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**book one**



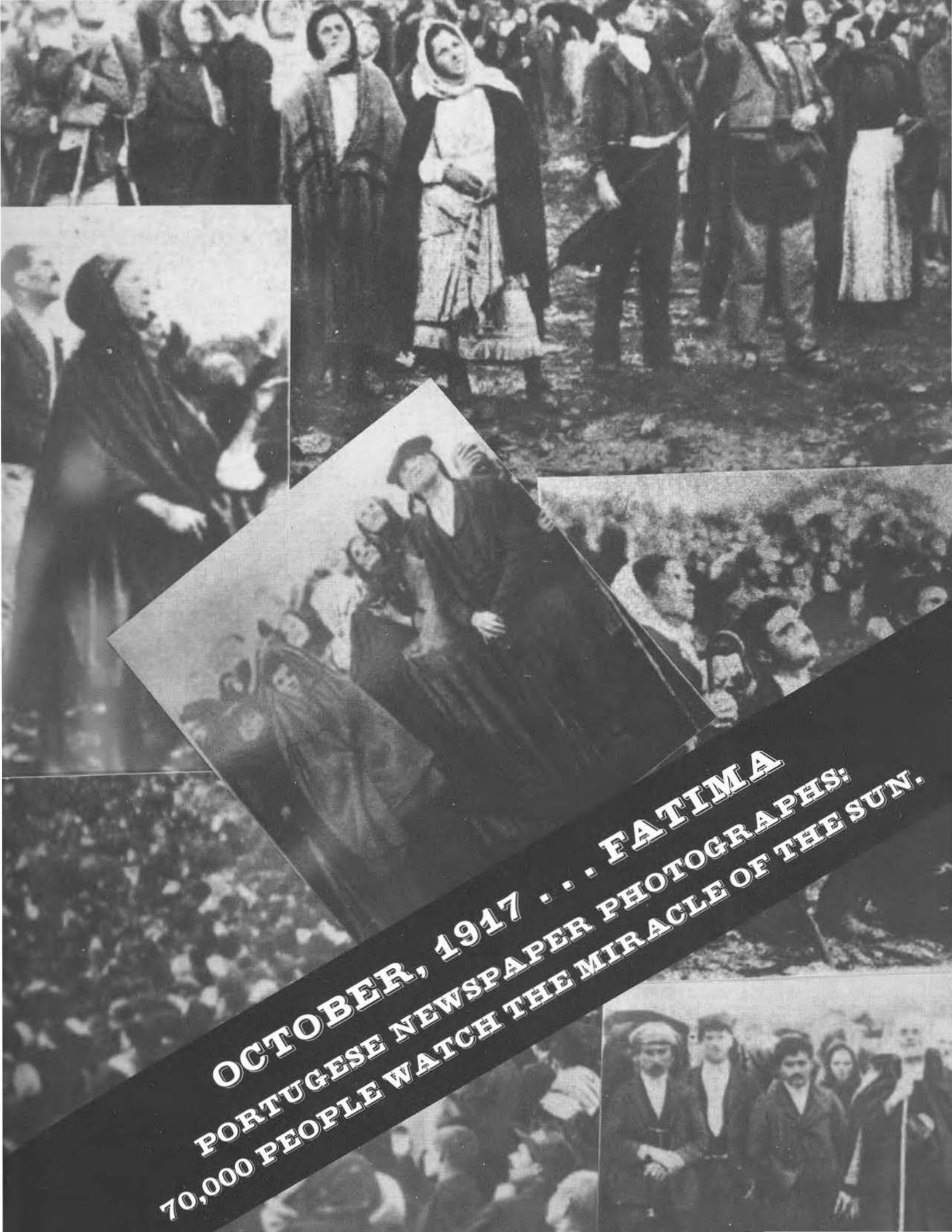
Exurgens autem Maria in diebus illis  
abiit in montana cum festinatione.

—Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome—

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

Luke 1:39





**OCTOBER, 1917 . . . FATIMA  
PORTUGUESE NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHS:  
70,000 PEOPLE WATCH THE MIRACLE OF THE SUN.**





**JUNE, 1961 . . . SPAIN**  
**ECSTASIES PROPHEZIZE A GREATER MIRACLE.**  
**THIS BOOK IS THE STORY OF THAT PROPHECY.**

## Publishers Note

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

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

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

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

**EUSEBIO GARCIA DE PESQUERA O.F.M.**

**SHE WENT  
IN WASTE  
TO THE  
MOUNTAIN**

**TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY GERARD SUEL & OTTO MILLER**

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

Santander, July 8, 1965

Eugenio,  
Apostolic Bishop,  
Administrator of Santander

**THE**  
**EVENTS**  
**OF**  
**GARABANDAL**

**Book One**

## Prologue

*Se Fue con Prisas a la Montaña. (She Went in Haste to the Mountain.)*

The author begins this book with the same words that St. Luke (1:39) used to begin his Gospel account of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin to St. Elizabeth.

Nineteen centuries ago Mary journeyed to visit Elizabeth in a place that the original Vulgate Bible called the *Montaña*. Now in the 20th century the province of Santander, also named the *Montaña*, is the site of another Visitation.

Mary had previously come to the *Montaña* on September 15, 1605, appearing with the infant Jesus to shepherd children in the presence of a beautiful statue. From this appearance came the official title **La Bien Aparecida, Reina Y Madre de la Montaña** (*The True Apparition, Queen and Mother of the Mountain*) by which she has since been venerated as Patroness of la Montaña.

In the year 1961, on July 2nd, the feastday of the Visitation, the Virgin came once more to the *Montaña*—to Garabandal. With St. Michael, the Angel of the Apocalypse, she came to visit mankind through four young girls. On her arm she carried a scapular resembling a sacerdotal maniple with a mountain on it to show that this was Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Mount Carmel, shrouded in unfathomable secrets related to the Mother of God, has apocalyptic significance as the mountain of the prophet Elias who is to return at the end of the world. Described in this book are an astonishing prophecy about the present Pope John Paul II, enigmatic allusions to the *end of the times*, and many other cryptic eschatological episodes related to the final book of the Bible and Christ's prophecy of the final times of the world. These intriguing elements, together with the Virgin's appearance under the Mount Carmel title, give these apparitions exceptional importance.

This book concisely presents the history of the most unusual supernatural event of modern times. Seen by hundreds of thousands of people, with hundreds of testimonies, and thousands of ecstasies, it still remains largely unexplained, a secret and mysterious preternatural marvel, unlike anything that has ever happened before or will happen again. This book is the astounding true story of Mary's coming *in haste to the mountain*.

# *IMPORTANT WARNINGS*

1. This book is not presented under any pretense of pronouncing a final judgement on the nature—natural or supernatural—of these events that do not fall in the normal range of affairs. An attempt is being made simply to present an objective reporting of the facts; but always through the eyes of faith, without which there is no way of understanding them.

2. Regardless of what some may say and others think, the Church has never made a decision on the things that happened at San Sebastián de Garabandal.

Rome, the highest ecclesiastical authority, has persistently refused to give its opinion despite heavy pressures from both sides, and perhaps especially from the side of those who are opposed.

And if the diocesan chancery has not proceeded in the same way, these things should be pointed out:

A) The negative pronouncements made by the bishop of Santander have always been informative remarks or opinions (*notas*), without ever being an official “documento” with the canonical formalities required to make the cause “judged”.

B) The diocesan chancery, when pronouncing a judgement on things related to its authority, is able to err; and falling into error, can lead others into the same; demonstrations of this sort are not rare in the history of the Church.

C) In the same way diocesan chancery could act inadroitly and show bias in handling the affair.

3) Nothing then prevents a Christian from believing in his heart the truth about Garabandal, if there are good reasons for believing.

4) Whoever takes this book into his hands should take care to begin the reading with a pure heart, for it is promised to the pure of heart that “they will see God”; and without impatience, so as not to miss any important matters. Interrupting the reading with pauses for thought is the best way to proceed.



# **PART ONE**

# The Epiphany of Mary

**1961**

*Dedicated to*

**ST. JOSEPH**

**PATRON**

**OF THE**

**UNIVERSAL**

**CHURCH**



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**As It Was  
in the Beginning**



In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

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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, (to the man) "Behold I have given you every seed bearing plant upon the earth, and all trees that have in themselves seed of thier own kind, to be your food."

(Genesis 1: 1, 11, 29)

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And the serpent said to the woman, "No you shall not die the death . . . On whatever day you shall eat from it . . ." 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 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 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 transpired at the beginning of another adventure—the *epic* of Garabandal.

• • • • •

In the little mountain village of San Sebastián de Garabandal,<sup>(1)</sup> century after century had passed without history; then one day . . .

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1. There are approximately sixty houses built of stone in the village, and arranged in typical rural style. They are grouped together on top of a narrow plain, irregular in outline, about 2000 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.

# A Sunday Like Any Other

The calendars in the kitchens 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 mountains where things were happening. Most of these were disturbing: men and nations stirred up with unrest, greed, anxiety, revolts; concerned 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 with inspiration and hope in his heart like the blossoming of flowers in springtime.<sup>(2)</sup> Through his efforts and by his decree, hundreds of eminent scholars set out to sound out the world, seeking to assist it.<sup>(3)</sup> As a result of their search, things like these were soon to be proclaimed to the council assembly:

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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 these bodies of water: the Cantabrian Sea, the Mediterranean (by way of the Ebro River), and the Atlantic Ocean (by way of the Pisuerga River).

In this region, Garabandal is the last village before those imposing mountain tops from which it is separated by miles of silence and solitude amid terrain of savage beauty.

2. 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.

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



*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 purpose and mission of man himself in the universe, about the meaning of his individual and collective efforts, and about the final fate of existence and 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 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.<sup>(4)</sup>*

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 Garabandal. 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.*<sup>(5)</sup>

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 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.

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4. Catechism of Modern Man.

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

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 delights 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 outside 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 *Angelus* 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 Simón, 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 demand of their work as cattle raisers and farmers; so they do not get up early to enjoy the Sunday mornings. Most of them arise 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 cleaned or their suit pressed.

When the bells peal 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 narrow streets to be lost far away in the fields and prairies, in the streams and riverbeds, 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 up six kilometers of bad road. The rosary is led by any one of the faithful who can say 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 relax and amuse themselves.

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 Puente Nansa. (There was no movie theater, television set, or town 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.

.....  
**Note: A large part of this book is direct testimony from eye-witnesses. European quotation marks « » and this slightly bolder type have been used to aid the reader in separating this testimony from the general text.**  
.....



**Conchita González**

Others wander down the paths to their homes chatting with one another, 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 that 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.<sup>(6)</sup>

## Temptation at Dusk

**It was a Sunday evening, and we were with all the young girls playing in the plaza.<sup>(7)</sup>**

**Suddenly Mari Cruz<sup>(8)</sup> and I thought of going to pick apples.**

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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.

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 . . .**

.....

**Note: All excerpts from Conchita’s Diary will be recognizable in this book by the usage of this extra-bold type.**

.....

**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 of time. We do not know if they, like Eve in the beginning, showed 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,<sup>(9)</sup> we started to pick the apples.**

**And while we were having a good time, we saw Loli, Jacinta,<sup>(10)</sup> and another young girl coming to see if they**

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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-skinned and wore her hair very short.

9. This place was 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 material possessions.

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



Jacinta and Loli

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*

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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 (León); Aniceto, nicknamed *Cetuco*, who would die at an early age in 1965; and Miguel. It was natural that Aniceta concentrated her care

*my mother.*<sup>(11)</sup>

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.*

**Then Mari Cruz returned and we left our hiding place so that we could all**

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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.

be together.<sup>(12)</sup>

**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 schoolteacher,<sup>(13)</sup> 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*.<sup>(14)</sup>**

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.<sup>(15)</sup>

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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



**Mari Cruz**

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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, believing 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.

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 where 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,<sup>(16)</sup> which so often showed its face surrounded by dark clouds, nor in the neighboring hills of Poniente where the thunderstorms gathered, could they find the least disturbance. What a strange thunder! What was going on?

## 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.<sup>(17)</sup>

Now with the thunder the breath of a new 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.**<sup>(18)</sup>

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

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16. An imposing mountain range that closes off the Garabandal horizon toward the South. On the other side of the Peña Sagra mountains extended the varied landscape of Liébana, at the extreme southwest of 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.*

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.





