me we were going to suffer a horrible disaster some day, in all parts of the world.

None of us will escape this: the good, so that they may draw nearer to God; the evil, so that they may amend their lives.

She didn't tell me what it was; but that she was expecting it any day. It would come before the Miracle.

She said that it was preferable to die rather than suffer for just five minutes what was going to come.² She said that it is horrible, that it is a thing clearly from heaven. People in every part of the world will suffer from it.

I said to her: "Why don't you publish it, so that the world may know what is going to happen to it?" And she told me that she was tired of giving warnings and the world was not paying any attention.

She said that the Virgin told her that the world certainly believes that there is a heaven and a hell, but that it can be seen that we think little about it. The Virgin also told her that when we suffer this punishment, all of which we have caused ourselves with our sins, that we should not feel the sufferings and pain for ourselves, but rather that we should suffer every thing for her Son, since He is very offended by what we do.

I asked her how long this catastrophe would last, and she said that she didn't know; but that we could suffer it both in the night and in the day. I said to her, "Will we die?" And she told me, "I think if that happens, it would be from fright."

—"And if we were in the church praying?"

2. According to later statements given by Jacinta, and published in the July-Sept. 1977 issue of the magazine *Needles*, now titled *Garabandal*:

"The Warning is something that is first seen in the air everywhere in the world and immediately is transmitted into the interior of our souls. It will last for a very little time, but it will seem a very long time because of its effect within us. It will be for the good of our souls—in order to see in ourselves our conscience . . . the good and the bad that we have done . . ."

It will come upon us like a fire from heaven, which we will feel profoundly in our interior. By its light each one will see the state of his soul with complete clearness; he will experience what it is to lose God; he will feel the purifying action of the cleansing flame. Briefly, it will be like having the Particular Judgment in one's very soul while still alive.

The purification of the Warning will be necessary to make us ready to face the Miracle. Otherwise we might not be able to sustain the superhuman and marvelous experience of the Miracle. Perhaps because he had not previously undergone the Warning, the early death of Fr. Luis Andreu came about, after he saw on that summer night in 1961 what even the visionaries have not yet seen.

Before the Finale

—“I think too that the church would be the best place to pass it, there next to the Blessed Sacrament, so that He could support us, give us strength, and aid us to suffer it better.”

—“Since you’ve told me this, I’ve done nothing but look at the sky, to see if I can see anything.”

—“I too, and when I go to bed, I look and have great fear. Though on the contrary, I have a desire for it to come, to see if we amend our lives, since we don’t understand the offenses that we make against the Lord.”

—Well then, when we see that it is coming to us, we can all go to the church.

—“I myself would consider doing that! But perhaps it will come upon us in the darkness and we won’t be able . . .”

How horrible it will be! If I could tell it as Conchita told it to me . . . She said that if she didn’t already know what the Chastisement was, she would say that the Warning was worse than the Chastisement.”³

From this testimony, written and signed by Maximina, it appears adequately clear that the Warning that was revealed to Conchita on January 1st, 1965 will have the following characteristics:

- It will cause terribly afflictive and striking suffering.
- It will have a universal scope; that is, it will reach everyone, in all parts of the world.
- It will be seen that it is a thing from God, something that man himself could not perform, leaving him to implore the mercy of God.
- It will come with a purpose of salvation: in order that the good may draw nearer to God, and the bad take their amendment of life seriously.
- It will certainly come, and before the Miracle; but no one knows the day or the hour.
- Its time, probably, will be a time of mysterious darkness.
- At that time, there will be no other refuge or relief except prayer.

Conchita’s important communication appears not to have been disseminated for a long time, since in the letters and information that I have seen from the first months of 1965, no reference was made to the Warning, which should have occupied everyone’s attention.⁴

3. It is no wonder that Conchita, having learned this and coming down from the Pines on New Year’s eve, appeared at her aunt Maximina’s house, according to the latter’s testimony as “very excited but also very happy”.

4. Maximina, who was always so prompt to report everything that was happening to her friends the Pifarré family in Barcelona, did not bother to say anything about the Warning until many months later (in a letter on September 9th), and then only because the Pifarrés had asked her about it:

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What did capture the people's attention was the announcement of the Angel's upcoming visit on June 18th. Many of those who believed in Garabandal began then to make plans and even to reserve rooms. On that same day of January 1st, Maximina wrote to Maria Herrero de Gallardo:

I am very, very sorry to have to tell you that the two rooms at my disposition have been promised already to Dr. Ortiz and Fr. Luis Retenaga. I have inquired at the other houses and they told me that, since it is such a long time away, that they couldn't promise a room. The village is going in a bad way. (She is referring to selfishness and interest in monetary gain associated with the coming of the visitors.) Perhaps not as many people will come as they expect. But I think it is most likely that you won't be able to walk through the streets because of the people who will come, since the people want to see apparitions again.

From these lines, we can imagine what the climate was at the beginning of 1965 in the village that had been so favored during the previous years.

Obviously in such an atmosphere the news and the expectation of the Warning would not easily penetrate. However Conchita continued to think about it, and during the year spoke about it to others, repeating basically what we have learned from Maximina, but adding other details that will be seen in time.

Waiting for the Day

News of Garabandal being the site of amazing phenomena was spreading throughout the world, and new visitors were coming ceaselessly to the secluded little town.

Everyone wanted to know what had happened first hand, through the visionaries themselves. The girls could not always acquiesce to the people's wishes; either because the flood of inquisitive people was at times overwhelming, or because the girls had duties which they could not neglect, or because their parents placed obstacles in the way of the persons who came.

But usually the visionaries tried to please everyone. Obviously they could not put down what they knew in writing for all. However there was an exception in the case of William A. Nolan, an American from Illinois.

"Concerning what you asked me about the Warning, I believe in it, that it is true; at least I have heard something about it from Conchita . . ."

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This man made his appearance at Garabandal in March, 1965, and wanted to learn from Conchita everything that had happened. He was not able to converse with her in words, since neither did he know Spanish, nor she, English. At the time the young girl agreed to write to him, something that was hard for her. In order that it would not serve as a precedent, she put as a postscript: "I'm doing this for this man, as we don't understand each other, and he wants to be informed. I'm doing this for him, but I can't do it for everyone. And he, with an interpreter . . ."

The manuscript was three pages long, and Conchita said nothing new; but it is of interest as a resumé and confirmation of the principal facts. She began:

On an evening in June of 1961, at San Sebastián de Garabandal, the Archangel St. Michael appeared to four girls, of whom I am one . . . The first time that we saw him, he didn't say anything—until the 1st of July. Before the 1st of July, he carried an inscription underneath his feet, and we didn't understand well what it said . . .

She continued, a few lines down:

The Virgin came on July 2nd and she appeared very beautiful to us, with the Child Jesus in her arms and two angels dressed alike, one on each side.

The first thing that she said to us was, "Do you know the meaning of the inscription that the Angel carries?"

And we said no.

"It is a message that you have to tell the world on October 18th of this year, 1961."

It is the following . . .

Besides the message, the Virgin told us many more things; she also told us that there would be many contradictions among us . . .

She continued appearing to us like this until 1963, and she told us many very beautiful things, which it would require many days to write all down.

In the past two years we haven't had apparitions; but the Most Holy Virgin has spoken to us interiorly, without words, and we understand her very well. These are called *locutions*. I like very much to see the Virgin; but I like even more for her to speak to me interiorly, because she seems to be inside me.

The Virgin has also predicted thru my intercession (thru me), a great miracle for the whole world; it is more important than any other, as the world needs now. For the world now there is the message—for the people to fulfill it, and make others fulfill it . . .

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After the usual descriptions of the Virgin, the Child and the Angel, she added in ending:

The last time that I saw the Virgin was at the Pines on January 1st. And I will see the Angel on the coming June 18th.

This document was dated March 22nd, 1965.

Three days later, Loli took an interest in the same man, writing this letter:

For my good believer in Christ, William A. Nolan,

I thank you very much for your trip to Spain, and for your visit to this village, lost in the mountains, where Our Most Holy Mother has shown herself one more time to demonstrate the love that she feels toward the whole world. As a mother she pardons us everything, if we ask her with faith. Show this letter in your town.

I also tell you this, that in order to avoid the Chastisement, we have to make many sacrifices and penances, to pray the family rosary every day; this is what Our Most Holy Mother requests of us. Also, that we should love one another, as Our Lord loves us. We have to love; the whites must love the blacks; and the blacks, the whites, since we are all brothers . . .

Not a bad letter! Brief and simple, but with material for extended meditation.

These two writings carry a breath of the Divine that acted in Garabandal; but there is also much of the human acting there, even the too human . . .

We know from Plácido Ruiloba, that toward May 11th of that year 1965, uncharitable comments and rumors concerning the bishop were being noised throughout Santander:⁵ that he was being obliged by his superiors to resign . . . that he was thinking of going to North America . . . that at the time it was said that Pajares and Tobalina⁶ were waiting to be rid of him, in order to finish once and for all with the bothersome matter of Garabandal . . .

5. Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal had come to Santander as the bishop of the diocese in 1962; because of his age, education and deportment, a fruitful episcopate was expected. Unexpectedly in 1962 he presented his resignation, which the Holy See accepted. His state of health was given as the official reason for the resignation.

Bishop Beitia retired to Bilbao, his native land, and there continued working, especially in collaboration with the press.

6. For many years Fr. Francisco Pajares and Fr. Agustín Tobalina governed the diocese of Santander: the first from his position as chancery secretary, and the second as vicar general.

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The atmosphere that had descended on the mountain village was lamentable; it was described by the French witnesses in *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*: "Dissensions, arguments, criticism, distrust, indiscretions, and insults concerning the Celestial Visitor . . . The more or less disguised waiting for the famous rendezvous . . . It will be seen what will happen—since for the past two years nothing has been seen."

During these days of confusion, especially on May 16th, it began to be known that Conchita had held an important secret since January 1st. Thus it appears, at least in the notes of Dr. Ortiz: "Plácido went up to Garabandal, and Maximina relayed the conversation that she had with Conchita in which she had been told that a sign (the Warning) would come before the miracle."

The news or announcement, if it was divulged to the village (concerning which I have no information), certainly made no impression. Most everyone's attitude remained the same: doubting, dubious. They shrugged their shoulders: "We will see what will happen, if anything is going to happen."

Conchita, on the other hand, showed herself more certain than ever. On May 23rd, the Sunday before the Ascension, Mr. Ruiloba once again was walking through Garabandal. He met Fr. Valentín, who was very worried about some plans attributed to Pajares and Tobalina, and from the priest he learned that Conchita was continuing to repeat that the Angel would definitely return on the date announced: June 18th.

—"But are you really sure?"—the pastor had said to her—"That it is not a lie or something that you imagined?"

—"Do you think that the Virgin would lie?"

—"No. Of course not."

—"Well, the Virgin told it to me."

Mr. Ruiloba was constantly wavering between belief and disbelief. Every street, almost every corner of the village, had to bring back memories to him of things experienced very personally;⁷ nevertheless, the man could not overcome his vacillation. And on the night of May 25th, Tuesday, being with Ceferino in the latter's house, he began again to bring out

7. This same Plácido mentioned one day to Doctor Ortiz that at the beginning of the apparitions, after an ecstasy, one of the girls spoke of the state of his conscience as though she were reading it. And his wife, Lucita, added that from that time on her husband had changed very much.

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the negative things that he thought he had seen in the apparitions and in the girls. Ceferino, who in this matter was never far behind, broadly seconded him. And the two were talking in such a way that there came a time when Julia⁸ could not endure it any more and interrupted the conversation to remind them of some things of a very different character which neither of the two could deny. Her husband had no other solution than to assent, and even on his own part added some marvelous signs that he himself had received; but as if he were ashamed of them, he made Plácido swear never to tell them to anyone.

As with so many others in the village, it seemed that Ceferino took a strange pleasure in destroying hopes. On June 6th, Pentecost Sunday, when again Ruiloba and his wife came to his house, Ceferino received them with these words, "My friend Plácido, everything is finished. This is nothing but a farce . . . And what Conchita is going around predicting . . . pure lies. I have already pointed it out, as I have always done. I went once again to talk about it to the bishop . . . If the people come here on June 18th, let them. I am going to play billiards."

His daughter Loli, who was present there, joined in the conversation, with words and attitudes that were almost as ridiculous as those of her father.⁹

8. Ceferino's wife and Loli's mother.

9. Ceferino's doubts, or his changing from belief to disbelief in what had happened, remained to the end. But finally in his last days he seemed to receive a clear light, which must have comforted him in passing away.

He died on June 4th, 1974 at 56 years of age, about to complete the 13th year from the beginning of those phenomena in which he has been so closely entwined. Two days before his death on June 2nd, a group of pilgrims came to Garabandal with an image of the Virgin of Fatima. They were singing the Salve and other songs in the plaza, and Julia opened the doors and windows of the house so the prayers and songs could come in better to the room of her dying husband, at times almost unconscious; then she leaned against the window weeping and praying . . .

When the songs ended, she asked one of the youths from the group to give her a flower from those decorating the image. She went to place the flower on the crucifix that hung over the head of the dying man. Ceferino then came out of his lethargy and began to look from side to side as if he were searching for something, while he said, "The sign! The sign!" Julia brought the crucifix with the flower. He took both with great devotion and remained with the flower in his hand, full of peace and joy, as if the flower had been for him the *proof* that finally was given to him on this matter that had worried him so profoundly . . . Julia, for whom the early death of her husband was a hard blow, now believes in the apparitions more than ever.

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And up in those remote mountains, that is the way things were going during the last weeks before the great date.

Conchita had remained alone as the center of everything. And as a result, she was the occasion and cause of the jealousies that surfaced in some, of the distrust that tormented others, and of the expectation of many others.

And Conchita, on June 13th—the Sunday before the date so awaited and feared—caught cold . . . Right at the wrong time. She awoke on June 14th with a bad case of flu that elevated her temperature to 39 degrees. For three days she was confined to bed with chills and fever.

June 17th, Thursday, was the great feast of Corpus Christi, and Garabandal, like so many other ancient towns in Spain, put its best piety and enthusiasm into celebrating the feast.¹⁰ But Conchita could not follow the celebration more than from afar, from her bed of sickness. As the procession passed around her house, she could hear clearly the songs of the crowd accompanying Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, “Most High Lord . . . Let us sing to the greatest of all loves . . . God is here, let us adore Him . . . Heaven and earth, bless the Lord . . .”

In the street next to the house, her mother Aniceta had constructed a small arch of triumph made from branches and adorned with flowers; she had also draped a banner on it with the colors of the national flag and an inscription that read, *Long Live Christ the King!* What more could the simple woman do? It was a deeply felt homage that she offered to Our Lord in her own name and that of her children, especially for the daughter who could only accompany the procession in spirit.