“a very beautiful figure appeared to me”

vocabulary and unaccustomed to the abuse of superlatives that permeates the news media, these concise expressions show extraordinary feelings. The figure that appeared, and the brilliance surrounding it, were beyond everything beautiful and impressive that could be seen here below.

**The other girls, Jacinta, Loli and Mari Cruz,** (later they would explain this about themselves) **on seeing me in that state, thought 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.<sup>(19)</sup>**

**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.***

**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

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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.)

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,<sup>(20)</sup> 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.***

**They ran off to tell the school-mistress.<sup>(21)</sup>**

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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.

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 in the village for many years. Her name was Serafina Gómez González; she was a native of Cossío; a widow of Raimundo Rodríguez and had a daughter named Toñito.

#### The villiage church



**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?***



The schoolmistress

**—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.***<sup>(22)</sup>

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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.

We know that during that unforgettable Station, the girls' words and 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 a 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, seeking protection. They whispered the prayers:

*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*<sup>(23)</sup> 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 lucis ante terminum.*)

*As the day ends we pray to you, Creator of the Universe, to be our Guardian and Defender*

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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.

*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.<sup>(24)</sup>**

**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.**

**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.<sup>(25)</sup>

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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.

25. I have come across a new version of what occurred on that memorable afternoon. It comes from Pilar, the mother of



Aniceta

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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 the 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 grown up 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.»

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 Llorente from Seville:<sup>(26)</sup>

«I recall seeing Conchita when she came back to the house after her first apparition. She



Conchita in front of her home

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 San Sebastián homes 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.

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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.*

—*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*



Loli's mother, Julia

*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 soon noticed something unusual in the child who was on her knees leaning against her, trembling like a frightened little bird. (Loli was quite small at that time.)

—*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.*<sup>(27)</sup>

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**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?*

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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 a 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 has 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 anymore that night. When I was alone, I couldn't stop thinking of what had happened in the Calleja.»

The four girls at the site of the first apparition



A subsequent ecstasy





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# Preparing the Way



**W**hen Garabandal awoke on the 19th of June, one topic monopolized all the conversations in the kitchens<sup>(1)</sup> and on the streets.

*You haven't heard? . . . What they saw? . . . Yes, that's what they said; but you'll have to find out for yourself! . . . Anyhow, something strange must have happened to the children because . . . What happened? . . . I am going to ask María 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 . . .**

**—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 belief in an all powerful God Who had created not only the 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?

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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.

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,<sup>(2)</sup> where the doors opened at 10 o'clock.

**When we arrived at the school, the schoolmistress asked us, *My children are you certain about the things you said yesterday?***

**We answered together: *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 not envy their four schoolmates? Of, if they could be part of such a thrilling thing too!

It is doubtful that there was much studying done on that morning in the young girls' school at Garabandal. However, Conchita writes, **We acted the same as always, undisturbed.** If tranquility resulted in them from the apparitions, it should be recognized that this is a sign it had a good origin. Neither the devil, neuroses, nor hallucinations leave peace.

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

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



Fr. Valentín with visionaries

**Jacinta and Mari Cruz went together and met the parish priest, Father Valentín Marichalar.<sup>(3)</sup>**

**—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.*<sup>(4)</sup>**

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3. Father Valentín resided in Cossío where he was the parish priest, but he had to go up to San Sebastián 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 Yahweh, and not die*, he certainly could not exclude the possibility of an angel's supernatural intervention in the village. What consequences that could cause!

**Then they went toward their homes.**

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

**Finding me near my home,<sup>(5)</sup> 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**

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5. Conchita's house was at the extreme edge 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.

knew that what the girls said was completely possible. God concerns himself deeply with His 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.<sup>(6)</sup>

**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.**<sup>(7)</sup>

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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 have been impossible to find such agreement if all this had been only *a game*, and even less would there



Loli in her home

**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.***<sup>(8)</sup>

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 3 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?***

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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.

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 where 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.

—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,<sup>(9)</sup> who was there working to repair our house, and also by my brother Aniceto, who was helping him.

—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!*

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

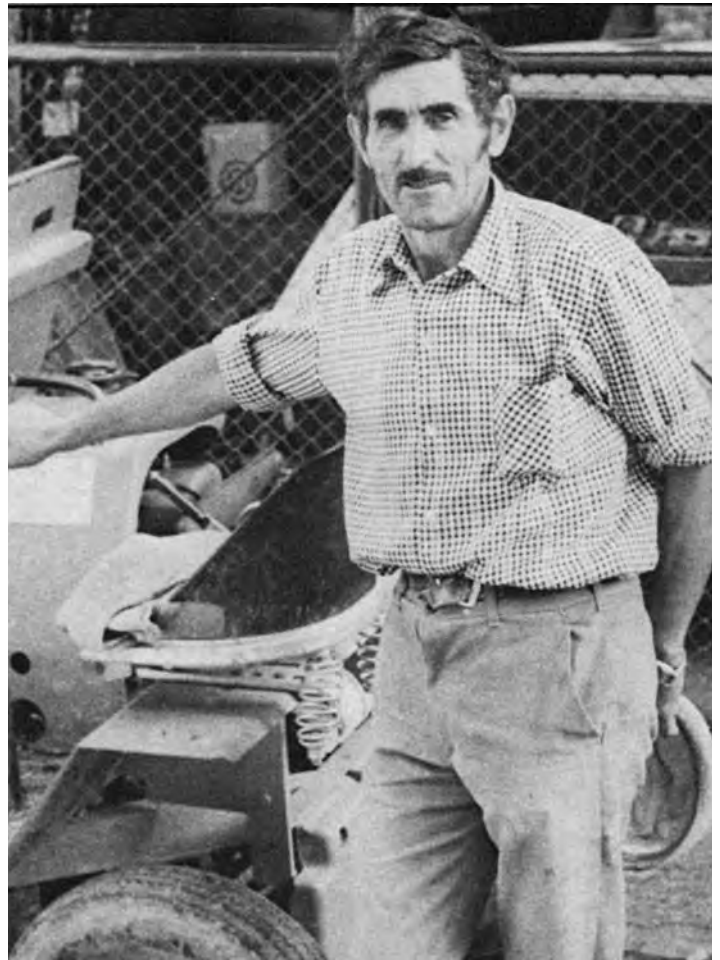
Conchita wrote these things in her diary more than a year after they happened. And perhaps, as they were side-lights to the really important events, she did not record them accurately.

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 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?



Pepe Díez

*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 wanted to expose himself to ridicule before the more *sophisticated* villagers by showing any belief in the strange story of the four little girls.<sup>(10)</sup>

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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.



**Conchita's brother Aniceto and mother Aniceta**

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 girls began to pray in the calleja; but it wasn't possible to concentrate on their prayers because of the little band of ruffians with disheveled hair and dirty faces, who started throwing stones at them, accompanying their missiles with laughs, insults and other words.

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.

Why didn't the Angel come? Would he perhaps come at another time?

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

Before arriving there, they met the schoolmistress. She tried to raise their spirits with a child-

ish 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 the eyes of faith amid the shadows of mystery. In the former place was the wonder of the vision, within 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, darkness fell over the spirits 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:

***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 dismal monotony 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 mid-afternoon hour came when the children, having left the classroom, asked for their lunches.<sup>(11)</sup> The four visionaries, besides asking 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**

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11. The lunches taken in the afternoon almost always consisted of bread and something 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.

**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



Left to right: Loli, Conchita, Mari Cruz, Jacinta

slower. Conchita had to reassure them that she would come. And a little 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 they had finished, the Angel had not come.**<sup>(12)</sup>

**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

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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.

this came a sensation of constriction—**fear**—that left them lost and floating in mystery, adrift in something completely unknown that they could not comprehend.<sup>(13)</sup>

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

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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.



**A small monument now marks the site of the Angel's first appearance.**

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.

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 children's 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 Fr. 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, Jacinta, 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.**

**“We five: the Angel, Loli, Mari Cruz, Jacinta, and myself”**



**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 call 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?

How they held themselves! And what expressions on their faces! Positioned on their knees on the rocky ground of the trail,<sup>(14)</sup> 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.

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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.*

***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 from what she was told 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 begin to come, such as Angelita, Conchita's aunt Aurelia, Clementina's 12-year-old eldest son, etc . . .

Those who had come, moved only by curiosity, did not take the matter seriously. Seeing that nothing was happening in spite of the girls' 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 . . .



The *calleja* was a rocky trail leading out from the village.

Clementina soon became very excited by this inconceivable spectacle. And certain that something was happening there — something from God — 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. What could this be? All of those present did not share her tremendous 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.<sup>(15)</sup>**

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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:

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.

## "Everything Seems To Be Coming from God"

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

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«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!*»



Fr. Valentín (arrow) was the first priest to see an ecstasy.

«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 throughout all the neighboring towns 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 June 22nd.<sup>(16)</sup> 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*

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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 Cuenca 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.*

*better report about everything.* Thanks to this intelligent observation, that Thursday, the day of the week dedicated to the Eucharist, which in 1961 had more daylight time than any other day in the year, was the first 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.<sup>(17)</sup>

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.<sup>(18)</sup> 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

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17. Planting and harvesting hay is a principal 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.

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.<sup>(19)</sup>

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.

At the same time of the evening there was an ecstasy in the *Calleja* again after the usual prayers. But the number of onlookers had increased markedly, since the news of what was occurring in San Sebastián had already traveled to the surrounding villages: Cossío, Puente Nansa, Rozadío.<sup>(20)</sup>

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.***

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19. The police chief mentions in his memoirs:

«In the village there was a teacher or professor who had come to give lessons on assigned courses to the son of the *indiano* Taquio. (*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.»

20. These are all small riverside towns on the banks of the Nansa River. Puente Nansa 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.

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.

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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, who was so much invoked there 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 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 below was seen a series of capital letters, that the girls later learned were Roman numerals, designating a date.<sup>(21)</sup>

**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 numerals. And they had paid little attention to the strange writing which the Angel himself had refused for the moment to explain.<sup>(22)</sup>

## 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

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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 meant. 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.

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.*



Ecstasy in the Cuadro

with pilgrims, among them **the school teacher from Cossío,**<sup>(23)</sup> (I do not know why Conchita mentions him so specifically) **five priests,**<sup>(24)</sup> some of whom **did not believe,** and **many doctors.** The atmosphere in San Sebastián on that beautiful day in 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.<sup>(25)</sup> 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.

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 doctor**<sup>(26)</sup> **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.**

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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 Celís, 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.

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

**I was unaware of all this but the people told me about it later.**<sup>(27)</sup>

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

**And I didn't know why.**<sup>(28)</sup>

From the Cuadro, the girls and many other persons went to 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 into the church sacristy **where there were doctors and priests** who assaulted them with questions that they answered with the ingenuous calmness of normal, honest country girls possessing quick intelligence, if poor education.

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 of Paul and Barnabas 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

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27. During the ecstasies, the insensibility of the visionaries was total. They neither saw nor felt anything that was outside of 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.»





**Ecstasy at the church door**

that there began to appear — for the first time, I believe — a certain *explanation* that would go on to spread 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 (due to 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.<sup>(29)</sup>

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

**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.**<sup>(30)</sup>

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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.»

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:

## 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 anything.**

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 those 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.

Their suffering must have been plainly evident, since the good people of the village felt it necessary

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«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.»



Typical village setting

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.<sup>(31)</sup> 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.<sup>(32)</sup>

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Faustino González 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

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



**Left to right: Mari Cruz, Conchita, Jacinta, Loli in trance**

devotion. It could hardly have come into their minds that heaven would concern itself with insignificant creatures like the children of Aniceta, Ceferino, Simón and Escolástico.

In the village the people gathered at the Calleja at the usual hour, as the sun set 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 González 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 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 well — for one time their inveterate human respect did not matter — and in the solitude of the mountain night, 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 presence of God.

That night must have left its mark on the herdsmen since a month and a half later when Celestino



*“I come to announce to you a visit by the Virgin under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.”*

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 Marías 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!***

The Angel smiled.

Finally, the reason for so many repeated visits by



**“He spoke to us about many things.”**

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 Virgin will tell you about it.”**

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.**

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 childlike 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.*<sup>(33)</sup>

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!**

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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 in spite 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.*

—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?"*



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# She Went to the Mountain



**M**any centuries ago a small yet very beautiful episode took place. It was recorded under the influence of the Holy Spirit, beginning:

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

(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 give birth to John the Baptist.

The feastday and liturgical commemoration of this episode — prior to Vatican II — came each year to all the places where a Catholic Church existed on July 2nd.

However, what concerns us now is 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 went in haste to the mountain.**<sup>(1)</sup> 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 Virgin<sup>(2)</sup> 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.

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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).

# Encounter of Love

It was a festive summer evening, at nightfall.

It was the hour to pray Vespers<sup>(3)</sup> 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,  
For He has regarded the lowliness of his handmaid.  
From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed,  
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: 46-52)

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**<sup>(4)</sup> 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,

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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.

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)



Large crowds saw the ecstasies and took the photographs that illustrate these books

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<sup>(5)</sup>, an abbot, and many cars.**

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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, who had come up with Doctor Morales and Doctor Piñal from Santander. I recall that Mr. Rocha

**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.<sup>(6)</sup>**

**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

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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, we will expand on these paragraphs.

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 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. It is he 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 apostatized, declaring themselves officially atheistic, or have come to take a policy of ignoring God to suit their own convenience.

Pope Leo XIII had mysterious and compelling reasons for ordering the prayer after low mass: *St. Michael, the Archangel defend us in battle . . .*

For some years now, almost since the time of Garabandal, the hierarchy has thought it opportune to stop those *post Missam* prayers. But this does not permit anyone to think he can neglect prayer to the 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.<sup>(7)</sup>

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 XII 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



The statue of St. Michael in the village church.

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 I: 19, 26)

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

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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.

## It appeared to be the eye of God.<sup>(8)</sup>

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 and recorded, ending 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)<sup>(9)</sup>

**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, María 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.

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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 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 more harm to the girl.» (See picture on page 53.)

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.



“It appeared to be the eye of God”

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 police guards and petition for their benefit *because they protect us from the crowd and prevent them from hurting us.*

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 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 You<sup>(10)</sup>

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.<sup>(11)</sup>**

**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.**

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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.

**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 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.**

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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 *Virgen 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.

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 differently. If they described her as they have in spite of what they were accustomed to seeing, 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!



“Sometimes she carries the Baby in her arms.”

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 sculptor 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 of concession, *Your statue is very beautiful, Mr. Sculptor, 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.<sup>(12)</sup> That magnificent panorama ought to have impressed her. Someone must have said to

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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.



“A normal eye with eyelashes . . . a rainfall of stars. The four of us saw it.”

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, validating it with her signature.

«This is a resumé of my conversation about the apparitions of Garabandal with Conchita in Burgos<sup>(13)</sup> from the 7th to the 15th of November, 1967. With her help, and that of the most Holy Virgin, I wanted to put on canvas something that would depict well those celestial scenes.

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

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 graceful. 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



**"A bright star with a large tail passed by."**



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 stairs. The four of us saw it—Loli, Mari Cruz, Jacinta and myself.*

I asked her how they fell. From the 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 read of this in a book.

*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,<sup>(14)</sup> 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:

**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

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

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 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 María* with them, it was not only an exercise of prayer, but also an instruction. The 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,<sup>(15)</sup> 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.<sup>(16)</sup>

**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**

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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 *puerility* 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?

**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 Odrizola<sup>(17)</sup> 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 would 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.

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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.



**“We are all always with her.”**

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:

***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.***  
(Antiphon from Vespers)



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And He Dwelt  
Among Us

**T**his important statement refers to the enactment 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 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** (Luke 1:56) to accompany and assist her.

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 large pilgrimages, this song is sung with devotion and feeling. The words implore the Virgin to be Queen *Chez nous*. The French expression is hard to translate and refers to what is properly one's own; what belongs to one's own house. *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.<sup>(1)</sup> The children looked at the Vision more in the quality of a mother and immediately began to

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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.

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.

**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 through 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 3rd, was to go and 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 attention.

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 cannot express themselves, as they prayed to the Spirit that breathes where He wills; and you 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 dreamed?

**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 Gómez.**

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

The good schoolmistress' feelings are readily explainable. How could she have even imagined that such things would happen to the children of 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 Simón 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.**

The good will of Simón 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 skeptics who never understand the working of the Divine Hand in lowly human affairs. Simón would have preferred then and there to see the girls immediately in a state of absolutely faultless



Jacinta's parents



Conchita's brothers: Miguel



Aniceto



Serafin

angelic perfection so as to prove the authenticity of their visions.<sup>(2)</sup>

The parents of Marí Cruz, Escolástico 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!**



Conchita's mother

**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.**

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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 to 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.

Good sign! The 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.

Surely the obedience mentioned by Conchita had its foundation in the solid upbringing received in the 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?***

**An 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.<sup>(3)</sup>**

**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.**

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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.





Conchita, Jacinta, Loli

**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.,<sup>(4)</sup> an exceptional 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 if they were together; they could occur to all four, 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.

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4. The name of this Jesuit priest will be forever 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.



Between calls . . . waiting for the rapture

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. Matutano<sup>(5)</sup> 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.*

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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.»

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.»

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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. Valentín, *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 are 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.**

*(On this occasion Mari Cruz offered the Child some caramels 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: 1. The miraculous exact coincidence of the calls in the four girls in spite of the separation imposed on them; 2. 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; 3. 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; 4. 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, at 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 above their childish ways and



“She kissed them all.”

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.  
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 gracious event is indicated. During the course of 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 caramel 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, 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 Virgin. While raising one of them toward the Virgin, she was clearly heard to say, *What? What has already been kissed? Oh! It is André's.*»

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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 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 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 Ramón)



“Cases of hierognosis have been observed in connection with the stones kissed by the Virgin.”

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 seem 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.

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.<sup>(6)</sup>

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

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

**Loli returning a wedding ring kissed by the Virgin.**





**Conchita holding up rosaries for the Virgin's kiss**

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 declare later with its Pastoral Document *Gaudium et Spes* (Part II, Chapter I).

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.**

**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 photographers<sup>(7)</sup> 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

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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.



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 have soon 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.

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 revealed and commented on.

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



**“Tell it to the people on the 18th of October”**

Heaven accommodates itself to the capacity of young girls lacking in education, but not lacking 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.**

They heard the words without being able to comprehend either their significance or their content. Finally the explanations and illustrations begin.<sup>(8)</sup>

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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 the 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 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 Valentín and he said later, breaking the intense silence of all those who 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.*»

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 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.<sup>(9)</sup>

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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 spend 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 could only 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?

—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



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 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)

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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.*

—All right. 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.»*



Jacinta presents religious articles for the Virgin to kiss



chapter

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i  
v  
e

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 to her estimation or what stuck the most in her memory.<sup>(1)</sup>

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I. 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 unexpected since he had many things to attend to 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 almost a week (from Sunday the 2nd of July, the day of the first apparition of the Virgin, until Saturday, July 8th). But on July 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.»*

And so 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 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

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.

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,

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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's brief resumés 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.

trying to size it up to determine exactly what was going on, of 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 observation and opinions, a priest by the name of Ramón María Andreu Rodamilans



Fr. Ramón

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 Castille 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 were 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 important:

«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.»

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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.<sup>(2)</sup>

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2. Apart from Father Ramón'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 don't 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.»



“Equivalent to eight or nine year old school girls”

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. Artinero<sup>(3)</sup> 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 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.*"»

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3. The renowned Dominican professor, Father Juan González de Arintero, was born in a little mountain city of Valdelugeros 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.

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.<sup>(4)</sup>

—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 reflection 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 ringing a bell, according to an ancient tradition, to call the townspeople to pray

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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.»

for the souls in purgatory. The rosary is said in the church every evening.



Typical scene

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.»<sup>(5)</sup>

## 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

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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 E. 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.





“They play and converse like the other children.”

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 their 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 Ramón mentions a letter written to him on August 24th, 1961 by a pediatrician, Doctor Celestino 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"<sup>(6)</sup> 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 mannerisms of great excitement), 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 being taken aside and put to bed, she slowly came

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.



Left to right: Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz, Conchita

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!*»

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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 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 by ourselves. So now once again with the crowd.*

They said that the Virgin told them to remain in their homes and not go out more than to do their shopping, that is to say, that they were not to walk in the streets during the night hours when the crowds gathered. The Virgin didn't tell them this every day; nevertheless, they carried it out well.

2. On the contrary, the children were pleased

that the crowds came, *so 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.»

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These opinions of Father Ramón 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,<sup>(7)</sup> there was a fiesta in the village of Garabandal. From afar one could hear

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7. A holy day of obligation in Spain.

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 were not 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."*

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Escolástico, 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 able to follow her. She answered them, "At the time it seemed to me I was sitting down."

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*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 . . .*<sup>(8)</sup>

*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.»*

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There is abundant evidence that the visionaries

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8. According to Fr. Valentín's notes, this episode took place on the 20th of September, 1961.



"Mari Cruz didn't want anyone to see her."

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 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 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 ordinary sang very badly, «*almost as badly 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 Ramón — «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 evaluate their answers better, 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 memory 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.»

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Continuing on, Father Ramón 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 is 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 Marín<sup>9</sup> with regard to the frequency of the ecstasies and the visions. "In some saints these have occurred on a grand scale. For St. Mary Magdalena of Pazzis, 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 No 465)

There also was much variation in the duration of the ecstasies. Sometimes they lasted only 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 . . .*

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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 province of Salamanca. He will be mentioned again later on.



**"We go as though we are in the air"**

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.



Mari Cruz' mother and father (Escolastico)

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 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.»*

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Escolástico 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."»

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Mari Cruz' mother added:

«*Why doesn't the Virgin act in these apparitions the same as she has acted in the others?*»

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Men rule the affairs of earth, but not the affairs of heaven . . .

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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.<sup>(10)</sup> 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.»

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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 there is no risk of danger, even though the person

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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.»



**“The falls in the state of trance increased.”**

should happen to fall into fire.”<sup>(11)</sup>

**«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,**

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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 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.*

**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,**



“Many reflexes disappeared during the ecstasies.”

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 tremendous rigidity that existed for other persons appeared to change into a great flexibility for her.<sup>(12)</sup>

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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 would

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 been 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.*»

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unscrew the light bulb 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 light bulb, she would burn her hand. Her mother said, *Heavens, take away the light bulb!*

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.»





As many as 3,000 spectators a day came to see the ecstasies and participate in them.

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 brother<sup>(13)</sup> 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 whom they knew, but also located them and touched them during the

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13. *Fr. Luis*: Father Luis Andreu, who will be discussed later. *The Pastor*: Fr. Valentín Marichalar *The brother*: Fr. Ramón María Andreu (brother of Father Luis), the author of these writings, who was spending some time in Garabandal.



**“The girls in ecstasy fell down on their knees before each person present and said the Act of Contrition.”**

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.<sup>(14)</sup>

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 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.

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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.

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 apparition; but she found the church locked. So she started to pray at the door, and entering again into ecstasy, was told by the Virgin 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 people answering. The girl did not count the Ave Marías 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.»

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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**



**“Take my hands and place them since I do not see the person.”**

seeing him—instead of saying the Act of Contrition, they prayed a Salve.»

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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.»

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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*.

«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.*»

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This became clear on learning—the visionary did not know—that the husband was a Protestant.<sup>(15)</sup>

«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.*

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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.

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, corralled 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.

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



**Conchita presents the Crucifix to be kissed.**

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.»<sup>(16)</sup>**

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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.



Sari, one of the 'child witnesses'



Mari Carmen, the other 'child witness'

Concerning the spectators in Garabandal we can add this curious bit of information that Father Ramón 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 Mari Carmen<sup>(17)</sup> should come together with us; the others should be far away so that they don't hear what we say. Then the visionaries went up to the Pines<sup>(18)</sup> and went into ecstasy**

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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, Fr. Angel Cossío Vélez and the mayor, Serafín González, Conchita's paternal grandfather. It seems that the occasion was the

**in front of the 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 the girls. Only concerning**

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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!

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.*»

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Father Ramón 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 the trances, without hearing what the children were saying.»

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I do not know what to say about all these things; 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 simplicity 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 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.

The extremely simple and transparent souls of the girls could be seen by their conversations. 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 ecstasies continued into September, 1961, verses formed part of the nightly rounds that the girls in ecstasy made to the other girls

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19. This is a song that was well-known in the towns and regions of Spain, at least in the northern provinces.

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.

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.

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 this way:

*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.»*

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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 Mary, 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 in 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 some 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 all could recognize them.