The sudden illness of Conchita was the object of the most varied comments. “A good way of preparing an “out” if on Friday nothing happens!” said some. “The things of God in this world never come without some tribulation,” said others. Those who still hoped could do no more than ask with a greater or lesser degree of concern, “Will she be on her feet for the call of the Angel?”

The situation did not look good, since, although the illness had improved much during the day of Corpus Christi, the doctor had pre-

10. They thoroughly swept, cleaned and decorated the streets for the procession of the Blessed Sacrament that would be carried through them. The people of the village assisted en masse at this procession, the most solemn of the year; those who were not able to participate in it knelt at their doors, windows and balconies for the passage of the Lord.

scribed that she remain in bed, or at least not leave the house, for the next six days.

The Gathering Crowd

Throughout June 17th, pilgrims were arriving.

The same was happening during Friday the 18th, well into the evening. Persons from foreign countries were numerous. The *L'Etoile dans la Montagne* mentions: "200 Frenchmen, 10 Americans, 6 Englishmen, 4 Italians, and an occasional representative of the other countries of Europe and America."

There must have been many priests, but there were only a dozen visible in cassocks.

Vehicles with the most varied license plates inundated the village and its surroundings. Attention was especially drawn, and not only because of their size, to the vehicles of the technical crews for Spanish NO-DO,¹¹ and Televisión Italiana. In the latter group, the famous actor Carlo Campanini was particularly active.

What was the attitude of the crowd? Fr. Laffineur tells us in *L'Etoile dans la Montagne* as a witness of the scene:

In general, it was exemplary. Pious, modest, penitent. Almost all those who composed it had received Communion at one of the three Masses¹² during the morning . . .

Occasionally there could be found a face that was there only to spy on the events and activities, to gather information to utilize in favor of a cause that he

11. NO-DO (Noticiero-Documental) was the governmental agency of news pictures. Its importance has diminished with the development of television. The presence of NO-DO at Garabandal was due to the activities of a young woman from Segovia, Paloma Fernández-Pacheco de Larrauri. This woman, who already knew the village well, was there again for June 18th with her sister Fuencisia.

12. Aniano Fontaneda from Aguilar de Campoo wrote on June 26th to Fr. Ramón:

"I was at Garabandal on the 17th and 18th and I saw your friends and a great number of acquaintances. You missed a great day since everything turned out magnificently. Although Fr. Valentín told me that there would be no Masses in the village unless the priests came with written permission to celebrate Mass, we actually had several Masses, with more than 1,500 Communions. I can say no more than that the Hosts were exhausted on two occasions."

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represented or served . . . the emissaries from the Commission of Santander, obviously; members of some foreign agencies also, and even someone representing the ridiculous ex-priest Collin.¹³

How did the crowd pass the interminable hours of waiting? Certainly with less problems and hardships than the other congregation had in waiting on October 18th, 1961. This time there was not such a great gathering and the weather was much better. But occasions were not lacking to exercise patience, and practice penance. Mr. Poch Soler, the reporter sent by the Barcelonian weekly, *Por que?*, wrote an interesting article:¹⁴

From Cossío we made the trip on foot, 7 kilometers, always heading upwards, arriving at Garabandal after 2 in the morning of June 18th. Unplanned and spectacular! The monumental task of sheltering hundreds of pilgrims in a small town of no more than 40 houses had already ceased when we arrived. The people were sleeping in the doorways, in the stables, on the porches, in the kitchens, in the middle of the streets . . . In our nocturnal walk thru the uneven and rocky streets, we had to step with the greatest attention, avoiding the many people who were sleeping, stretched out on the ground, under the feeble illumination of a dozen light-bulbs scattered throughout the village.

One of the two bars or taverns in Garabandal remained open all night, although its small capacity could barely shelter 12 or 15 people. We settled ourselves down there to write. On our one side two English people were sleeping peacefully, leaning on the table with their elbows. On the ground, two French priests were praying the rosary in a low voice. Others were drinking beer and later went outside to walk in the streets beneath the clear moon illuminating that night in Garabandal.

The French correspondent from *Le Monde et La Vie* agreed with this, and said further that well into the night, in the most diverse sectors of the village, there rose up prayers and pious songs in Latin, Spanish and French . . .

13. We have already spoken about him during his visit to Garabandal on August 22nd, 1963.

14. This article was not published in the weekly paper until April, 1966. Its introduction went like this:

“In writing about this, we have tried at all times to avoid the frivolousness and journalistic lightness that at times we are accustomed to use for other subjects of the street. We have limited ourselves to reporting the facts as we have seen them, transcribing everything that we have heard and all this with the greatest objectivity possible.”

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As day dawned, the influx of people increased and the commotion in the streets was tremendous. The French reporter describes it:

The morning passed rather well. Everyone was using the time the best that he could. They were praying, singing, taking photographs, speaking with the villagers, asking a multitude of questions about the girls and their ecstasies.

Conchita's house naturally was the principal magnet of attraction. Only she was going to be the protagonist of what everyone was awaiting. Only she could name the time and the place. The youthful 16 year old girl was slow in appearing to the crowd because her mother rightly did not let her get up until well into the morning. The reporters were the ones most importune in their desire to see her. Poch Soler wrote in his article:

Conchita inspired all the press reporters with profound respect. My colleagues from Paris, Portugal, Madrid, the crew from NO-DO were waiting impatiently, but without irritation, for the time when they would be able to speak to her.

"You have to have a little patience," her mother told us. "Understand that the girl is tired. Yesterday she was still sick with a 40 degree temperature. She wants to talk with everyone, embrace everyone. I am the one who doesn't want her to go outside on the street."

Finally the door opened inch by inch, and in the doorway stood the young girl, pale, heavily bundled up, but with her best smile for everyone. For hours . . .

. . . She let herself be devoured by the crowd. She smiled, she wrote cards, she allowed herself to be photographed, she responded to the questions thrown at her, she promised to pray for the most diverse intentions, she tried to console the most afflicted, she embraced the children. (*L'Etoile dans la Montagne*)

Mr. Poch Soler continued:

At 2 o'clock in the afternoon of June 18th, we managed to speak with Conchita. I confess that this was the most moving moment of my career as a journalist. Never has a person filled me with such respect and confidence at the same time . . .

The interview took place in the kitchen of her home. Present were her mother and her two brothers, two strong men of the north who maintained the place. She held out her hand and apologized for making me wait to get the interview.

—"Are you happy?" I asked.

—"Very happy, Señor. I feel a great joy."

—"Why?"

—"Because today I will see the Angel and that is marvelous."

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—“Have you noticed the number of people who have come to Garabandal?”

—“I haven’t stopped thinking of them!”

—“And how do you feel about this enormous crowd?”

—“My joy is difficult to put into words . . . How happy Our Lady will be!”

—“Are you sure you will see the Angel today?”

—“Very sure.”

—“At what time?”

—“I cannot say, since I don’t know. I don’t know the hour, but I have a feeling that it will be rather late.”

—“What do you feel when the Virgin appears to you?”

—“A strong constriction that comes up from my chest to my throat . . . And then there is a marvelous light.”

—“What do you think the Angel will say?”

—“I surely don’t know. Possibly there will be a message. But I don’t know; we will see.”

When I went out on the street, the people closed in around me. Everyone wanted to know what Conchita had told me. French, Americans, Portuguese, they all begged me to please give them an answer. It was hard to convince them that it had been a normal interview, that the visionary hadn’t told me anything about the time or the place of the ecstasy.

After 3 o’clock in the afternoon, the concentration of pilgrims around Conchita’s house was imposing . . . The troops of the Civil Guard of the 242nd Command were in charge of maintaining order, although it wasn’t ever necessary for them to intervene with force.

The French groups and the people from the other nations gave a lesson in faith, devotion and seriousness, that we would have appreciated in our own Spanish people.¹⁵ At all times the initiative for prayers and petitions arose from them . . .

The climate at times was almost hysterical. Some physically covered Conchita with medals, scapulars and holycards, hoping that she would touch them and kiss them. Others made their way toward her to ask for her autograph, to take her photograph . . . A woman raised a paralytic son in her arms, imploring Conchita to kiss him.

Among the priests who had come to Garabandal, certainly the one who aroused the most interest was Father Pel . . .

15. *L’Etoile dans la Montagne* states:

“Toward nightfall gangs of Spanish boys and girls appeared whose flippancy showed that the devil wanted to be present at the spectacle too.”

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. . . the famous stigmatic, called the French Padre Pio,¹⁶ known throughout France for his sanctity and miraculous gifts. Even though 87 years of age, he was circulating around and talking with great agility.

But the one who showed himself the most active, and who seemed to have the best welcome in Conchita's house, was the Spanish Fr. Luis Luna, who had come from Saragossa. He was privileged to be near the visionary for many hours that day . . .

Continuing now with the article of Poch Soler:

The evening advanced, without Conchita announcing the time of the apparition. It became darker. But how sure it is that faith moves mountains! No one gave up or abandoned his post . . .¹⁷ 8 o'clock came, then 9, then 10 at night . . . They were praying without ceasing; supplications and hymns in every language rose up to heaven . . .

. . . until a trembling of emotion seized everyone: At the door of the house a priest¹⁸ came out, and calling for silence, spoke to the crowd.

"This is from Conchita: Everyone should go to the Calleja, to what is called the Cuadro, since the ecstasy will be there."

The frenzy stirred up by these words could not be described . . . Everyone ran crazily to see if he could get the best place for observation.

Aniano Fontaneda wrote in his letter to Father Ramón:

Everybody wanted to be the first to get there; they almost ripped my clothes off as they shoved me on all sides. Many were knocked to the ground. I lifted up Mercedes Salisachs¹⁹ and other people who stumbled and fell going up the hill.

16. Referring to the Italian Capuchine Padre Pio from Pietrelcina, famous the world over for his extraordinary apostolate and mystical charisms. Father Constant Pel died on March 5th, 1966, convinced of the truth of Garabandal.

17. Conchita stayed at the door of her home, giving herself to the multitude:

"Until night fell, and we did not know if she had the time to eat anything more than a crust a bread. Shivering, she went back into the house; but in order not to let anyone down, she opened the window of the kitchen and across the iron grate continued to give herself to the crowd." (*L'Etoile dans la Montagne*)

18. This seems to have been Father Luna from Saragossa.

19. The illustrious writer from Barcelona.

An intelligent person will understand the frenzy with which the throng rushed to seize good positions. This is not meant to commend it; only to make the situation understood. The reporter Poch Soler showed he sympathized with the crowd in his article:

"The spectacle was not only striking; it instilled fear . . . A woman was dragging her five year old son between her legs; the little boy was crying, but the mother could not give him any attention because she had to find a good position at all costs. A blind American got up on top of the wall, helped by his friends. A man with two bad legs asked me to give him a

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Fr. Luna also described it:

After having been together with Conchita for several hours—in order to benefit from her company when the expected ecstasy came—at the time of going up to the Cuadro, I found myself bowled over by the rush of the crowd, which carried me along in the turmoil and finally knocked me to the ground. With my back on the ground, the people passed on top of me as they ran upwards. While I was there, in the darkness of the night, two people assisted me, one on each side, and without the least effort on my part, in spite of the weight of my 80 kilos, I found myself on foot. Later I was able to guide myself on the left wall of the Calleja, where the stones are stacked without mortar.

The dispersal of the crowd left Conchita's house surrounded by an unusual silence. Only three or four persons still remained there at the window of the kitchen, desiring to exchange words with the young girl still inside.

—“What are we going to do now, Conchita?”

—“Go to the Cuadro, like the rest.”

Tryst with an Angel

At the Cuadro, order had been restored in the crowd.

Almost everyone was praying in a loud voice, in two choruses, the French and the Spanish alternating. What an extraordinary night! There was an unprecedented luminosity with innumerable stars shining as never before. Without a moon, at least for the spectators . . . ²⁰

Suddenly everybody lifted up their heads. From the northwest, a new star shot up, brighter than the others. It traced a great circle and returned to its starting point.

Two minutes later, another star, splendid but smaller than the first, appeared straight above Conchita's house, advanced slowly in the sky and suddenly disappeared above the Pines.²¹

hand so that he would be able to climb the rocky road. The human drama that brought all these persons to the *Cuadro* overwhelmed us all. Those people had their life conditioned by suffering and their admirable resignation was the greatest miracle of that night at Garabandal.”

20. A correspondent from *Le Monde at la Vie* had the same observation: “From 9 o'clock in the evening a magnificent starry sky covered the heavens.”

21. Juan Alvarez Seco, the Police Chief, also gave his testimony about the two stars that were seen on that night in Garabandal “while I was waiting for Conchita between 11:30 and 11:45 on that June 18th.”

The first star “was seen shining brightly, very brilliant and a golden color; it went from the ground upwards . . . The other, of lesser brightness, moved more horizontally.”

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Everyone was talking with the person next to him about these extraordinary phenomena, when at the foot of the road, in the light of the starry night and the flashlights, Conchita appeared, protected by a squadron of police guards.²² The young girl was walking so fast that her guards were out of breath.” (*L’Etoile dans la Montagne*)²³

The press reporter Poch Soler saw the scene like this:

At a quarter to midnight, Conchita, followed by some priests and seven police guards, went up to the Calleja in a completely normal state. She advanced with her gaze fixed. The flashes from the photographers began to shine on her. A police guard asked her,

—“Is it here, Conchita?”

—“No, Señor, a little higher up.”

On coming to the designated spot, the girl plummeted to her knees on the sharp stones of the road. The ecstasy had begun.

The moment is exciting. Conchita’s eyes are fixed on the sky. She laughs and pronounces some words in a very low voice . . . But immediately she completely changes her expression and tears run down her cheeks.

The photographers and the television cameramen are shooting their cameras, and their beams of light shine right into her eyes—wide open—but she doesn’t blink or make the least motion. The ecstasy is absolute.²⁴

The witnesses of the *L’Etoile dans la Montagne* tell of it:

The ecstasy was similar to those that we had previously observed in the village, in the seer’s kitchen or her room. There were signs of the cross made with an indescribable piety and majesty, a face resplendent with an interior light, an angelic smile and moments of solemn seriousness, whispering with lips open and the silence of a soul that listens, a tear that glistens on the temple and leaves a trail of crystal.

On his part, the reporter of *Le Monde et la Vie* wrote:

Conchita was there in front of my eyes, in the center of a circle of flashlights and camera lights focused on her. Her head, which I could see well during almost all

22. The reporter from *Le Monde et la Vie* spoke of six guards; the one from *Por Qué?* mentions seven.

23. The correspondent from *Le Monde et la Vie* also called attention to the rapid pace with which the girl was walking.

24. There is a good documentary motion picture of this complete ecstasy in the archives of NO-DO in Madrid. Copies of this motion picture, together with movies of other ecstasies, documentary movies, slides, books, etc. can be obtained thru:

GARABANDAL Magazine,
P.O. Box 606, Lindenhurst, N.Y. 11757

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the ecstasy, stayed motionless, thrown backwards in the way that so many photographs show. And her face appeared to gleam, extremely beautiful and transparent, arousing everyone's admiration.

Fr. Luna's testimony is exceptionally valuable:

I finally found myself on the hill, a little more than two meters from Conchita, who was already in ecstasy and whom I could see and hear perfectly. I was impressed by the more than human beauty of her face, speaking without blinking, under torrents of light projected on her from the cameramen and flashlights.

I was overwhelmed on seeing her cry, as up till then, I had never seen this. From her eyes poured out tears that joined in a stream, filling the concavity of her left ear (the only one visible to me at the time), falling on the ground like water from a loose faucet . . .

I heard her speak with a voice that was gasping and breathless: "No! . . . No! . . . Still no! . . . Pardon, pardon!" Later I saw her lift herself up some 70 centimeters with her right hand raised and unsupported, to again fall to her knees on the ground with a chilling crunch.

Later she said, as if repeating it and asking a question, "Priests? . . . Bishops? . . . July 2nd?"²⁵

I saw her cross herself with a majestic slowness . . . And suddenly she put her two hands to her face, trying to protect her eyes from the bright lights. The ecstasy was over."

There is one missing element in Father Luna's report, which the French reporters give us:

Conchita had remained immobile some 12 or 13 minutes, in conversation with her mysterious interlocutor. Suddenly, still in ecstasy, she got to her feet, in her right hand holding up a crucifix (that she later said had been touched at the time by the Angel). She fell again on her knees and brought the crucifix to her lips with an extraordinary expression of love. It was at this moment, according to what her mother told me, that one of the police guards, with a changed expression on his face, made the sign of the cross solemnly, as if to say, "I believe."

Then Conchita, without paying the least attention to what was happening around her, without changing in the slightest the immobility of her face or the fixedness of her glance, presented the crucifix to be kissed by three persons from France: an old priest at her side, a father of a family who had lived in Spain for some time, and a religion teacher from Leon.²⁶

25. There were only a few words that could be clearly heard from Conchita during the ecstasy; some people reported some, others reported others; but almost all agreed on these; "Pardon! Pardon! . . . Still no, still no . . . July 2nd? . . ."

26. According to the *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*, these three fortunate men were: the previously mentioned Father Pel, Mr. Mazure and Mr. Piqué.

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After making the sign of the cross with an extraordinary carefulness, she lowered her head, and smiling, without any sign of fatigue, got up.

With difficulty, the six police guards managed to protect her from the crowd . . ." (*Le Monde et la Vie*)

The guards' task was difficult. Everyone wanted to see Conchita up close, to touch her if possible, to ask her questions . . . especially when it was heard that she had received a message.

Mr. Aniano Fontaneda, in the letter previously quoted, wrote to Fr. Ramón:

The crucifix that she gave to kiss in the ecstasy belonged to me. I had left it when I went out of her house on the way to the Cuadro . . . On returning, she was holding up this crucifix for everyone to kiss at the door of her house. She continued until they finished kissing it, then she gave it back to me, and everyone came to ask me for it, since they wanted to kiss it. When I left Conchita's house, I passed Ceferino's tavern with the people from Catalan, Argentina and Madrilen. At every step I had to take out the crucifix, until a lady from Segovia named Fuencisla Fernández-Pacheco took charge of doing it.

Among the few people who succeeded in getting into Conchita's house after the ecstasy, was the correspondent from *Le Monde et la Vie*. All that he could pry from the visionary about the message that she had received was the vague statement: "It was very sorrowful."

But to find out its exact words, he would have to wait until the following morning.

But not everyone could wait. Such was the case with Mr. Fontaneda:

Conchita was going to give the Angel's message on the following day —Saturday— in the morning after Communion. But I couldn't wait. We left from there at 2 in the morning, without having eaten, with only two Coca-Colas that they had given me at Ceferino's place.

During the hours of the night, the village was almost completely tranquil and silent. The need for rest and sleep had overtaken everyone. And finally all that remained were the stars in the distant firmament above, as sentinels to continue the watch.

What mysterious designs were being planned for the world?

And the matter is doubly surprising, since no one is able to explain how they were able to get close to Conchita at the time, nor how she was able to give them the crucifix to kiss without seeing them and while holding it over the people who were next to them.

Before the Finale

In those designs, what would come from that June 18th in Garabandal
that was just ending?

Would it leave its mark?
Or would it fall into oblivion?

CHAPTER 26

“You Are in the Last Warnings”

THE MORNING OF SATURDAY, June 19th, came quickly. But the streets of the village were slow in showing activity. The waiting and the fatigue of the previous day had worn everyone out.

As the morning slipped past, a crowd of expectant people grew around Conchita's house, hoping to finally learn the message.

The young girl appeared rejuvenated. It was said that the ecstasy of the previous night had brought back all her energy and vitality. Indefatigable and patient, she attended to everyone to the best of her ability. Some wanted to say goodbye to her; others, for her to write on photographs and cards, or to kiss some holy article . . . the majority were coming with questions about the message.

But they still had to hold back their impatience.

There were Masses in the parish church. Conchita went to one of them, still fasting. On her way to and from the church, she was besieged by questions.

Finally, at noon, prior to the departure of a bus-load of people to France, the desired proclamation was made at the door of Conchita's house.

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A priest read in a loud voice what Conchita had given him in her own handwriting, even with minor spelling errors and erasures.

The priest was Fr. Luis Luna from Saragossa. He has declared on repeated occasions:

“Conchita gave me the message in writing, and I read it in a loud voice in front of the doorway of her house; I kept it after that as a precious relic.”

It was first read in the original Spanish text, then in French. Another priest continued with an English translation; and apparently it was said after that in Italian too, so that the proclamation of the message left nothing to be desired.

Brief in Words, Extended in Content

On June 19, 1965 this was read at Garabandal:¹

The message that the Most Holy Virgin has given to the world through the intercession of St. Michael.

The Angel said:

- As my message of October 18 has not been fulfilled, and as little has been done to make it known, I tell you that this is the last.
- Before, the cup was filling up; now it is overflowing.
- The PRIESTS: Many are on the road to perdition, and with them they are taking many more souls.
- The EUCHARIST: It is being given less and less importance.
- With your own efforts, you should avoid² the wrath of the Good God.
- If you ask pardon with a sincere heart, He will forgive you.
- I, your Mother, through the intercession³ of the Archangel St. Michael, want to tell you to amend your lives.
- You are in the last warnings!

1. Conchita’s text is given accurately, but not as she wrote it (one statement after another, without proper separation or punctuation).

2. Almost all the copies that I have seen of the message, even Conchita’s manuscripts, give this matter in the first person plural: “We should avoid . . .” This certainly is due to an assimilation on Conchita’s part of the Angel’s words, and should rather say: “You should avoid . . .”

In the first writing of the message, as it appears on the photocopy, she corrected the our efforts, putting in your efforts. An unconscious echo of what she had heard came out.

3. As on other occasions, Conchita confuses intercession with mediation. Obviously, the proper thing to say here would be “by means of the Angel St. Michael.”

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- I love you very much, and do not want your condemnation.
- Ask us sincerely, and we will give you what you ask.
- You should sacrifice yourself more.
- Think of the passion of Jesus.

With this text before us, something should be said about its delivery and much more about its content.

In its delivery, it is not easy to separate the words that the Angel actually said and those that belonged to Conchita's vocabulary, and which she used in communicating what she learned in the trance. Furthermore, although St. Michael gave the message, he was speaking in the name of the Most Holy Virgin. So words that he personally used (although by delegation) are merged with those that were simply repetitions of the Virgin's words. Her direct speech is especially clear in the last part of the message: "I, your Mother . . ."

Obviously, Conchita put in writing only the most important part of what was heard in the ecstasy at the Calleja. Almost 15 minutes of conversation could not be covered in half a page of written manuscript. Furthermore, some of the words that were heard during the ecstasy referred to other things than those that appeared in the message. But looking at the content, which is what is really important, there are three elements that cannot be separated, but are easily distinguished:

- A denunciation of the terrible moral situation in the world.
- A warning of what was being prepared because of this situation.
- An exhortation to correct the situation before it becomes too late.

The Denunciation

—My message of October 18th has not been fulfilled.

—The cup is overflowing.

—The PRIESTS: Many are on the road to perdition.

—The EUCHARIST: It is being given less and less importance.

The first message of October 18th, 1961 had passed for the majority, for the vast majority, without concern or glory; that was more than obvious. Even the staunchest enthusiasts of Garabandal were disposed more for seeing and experiencing novel things, especially if they were exciting, than for carrying into practice the admonition to *make many sacrifices, do much penance . . . visit the Blessed Sacrament . . .*

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But the cup was overflowing because of other things too.⁴ The unbridled sins of men and nations, especially with regard to sin of the flesh, are so plainly patent to all that they need no illustrations or examples.

Almost the same could be said about the denunciation that many priests are on the way to perdition, taking many souls with them. The facts are there, beyond discussion. Many have faithlessly abandoned their vows and vocations; others, it would have been better if they had abandoned them, for then they would cause less harm to the faithful by their unorthodox doctrines concerning dogma, and by their immoral opinions concerning moral law.⁵

Here is one of the greatest disasters that could fall upon the Church. Jesus had warned about it, “You are the salt of the earth; if the salt loses its flavor, what can it be salted with? It serves for nothing but to be cast on the ground, to be trampled on by men.” (Matt. 5: 13)

But the most grave thing is that the matter is not confined entirely to priests.⁶

During the transmission of the message, Conchita was definitely heard speaking about “bishops too . . .” and even cardinals! The testimonies cannot be denied. Fr. Luna was asked about his impression when—near to Conchita in ecstasy—he clearly heard her say with tremendous aston-

4. According to traditional symbolism, the cup represents the *tolerable* level of our sins. If the cup *overflows*, it shows that level has been surpassed.

5. I am not talking about all priests, or even the majority. Those who remain faithful deserve only praise; they do not make as much noise as the others, but they get the work done.

6. Complementing what was said about the bad state of the priesthood, it would be well to place here what Conchita wrote on July 29th, 1967 to a young French priest who asked her what the Virgin wanted from priests:

“The first thing that the Virgin wants from a priest is his own sanctification.”

“Fulfilling his vows for the love of God.”

“Leading many souls by example and prayer, for in these times it is difficult to do it any other way.”

“That the priest be sacrificed out of love for souls in Christ!”

“That at times he retire in silence to hear the God who speaks to him constantly.”

“That he meditates frequently on the passion of Jesus, so that his life may be more united to Christ the Priest, and thus invite souls to penance, sacrifice . . .”

“To speak of Mary, who is the most secure way to lead us to Christ.”

“And also to speak about and make people believe that if there is a heaven, there is also a hell.”

“I think that this is what God asks from His priests.”

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ishment: “Bishops! Bishops too? . . .”⁷ Several other persons testified to the same. And under my gaze, I have a letter from the old professor of moral law at the Pontifical University in Comillas, Fr. Lucio Rodrigo, S.J.,⁸ written to Fr. Ramón, dated November 13th, 1965. He says in it:

On Thursday, fifteen days ago, the pastor from Barro brought Aniceta and Conchita to me, to whom I gave Communion in the infirmary chapel. We spoke for a long time together, and afterwards I spoke alone with Conchita. She confirmed to me categorically that in the June 18th message, the Angel explicitly mentioned bishops and cardinals. But influenced by truly supernatural and inspired prudence, she was silent about them (in her text of the message) since they were included with the priests.⁹

Those who have studied the Church and know its history will be immunized against a gasp of amazement such as Conchita had on the night of the ecstasy. They will know that bishops are the keystones in the structure of the Church; but they will also know, that besides innumerable good shepherds who fulfill their duties to God and their people, there are also hirelings, who frequently are responsible for the worst tribulations that can afflict the flock of Christ.

At Rome on December 5th, 1971, Paul VI made public an apostolic exhortation to all the bishops, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the closure of Vatican II. The Pope employed a forceful and demanding tone, rather unaccustomed in him, that showed his concern that not all the bishops were fulfilling their duty:

Many of the faithful feel themselves disturbed in their faith by an accumulation of ambiguities, uncertainties, and doubts in essential matters . . . While little by little silence is covering the fundamental mysteries of Christianity, we see a ten-

7. For a young girl from the mountains, as Conchita was at that time, it was almost inconceivable for even a priest to be bad—much less a bishop! For the inhabitants of the old villages, the faraway Reverend Bishop had the halo of unquestionable sanctity, far above common human frailty.

8. This saintly priest was obliged by his superiors to keep silent about Garabandal. When insistently asked, he was not reticent in revealing in private his opinion completely favorable to the events considered as a whole.

9. It is undeniable that the Angel said in his message that “Many priests, many bishops and many cardinals are on the way to perdition.” If later it was not put literally like this in the written text, it was due to Conchita believing it more prudent, given the circumstances, to ease the impact of that tremendous denunciation . . . For in considering everything, “they were included with the priests.”

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dency to construct a Christianity derived from psychological and sociological data, a Christianity separated from the uninterrupted tradition that goes back to the faith of the apostles. And we see a tendency to exalt a Christian life deprived of religious elements . . . “And from our own selves, just as in the days of St. Paul, shall rise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20: 30)

The successor of St. Peter was speaking at the time to bishops.

Closely linked with bishops and priests is the magnificent mystery of the Eucharist. What is the situation in Its regard? The message makes it clear: there is a progressive veiling, a growing lessening of Its importance. The results of this can be predicted. If the Eucharist is the mystery of the close presence of Jesus among us, the more Its existence is obscured and clouded, the less importance It will have in our lives. And so we will be drawn farther away from Him, farther away from His love, and closer to darkness.

That this was already happening in broad sectors of the Church, and was tending to spread thru the entire Church, Conchita could not have known thru natural means on that June 18th. The crisis of doctrine concerning the worship of the *Mysterium Fidei* that had broken out in other lands was still far from being felt in Spanish Christianity; and certainly not in those surroundings that the young girl knew.¹⁰

Months later appeared the first solemn and official call to attention: the encyclical of Paul VI, “given in Rome, from St. Peter’s, on the feastday of

10. During the days on which the message was proclaimed from the heights of Garabandal, I arrived at a region in France where I immediately discovered things that I would not have suspected from Spain . . .