In the numerous trances that I witnessed, I never saw in a simultaneous action 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 *throwing a kiss* . . . Frequently on terminating a vision, the girl or girls 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.<sup>(20)</sup> Afterwards, it appears that she became serious . . . When the girls told her that many did not believe, that no one believed, she answered on several occasions, *They will believe.*

Actually the girls stated that they had heard from the Virgin that there would definitely be a miracle,<sup>(21)</sup> although they did not know when, or in what it consisted.

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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, Fr. 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's only a little one.*

And the following day, a Sunday and the feast of Our Lady 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.*





**They had heard from the Virgin that there would definitely be a miracle.**



“In the events of Garabandal, prayer has always been the most important thing.”

**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 made 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.<sup>(22)</sup> 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**

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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.

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.*<sup>(23)</sup> 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 Sacrament!* 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**

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23. The form of the Hail Mary that the girls learned from Fr. Ramón is what is heard on the tape recordings during the girls' prayers in ecstasy.

case, besides the devotion to the rosary, it appears that she wants to bring out the attention that we owe the Blessed Sacrament.»

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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.<sup>(24)</sup>

As he continued, Father Ramón 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;<sup>(25)</sup> the fact is that the girls have spoken *words* in other languages.

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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.

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 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.<sup>(26)</sup> When there are

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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.»

“The girls spoke foreign languages while in their state of ecstasy.”





“It appears unquestionable that they are corresponding to something that they are seeing and hearing.”

several together in ecstasy, everything about them is simultaneous and well synchronized; they speak and ask question at the same time, make the same exclamations of joy, and of fear . . . <sup>(27)</sup> 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.<sup>(28)</sup>

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

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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 could not 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!»

ordinary conversations 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

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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?”»

priests later on.

Toward the end of the trance the girls are frequently heard saying, 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: at times 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 that the Lord is pleased for it to 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 can go into contemplation*<sup>(29)</sup> *on his own volition*. 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

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29. This refers to supernatural contemplation, a higher form of prayer that is studied in courses on mystical theology.

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.»*

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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 I 1: 33-36)

Oh the depth of the riches  
Of the wisdom and 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!**



chapter

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He Came Unto His  
Own, But His Own  
Received Him Not

**I**n 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.<sup>(1)</sup>

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?<sup>(2)</sup> Some heard and accepted Him gladly; but others—the ruling classes in general, the priests and scribes—were obstinate in their hard-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 unto His own, but 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

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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*.

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. However, as the girls were not capable of explaining these lessons, 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.)<sup>(3)</sup>

## 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,<sup>(4)</sup> which in that year fell on a Sunday.

I personally received the account from Andrés Otero Lorenzo from Santiago; he was both a witness and a participant in what he described.

On that July 16th, in the early hours of the afternoon, Mr. Lorenzo came by car to Garabandal

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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.



**“The face turned completely upwards with a most beautiful expression”**

together with Mrs. Zubiría and Carmen Herrero y Garralda, youngest daughter of the Marquese de Aledo.<sup>(5)</sup> They had left Ribadesella<sup>(6)</sup> 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

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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.

at Conchita's house and had a talk with her. She confirmed what Loli had said. *Yes, they were waiting for something, but much later.* From the church tower the bells then began to ring out the first calls for the rosary in the church.<sup>(7)</sup>

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.<sup>(8)</sup> The face turned completely upwards with a most beautiful expression; the lips partially open—I don't know

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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.



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.»



“Her walk! It was really unique in its grace and lightness.”

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 (*Nandín*) 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 village<sup>(9)</sup> led the recitation of the rosary and during it the girls in ecstasy answered until the finish. When the prayer ended they stood up, left the church reverently, and began an ecstatic march<sup>(10)</sup> toward the Pines.



Loli in rapture

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

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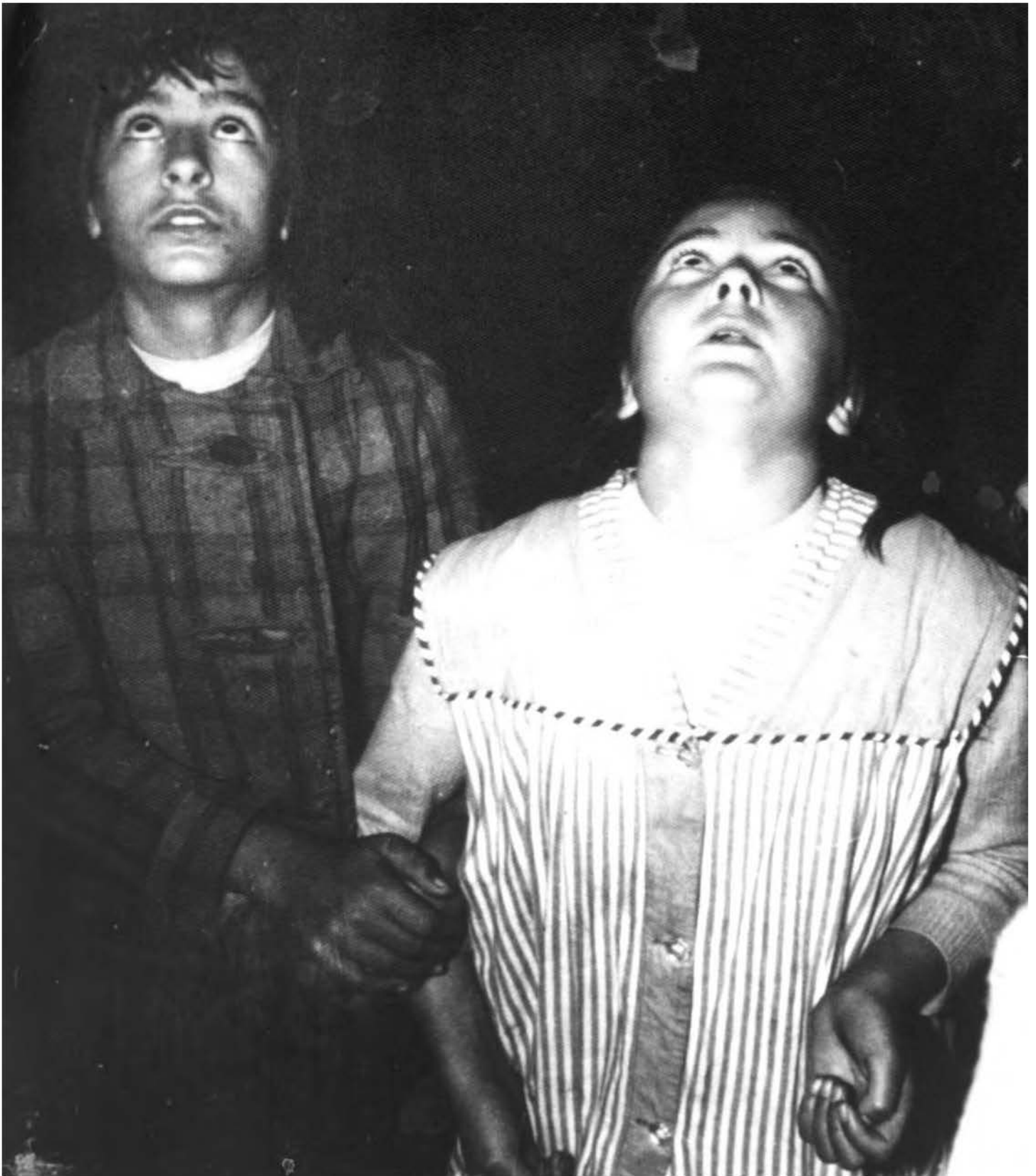
9. Referring to Maximina González, Conchita's aunt. Father José Ramón García de la Riva, of whom we will speak later on, told me this. Sometimes another woman of the village, Celina González, led it.

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)



**“Looking always and only upwards, they never stumbled.”**

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



**“And look out! There are rocks and stones throughout those streets.”**

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 a 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 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 low-lying 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



**“The girls walked as if their feet had eyes.”**



“I cannot explain how they—without ever looking away a second from the vision on high—could follow that path.”

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 blink! 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 for 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



**“I could notice the extraordinary laugh and smile of the children in ecstasy.”**

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.

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 ones<sup>(11)</sup>—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

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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*.

The people around them started to keep a



**“They were oblivious to the things that were happening around them.”**

were having. And everything ended at the church doors. When the girls returned to their normal selves<sup>(12)</sup> 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 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

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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)

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.»

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The man showed me a photograph<sup>(13)</sup> 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

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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.

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 — 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 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 children's 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 repeatedly 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.<sup>(14)</sup>



“They should be modest.”

2. Another counsel, often repeated, was that they should be *modest*.<sup>(15)</sup> They interpreted this

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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 . . .



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.



“Be obedient.”

3. Probably even more often they had repeated to them the counsel to be *obedient*.<sup>(16)</sup>

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16. Fr. Valentín has this recorded in his notes of July 16th, a Sunday, and the feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel:

«When I went up at five in the afternoon, I met Conchita and Loli wearing two or three chains and medals, two or three rosaries, watches, bracelets, etc. I was slightly 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 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 could not see you, since they would not 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 could not hear. At the time of these happenings, no one said that this reminder to obedience was improper or unnecessary.

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.<sup>(17)</sup> I myself had to give them explanations.



“Make sacrifices.”

5. The Virgin inspired in them a *horror of sin*.<sup>(18)</sup> One time while alone in ecstasy Conchita said, *And that, what is that? Oh! The sight of sinners. How ugly! Take me away from it! Yes, I don't want to see it. No! (crying) Another*

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17. We supposed 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 these mountains 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 falsehoods and absurdities like these are spoken day after day to a confused people of God!

*time? The sight of sinners? Ah, 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.



“Sinners? Oh, yes! Sacrifices!”

6. With regard to *piety*, the girls were requested to pray often, 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.<sup>(19)</sup>

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

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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.



“Pray often, especially the rosary.”

of trance. Here are some of these questions:

—*To sing the song ‘Esperanza,’<sup>(20)</sup> is that a sin?*

—*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.*

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20. This refers to a song that was very popular at the time; a frivolous song, vulgar and imbecile like so many other songs that have been successful. For example some of its words were:

*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 strict—and it was for this reason that they asked the Virgin about this.

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 . . .



“**HUMILITY**—This was shown. . . by the lowly work that they continued to do in front of everyone.”

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.



“The girls were imbued with a spirit of obedience.”

I have personally noted several cases of this:

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,



**Sleeping between calls**



“The Virgin told me to obey.”

— *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 Garabandal 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.<sup>(21)</sup>

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 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

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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.



“They prayed several rosaries a day.”

heard all the Masses that were celebrated—unless they were in the pastures.<sup>(22)</sup> 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**

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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.

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, caramels, candy, etc. up to the point of not keeping anything for themselves<sup>(23)</sup>—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,<sup>(24)</sup> of Conchita and Mari Cruz for a blind man,<sup>(25)</sup> the amiable patience with so many inquisitive people, the desire that all would believe and be saved . . .



“They showed charity in a thousand ways.”

**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.*<sup>(26)</sup>

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

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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.

26. A definition both simple and magnificent.



**“The children received Communion every day and heard all the Masses.”**

that they said, replies that they had received<sup>(27)</sup> — 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.



“A desire to atone for the sins of mankind.”

The *modesty* of the girls in their manner of walking, of running, of looking, of conducting

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27. The girls had been brought up and lived in an atmosphere of rough speech, sometimes very rough. Farmers and herdsmen are not noted for 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.

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.<sup>(28)</sup>



“Close following of the advice repeated by the Virgin that they *Be modest*”

**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 answer what*

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28. It is not said that smoking is exactly a sin; smoking by women was not pleasing to the girls favored by the Virgin.





“The girls demonstrated a special predilection for priests and religious.”

*they ask us if we can.*

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.<sup>(29)</sup>

**ATTITUDE TOWARD PRIESTS** — In the beginning of the events the girls demonstrated a special predilection for priests and religious. Frequently

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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.

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.

all men *had come to her own*. But not all comprehended or wished to receive her.<sup>(31)</sup>



Fr. Valentín with a priest who visited the village.

**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.»<sup>(30)</sup>

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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 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

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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.

## "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*.<sup>(32)</sup>

According to our information, this group consisted of three priests as experts in ecclesiastical

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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 Doroteo 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.

disciplines and two laymen as experts in medical science. The priests were Juan Antonia del Val,<sup>(33)</sup> Francisco Odriozola,<sup>(34)</sup> and José María Sáiz,<sup>(35)</sup> 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.<sup>(36)</sup>

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).

The fourth part of this report deals with

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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.

*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 irreproachable witnesses that they knew were favorable to the apparitions.*

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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.