In Paris several months later, the message given in the apparitions *at the village of Garabandal in Spain* came into my hands. I was then surprised by the clearness with which it seriously pointed out the four most dangerous things that were revolutionizing the Catholic Church:

- The crisis of the priesthood.
- The doctrinal and practical deviations concerning the Eucharist.
- The progressive loss of every notion of penitential and ascetic life.
- The setting aside of everything that required personal patience, submission, sacrifice, and humiliation for Christ.

At the time, these things could hardly have occurred to a child in Spain; and much less, to one who had no more perspective than that of a little village lost in the Cantabrian Mountains.

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Pope Pius X, September 3rd, 1965, in the third year of our pontificate.” In his encyclical, *Mysterium Fidei*, the Pope stated the reasons that led him to publish it:

There are not lacking, venerable brothers, reasons for grave solicitude and anxiety. The awareness of our apostolic duty does not permit us to be silent . . . We know that among the persons who speak or write on this very holy mystery, there are those who spread opinions about the subject of private Masses, the dogma of transubstantiation and of Eucharistic devotion that trouble the souls of the faithful. They cause a great confusion of ideas, touching the truths of the faith.

The encyclical did not succeed in correcting the evil. Almost three years later, on May 8th, 1968, the same Paul VI saw himself obliged to explain his proposal to assist at the International Eucharistic Congress which was going to be celebrated in Bogota, Colombia in August:

It is not the external solemnity that draws us here, although it also has its highest value . . . It is the affirmation of the Eucharistic Mystery that draws us; an affirmation that wishes to consolidate strongly and express in an unequivocal form the faith of all the Catholic Church . . . an actual confirmation of the Eucharistic doctrine in the face of the ineptitude, the ambiguity, and the errors from which a part of our generation suffer with regard to the Mystery of our altars.

What was almost unforeseeable in Garabandal in 1965 is now visible to all: the disrespect—if not outright disdain—that many priests hold for the forms of devotion that Catholic piety has built around the Eucharist thru the centuries. Now comes the placing of the sanctuaries and tabernacles at the side of the churches; the arrangement of churches more as a center of reunion than as a place to meet with the Lord Jesus present among us; the tearing down of the altar rails; the Communion made carelessly and without thanksgiving; the progressive elimination of Benediction, Nocturnal Adoration, Forty Hours Devotions, and processions of the Blessed Sacrament.

As an illustration of this, in 1968 I was waiting at a train station, speaking with a man who had begun his theological studies in a diocesan seminary. We had a friendly conversation and among the things that I heard

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in the conversation, this stuck especially in my mind: “The other day several seminarians were talking about what each wanted to do in his church as soon as he was in charge of a parish. One of them, after saying what he thought about statues, the arrangement of altars, the placing of pulpits, etc., ended like this, ‘I haven’t decided yet what to do with the tabernacle . . . Although perhaps, when my time comes, that won’t be a problem, since it will have disappeared.’” The seminarian was certainly speaking ironically, but this illustrates the truth of the statement: The Eucharist: It is being given less and less importance.

Warning of Disaster

—*I tell you that this is the last message.*

—*You are in the last warnings.*

I do not know if the first of these two statements should be taken in its absolute sense, or if it has only a relative meaning.

Understanding it in its absolute way, it would affirm categorically that there will be no more communications from heaven until the great hour comes; we are already sufficiently warned. In which case, we would have to reject as not authentic the many messages which have been proliferating during recent years in many sites of “apparitions?” by numerous “visionaries?” of all types.

But if the statement is taken in its relative sense, then it only alerts us that there will be no more messages at Garabandal.

The same could be said with regard to the second statement, that we are *in the last warnings*.

Which of the two interpretations is the correct one? I honestly do not know.

What is very definite is that Garabandal has warned us in an unequivocal way about the imminence of a very grave, decisive period that I do not hesitate to classify as eschatological. As we are not paying attention to this last announcement-admonition for amendment, a tremendous flood of God’s justice will inexorably fall on mankind. Moral decay and apostasy are reaching their limits.

Call to Repentance

- You should avoid the wrath of the Good God.*
- I want to tell you to amend your lives.*
- You should sacrifice yourself more.*
- Think of the Passion of Jesus.*

We provoke the wrath of God upon ourselves by our own rebellions, our own disorders, our own self-will. All evil consists in trying to follow our own ways, instead of seeking the ways of God.

Our ways are very easy to follow; it suffices to allow ourselves to be led. But ours are ways of sin—and not only the “sin of the world” that so many new books now propose—and they lead us to destruction. On the other hand, the ways of God, how difficult they can be at times! His are the ways of triumph and salvation; but they can only be traveled thru effort and sacrifice: two things that our weakened nature abhors.

The world—men of the flesh—incline toward ease and not toward combat, toward pleasure and not toward service, toward leisure and not toward work, toward the good life and not toward good living. This style of life—spread throughout the Church—is inflicting mortal wounds.

Pseudo-prophets with their distorted nuances ranting about *renewal and liberation* are attempting to discredit the ascetic and penitential way of life, as though asceticism were not an evangelical sign, but the despised residue of a naïve and misled monastic spirituality not worthy of regard. Self sacrifice? Self denial? Self renunciation? How absurd! Neither the clergy nor the laity want any of this. Anti-asceticism is the order of the day.

But for whom did Jesus say, “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross?” (Mt. 16: 24) Certainly this is not for those who never mention Him except to speak about self-determination, self-fulfillment, self-advancement . . .

And so many things explain themselves. How could a person like this accept the message of June 18th that insistently requests things that they themselves are trying at all costs to renounce?

- You have sacrifice yourself more.*
- Think of the Passion of Jesus.*

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The Passion of Jesus! They are not interested in this. They are only interested in talking of things more to the liking of the man of today.

For them the only things that matter are actions and words that are favorable for their liberty and their life, which is very far from, “He made Himself obedient to death, the death of the cross!”¹¹

The Aftermath of June 18th

The huge crowd that had come to Garabandal from afar, left the village for the most part consoled and inspired. They had assisted at another manifestation from God: one more sign that we are not alone in the troubles of our world and our time. The majority of them would have endorsed the final lines with which the reporter from the *Le Monde et la Vie* concluded his article: “Toward 4 o’clock on the afternoon of June 19th, we left the village to head for Santander, exhausted, but at the same time, fulfilled.”

The reaction was neither as unequivocal nor as favorable among the people of the village and of the neighboring towns. Their attitude was reflected in the remarks they made.

Father Laffineur, perhaps fortuitously, had kept himself at a discreet distance during those eventful days. Finally, with the departure of the people, he was able to walk freely through the village. Soon he ran into the stonemason Pepe Díez, a witness of the first rank for many of the happenings.

—“How is it going, Pepe? What do the people say now?”

—“This time, it’s for real. Everyone seems to be believing again.”

But the enthusiasm was not so general, and there were exceptions.

Dr. Ortiz’ wife Paquina, and her sister, Eloísa, took advantage of their stay in the village to make several interviews with Mari Cruz’ mother, Pilar. On June 18th, the night before the event, they found her upset:

“Look.”—she said to them almost in tears—“Now everyone slanders us. There are papers going around saying that we are the ones who go to

11. How much some would like to efface one of the principal declarations of the Gospel: “Enter by the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who enter that way. How small the gate and narrow the way that leads to life! And few there are who find it.” (Matt. 7: 13-14)

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church the least. What they say about me isn't important; but what they say about Mari Cruz . . . and her father . . ."

On the following afternoon, in the midst of everyone's anticipation of what was to happen, she seemed calmer and even happy.

But when the two women from Santander went to say goodbye to her on Sunday, June 20th, they found her in a very different mood.

She was writing, and on seeing them, hurriedly put the writing paper away.

—"I don't write to anyone except my sister."

—"Please continue then, we don't want to interrupt you."

—"No, you aren't interrupting me. Come in . . . Today I gave Mari Cruz a lesson. I gave her a good scolding. Because she's stupid. Since, instead of giving an explanation when they say something to her, she keeps quiet . . ."

(Then she changed the conversation.) "What a stupid thing Conchita did yesterday! I could do that myself, if I wanted to . . . That's all a lie. What I should do is go tell the bishop about the whole thing."¹²

—"That seems good. He's the one that all of these things should be told to, not the others."

—"I would have gone already, if I had a car waiting for me, rich people in my house, and a lot of money to spend! Yes, then, I'd have the means to travel."

—"If it's for that, my car is at your service. I will take you to the bishop. Or, if you prefer, there is Plácido, who certainly will take you too."

—"Look, he's the only good person who comes here. I'm going to tell you something." (She became agitated.) "If you didn't come, and no one else came, this thing would have ended."

12. Pilar was not long in finding an occasion to tell this to the bishop . . .

When many days later, on June 24th, Father Laffneur and his companions stopped in Santander to present their respects to the bishop and pass through the Commission, they learned that Mari Cruz and her mother had also been through there, and had been interviewed extensively by the canon Odriozola. He had taken them to the bishop's place . . . and in his presence, as a concrete demonstration that everything about Garabandal had been false, "Mari Cruz started herself making an 'ecstasy.'" The affair had to be shocking, so that after a minute the bishop interrupted the trance, saying with disgust: "That's enough!"

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—“We haven’t taken part in this for nothing. We have come to pray . . . And if we’ve spoken with the girls, we’ve been satisfied with whatever they wished to tell us . . .”

—“Listen to me. If you didn’t come, they wouldn’t have a reason to do these things, and all this would have been ended. Since you want to make something out of nothing . . . My daughter is sincere and tells the truth.”

—“Well, Pilar, when this began, no one came here. We didn’t even know the village existed. Then why did they make this up? To fool people?”

—“Oh! I don’t know. But in the beginning, my daughter told the truth. I believe she now does too, since she is honest.”

—“In the beginning, Mari Cruz told the truth and now does too, since she is honest. In the beginning, she said that she saw; now, she says that she never saw . . . Where is the truth?”

—“I don’t know. But my daughter was honest before, and is now too . . . Only if the Miracle would come!”

Many enlightening thoughts occurred to me in reading this dialogue; but I think that they would have occurred to the reader too.

It was on a group of priests near Puente Nansa that the events of June 18th had their greatest impact. Fr. Laffineur wrote about it in *L’Etoile dans la Montagne*:

On the evening of June 18th, we were invited to a conference planned for the following day at Puente Nansa. An engineer, who represented himself as a member of the Commission of Santander, wanted a meeting attended by himself, the local priests, and us. We confided this to the pastor of Garabandal, Fr. Valentín Marichalar, who ultimately opposed it.

Perhaps we involuntarily lost a valuable occasion to inform ourselves. This engineer and the circle of listeners that we would have met were determined enemies of the apparitions. The ancient Romans were right in their maxim, “It is useful to be taught by one’s enemies.”

What was the result of this meeting at Puente Nansa? According to the author just mentioned, the meeting was initially brought to order because the priests of the area thought that the statement, “The priests: many are on the way to perdition . . .” applied to them personally. Later they broadened their interpretation, declaring heatedly that it referred to all priests; and finally they traveled to Santander to present a very irate protest to the bishop.

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Actually, I do not understand such a nervous reaction on the part of those priests. Unless, in their case, they were convinced that the message had a basis . . .

The Fourth “No” from the Bishop

Perhaps the feverishly antagonistic reaction from that group of priests pushed the Commission at Santander to publish a new *Nota* on the matter of Garabandal. Bishop Beitia Aldazábal, who was no longer titular bishop of the diocese, but who continued at its head as Apostolic Administrator, honored this *Nota* with his approval and signature, although there are reasons to doubt that he personally was in full accord with what was officially declared. The *Nota* was dated July 8th, and inserted into the *Bulletin Official del Obispado* of that month:

Our pastoral duty obliges us to write this *Nota* . . .

The Bishopric of Santander has received extensive documentation during these years on everything that has happened there. It has not closed its file on this matter. It always gratefully receives all the evidence for judgment that is submitted to it.

There have been three official *Notas* that have appeared up to this moment, trying to orientate the judgment of the faithful. This *Nota* will be the fourth, and its conclusion: the same as that of the preceding *Notas*.

The Commission that studied the credentials of these matters has not found reasons to modify the judgment already pronounced, declaring that there is no evidence of a supernatural character in the phenomena of which it made a careful examination . . .

As an illustration of the “extensive documentation” received and of the “careful examination” made, we cite here an extract—up to now, never responded to by the chancery—from Fr. Laffineur in the book, *L’Etoile dans la Montagne*:

This is the fourth anniversary of the apparitions. Yes, four years earlier, on June 18th, 1961, everything began . . .

But in four years the Commission has never had the time to bring before them either the visionaries, or their families, or even the pastor of the parish (and for our part we might add: nor any of the witnesses who might have shown themselves favorable to the supernatural character of the phenomena). Inconceivable, the French would say, and all those who know the history of Lourdes and Fatima. Yes, inconceivable, but true. More than true, unfortunately!

“You Are in the Last Warnings”

The Commission was content with emissaries, some of whom we know; and we know all the harm that they caused in the little village, left to itself in the middle of events that were infinitely beyond it.

Fr. Laffineur and his French companions had a good occasion to see how the Commission of Santander carried on its work—by their personal experience on the morning of June 24th, six days after the message, during their return trip from Garabandal . . . Anyone wishing to know the remarkable and astounding experiences they had with the Commission, can read them in the *L’Etoile dans la Montagne*.¹³

But let us return to the bishop’s *Nota*.

“Nevertheless, we make it known that we have not found material to be censured by ecclesiastical condemnation, either in the doctrine or spiritual recommendations that have been divulged on this occasion, as directed to faithful Christians, and which contain an exhortation to prayer and to sacrifice, to Eucharistic devotion, to devotion to Our Lady in the traditional praiseworthy forms, and the holy fear of God offended by our sins. The current doctrine of the Church in this matter is simply repeated.

We accept the good faith and religious fervor of the people who go to San Sebastián de Garabandal, and who merit the most profound respect; and we wish to call upon that same religious fervor so that they, relying fully on the hierarchy of the Church and its magisterium, comply with the closest exactness to our repeatedly published recommendations.

It can be assumed that these paragraphs were the *personal* part of Bishop Beitia; perhaps the sole part of the whole *Nota* that was composed by him. But there are serious indications that he, in the middle of his confusion with regard to Garabandal, personally came to be closer to its

13. On May 1st, 1969, Father Laffineur gave a conference at Lisieux, France and in it he reminisced about his meeting on June 24th with the one who had been the secretary, lawyer, judge, and everything else in the Commission:

“All my responses were interpreted beforehand, giving a feeling that there could be nothing else than what was unfavorable to Garabandal . . . And listen to this. When I had finished my statements (which took place in a restaurant! The ultimate scandal in canon matters!) he said to me, ‘Sign it.’”

“I answered, ‘I won’t sign this thing.’”

“Then I saw what none of you could have imagined: with his own handwriting, at the bottom of what had been written, he calmly put my first and last name in large capitals . . . How can this be called canon law? When some of my friends from Germany passed through Santander sometime later, he assured them that I had given a deposition in front of the Commission ‘against Garabandal,’ and that the deposition was ‘signed by me.’”

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acceptance than its rejection . . . And so? Mysteries of God. Or, perhaps, simply mysteries of man.

During the days in which the fourth *Nota* was composed—the second and last *Nota* from Bishop Beitia—his bewilderment on this matter had to be increased by the change taking place in Father Luis López Retenaga.

From the end of 1962, that priest, mentioned so many times in our story, had been confronting the bishop of Santander as the most convinced and qualified defender of the authenticity of the Garabandal events. But, suddenly, unexplainably—or perhaps, too explainably, as some might say—he made a complete about-face, changing his enthusiastic defense not just into doubt, but into an outright opinion that all the events could well be considered the result of diabolical intervention. Something of what happened to Father Retenaga can be read in the *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*: “A priest stopped believing in Garabandal.” (His name is not given.)

Upsetting? But not too much. Garabandal continued being, more and more fiercely, a “sign of contradiction.” But wasn’t that what had been prophesized about Jesus Himself? (Luke 2: 34)

Here on the earth, we are suspended between the light and darkness.

Only a fool would pretend that the affairs of God have the $2 + 2 = 4$ clarity that we like to see in the affairs of men!

CHAPTER 27

Farewell in the Rain

DURING THE ECSTASY on June 18th, among the few words that Conchita was heard to say were these: “July 2nd . . .”

What was predicted for this date? We do not know; or at least, I do not know.

We do know that on July 2nd, the fourth anniversary of the Virgin’s apparition, she condescended to visit the young visionary. She came by way of a locution.

Conchita had another locution on the 18th of the month, which was the village feastday and the third anniversary of the Miracle of the Host.

It might have been thought at the time that the events would hold their usual course; that everything was going to continue as before.

But the most astute observers soon could not avoid the impression that June 18th had come as a finale or closure, to public manifestations at least, of all that had taken place at Garabandal.

The events would not be repeated. The seers had changed. The circumstances had changed too.

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And the girls no longer had a reason to remain in the village, waiting for interventions from heaven. It was time for them to think of their futures, to try to arrange their later lives.

The most singular things that they had experienced would remain only in their memories—confused, at times—leaving them with the obligation of showing a conduct shining before God and man.

As if his departure was also necessary for the new phase that was to be experienced by Garabandal, on August 16th Bishop Beitia left Santander forever. The feast of the Annunciation with its liturgical celebrations, its bouquets of flowers placed at the foot of the Virgin's statue as it is carried in front of the cathedral, was his last day in the diocese that he had headed for three years. Two days later, on August 17th, Bishop Vicente Puchol Montís was installed as his successor.

With the new bishop, many felt a great euphoria. He was young, with a late vocation,¹ extremely personable. Others could not avoid feeling wary and uneasy. The Spanish Church had already begun to experience in a dramatic way the confusion of mentalities and ideologies that would burst out later in violent confrontations. Although the new bishop appeared to be opposing the innovators, it was said of him that he was the initiator, if not the author of the complete change—some spoke of an *actual revolution*—that was happening in the diocesan seminaries.

With regard to Garabandal, the future did not auger well with the new bishop. As soon as his nomination was known, a priest in Madrid, a former student at Comillas, notified Father Lucio Rodrigo:

“Walk cautiously. I know Vicente Puchol, and I know that he is against Garabandal. He is a declared enemy of the apparitions . . .”

Although the one thing had nothing to do with the other, on the day after Bishop Puchol's installation, Conchita wrote to Fr. Laffineur, to communicate her great joy:

“My mother has allowed me to enter into the convent. For me, it is a great thing to be able to consecrate myself completely to Christ like this—from my 16th

1. A late vocation refers to those who did not begin study for the priesthood in early youth. After the bloody Spanish Civil War, in the fervor of the Catholic reconstruction that followed, there were many of these late vocations. They came to be overestimated, as if from them could be expected much more than from the others. Time has gone by and in the face of the end results the special esteem for those vocations has declined.

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year—for the rest of my life . . . Pray for me, so that I will be able to go as soon as possible to the Missionary Sisters of the Discalced Carmelites.”

Thinking perhaps that Conchita’s departure was imminent, Fr. Laffineur arranged another trip to Spain, to obtain certain clarifications from her. The meeting took place in Torrelavega (Santander) on September 8th, the feast of the Nativity of Mary.

With Fr. Laffineur were some travel companions who served as witnesses; at Conchita’s side, as usual, was her mother Aniceta. Fr. Laffineur submitted 45 questions to the young girl and carefully recorded her answers. Part of these have been published in the *L’Etoile dans la Montagne*; the rest have been reserved for the future.

These are the most interesting of the ones that have been published:

—“Yes, I wrote the date of the Miracle to the bishop.” (It seems that this letter never came into the hands of Bishop Beitia.)

—“I had a locution on July 2nd. I already explained it to you by letter. And I had another on the 18th of the same month; I gave that in writing too.”

—“My companions and I thought about the convent from the first days of the apparitions. No priest put it into our minds.”

—“The Pope will see the Miracle, wherever he is; Padre Pio will see it too.”

—“Yes, the Council will have an extraordinary outcome.”

—“After Paul VI, there remain only two popes. Following that, the ‘end of the times’, which is not the same as the ‘end of the world’. I do not understand this well, but the Virgin told it to me like this.”

—“My leaving Garabandal is no obstacle to announcing the date of the Miracle. I’ll be able to tell the date to my superior, and if necessary, also to my spiritual director . . .”

—“After the Miracle, a chapel will be built in honor of St. Michael the Archangel.² I would prefer that it would not be done as at Lourdes, which I got to know in May of 1963; I would like it to be more simple and unadorned.”

—“The greatest danger for the village of Garabandal is pride.”

—“Mari Cruz certainly saw the Virgin. Her denials today are due to the mysterious work of the devil. After the Miracle, she will reaffirm the truth of her ecstasies.”

—“The best time to go to Garabandal will be when the four of us have left the village; then it will be solely for the Virgin.”

2. Obviously this has nothing to do with the chapel built by some people below the Pines in September of 1967.

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Two days after this meeting in Torrelavega, on September 10th, there was another meeting in Garabandal itself. It occurred under the awning of a tent that a French family had pitched a few steps from Conchita's house. Conchita went to visit a woman there with the two smallest of her eight children.

—“You are fortunate to set up your tent here; it was right here that Mari Cruz had an apparition with the Virgin.”³

—“You are certainly the fortunate one in having been specially chosen by her.”

—“When the Virgin appeared to me, her look didn't stay fixed on me; it roved from one side to the other, over the mountains, taking in the whole world, and her face seemed to smile at all the universe. She didn't come for me.”

—“You have a large picture of the Virgin in your house. It's very beautiful. Does it resemble your vision?”

—“Oh no! That's nothing. It's less than wax to the real thing. There's no way of copying the Virgin's beauty . . . You know about Fatima?”

—“Only a little. I have heard talk about the miracle of the sun.”

—“The miracle of Fatima is nothing in comparison with what will happen here. This will be much, much greater.”

Then the interpreter, Eloísa Deguía, whispered to the French woman: “Perhaps the Virgin herself will be seen in person.” Conchita, overhearing this, replied vigorously:

—“No, no! It won't be that . . . If it were that, then it would be an apparition, not a miracle.”

Lifting up her arms and spreading them out, Conchita continued:

—“The Miracle here will be much greater, more tremendous than Fatima. It will cause such an impression that none of those who see it will be able to leave with doubts. It would be well if all the world were here, since that way there surely would be no chastisement, since everyone would believe.”

—“Will all the sick who come be cured?”

—“The Virgin didn't tell me “all” or “some,” but: “The sick will be cured.” “The Virgin smiled, she smiled very much. She didn't inspire fear!”

3. We have already spoken about this rather notable apparition in Chapter VIII of Part One.

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—“Then she is very kind. Kind like a mother.”

—“No, much more than a mother! She is kind like one who, besides being a mother, is a best friend, for we could tell her everything that came to our minds. And she understood us and helped us.”

“She laughed and even played with us. One day, she even handed down her crown to Loli, so that Loli could amuse herself by putting it on her head, although Loli was afraid of burning herself on the flaming stars.”

“With a mother one doesn’t feel so free and confident as with the Most Holy Virgin. No one confesses his own faults to his mother, nor does he reveal his secret defects.”⁴

Four days later, on September 14th, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, there was another meeting with new statements and clarifications about the things that had been hanging in the air at Garabandal. It was said that the young visionary, before her departure for the convent—which she thought very near—was more fluent than ever in answering the questions that interested everyone. This time, her questioners were Americans. They had given their questions in writing, and in writing Conchita gave them these answers. We have an accurate copy of this, but we are only reproducing the points of major interest, because many of the others have already been sufficiently repeated:

—“The Warning, will it be a visible thing, a personal thing, or both at the same time?”

—“It is something that comes directly from God, and will be visible throughout the world, in every place that exists.”

—“Will it reveal his own sins to every person in the world, including persons of other religions and even atheists?”

—“Yes, the Warning will be like a revelation of our sins. Believers and non-believers alike will see and experience it, whatever religion they are.”

—Will the Warning cause people to remember the dead?

—“The Warning will come to purify us for the Miracle, and it is like a catastrophe which will be felt in our conscience. It will make us remember the dead in the sense that we will prefer to be among the dead, rather than to endure the warning.”⁵

4. Conchita speaks from her own situation. In Aniceta she had a very strict and demanding mother, although one full of solicitude for the welfare of her daughter.

5. For a long time Conchita was the only visionary who talked about the Warning. This had caused it to be believed that she was the only one who had received communications concerning this important thing. (This had led me to hold the Warning as having the least guarantee among the future events that were predicted at Garabandal.)

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—“Please tell us what you can about the Chastisement, and what will be felt when it is seen.”

—“The Chastisement, if we do not change, will be horrible. Loli, Jacinta and I have seen it; but I’m not able to say in what it consists, since I don’t have permission from the Virgin. When I saw it, I felt a tremendous terror, in spite of seeing the Virgin at the same time in all her beauty and indescribable goodness!”

—“When you prayed the rosary with Our Lady, did she teach you how to pray it?”

—“In the beginning, the Virgin prayed the rosary ahead of us very slowly, as she wanted us to pray it. Because of this, she herself recited the Hail Mary too, so that we would learn how.”

—“Is it true that the body of Fr. Luis Andreu will be disinterred on the same day as the Miracle, and will be found incorrupt?”

—“The Virgin told me in a locution: ‘The body of Fr. Luis Andreu will be found incorrupt, just as he was buried’”.

But on being able to speak with Jacinta in Santander on November 10th, 1973, I discovered that the Warning has a broader foundation. In the presence of several persons, Jacinta affirmed with complete clearness:

- That the Virgin had spoken to her too, and more than once, about the Warning that would come before the Chastisement.

- That she knows of what it consists, although she does not know the date; if she does not say anything about what it is going to be, it is because the Virgin has commanded her to keep it secret.

- That, on the contrary, she doesn’t know anything about the Miracle that Conchita is predicting because the Virgin never told her that it was going to come. Whenever she inquired about it like the other girls, the Virgin either didn’t answer or only said: “They will believe, they will believe.”

The little bit that I was able to draw out from her about the Warning coincided with what was already known from Conchita: that it was going to be worldwide, that it would oblige us to face our consciences, that it would be terribly impressive!

More recently I have come upon proof that the Virgin told Loli about the Warning. It appears that this came very early in the revelations received at Garabandal, although the girls receiving them (this is my impression) were slow in understanding the importance and special characteristics of the supernatural phenomena that were predicted.

Mrs. Sagrario Aguirre from Oviedo informed me by letter in 1978:

“Before the Warning was talked about, actually more than a year before Conchita predicted such a thing for the world, Loli told me one day, ‘One night you will be struck with something tremendous.’ (I can’t say for sure that she said ‘night’, but I was certainly left with the impression that it would be at night.) During the night on that day, and also the following night, I couldn’t sleep, waiting in terror . . . But talking with Loli again, she told me, ‘Do you think it’s going to be for you alone? No, it’s going to be for the whole world.’ And she made me keep it secret . . . And she added that, ‘The Virgin had told this to Jacinta and her from the beginning of the apparitions.’”

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(We have already described in another chapter that Conchita wrote to Fr. Ramón Andreu, assuring him that on the day after the Miracle they would find the body of his brother just as it was when he was buried.)

—What value will the articles kissed by the Most Holy Virgin during the apparitions have, before and after the miracle?

—“The Virgin told me: ‘Jesus will perform miracles with these articles. Those that wear them with faith and confidence will have their purgatory on earth.’”⁶

(This means that they will have the suffering here that they would otherwise have to endure in the next world after their death.)

—Did the Most Holy Virgin tell you anything about the perfume of flowers that sometimes emanates from the articles kissed by her?

—No, I never heard anything about that. She did say that they will work miracles and prodigies.

—Did the Virgin teach you any songs?

—No. The Virgin helped us make up some songs.

(By this is meant that the Virgin did not teach them in advance the verses that they sang. Rather she aided them in saying small poems at the time when they sang them. They were apparently inspired and all three were able to sing at the same time, in the same words, and with the same tune.)

—Did the Most Holy Virgin or Jesus say anything about the conversion of Russia?

—In a locution with Jesus, the only one that I have had with Him up to the present, He told me that Russia would be converted.

—Could you explain the sign, that will remain at the Pines after the miracle?

—It is a sign that will remain forever. It will be able to be photographed televised, seen; but it will not be able to be touched. It will be evident that it isn’t a thing of this world, but of God.

—Many believers in Garabandal want to work for the spread of the Virgin’s messages. But they are concerned because of the obedience that they owe to their bishops . . . What do you have to say about this?

—That’s very pleasing to the Virgin. She likes that very much. She desires us to work at spreading her message. But also she wants us to obey the Church, so as to give more glory to God. And she will give time for the message to be spread, with the permission of the Church.

6. No one can enter into heaven without being purified, or said in another way, without expiating the debt due for sin. That is the reason for purgatory. To suffer in this world for the debt that we owe for our sins is much better than to suffer in the next; since here, at the same time as *making satisfaction*, we also *obtain merit*. On the contrary, all that it is possible to do in purgatory is to make satisfaction for sins.