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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 persons 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.



“They said it was I who was influencing the others.”

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?

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

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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.**»

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,<sup>(38)</sup> 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.<sup>(39)</sup>**

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.

It was July 26th, 1961.<sup>(40)</sup> 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

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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.

40. I am almost sure that this is the date and not the 27th, as Sánchez-Ventura writes in his book.

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 caramels; his name was Alfonso Cobián.<sup>(41)</sup>**

**He had given them to the four of us.**

**And when we were eating them, the third call came.**

**And we dropped the caramels on the road.**

**How we would have liked to eat them!<sup>(42)</sup> 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.**



**“The third call is a thing that takes us, and we don't know how.”**

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

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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.*



Conchita in ecstatic fall

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.*

Jacinta started one of those oscillatory movements which were to become, sometime later, one of the most striking phenomena in Garabandal—the *ecstatic falls*.<sup>(43)</sup> 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 Mari Loli, *Cross my arms right, you have crossed them backwards.*<sup>(44)</sup> (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.)

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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.

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44. It seems to me more acceptable, because it is more understandable, what Father Valentín 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.»

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 discomfort.<sup>(45)</sup>

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,<sup>(46)</sup> especially about the one who had most attracted their attention.

**Since we wanted so much to know who was the priest who had come in the white habit,<sup>(47)</sup> 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 loose<sup>(48)</sup> *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,<sup>(49)</sup> *That it was a house . . .*

And naturally Conchita did not forget her mother's request.

**That same day I asked the Virgin if**

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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.)

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.

**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 closed their hands with the gestures of waving good-bye. Abruptly, as sudden as turning off the electricity in a light bulb, 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.<sup>(50)</sup> Since the Virgin had not opposed it, Aniceta decided definitely on the trip to 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

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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.»



**Conchita washing laundry with mother in isolated village environment**

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.<sup>(51)</sup>

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,<sup>(52)</sup> would witness something that it had never before witnessed.

### **The first day that I went** (to Santander),

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 Luís 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.

### **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*)<sup>(53)</sup> had to intervene.**

**That day they made various tests on**

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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 provinces 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 the arms and legs, brought her to the parish 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!





"The first day that I went, I had an apparition."

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 coadjutor, later a parish priest — who had arranged the girl's trip and assumed responsibility for watching over her. Immediately Father Odriozola and Dr. 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. <sup>(54)</sup>

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.***

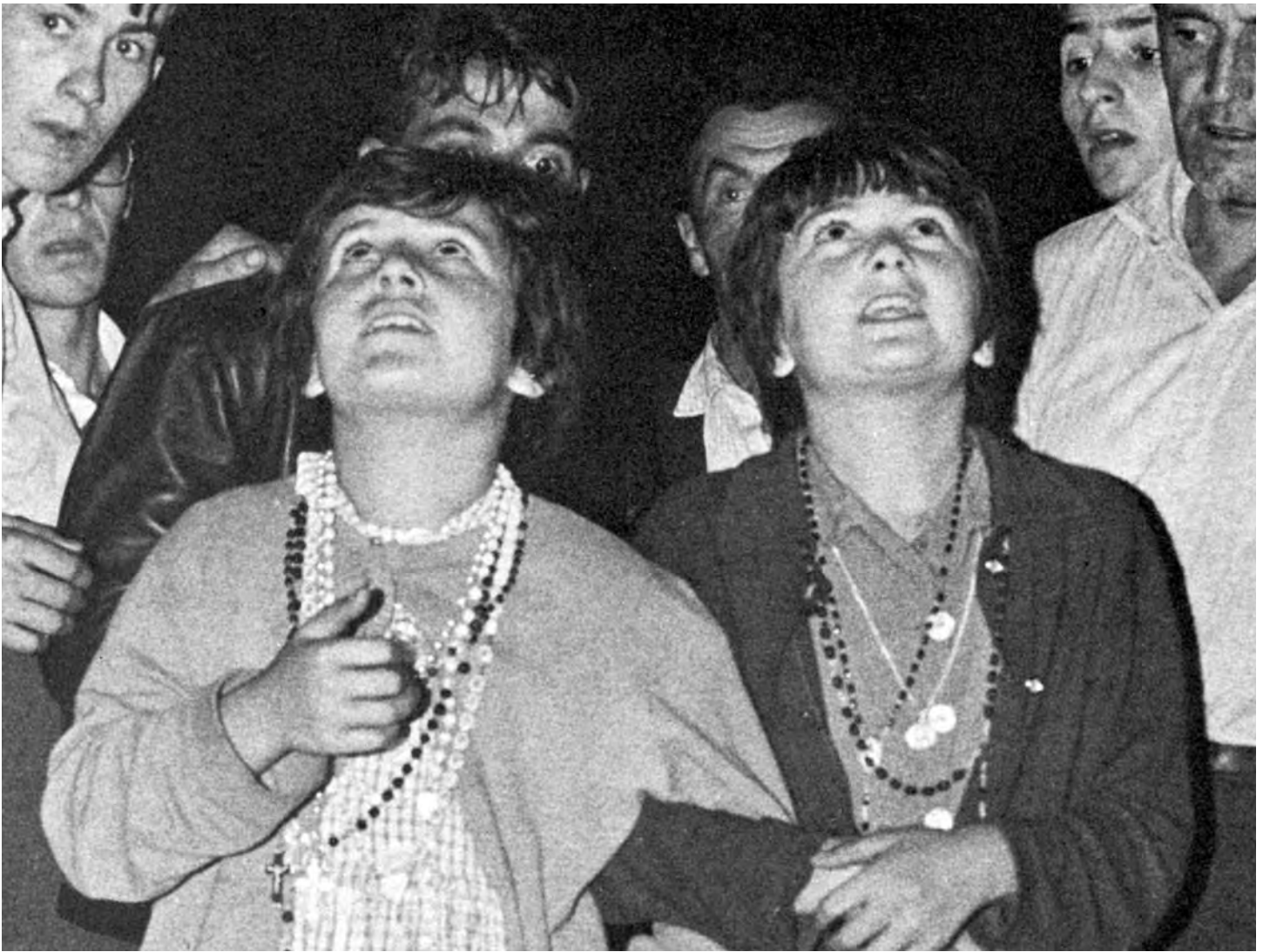
**And he said to me, *Don't you laugh. This is not a laughing matter!***

**And that day they didn't do anything more to me.**

We do not know at which time this first session of Conchita's treatment ended, but it must have taken place on the evening that she arrived.

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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.



**The girls in Garabandal saw the Virgin at the same time that Conchita was seeing her in Santander**

But how Father Odriozola and Dr. 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 then to the people, and the chief of the Civil Guard<sup>(55)</sup> was able to determine soon

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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

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.

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**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!*

**The next day they took me to the doctors<sup>(56)</sup> to see if I was ill.**

**They took me to one whose name was Morales and several others.**

**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 those strange ideas would leave her head.*

The attitude and the words of the consulting doctors impressed themselves on Aniceta's mind.

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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 Cardeñoso, 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.

**Then my mother, as she was so convinced that there was nothing wrong (with me) because everything that the doctors told her, left me (in Santander) and went away.**



**The supernatural things happening to her only daughter caused Aniceta many worries.**

*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.<sup>(57)</sup>**

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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.

We can imagine the dazzling and disturbing effect of **which up to then I had never seen**, or even imagined and would cause in the young girl reared in the 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, semi-nude bathers, by the booths at the fair<sup>(58)</sup> 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.**<sup>(59)</sup>

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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 holy day 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.

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 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,<sup>(60)</sup> 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

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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.



**"I was going to the beach. But now I have confessed."**

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 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.<sup>(61)</sup>

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

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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.

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.*

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.»*



**“The strangest phenomenon resulted in her speech.”**



**Grandmother’s house with balcony**

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;<sup>(62)</sup> from there they could be seen by visitors.

The time came when impatience from 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

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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.

were really admirable (as we know they always were during the ecstasies), but Father 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.<sup>(63)</sup>

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 Marías, either by the rosary or with their fingers.

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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.

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 Marías!*

«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.»

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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 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.<sup>(64)</sup>

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 serious*<sup>(65)</sup> *when we asked for a miracle*», they said later.

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<sup>(66)</sup> there were ecstasies

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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 reality 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.





“Holy Mary, Mother of God, *and Our Mother*”

near the Pines at three different times: 10:45 a.m., 12:15 p.m. and 5:40 p.m.

During one of these, at noon, the hour of the Angelus, the girls were heard clearly to pray the Ave María with a charming modification and addition: “Holy Mary, Mother of God, *and our Mother*, pray for us.”<sup>(67)</sup> 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.<sup>(68)</sup>

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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.

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 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 Valle<sup>(69)</sup> who intervened to repatriate her who could be considered in some respects as kidnapped in Santander<sup>(70)</sup> — 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.<sup>(71)</sup>

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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 be *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 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

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 señorita. 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.<sup>(72)</sup> 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.*

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?*

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that **the wandering of desire 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.

—*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 González, 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*.<sup>(73)</sup> 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.



Maximina, to whom we owe this report of what happened at Santander, thinks Conchita signed a blank paper.

The thing went well with regard to the wishes of the Commission, or at least of one of the commissioners. The 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.*

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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!

—*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?*

—*The Bishop.*

That was who he actually was. After the greetings and introductions he ordered them to be seated; he adjusted his insignia 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.*<sup>(74)</sup>

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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.»*



**“To be a señorita . . .**



... or to remain a shepherdess?"

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,<sup>(75)</sup> and I talked to him.**

**They all acted very nice to me, after all this.**

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 every proceeding to seriously interrogate the

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75. Bishop Doroteo Fernández was not bishop of Santander but Apostolic Administrator of the diocese, after the death of Bishop José Eguino Trecu.

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.<sup>(76)</sup>

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 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.<sup>(77)</sup>

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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.

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.

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 Cardeñoso, 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.

**"I told him that I was not seeing the Virgin; but that others were, it seemed to me. And that the message seemed to me to be true."**





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**“But As Many  
As Received Him”**



**F**rom 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 is also **a sign that shall be contradicted.** Many save themselves and are saved in her. Many ruin themselves and are ruined 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, 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. Was trouble feared? No. It was simply that the Director General of Security<sup>(1)</sup> 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 a *corro de aluche*,<sup>(2)</sup> 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.

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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 the 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.»

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.

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 into words, even when giving the best possible description.

It was clearly seen that they were in 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 noticed the time; but nearby I saw a priest—later I learned that he was the priest from Aguilar<sup>(3)</sup> 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

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3. A city famous for pastry in the north of the province of Palencia on the left bank of the Pisuerga River.

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!

We were all very frightened, fearing that something serious might have happened. The mother of one of the girls<sup>(4)</sup>—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 with 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 a while, as if coming out of a wonderful sleep, the girls returned to themselves, and became again so natural, fresh, smiling.»<sup>(5)</sup>

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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 through Mary.*

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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 happened: 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 (Loli) 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)



“The girls fell on the ground in ecstasy.”

In the chapel would be new communications.<sup>(6)</sup>

## 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.**

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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

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?*<sup>(7)</sup>

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

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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.»

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*.



**“The Virgin’s voice has been heard on a tape recorder.”**

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 the 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 Doroteo<sup>(8)</sup> and he told me . . .*

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?***

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8. It was not remarkable that Father Victor would speak on familiar terms with the Apostolic Administrator. Bishop Doroteo Fernández, who came from the diocese of León and for years had close relationships with many priests in that city.

**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, 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, Mari 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<sup>(9)</sup> let them hear some of the things recorded on the tape; among 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. Mari 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*

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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 Hospital 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.

*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.<sup>(10)</sup>

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.<sup>(11)</sup> And once again everyone 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

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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 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.

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 cannot be taken lightly since there are twelve signed witnesses to it.<sup>(12)</sup>

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 so ordinarily 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 awhile 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?*

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

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12. In his book, Sanchez-Ventura gives the name, age and address of seven of these.

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 and Aniceta

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.<sup>(13)</sup>*

*—Oh heavens—exclaimed Aniceta—and if it takes you over a steep cliff?*

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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.



**“We would come to doubt everything. And almost everyone would come to doubt.”**

**—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 then could have possibly imagined, and which 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 face*<sup>(14)</sup> contact with heaven. The mysterious veil was not pulled completely away from them.