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* * *

With these statements, Conchita thought she was performing her last services for the cause of the Virgin of Garabandal prior to her entrance into the religious life, where she would have to keep silent and remain in seclusion.

She was impatiently looking forward to this time. But at the same time it seems she felt an instinct of foreboding for the future.

Two days after meeting with the Americans, she wrote to Fr. José Ramón de la Riva.

She deliberately used for her letter a piece of paper on which the message of June 18th was photocopied, and she wrote:

San Sebastián de Garabandal, 9-16-1965

Dear Father José Ramon,

Just a few lines to tell you that I found out that you were here a few days ago. That made me feel bad since I wanted to speak with you for a few minutes, if not longer. . .

You know that within a few weeks, or perhaps a few days, I'll enter the convent. I want to enter soon in order to do—or try to do—what the Virgin wants.

I don't know if I have a true vocation. I think I do, although I have some doubts. The Virgin didn't tell me to enter.

These last lines are revealing. They show that there is something deeply troubling Conchita. She does not know God's plans for her. Up to now, during the ecstasies and locutions when she had asked personal questions about her future, she had so many times been left unanswered, or else had been answered in words that clearly evaded the question.

And the day would come on which she would clearly feel herself not chosen by Jesus to form part of what the Church considers His spouses. This would be for her a cause of great suffering and a perilous spiritual crisis.

But as summer ended in 1965, she was counting on leaving immediately for the convent at Pamplona to begin her religious life. The day of departure had even been set: September 29th, the feast of St. Michael, the Archangel. Could she have chosen a better date?

But that day came, and Conchita had to stay in Garabandal while, with tearful eyes, she saw her friends and companions, Loli and Jacinta, leave for Saragossa on September 30th.

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Fr. Luna had arranged everything so that the two girls could enter free of charge as boarders in the college of the Charity Sisters of St. Ann in the Aragon town of Borja.

Jacinta and Loli were 16 years old at the time, in the flush of youth. They had never lived outside of San Sebastián de Garabandal, and the parting from the village on that day, even with their eyes on the future, must have been nostalgic. While saying goodbye before leaving, Loli soaked two handkerchiefs with her tears.

Understandable sorrow! Beside the pain of separation, could it have been due also to the ending of the most unforgettable period of her life?

Perhaps she was beset also with the premonition that her way would soon turn into a most narrow and difficult one.

Almost on the night before leaving, she had a locution, and heard from the Virgin: “Loli, if in the future I do not appear to you again, it is that your hour of suffering has come.”

Actually both young girls, Loli and Jacinta, suffered considerably in the school at Borja. I know this expressly from Jacinta’s admission that she kept a painful remembrance of the school year there. All the blame could not be put on the religious teachers. According to Fr. Luna, the principal cause of their unfortunate troubles were certain Garabandalistas of the first rank, who could not resign themselves to the girls being outside of their presence and control.

Jacinta probably cried less than Loli at the time of farewell. Not because she was less sensitive, but because she had a different character, less prone for expansion.

Before Fr. Luna could arrange for her stay at school, Jacinta was talking about entering into a convent of cloistered Carmelites. Fr. Luna himself requested her admission to the Carmelite convent at Saragossa; and the community, by a secret vote, accepted the request. Why then, didn’t she go?⁷

7. It appears that the decision that stopped Jacinta from entering into the Carmelite convent came from her father Simón. The good man was categorically opposed at the final hour, believing that it was a barbarous thing for his 16 year old daughter—who had never left her house or had the least experience with the world and life—to forever commit herself like this in something so difficult.

Actually Jacinta was not sure of her vocation. During the time of the ecstasies, whenever

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Perhaps the one who was most pleased by this change was her mother, María; it seemed that she would lose her daughter much less this way. Not surprising. Nothing is more difficult than complete generosity toward God.

On that September 30th, 1965, as Jacinta and Loli went down toward Cossío, the dispersal of Garabandal began. As they turned the bend in the road to cast a last look at their village, their minds could not fathom all the things that they were leaving behind.

Still in the village, keeping her suffering to herself, was the one who had looked forward with such longing to September 29th, the day set for her leaving to be a novice in the Discalced Carmelite Missionaries: Conchita.

Her mother, who had given her consent originally, later changed her mind, refusing to allow her daughter to leave before . . . Before what?

It had been mentioned to Aniceta about the possibility and feasibility of Conchita going to Rome, to be interviewed by the highest hierarchy of the Church, and to see perhaps, if it were possible, the Holy Father himself. And Aniceta came to the conclusion that this had to be done before anything else, and the sooner the better; therefore, before the girl shut herself in the convent. In August, it had seemed a simple matter to finish the trip before the middle of September; and thinking along that line, she gave her consent to Conchita to leave for the convent on the feast of St. Michael. But complications delayed things.

Fr. Laffineur wrote:

On September 8th at Torrelavega, Conchita announced to me her departure for the convent of the missionary sisters of the Discalced Carmelites at Pamplona. The departure should have taken place on the 29th of that month. During the same period Loli and Jacinta were to leave for the province of Saragossa to stay with the Sisters of Charity.

Why was the end of September chosen? Because Conchita and her mother had good reason to believe that their voyage to Italy would have taken place well before the date fixed for the inauguration of the Council's last session, that is to say, before September 14th. But complications developed and after September 29th the two of them had to pass some extremely difficult months.

she had talked about, or asked about this particular thing, the Virgin had never given her a definite answer.

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Why did complications arise? Fr. Luna undertook against wind and sea, as a true man from Aragon, to bring Conchita to Rome, in accord with Cardinal Ottaviani who then was still the head of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office. But the chancery at Santander, as soon as it learned of the project, deployed all its connections in Rome and outside of Rome to crush the matter. The chancery must have been afraid of something.

Let us see how Fr. Luna himself recounts this in the introduction of a book he wrote about another site of apparitions:

“In September we got our passports in order. However . . .

Toward the end of August, I offered my services to the new Bishop of Santander, Bishop Puchol, so as to put him in direct contact with the girls. He told me that he didn’t consider it necessary, or even wise, to know them.⁸ He assured me that he was already well informed, and he confided to me his plan: to put a young priest⁹ in charge of the village and “the girls should remain there.”

8. Why would Bishop Puchol need to know the girls and thoroughly study the matter if he were fully set on the progressivist theory that apparitions and revelations are superfluous for the Church?

Shortly after his *Nota* of Sunday March 18, 1967 (which was given the maximum publicity, even television exposure), thru which he thought to definitely bury Garabandal, Bishop Puchol went up to the village to see if he could effectively and smoothly liquidate it.

He was eminently educated and eloquent. It was a Sunday and the entire village attended his Mass. It was expected that his sermon would clarify the matters that were preoccupying everyone. But the bishop avoided the main subject, and all had the impression that he had limited himself to talking about the Gospel. Nevertheless Aniceta, who was very attentive and watchful not to miss anything, caught this, which later she confided to me as absolutely sure: The bishop at one time during his speech, lowering his voice in an off-hand remark, came out with this: “We know that after what Jesus Christ brought, there can be no more apparitions or revelations.”

A gross imbecility, much repeated today, which gives us an idea of the bishop’s poor theological background. It is obvious that this is not in communion with the Supreme Magisterium which has told us: “From heaven Christ always looks with great affection at His spouse (the Church) exiled in this world, and when He sees it in danger, either through Himself, or through the means of His angels, or through the intercession of the one whom we call Help of Christians, or through other intercessors, takes it away from the tempest waves . . . and consoles it with that peace which surpasses all knowledge.” (*Enc. Mystici Corporis Christi*, 1943)

9. The priest assigned was Father José Olano, who had recently finished his seminary studies. Thus a novice priest was sent to Garabandal, a man almost without experience, as if nothing were happening there, and as if it were simply a parish without special difficulties. But if the new priest came without proper pastoral experience; he came well provided with *instructions*. It did not take long for the effects of the instructions to show themselves.

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I answered that it seemed an excellent idea to send a well-chosen priest; but with regard to the girls, neither he nor I had authority to determine whether or not they were to stay. Aniceta had already authorized the admission of her daughter at Pamplona, and the parents of Loli and Jacinta had also consented for them to leave for Borja.

—“In writing?”

—“Yes, your excellence. Yes, in writing. I have signed authorizations.”

I have always kept my principle of respecting the hierarchy, but also I have required respect in return. I have conscientiously been courteous before whomever represents God; but not weak.

On that same day, I said to Bishop Vicente: “I don’t want to do things behind your back. For that reason I offered to bring the girls to you. Today I’m going to tell you a secret: A person of high station is working in Rome for the girls to be received by the Pope.” The bishop smiled broadly, as if dubious . . . We were alone, seated in a room on the first floor of the seminary at Santander. I then took two telegrams out of my briefcase, and unfolded them for him to see.

—“Are you from Aragon?”

—“From Saragossa, Your Excellence!”

The news got out and the departure was delayed . . . until, in the middle of December, I received a telephone call from Santander, announcing the arrival of a person from Rome with a letter from Cardinal Ottaviani that read: “With the permission of the bishop, or without it, bring the girls.”

I asked the person who spoke to me to take the letter to be read secretly and personally by the bishop. But he lacked the patience and energy not to be overcome before the defenses of the bishop’s door! And my envoy didn’t have sufficient rank; the copy of the letter remained in the hands of the vicar general.¹⁰ On my return from Rome in the winter of 1966, when I was with the bishop, he assured me that he hadn’t received it. I think he was sincere.”

At this time we might make some comments about the chancery officials at Santander who so often called for “the submission owed to the

It seems that the bishop’s viewpoint was this: The problem of Garabandal would resolve itself if the girls and villagers were indoctrinated (brain-washed), and the visitors were treated with a firm hand. The new priest came with this program.

A remark might be made about the way he said goodbye to his parishioners from the valley of Polaciones before going to Garabandal. A man from the town who was present at his farewell Mass on that Sunday noted the things that were said and the remarks made by Fr. José Olano in his sermon. After the Mass, Father’s friends from the place joked with him about the stories about Garabandal that were going to soon end.

10. Bishop Puchol had brought with him to Santander, as his vicar general, a priest from Navarra, also a late vocation and a man rather arbitrary in his actions: Bishop Javier Azagra. Later he was auxiliary bishop of Cartagena-Murcia.

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hierarchy” in order to strangle Garabandal, but who went to such efforts so that the cause would not come directly to the hierarchy, to which they should be as submissive as we.

From this it can be more easily understood what Fr. Laffineur wrote:

Certain adversaries of Garabandal, fearing the worst for themselves, made it impossible for Conchita to be received at Rome. Others, in a less high position, profited of the new situation to calumniate Conchita: “The balloon has burst. Conchita wears short skirts and listens to the radio; the vocation is gone. Garabandal is finished.”

During this time, Conchita felt the devil present around her. She was subject to interior sufferances which only the most contemplative souls know. She wrote about her secret suffering to priests whom she trusted, and prayed to obtain permission from her mother to leave for Pamplona immediately.

Apparently the young girl, although accustomed to submitting everything to the Virgin, had not immediately understood the importance of her trip to Italy. Or else she could have thought, logically, that if this trip would take place one day, it could begin just as well from Pamplona as from Garabandal.

But Aniceta was watching. And Aniceta has a will of steel. She was convinced of the necessity and imminence of the visit to Rome and no person in the world could make her yield . . .

So Conchita was not to be separated from her side until she had completed her mission at Rome.

But this mission would not be accomplished until the winter of the following year, 1966. And then the final period would be placed on the long and wondrous story that had begun on June 18th, 1961 at Garabandal.

* * *

On October 30th—the last Saturday of the month of the rosary—in that painful autumn of 1965, Conchita had another encounter from above. She had gone to the church to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament,¹¹ and soon she felt a communication from the Virgin inside her,

11. “I found Conchita very happy. In our conversation she mentioned that during the final days of October, when she was making her usual visit in the church to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, she had a locution in which the Virgin told her that she should go up to the Pines on November 13th and should bring the religious articles that she had . . .” (Letter of Dr. Ortiz to Fr. Ramón Andreu, dated December 13th, 1965.)

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which not only consoled her in what she was suffering by not being able to go to the convent, but also notified her of a future meeting.

At the time Conchita wrote several letters; one of these was to a Mexican priest, Father Gustavo Morelos, dated November 8th:

“Dear Father Morelos:

You see, without receiving your reply, I’m writing you again. And it is to say that I received a locution from the Virgin and she told me: “On Saturday, November 13th, go to the Pines, and there you will see me. And bring many religious articles to me, and I will kiss them all, so that you can distribute them. My Son will perform prodigies by means of them.”

Pray very much for me, so that I may soon enter the convent and be good. In union of prayer.”

The prediction was fulfilled.

The description of what occurred would be better left to Conchita herself:¹²

“It was a special apparition to kiss religious objects, later to distribute them, since they have a great importance.

I had a great desire for Saturday, November 13th, to come so I could see again the ones who had sown in me the happiness of God: The Virgin and the Infant Jesus.

It was raining; but it didn’t matter to me that I was going up to the Pines in the rain.”

Describing this, here is what Dr. Ortiz wrote Fr. Ramón in a letter on December 13th:

“On our last trip to Garabandal, Sunday, December 5th, I was able to learn that Conchita actually had an ecstasy at the Pines on November 13th. As an interesting fact, I have to say that, although Olguita (her neighbor) was in her company, she later left her out of curiosity to go see an accident that had happened to a truck in La Jaraiz. This accident was the main attraction for the village.¹³

12. We are accurately giving the text that seems the best, and which differs only in very small matters from others that were also written by Conchita.

13. Apparently at that time in Garabandal a truck accident attracted more attention, by its unusualness, than the girl’s ecstasy.

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On that Saturday, when it was raining the most, Conchita left the people in her kitchen and went up alone to the Pines.”

Continuing with the report of the visionary:

“I brought many rosaries that had recently been given to me¹⁴ to distribute. As the Virgin had told me, I brought them for her to kiss.

Going up alone to the Pines—very sorry for my faults—I was saying to myself that in the future I would not fall into them, since I was ashamed to present myself like this before the Mother of God, whom my faults make suffer so much. And I believe that mine are the greatest, since I have seen her.

When I came to the Pines, I started taking out the rosaries that I was carrying. And while I was taking them out, I heard a very sweet voice—clearly the Virgin’s!—easily distinguished from all others, calling me by my name. And I answered: “What?”

And then I saw her with the Infant Jesus in her arms. She came dressed as usual and was smiling broadly.

And I said to her, “I have come to bring the rosaries so that you can kiss them.”

And she said to me, “I see that.”

I had a Chiclet in my mouth, although I didn’t chew it after I saw her, but stuck it against my cheek.

And she told me, “Conchita, why don’t you give you your Chiclet and offer it as a sacrifice for the glory of my Son?”¹⁵

Ashamed, I took it out of my mouth and threw it on the ground.

Then she said to me, “Do you remember what I told you on your feastday, that you would suffer much on the earth. Well, I am telling it to you again. But have confidence in us and offer everything to our hearts for the good of your brothers; that way you will feel us near to you.”

And I said to her, “Oh, Our Mother, how unworthy I am of so many graces that you’ve given me! And still you come to me today, to lighten the little cross that I have now.”

—“Conchita, I do not come only for you. I come for all my children, with the desire of bringing them to our hearts.”

“Give me all the things that you have brought so that I may kiss them.”

14. We know of one man from France on a pilgrimage in Lourdes who got the idea, or inspiration, to send Conchita 100 rosaries of five decades and four of 15. The package arrived in time for November 13th.

15. The Virgin obviously did not condemn the use of the Chiclet as a fault. She simply invited Conchita—so devoted to her—to fulfill in this way the making of small sacrifices.

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And I gave them to her. I was also carrying a crucifix with me, and she kissed it and said to me, "Put it in the hands of the Child Jesus." And so I did. He didn't say anything to me.

I spoke to the Virgin, "I will carry this cross with me to the convent," but she didn't say anything to me either.

After kissing everything, she said to me, "By the kiss that I have put on these articles, my Son will use them to perform prodigies." Distribute them. And I thought about doing this.

After that, she asked me to tell her the petitions that other people had given to me; and I did this.

She continued: "Tell me, Conchita. Tell me about my children! I hold them all under my mantle."

And I said to her: "It's very small, it won't hold all of them." And she smiled.

—"Conchita, do you know why I did not come on June 18th to personally give the message for the world? Because it hurt me to say those things. But they had to be said, for your own good; and if you accomplish the message, for the glory of God. I love you very much, and desire your salvation, to reunite you here in heaven around the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. You, Conchita, will you respond to us?"

—"If I were always seeing you, then it would be yes. But if not, I don't know, since I'm very bad."

—"Do all that you can on your part; and we will help you, and also my daughters, Loli, Jacinta and Mari Cruz."

It seemed that she was with me a very short time. She told me also:

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

She also said to me:

"Conchita, you should visit my Son in the tabernacle more. Why do you let yourself be carried away by slothfulness so as not to visit Him? He is there, waiting for you day and night."

As I have said before, it was raining very much, and the Virgin and the Child Jesus didn't get wet. When I was seeing them, I didn't know that it was raining; but afterwards, when I didn't see them, I was soaking wet.

I also said to the Virgin: "Oh, how happy I am when I see you. Why don't you take me with you now?"

—"Remember what I told you on your feastday: When presenting yourself before God, you have to show your hands full of works done by you for your brothers and for the glory of God. Now, your hands are empty."

Nothing more. The joyous time had passed in which I was with my best friend and Mother in heaven, and with the Child Jesus. I have stopped seeing them, but I haven't stopped feeling them.

Again they have left in my soul a peace, a joy and a desire to conquer my faults and to love them with all my strength!

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Formerly, the Virgin told me that Jesus wasn't sending the Chastisement to torment us, but to help us, and reprimand us for not paying attention. He is sending us the Warning to purify us before the Miracle, in which He will clearly show the love that He holds for us. Because of this He wants us to accomplish the message.

That was the episode of Saturday, September 13th, 1965 at Garabandal. The last chapter in an unparalleled story, which is still too recent to be evaluated with sufficient perspective.

We are coming to the ending, and endings are tinged with sadness.

As she said to Conchita, "This is the last time you will see me here", the Virgin's voice had an ineffable sweetness.

What had begun four years previously with a blast of thunder on a sunlit day in June, was coming to an end now, without fanfare, on a dismal overcast day in November. It was raining . . . I went up alone . . . And the Virgin said to me . . .

There would be no more meetings at the scene where so many had taken place.

Yes, it was all over. Farewell in the rain. Why do wonderful things pass so swiftly?

When Conchita returned to herself and lifted her knees off the damp ground, when she became aware that she was alone beneath the Pines in the rain, she herself could not say if the drops of water running down her cheeks were raindrops that the clouds were weeping for an unhappy world, or tears that she was crying because she would never again see the one she had seen so often.

Certainly the girl was in no hurry to go down from the Pines after the vision was over. Her state of mind would not allow it. She had to remain there a while, alone with her feelings.

Sadly and poignantly, she arranged and put back all the rosaries distinguished by Our Lady's kiss. Then she took a few slow, sad steps toward the crest of the ledge on which the nine solitary pine trees have their roots, and near the cliff edge she paused. There, partially hidden in the mist and rain was the unforgettable panorama: the mountainpeaks, the steep slopes, the winding valleys, the woods and meadows with their lonely cabins; and nearer, at her feet, the village: her village of San Sebastián de Garabandal. Her village, which during those unforgettable years, seemed to have been the Virgin's village! Here Her merciful and smiling footsteps

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had passed; Here She had visited her poor and humble houses, her winding streets, her innumerable streetcorners, her church that knew her so intimately, her cemetery, that gathered all for the last rest.

How the Virgin had immersed herself in that village. As a Mother, for whom nothing about her children lacked interest. “She was interested in everything”—Conchita remembered with tears in her eyes—“even in our cows.”

Well could it be said that this was the most beautiful story of mankind since the time of Christ, the second life of the Virgin on earth; and there are no words that can thank her for it.

After the farewell in the rain, all this has passed into history.

But of all this, now history, there forever remains something ineffably new and eternal here, that those will find who come with faith, and from which they can draw strength to uphold the highest hopes and the greatest love.

This is the last time
you will see me here.
But I will be always with you,
And with all my children.

Of all the words said at Garabandal, these are the last and the best.

Epilogue

FINALLY COMING to the end of this long endeavor, I feel a mixture of joy and liberation. Joy, in thinking that I have done a good work. Liberation, in not having the pressure to finish this work quickly.

After great effort and innumerable hours of work revising papers and putting in order the mountains of information, it seems that I have succeeded in reconstructing the events and the climate of Garabandal during the “apparitions,” so that I can offer its first history to persons of good will.

The “history” of Garabandal, as it concerns the seers and those around them, has not been, nor is it now, completely angelic like Lourdes and Fatima.

Because of this, I find Garabandal to be more in measure with the History of Salvation, more in line with the Church itself, where the most beautiful and exalted interventions of God have been continually intermixed with lamentable and repeated human miseries, with the results that we know.

The full picture of Garabandal is disconcerting: on the one hand it offers abundant proofs so that many might find its truth, and on the other hand, it leave motives for others to remain in their doubt and disbelief.

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I believe in the supernatural authenticity of Garabandal, taken as a whole. But not everything offers the same guarantee of truth.

A descending scale of credibility can be noticed:

1) *The facts*—the phenomena that were definite facts and could be proven and were proven from observation by irreproachable witnesses.

2) *The joint statements*—the statements or declarations in which the visionaries agreed.

3) *The individual statements*—the statements or predictions due to one visionary alone.

In the last case, it is necessary to proceed with great caution and discretion; since, unfortunately, not all—or even a single one—of the seers have shown themselves to be completely trustworthy.

* * *

It was seen that on Saturday, November 13th, 1965, the course of the phenomena closed at Garabandal. From that date, nothing has occurred.

But here a question comes up: “Since November 13th, has Garabandal completely ended?”

Or does it remain only temporarily interrupted?

My personal impression is that a simple intermission is taking place, since the evidence shows that Garabandal has not concluded. An interlude has come, as in a dramatic play, that for some purpose leaves things abruptly interrupted, suspended . . .

Garabandal is an event of enormous proportion, which is unfolding in three stages:

- The first stage, with a personal and local imprint: the time of marvels and astounding communications; the time already experienced, which ended on November 13th.

- A second stage, of intermission, with matters suspended: a period of pruning and purification. This is what we are experiencing now, with its disillusion, expectations, falling away.

- A third stage, which we await, that will bring to light many things and fulfill the prophecies of universal reach: the Warning, the Miracle, the Chastisement.

It seems beyond doubt that what really happened at Garabandal, what we should see across the great maze of detail, is a very careful intervention by God to aid us in these difficult hours for the Church and the world.

Epilogue

With such a purpose, God has placed in front of us:

- A new *Marian Epiphany*.
- A call for greater *devotion to the Eucharist*.
- A prediction of approaching *eschatological times*.

Why the first? Because it could well be that Mary is our last recourse for salvation . . . In Garabandal, she has manifested herself to us—she has given herself—above all, as *Our Mother*.

Why the second? Because the reality of the actual presence of the Lord among us is the last thing that we can allow to be neglected in the Church. And this is precisely what has started to happen, and what is continuing to happen.

Why the third? Because the last times can be already at the door. We should not be oblivious or forgetful of what we repeat in the Credo: “And He will come again in glory,” since without the inflaming emotions of hope, religion will not keep burning in the hearts of men.

* * *

Yes, we cannot put the final conclusion out of our minds.

“The biblical writings revolve around a theological drama that unfolds throughout history and reflects the plan of salvation from a God Who constantly seeks out mankind to transform it. From the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of the Apocalypse can be seen the silent struggle by forces fighting for the hearts of men. Man, wrongly exercising his free will and trying to assert his autonomy, chooses to live separated from God. Besides this, the power of evil seems to dominate humanity, seeking to draw it from its natural orbit: the God of Creation, Who directs the world and the march of history.”

(M. García Cordero, *Problems of the Bible*)

Eschatology is the word used to refer to the final act of the great drama of our salvation.

And it might be asked if Garabandal does not have an eschatological purpose.

There are many things in it that put before us the *last times* and alert us to them:

- The presence and prominent activity of the Archangel St. Michael, who appears in the Apocalypse as the Angel of the last combat.¹

1. One last detail in this history that appears to be unending . . . Recently residing in the United States, Loli had been living the meaning of the locution of 1965 “In the future, if I

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- The firm declaration in the message of June 18th, 1965: You are in the last warnings.
- The trilogy of the Warning—the Miracle—the Chastisement, whose characteristics do not permit them to be inserted as ordinary pages in the works of God.
- The repeated, extremely compromising affirmation that there remain only three Popes, and then the end of the times.

Possibly, Garabandal has come to repeat to us, Christians of these last times, what the Christians of the early times said for greeting and encouragement: “Maran Atha! The Lord returns!”

We await.

And as the hour approaches for the realization of Garabandal, let us repeat without cease what is said on the feast of Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace:

*On our knees, let us adore
Christ the Savior,
Who wants all good things
to come to us thru Mary.*

do not appear to you again, it is that your hour has come to suffer.” In October of 1977 she had a few happy vacation days during a brief stay in Spain in her home country of Santander. María Herrero de Gallardo spent some time with her and wrote me on the 30th of that October:

“The other day, while taking food to Loli that she liked very much and hadn’t tasted for years, she told me very interesting things: about the pope . . . about Adam (that we didn’t descend from a monkey, or by evolution, or from any other animal, but from a perfect man, Adam). She told us about a dream that she had recently: the devil, horrible, trying to conquer the world . . . As Loli cried out, calling to St. Michael, he appeared dressed as a warrior, not as the girl had seen him in Garabandal. He waved a great sword and began battle against Satan . . . In connection with this, she told us how the devil, during the apparitions, had twice burned part of the scapulars that they were wearing . . .”

What believer in God could doubt the reality of the devil and his world of darkness? And he is now laboring like never before; not just for partial victory, but to dominate completely this world in which God has so loved us, his human creatures.

It is the great hour of the leader of the celestial army. (Apoc. 12: 7-8) “Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle . . .”

APPENDIX

Recollections

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

The people who were looking out for her welfare thought that this would provide both for her *isolation* and *education*.

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

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

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

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

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

From the statements of the *former child visionary*, I am only going to mention here the ones that refer to the *apparitions*, which even then seemed to be far away—and not only because of the passage of time. From time to time her memory would flash back to the events, inspiring her to speak out.¹ It should not be forgotten that all the conversation recorded in Burgos was occurring when the girl was beginning a period of great darkness, that is, in the full phase of doubts and denials. Because of this, Sister María Nieves never openly broached the subject of what had happened during those exceptional days at Garabandal.

October 19, 1966

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

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

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

October 23

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

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

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

Recollections

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

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

Seconds later:

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

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

—I don’t like it.

—Why not?

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

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

October 25

A long interview. At one time Conchita stated:

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

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

—That is just what the Virgin said to me!

October 26

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

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

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

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

—Did the people from the village harass you?

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

October 29

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

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

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

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

Many times the Virgin didn't look directly at us, but farther away at the people who were behind us. Sometimes she changed her expression; but she didn't stop smiling. I asked her, "Who are you looking at?" She said to me, "I'm looking at my children."

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

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

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

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

—How nice it was to be with the Virgin! She was really like a friend; just as if she were living with us. And she called us by our nicknames like the people did. She didn't say, *María Concepción*, but *Conchita*; not *María Dolores*, but *Loli*.

Recollections

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

October 30

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

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

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

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

November 1

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

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

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

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

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

After Paul VI there will be only two more popes; and after that, the "end of the times."³ I told the date of the Miracle to Cardinal Ottaviani and the Pope's

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

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confessor. The Pope gave me the impression of being an oppressed person, as if restrained by the cardinals and the hierarchy.

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

November 3

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

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

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

He told us how they had buried him . . .

His voice was the same as when he was alive.

November 6

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Recollections

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

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

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

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

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

November 8

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

—Suffering leads to God.

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

God does exceptional things, isn't that so? And the people don't respond well.

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

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

—"Heavens! What this does too me!" exclaimed Conchita.

We laughed—noted the Sister—and she described again how she saw the Virgin, with such exactness that she said nothing different from what she had repeated so many times. She spoke at times of everything as if her 'denials' had not existed. This is really marvelous, and at the same time there is a tremendous mystery here, indescribable.

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

She Went in Haste to the Mountain

November 9

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

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

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

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

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

November 12

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

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

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

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

Recollections

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

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

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

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

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

“—My mother and my brother suffer. Chon⁶ has told me this and I see it from the letters that I receive . . . I don't know why it is that on returning from the monastery, I am finding such sorrow . . . This morning I didn't have the desire either to pray or think during Mass. My head was bowed low; I don't now if I accomplished anything. If this dryness would leave me, that would make me very happy. Do you think that thinking this is opposed to the will of God?”

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

—Just as before. That is, the same as before August 15th.⁷ I see all the apparitions as if they had been a dream that has gone away.

6. Ascensión de Luis, the young Jewish girl mentioned in a previous chapter, who converted to Catholicism.

7. On August 15th, 1966, a type of darkness concerning the apparitions fell on Conchita's mind.

She Went in Haste to the Mountain

—Can you deny them completely?