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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)



**"I see her, surrounded with great light."**





**“One can never touch either the Virgin or the Infant.”**

Plácido Ruíloba, a businessman from Santander, one of the witnesses who has seen many things in Garabandal, recalls those times in 1961:

**«One day I asked Mari 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 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.»<sup>(15)</sup>

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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

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.**

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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.»**



“the sensation that we surely have her there—in front of our hand.”

—But don't you hold Him in your arms?

—How can this be?

—Yes, we hold Him in them, and because of that we are not able to bring our arms more than a certain closeness to our chest.

—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.»

—Is He heavy?

—Not at all.

—And when you kiss the Virgin, do you feel the freshness and the softness of her face?

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Moreover, we know that when the children offered the Infant pebbles or caramels that they had saved for Him, both the pebbles and the caramels were found afterwards lying on the ground.<sup>(16)</sup>

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.*

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## Behind the Mystery, Our Lady

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16. Material taken from *Star on the Mountain*.

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 approved 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 pierced with seven swords, holding in her hands a cloth to collect her tears.

*Why does she weep?*

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 innumerable sinful human beings. After being the sorrowful mother at the foot of the cross, she remains the suffering mother who fears losing 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 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 the victory from Satan, and gain the triumph that Jesus wants to grant her."

*(Star on the Mountain)*

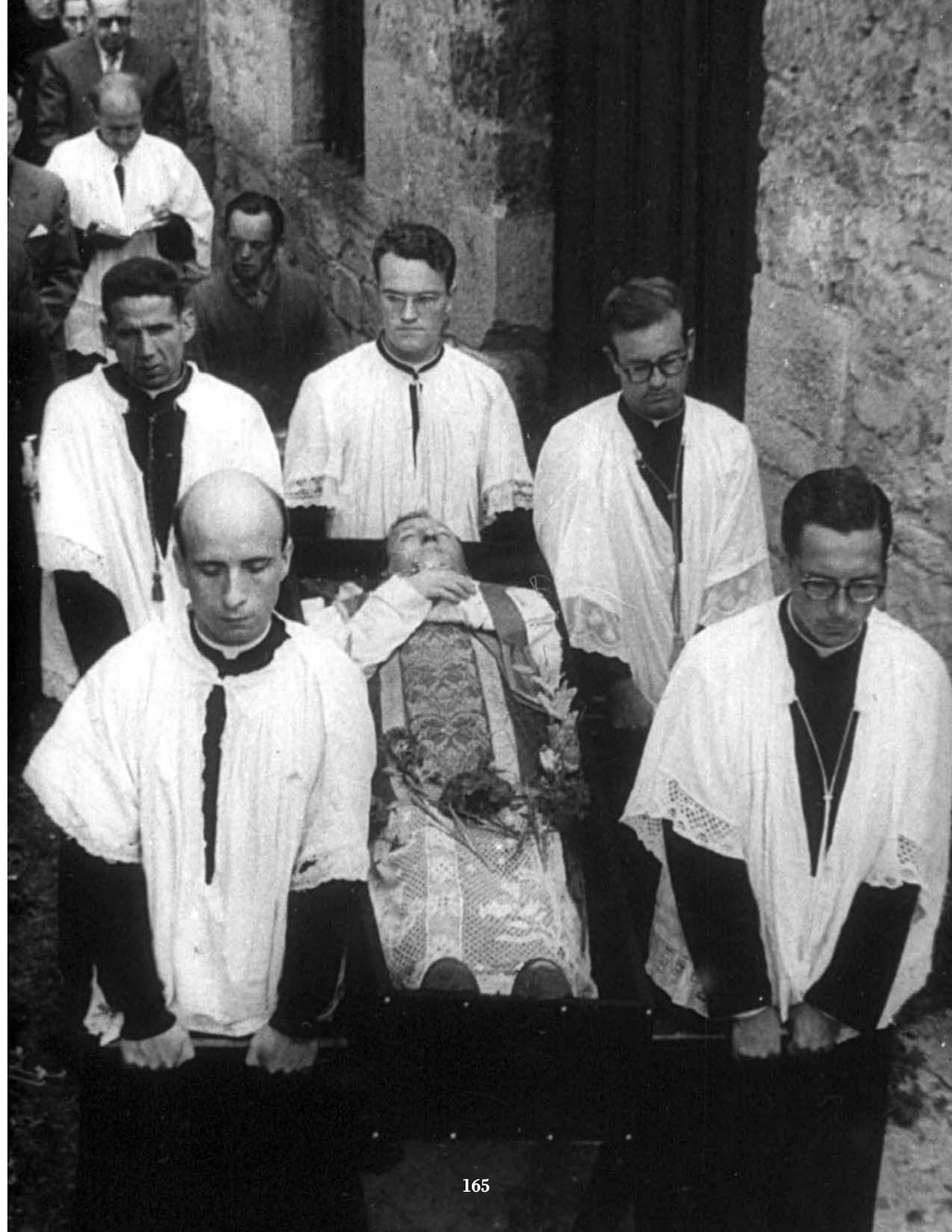
**Yes it is she, the mother concerned for her children,  
who is beyond the mist and mystery of Garabandal.**



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# 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 pretension 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, 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 actual story of what had happened on the preceding two days: how the children (in their ecstasy at the Pines on July 27th at nine o'clock on Thursday evening) had learned from the lips of the Virgin all that was happening to their companion 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. *There should be an ecstasy at seven o'clock 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, Father Ramón meandered around 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 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 priest had already received. Certainly this was an



**The Calleja—symbol of the Virgin's call to penance**

intriguing mystery to be carefully examined.<sup>(1)</sup>

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 to 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 follow closely

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1. Several days after what we are relating here, the famous bullfighter Alvaro Domencq, 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 Castellian 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. Domencq 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.)

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 priest tried to hide himself as much as he could to escape from glances that were not overly benevolent.

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 preceded 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.

They all went up to the Pines and there the children unaffectedly pointed out the places where the various groups should situate themselves.<sup>(2)</sup>

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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

It appeared that the Virgin had told the children that the people could see, but should not hear<sup>(3)</sup>. 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.



Loli with sister Sari

The ecstasy and the apparition began. The nearest spectators were able to notice that the faces of

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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.



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.*<sup>(4)</sup>



**Jacinta on right; her sister Mari Carmen at left**

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.

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.<sup>(5)</sup>

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4. Distressing things that were terrifying and painful.

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

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 María of the third mystery, the two children stopped at *The Lord is with . . .* without pronouncing the next word.

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*

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*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.»*

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 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 nevertheless, *that one of the two children would return to consciousness while the other remained in ecstasy.*<sup>(6)</sup>

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?*

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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 at the same time.



“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 lightening fast!*

My brother responded: *Did something happen to you?*

Yes, I answered him. *I'll tell you about it later.*<sup>(7)</sup>

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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!*

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—*Yes, nuns, I answered, not understanding immediately.*

—*That's the Virgin!* He shouted out very excited.

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 Valentín 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 Scared 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.

**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 skepticism, 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.»<sup>(8)</sup>

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Thus on the 29th of July, 1961, two brothers, <sup>(9)</sup> both priests, both religious, initially skeptics in their first impressions, would enter into the history of Garabandal where they were to play a major role in the unfolding and development of that history.

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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) 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.

## 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 *every-one 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.

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



**On August 3rd, the first ecstatic falls occurred.**

**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.»**

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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 way 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 he 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, heavenly music was heard that lulled those hearing it and stirred up devotion as the girls were heard 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 cadence of the first. It was evident that the girls in ecstasy were before something or someone that transformed them.<sup>(10)</sup>

On August 7th, a Monday, there were more ecstasies. For example, one occurred at 2:00 in the afternoon to all four girls together.<sup>(11)</sup> 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.

## Spectacular 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 Palencia. 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,

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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)

Piedras Luengas, Polaciones and Tudanca.

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, very happy to see that Father Luis María had come, 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.<sup>(12)</sup> *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.»<sup>(13)</sup>

«The Mass that Father celebrated»—Rafael Fontaneda assures us—«was exceptionally said. All those present were impressed.»

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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.

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12. Son and Nephew of Rafael y don Antiano Fontaneda Ibañez, 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.



The sanctuary at the time that Father Luis said his last Mass

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 suspicion 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.»<sup>(14)</sup>

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There was nothing else new on that morning; but

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14. Sánchez-Ventura, page 115. (Spanish edition)

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.»

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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.»<sup>(15)</sup> Obviously he felt the presence of

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15. On the following day at Reinoso 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.*

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 Marín.

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 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)

Naturally 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 Juan<sup>(17)</sup> told priests not to come. Why did he do that?»*

Father Luis was writing down the incidents of

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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.



“One is a Jesuit, and he said mass very well.”

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 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!**





**“Here is where the chapel will be built.”**

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 guiaste!* 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.

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*



“We heard him shout the word *Miracle!*”

*here?*»<sup>(18)</sup> 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:

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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 the 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.*

«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!*»<sup>(19)</sup>

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Not only were the spectators able to observe Father Luis' trance; the girls, swept away from the normal world of the senses, saw him also. This was the first and only time that any 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!***

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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.

**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.<sup>(20)</sup>**

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 whom we will see is still a mystery . . . The fact that Fr. Luis was not able to survive after his ecstasy at the Pines might make us recall 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.

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.*»



**“The Virgin was looking at him.”**

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 to 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!*»



**Father Luis (on right) with mother and his two priest brothers**

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:

**The people said that we prayed a Credo at the Pines.**

**That day was the first in which the Virgin taught us to pray.<sup>(21)</sup>**

**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.**

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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.



**“The Virgin said the prayer ahead of her in order to teach her to pray.”**

**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?*<sup>(22)</sup>**

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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.

This was heard by several people who were close to her: among them were Fr. Luis María Andreu, a seminarian, and Fr. Royo Marín.

## 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;*<sup>(23)</sup> *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:

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23. A few years previously he had published an extensive and very documented *Theology of Christian Perfection* which had great successes in the latin-speaking countries.



**Father Luis with his mother and youngest brother on the day of his first Mass.**

*«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 the one used for arrival, longer but better: through Torrelavega and Reinosa. Continuing the description of Raphael Fontaneda:

«In Cossío 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 Mari 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 Marín 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 Cossío 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.<sup>(24)</sup> 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

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24. An important industrial village in the Cantabrian Mountains to the southwest of Santander.

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.<sup>(25)</sup>

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 supernatural life. We should learn to act toward the Virgin as the children do. They have given us an example.*<sup>(26)</sup> *I can't have the least doubt about the truth of their visions . . . Why has the most Holy Virgin chosen us! . . . TODAY 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**

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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 most of the other people gathered around him and asked him questions . . .

After awhile the trip was begun again with the priest'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.

26. The girls' relationship 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 relationship a strong reason for coming to their negative position. How could this be with such *imbecile and puerile conversations!*

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 doctor<sup>(27)</sup> 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 Marín<sup>(28)</sup> also arrived in Reinosa and he accompanied and consoled us. And toward the middle of the morning Fr. Ramón María Andreu presented himself.»

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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

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27. Dr. Vicente González. The hospital to which they brought the priest was the Clínica 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.



**“They hold their eyes wide open but those eyes are dead to all sensorial stimulation.”**

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 affects 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.»<sup>(29)</sup>**

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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, preaching 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.»**





“He died of joy!”

## 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 did not 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.»

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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,



Father Luis — a priest forever

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 sign of a martyr, as he sealed the truth of his testimony with the laying down of his life.<sup>(30)</sup>

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*

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30. *Martyr* is a word of Green 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.

*sojourn turns into dust, an eternal dwelling awaits us in the heavens.*

## Beyond the Twilight

In the sight of the unwise,<sup>(31)</sup> 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.

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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)



**“Father Luis’ funeral rites were completed in Oña.”**

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 Luís*. The noble Spanish soil fell over the poor coffin<sup>(32)</sup> of a poor religious who 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 . . .

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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 (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.

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 . . .<sup>(33)</sup> 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.*

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*

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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 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.*

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.



**“The chalice, which should have been held in his hands, had been replaced by a crucifix.”**



“After the death of Father Luis, the Virgin told us that we were going to speak with him.”