—No. No, that I could not! I would feel remorse. When I deny, I feel inside—deep down—something that doesn't leave me at peace.

In a long series of petitions, there were these two:

María Nieves: We petition you, Lord, for the Pope.

Conchita: And for all those who surround him.

Maria Nieves: We petition you, Lord, for priests.

Conchita: So that they may be holy, and may not stop wearing the cloth out of presumption. I do not like to see a priest as a layman. Not at all.

The unplanned vigil ended near the altar—as Sister M. Nieves wrote—like two children in front of the Mother of Heaven and God the Father. Something that I couldn't forget, for the simplicity, the peace, the interior joy. It was one o'clock when we retired, and it had seemed a very short time to us. On getting up from the floor, Conchita said to me:

—“I would like to stay all night.”

November 15

—In my village they told me several times to kiss my mother when I had displeased her. I couldn't do this and it irritated me. I don't like to kiss. When they embraced me, I held out my cheek, but I didn't kiss; I really only kissed Loli.

November 16

—Sometimes they judged me bad without reason. I remember that one day the guards told me something bad that had been said about me. I let out a laugh, because I didn't understand. They became angry at my laughter. Later I mentioned it in my home, and everyone was very displeased. They even came to threaten the guards for having said such things to a child.

November 17

Conchita had heard that there was danger of war because of the situation in Gibraltar . . . She was worried, thinking of her brother Miguel, and she spoke to the Sister as soon as she saw her:

—How afraid I am of war! Will it happen?

In 1962, when they were speaking of the threat of a war, I told it to the Virgin. “Will there be a war?”

She only answered me, “God does not want war for His children.”

That says a lot, doesn't it?

Recollections

In order to inspire Conchita to be strong in the face of difficulties, the sister talked to her about Christ. This obviously pleased Conchita; however, she ended up saying this:

—I think more of the Virgin. It is . . . as if I have more feeling for her. The Lord is very serious. And when He speaks to me, He seems concerned for everyone. The Virgin, as if more for me . . . Anyhow in summing things up: who loves the Mother, also loves the Son. Isn't that so?

November 25

—I remember that my village made me suffer. I felt as if imprisoned in it. I acted by the command of others who constantly advised me, “Go to Mass . . . Pray the rosary . . . Do this . . . Give up that . . .” At times I thought I would be happy to be in a hermitage away from everyone, and to work there alone for God, and see what I was capable of doing without their forever telling me.

On the one hand I have no desire for the feast of the Immaculate Conception to come because it will hurt me that this day arrives and I won't have anything. (All these years since 1961, I have had an apparition or locution on it.) And on the other hand, I fear that something will be given to me—since later anxieties will come over me as to whether it was or was not.

Do you know something? You gave me one of the envelopes that they made for all the girls on the 21st, the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin. It was sealed, and I received it with a great desire to know what the Virgin wanted from me. Do you know what mine contained? What she had told us so many times: “Faithfulness in everyday life!”

November 29

—I would like to have my brothers priests. I have known many . . . I remember a young priest of the Heart of Mary, to whom I wanted to give the crucifix to kiss, drew back, and weeping said, “I am not worthy, I am not worthy . . .” When I had finished seeing the Virgin, I went up to him and, apart from everyone, communicated to him what she had told me. “He wants to take off the habit and leave the congregation.” On hearing this, he began to cry again. I've never seen him since.

December 2

The first Thursday of the month—a priestly Thursday. During the interview, the Sister read to Conchita some edifying letters from priests.

—Before the Virgin told me about it, I thought that all priests were good. It had never occurred to me that they could commit mortal sins too.

She Went in Haste to the Mountain

I have known many . . . Some appeared holy to me in the beginning; later I saw things that I didn't like. I learned later how people can be deceived. At first I was very friendly to all, but on noticing that my trust was badly interpreted, I changed.

Sometimes I wonder if there's anyone among the persons that I know who really loves me. Many compliments, many endearing phrases, but they want me for themselves. I saw that even the priests got angry with each other in order to have a bigger part or involvement with me . . . I'm ashamed that they praise me, and I'm pleased that they tell me what I do wrong.

December 3

The Sister read and explained the parable of the Good Shepherd. On this occasion, Conchita was confiding the memories of her life from early youth, "with peace and joy . . ." She ended this way:

—Everything that happened I see now as if in a dream—the apparitions, the people . . . I'm sorry that many doubt the apparitions because of my denials. It occurs to me that, although I denied, I would still like to say, "Have hope! Don't be discouraged." I think that the three other girls feel the same.

When I think about the Virgin, I picture her as something I dreamed. How nice it would be if now she would come here in this parlor with the two of us! What a joy! It isn't necessary to be perfect to see her. I have been a girl with many faults. On the day on which the Angel appeared to us, I had just fought with Jacinta. And I see that today I still don't like to pray. She comes to make us good . . .

If you could see how human the Virgin is! Sometimes she repeated comically our badly spoken expressions, and she did this in order that we might have confidence. But we had it from the first moment.

Now I have doubts about many things; but what I don't feel the least doubt about are the calls. I remember them perfectly, and moreover, as if I were feeling them right now.

December 6

—We have not always been treated well. Sometimes they said outrageous things about us, and they insulted us. How many times I had to listen to outright lies about us!

—When they acted this way, did it bother you?

—No, I remained quite calm. Actually I was not hurt; and it was this way with the four of us. I don't know the cause. That they say nasty things to me doesn't matter to me; it humiliates you much more when they flatter you.

Recollections

I don't feel rancor or hate toward anyone. When the priests of the Commission or those in charge of us attacked us, and the others became angry because of this, I did not. I thought that they had to act like this; and I loved them. I love very much the people who seem good, pious; and also I love those who are sick, and those who live their vocation or, having a vocation, are not able to attain it. Perhaps, after the Miracle, I also will be able to become a nun. What a pleasure that would be!⁸

January 27, 1967

Because of certain rumors, the Sister asked Conchita about her diary:

—Did you write the diary about the apparitions on your own or did they tell you to do it?

—A priest told me that the Bishop said I should write it.

—You never speak of your conversations with the Virgin.

—What for? We said such stupidities . . . Nevertheless, she never reprimanded us for it; she listened. One day we asked her something serious: What we should do to practice penance. She answered us, Always do what your conscience tells you. She didn't say any thing else. I seem to remember also that once she told Loli to obey her mother.

January 31

Certain persons had brought water from somewhere or other, and also some relics for Conchita. When the Sister in doing her job was giving them to her, saying that a visionary had brought them, Conchita told her . . .

—It seems that you don't believe anything about this. I don't have much faith in seers either, without denying that some are true.

—For me not to believe much in these things is logical, but for you that . . .

—That is something very different! I don't know how to explain it; but it's not the same.

—They said that this visionary sent a message to your mother, saying harsh things, and that you threw it away. Why? . . .

—She said that my mother was acting very bad toward me . . . The Virgin didn't say that!

—She is more kind, is that right?

—Oh yes! She would never say that.

8. Conchita spent the Christmas holiday in the village with her family.

She Went in Haste to the Mountain

March 2

- Whenever we prayed the Gloria, the Virgin bowed her head.
- Did she rest standing on top of the Pines?
- We didn't see the Pines or any thing else. We only saw her.

April 10

Many things had occurred during the previous weeks, for example, the *Nota* of Bishop Puchol, dated March 17th. This had greatly affected the Sister; and to a lesser degree, Conchita, who was able to notice the effect of the *Nota* in the village, where she spent her Holy Week vacation.⁹

That April 10th an issue of *La Gaceta Ilustrada* had fallen into her hands, publishing a pitiless article by the reporter Julio Poo San Román of Santander, speaking out against the events and visionaries of Garabandal.

—How did this article affect you?

—It's very bad. There are many lies in it. For example, it says that I didn't want the Bishop to inform the people about my denials, and the truth is that I myself asked them to make it known so that I would be more at peace with myself that way. What makes me suffer is that the people now look on us in a bad way . . .

I have only one desire: That the date of the Miracle come—not for the Miracle itself, but in order to see once and for all if it is true or not. If it has been the Virgin, the Miracle will take place, because what she says is always fulfilled. As for myself, regardless of whether the Miracle takes place or doesn't take place, it will always be bad for me.

—Why is that?

—If the thing is true—for having acted badly, denying and not being generous. And if it isn't true . . . well for everything!

If what happened to us, being good little girls, hasn't been supernatural, and God has permitted it to happen with the consequences that can result, then I couldn't believe that God is good. And my mother and brothers could never believe it.

The Sister advanced some explanations in order to clear up a problem and Conchita replied:

—I don't know the first two cases that you mentioned, since we didn't begin with a lie, and I can assure you that we made no agreement among ourselves.

9. This *Nota*, given to all the news media by the Bishop of Santander, Vicente Puchol, intended to obliterate as false everything about Garabandal.

Recollections

—And what followed?

—It was the same as at the beginning. It isn't true that we rehearsed this! How could they think and say that?

—Then I see clearly that these things did not come from you girls.

—I don't know how they came. I see everything darkly. What is clear to me is that we didn't plan them.

April 19

—What the Virgin told you about pride and humility . . . did you receive that together with the message?

—No. She said it on another occasion: What God loves most is humility; what most displeases Him is pride.

—Would you like to see the Virgin again?

—It's all the same to me. I hope to see her in heaven.

—Why do you talk that way?

—It would be painful for me now because of my denials . . .

April 21

They discussed the article in *La Gaceta Ilustrada*:

—It was not—Conchita remarked—a game of ours, nor did we do it to deceive. Nor did the pastor talk to us about guardian angels on that day. He almost never gave us catechism. Nor did we get together in order to make up the message . . . Nor did I prepare any dough to make the host for the Communion . . .

It's true that we did many stupid things too, that Cardinal Ottaviani read to me in Rome¹⁰ from a report by the bishop of Santander. For example, the thing about the powders, the statue of the Virgin that we were going to hide, and some other things . . .

April 30

To inspire her, the Sister talked to Conchita about how much Our Lord and the Virgin loved her.

—Yes. But They love everyone. When we were talking to the Virgin about things that were too personal, she didn't answer us; she was concerned about others.

10. When she was called there in December, 1966.

She Went in Haste to the Mountain

May 4

Conchita had decided to celebrate this month of the Virgin better than ever. On this day she met with the Sister and told her:

—If the Virgin would present herself to me now, how many things I would ask her! At the time we only said stupid things to her, things without importance. I think that we did it to make her stay longer so that she wouldn't leave us, for at times she remained silent and didn't look at us.

—Do you think about the mysteries when you pray the rosary?

—No. I give my attention to what I'm saying in prayer.

When I hear the Virgin talked about, whatever is said good or bad, I think is said to me, since I consider her something mine.

The Virgin is very much with us; she isn't distant . . .

One day she gave me a statement to tell a certain priest; I gave it to him and he wept very much.

(Here the Sister added that the husband of one of her former students had recounted how Conchita had spoken personally to him in Garabandal about something very hidden in his conscience, and that this had made him resolve to change his way of life.)

May 8

By a telephone call from Francisco Sánchez-Ventura the Sister had received news that the Bishop of Santander had just been killed in a tragic accident; the Sister told it to Conchita, who was overcome and later broke out in tears.

—I am so sorry about what has happened! He was very good and very young. The poor man! He did everything with good intentions. Isn't that true? This warns us that we must be prepared. So many things can happen to us in this life! . . . Now the Bishop knows everything.

June 11

The apparitions were discussed. Sister asked:

—Why did you fall on the ground?

—We were not aware of that; we were with the Virgin! And we followed the conversation or communication with her, without knowing if we were running or not, if we were on our knees or lying on the ground.

The Sister makes a note here: A few days previously Father Laffineur had come and asked me how Conchita looked to me. I answered: "Simple, natural,

Recollections

candid, intelligent. So normal and well-balanced that I could certify that in my profession as a teacher I haven't known another like her." I also told him that I didn't find a very strong will in her.

June 14

—The Virgin didn't tell me that she didn't want me to leave the village and be in school.

June 17

—Our greatest treasure is within. The external appearance doesn't matter much; it should be made agreeable, but without affection.

—I understand, and I see that you are right. We told the Virgin that we wanted to be beautiful like her . . . But she smiled and was silent. If she had conceded it to us to have her face! How the people would have looked at us! She is so beautiful!

—At times you did strange things in front of her.

—Yes, we walked sitting down for example. In the beginning I was very surprised in seeing this in the others; afterwards I became accustomed to it. I saw them descend a steep stairway this way.

I recall once having a knee injury. The doctor ordered rest, but I didn't take care of the knee. And it didn't hurt after that. Without taking a treatment, I had a complete cure.

They said that on another occasion I had left blood on a stone; but later I didn't notice anything on my knees, except a little scratch.

—In some of those things, did you add something of your own invention?

—Doesn't it seem to you that some of your little deceits, on top of seeing your present doubts, could contribute in some way to cloud the truth?

—It is very possible that could be. Don't think that I haven't thought about it.

Conchita passed the summer in her village, with the exception of the last half of August when she was back again at school. In October she returned to Burgos to begin the 1967–1968 schoolyear.

October 18

—Have you noticed what day it is today? We should do something more in prayer. Shall we stay in prayer this night? . . . What happened on this day in 1961?

She Went in Haste to the Mountain

—We announced the first message. We had already seen it beneath the Angel; but we didn't understand what it meant. The Virgin explained it to us . . .

And in what happened to us during those years I see the work of the devil too.

I remember, for example, the voice that we heard in the great darkness that I have already mentioned.

And that other day on which Loli and Jacinta intended to jump down from the choir loft of the church.

At the time I wasn't seeing the Virgin, and I was near the main altar.

I remember that they came down, and touching my face, asked me,

—“Are *you* Conchita?”

On that day, it certainly seems to have been the devil.

On December 22nd, Aniceta came to Burgos to pick up her daughter. She had not come to take her back only for the Christmas vacation; she was taking her back permanently. There had been strong exterior influences and pressures that caused this.

On one of the last visits Conchita told the Sister:

—“From time to time I see more clearly that what happened to the four of us girls was true, but we wasted it . . . Our denials are our own doing. Sometimes, although very briefly, I see this very clearly.”

And the Sister closed the long chapter of her remembrances of the extraordinary closeness to the child of the Montaña with these lines:

“I give thanks to the Most Holy Virgin for everything. Whether she has appeared or not at Garabandal, I have been moved in everything by her love, and certainly all this has brought me to love her more and to feel closer to her.”

May this be the final result for everyone, while we continue to revolve between the light and the shadows of . . .

The Great Mystery of Garabandal

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