Concerning the first vision on August 14th,<sup>(34)</sup> 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 through 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

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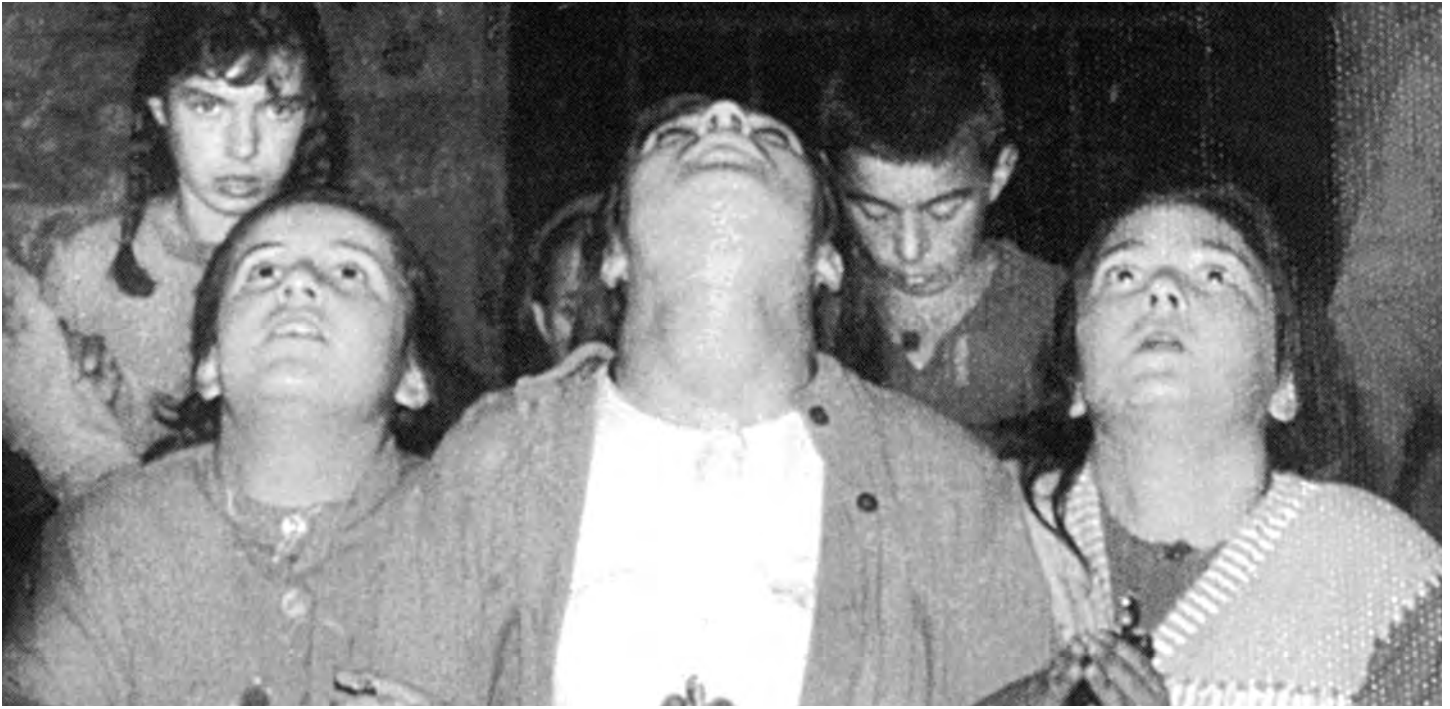
34. «On the 14th of August Father Andreu came another time; he was with the girls almost all day and during the night up until 3 o'clock. Also in the village on that day were Alberto Martín Artajo (former Minister of Foreign Affairs), Father Lucio Rodrigo (a Jesuit professor in Comillas), and many people.» (Father Valentín's notes)

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!*»

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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 to him.**



“He called to us one after the other. But we didn’t see him; we only heard his voice.”

**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.**

**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.***<sup>(35)</sup>

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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

**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.**

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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 was obvious.»

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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.»

**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.**



**Father Luis and brother Ramón**

**And he taught us words in French, and even to pray in Greek.**

**He taught us words in German and in English, too.**

**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**



**“in foreign languages”**

**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.»**

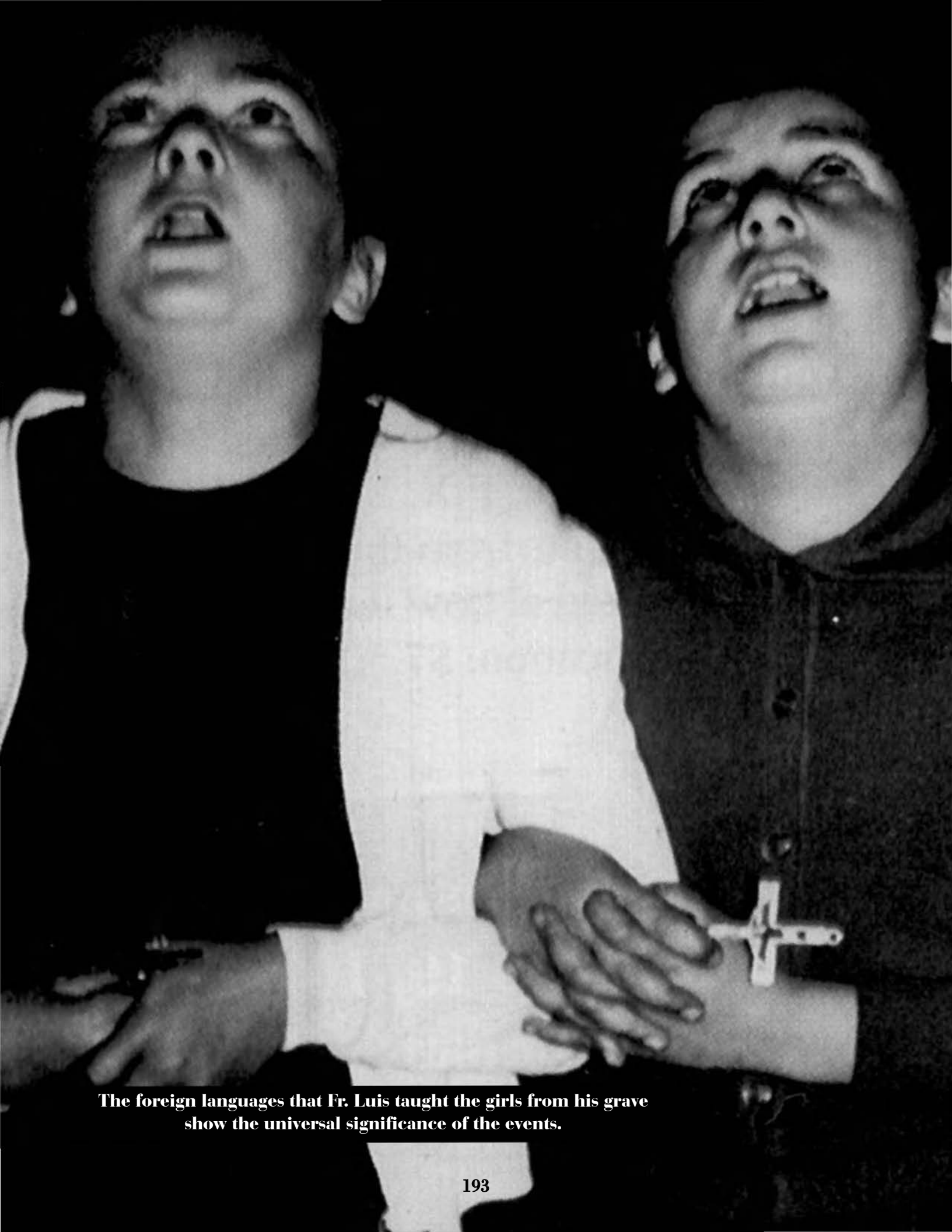
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Some have expressed the opinion that these words and sentences in foreign languages seem to be a game, rather pointless, and even a little too ridiculous to be admitted as proceeding from God. With due respect to their opinion, this observation can 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.





**The foreign languages that Fr. Luis taught the girls from his grave show the universal significance of the events.**

At times I have asked myself whether these foreign tongues in Garabandal might not be connected with the universal dimensions 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 María, the foremost Marian prayer, were pronounced 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.

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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.

Besides the most amazing thing was what Conchita wrote Father Ramón in a letter on the second of August, 1964: (*partial copy of letter on next column*)

«On July 18th (the village feastday of San Sebastián de Garabandal) I had a locution,<sup>(36)</sup> 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**.»

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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.



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 of the Garabandal devotées and rejoice their enemies.

And now we continue to hope . . . for certainly a proper explanation will come with time. It appears that this is a failure of one of Conchita's prophecies. It would be good therefore to carefully question her concerning this *prophecy*, for some small detail that might bring great light on this matter. But this *failure* of a prophecy does not destroy—far from that—the overwhelming mass of evidence that shows decisively that in few other places has the admirable *Hand of God* acted as at Garabandal.

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.



**“On the day after the miracle your brother will be taken out of his tomb,  
and his body will be found *INCORRUPT*.”**

#### Publishers Comment

Fr. Luis' tomb has been opened and his supposed remains transferred to Loyola. Those who believe Mary's words will await the day after the Miracle at Garabandal when a tomb will be found and opened to reveal Fr. Luis' incorrupt body.



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# 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 cannot 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: *Sí, Señor, sí; 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.<sup>(1)</sup>

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.

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

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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.)



**Dr Ortiz checking Conchita's pulse during a rapture**

could use for their negative attitude of rejection.<sup>(2)</sup>

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.

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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 . . .*»

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 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 been easily 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.»<sup>(3)</sup>

## Unplanned Vigils

The *vigils*,<sup>(4)</sup> 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.

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

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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 Clínica de la Concepción (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 beside 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 place, spend the time in watching, reading from the bible, religious instructions, hymns, prayers, etc . . .

—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 read — «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.*



It lasted almost two and a half hours  
And all this time they were marching . . .



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.*

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 . . .*<sup>(5)</sup>

They also sang the Christmas hymn *Noche de paz*, and several *mañanitas*.<sup>(6)</sup> Every time that they sang a verse, they laughed and said, *How fast we learned it!*

At one time, the three separated from one another, 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 flying 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.»

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The short resumé 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?

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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 *las Mañanitas* Fr. Ramon is referring to a Spanish song that starts:

*These are the mañanitas  
sung by King David . . .*

The entire liturgy of the Assumption 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.<sup>(7)</sup>

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:

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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.



“She told us the same thing as on the previous day: *Recite the rosary.*”

As she had said, she came.

And she told us the same thing as on the previous day: *Recite the rosary.*

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 the 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.<sup>(8)</sup>

And that night we played *Los Tios*<sup>(9)</sup> with the Virgin.

Two of us hid, and the other one searched for us.

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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*.

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 understand easily 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.** (Isaiah 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)

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 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? <sup>(10)</sup> 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.*»

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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.*»

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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.*<sup>(11)</sup>

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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!* <sup>(12)</sup> *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.*»<sup>(13)</sup>

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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!*<sup>(14)</sup> *Oh, I understand!*»

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(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 has rung . . . He is with us? . . . Next to whom? . . . We will ask him later to see if that's right.*»

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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*

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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 from this one.



The visionaries spoke in rapture to the dead priest.

*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 was Dominus Vobispum, as Fr. Valentin says . . . Oh! You! How well you say it! . . . Your brother has taught us a song.»*

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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?»*

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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.<sup>(15)</sup>*

*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!<sup>(16)</sup>*

*Your brother has told us that if you want to take him away, that you could take him away, as you . . .»*

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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.

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.*<sup>(17)</sup>

*When will you return? . . . Monday? . . . Why not Thursday?<sup>(18)</sup> . . . Until Monday is going to seem a year to us.»*

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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

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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.

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.

the other three according to the formula used by the Andreu brothers.<sup>(19)</sup>

## 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.**<sup>(20)</sup>

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.**



**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.**

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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.



“She said to us, *Don't be afraid.*”

**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. <sup>(21)</sup>**

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?

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21. It is no surprise that the girl remembers the exact beginning of the marvelous gift Our Lady's kiss . . . After that time the spectators knew when the end of the ecstasy would take place — then 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.

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.

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, <sup>(22)</sup> 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

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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*.



"If it could be known how she loves us, we would have no other solution but to love her very much too."

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 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





**“They heard that strange voice for the first time . . . a hiss or a roar that cries, *Come . . . Come . . . Come . . .*”**

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 . . .”*»

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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.  
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 apocalyptic <sup>(23)</sup> 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.<sup>(24)</sup>

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, with her hands joined on her chest and kneeling — she leaped<sup>(25)</sup> 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.»

23. *Apocalypse* — Revelations — 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!*

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.



“She contemplated the Holy Family.”

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 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, lying 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.<sup>(26)</sup> And she was like this at the time that she contemplated the HOLY FAMILY as if in a picture.

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26. Loli, truly transfigured, was on her knees like this for a

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 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.<sup>(27)</sup>

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while imploring, «*Mercy.*» Then she recited an act of contrition with extraordinary fervor, and then a *Salve* as mentioned in the text.

27. This song of the three year old infant is full of meaning.

It was 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.

Finally Jacinta and Loli departed for Loli's house. And very swiftly, without our being able to follow, they went up 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.»

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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 going inside, they made several trips <sup>(28)</sup> around it, counting out the Hail Marys of the rosary. The crowd around them had become very close together . . .

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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.

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.<sup>(29)</sup> 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.*» <sup>(30)</sup>

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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

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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.»

language that we use is made to express realities and experiences of this world, not of the world above.

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.**»

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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.



“Conchita always said that the Vision made them recite the rosary very often.

As unusual background music in the tape recordings, underneath the voices of the girls is heard muffled sounds made by the footsteps of the people accompanying them during their mystical marches through the village.

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 footsteps—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,



Celestial music accompanied Jacinta.

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.*»

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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!*»

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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.<sup>(31)</sup>

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 . . .*»

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31. The archives of the monastery have the name of this abbot listed as beginning in the year 928.

## 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 (años 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 as an aid to 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:

«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 . . . »

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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 walking 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 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.»

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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 sometimes 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 luminance 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.»

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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.»

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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.*»

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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.*»<sup>(32)</sup>

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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 that 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*!

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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.

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, which wasn't difficult for everything was said in a loud voice, and nothing seemed to be secret.»<sup>(33)</sup>

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.»*

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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

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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 delivered in the way that Fr. de la Riva described to us.



**“If this comes from God, it will make its own way.”**

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 praetorium 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.

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 occupy later 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 through a priest from Madrid — Father 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 marquese 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 sought 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 call <sup>(35)</sup> 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.

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

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35. 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.

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 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.»

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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 the 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 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 an 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 sent 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.»

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When the registered letter of Fr. José Ramón arrived at the chancery in Santander, Bishop Fernández 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 Sebastián de Garabandal, and with the desire to instruct the faithful in the correct interpretation of these events, we have felt ourselves obligated to study these things closely 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.*

*Considering all this, and withholding a final judgment on the things that may happen in the future, we have 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.



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# 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 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 the Sacred Scripture would be very difficult for most people to understand, and consequently the march of history would fail to make 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 complementary chapters of the last times.

Did not official revelation close with the death of the last apostle, 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; through Himself, or through others; through

His *prophets*, through His own Son,<sup>(1)</sup> through 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 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 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.<sup>(2)</sup> And

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1. Beginning of the epistle to the Hebrews.

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.

what peace, consolation of soul,<sup>(3)</sup> and security went out toward the countless participants of those almost daily ecstasies that some considered 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,

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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.»

*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 short 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 short 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 Virgin 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 short man; and she gave me the cross to kiss, and she gave it to the little man to kiss . . .*



**Peace came to tormented consciences as the seer presented the cross to be kissed.**

— *Listen, Listen.* Fr. Andreu interrupted him. *Let me know who that short 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 *short 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 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



**The visionary answered unspoken questions by making the sign of the cross with the crucifix.**

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 through 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 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.



Loli in front of her home in 1961 —an instrument chosen by the Virgin to convey messages both for individuals and for the world.

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,<sup>(4)</sup> 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.<sup>(5)</sup> 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 crucifix<sup>(6)</sup> for everyone to kiss. And when all those in the kitchen had finished kissing it, she put her hand without difficulty through

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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 from 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, making us aware of them by association of ideas and reflections, recalling to mind and maintaining certain physiological 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.*

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.

After those final two kisses, the girl withdrew her hand from the window, and minutes later the ecstasy ended.<sup>(7)</sup>

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

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7. Fr. Valentín's journal shows that this episode took place on the night of September 17th.



Conchita's house with the grated window through which she offered the Virgin's kiss to repentant sinners outside

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 heart full 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 salutary 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.

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 Peman<sup>(8)</sup> 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 known, 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,<sup>(9)</sup> to whom it happened; he remembers it as if it were still taking place.

As on almost all 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 through 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

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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 troops at Cadiz.

9. See Chapter II, footnote 9.

returning. It did not take 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.** (1 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 that 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,





“Never have they been surprised in the least lack of purity.”

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 Ramón García de la Riva,  
*Memorias de mis subidas a Garabandal*)

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 ecstasies<sup>(10)</sup> the three girls went to

10. This was an ecstasy during the middle of the night, between the 9th and 10th of September.

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,<sup>(11)</sup> 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 or 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)

11. This refers to Conchita, according to Fr. Valentín's notes.

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 . . .**

**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.<sup>(12)</sup> None of those who came

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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 María at each house. Sometimes they went up the stairs if it was necessary.»

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.*

## From the Water of Garabandal to the Water 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.

Through 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.<sup>(13)</sup> The young woman from Burgos was slightly older, and was called Ascensión 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

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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*.

13. For special reasons, Muriel Catherine's last name will not be mentioned.

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.

Ascensión 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. Ascensión 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 Ascensión 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 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 Ascensión 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. Ascensión 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.»

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Catherine responded well, since she was a good person; and even had a little sentiment in her first experiences, in her first prayers. Ascensión remembers them 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 Ascensión 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 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.»

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The priest's reaction and words had an effect on the simple people of San Sebastián. Ascensión 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 —



Jacinta in her home where the miraculous religious experience took place

she would receive an *asperges* 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:

*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.*



“With this rosary she learned to pray . . .”

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.»

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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 Ascensión 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 whoever 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 . . .

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. »

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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 Ascensión 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 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 an 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.»

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Ascensión 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 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: María 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



Muriel Catherine receives her First Communion

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 well, I found an old and venerable 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

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 choose 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 parents 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





“Nothing extraordinary in them; they were similar to the other girls.”

such suppositions —*tremendous pressures*— in a document more or less *official*.<sup>(14)</sup>

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 Julío Porro Cardenoso, canon of Tarragona, described his first visit to the

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14. «Nota» of March 17th, 1967 to the news media.

celebrated village.<sup>(15)</sup>

«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.<sup>(16)</sup> About 5 o'clock in the afternoon the girls returned to their homes, still not having eaten. Meanwhile, my good friend Father Valentín, the pastor of the place, had informed me in detail of all the most spectacular things. The rumble of thunder broke the almost

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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, Paseo Fernando et Catolico, 39, 7, Zaragoza)

The notes that I am using here were taken from his first book, *God in the Shadows*.

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 Peña Sagra Mountains. In the village there was great veneration for 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 slopes of the mountains.

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.»

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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.»

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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.»

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It was probably during this ecstasy<sup>(17)</sup> 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 urges the Spanish people for amending their lives?»*

**Answer: That they confess and receive Communion.**

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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.



“Loli fell slowly as though someone were lowering her to the ground.”



**“Confess and receive Communion.”**



“They fight among themselves.”

*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?*»<sup>(18)</sup>

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

better before the proofs of the daytime, of which there are a great number. Would their attitude have been any different if 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**

18. The question took place in an ecstasy on September 8th.

**the mass of spectators had left.»**

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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,<sup>(19)</sup> 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.<sup>(20)</sup>

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 prayer for sinners.<sup>(21)</sup>

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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 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

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.<sup>(22)</sup>

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,**

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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.

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)

Your mighty word leapt down from heaven,  
from Your royal throne.

(18: 14-15)

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 Gallardo; 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*



“The ecstasies started about five in the afternoon, and lasted well into the night.”



*“hide and seek with the Vision.”*

*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.*<sup>(23)</sup>

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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)*

Jacinta went from house to house, and made the Sign

I believe it was on this day that I saw the girls obviously play *hide and seek* with the Vision,

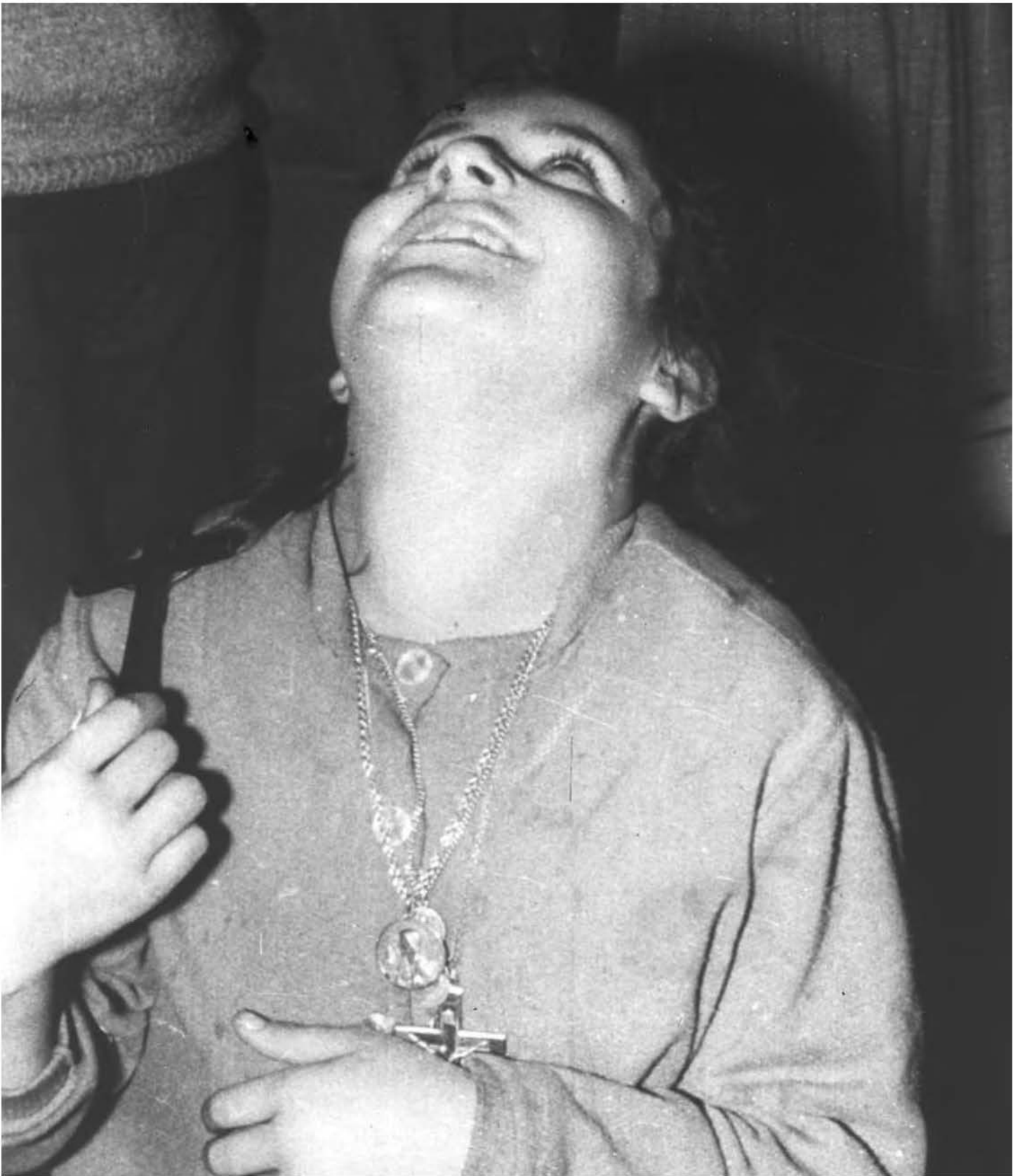
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of the Cross on the beds of the sick . . . She turned toward me to meet me on the street, and made the Sign of the Cross on me . . . At 6:30 she passed by praying the rosary and made a Sign of the Cross on the cars that had come up to the village.»

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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.»



“shouts of joy”

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.»

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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 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 traveled through the village in ecstasy 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 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 a 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.



“Aniceta . . . struck by Conchita’s voice . . . a strange force that came out of Conchita.”



**Loli returns a wedding ring to its owner on instructions from the Vision.**

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.»<sup>(24)</sup>

On that 12th of September, in a more private ecstasy following the one that María Herrero has just described, some interesting things occurred in Conchita's house, I say, *in Conchita's house*, since

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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 Cataluña 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 all of us got on our knees on the hard ground; we prayed one of the 25 rosaries that we recited that day.»

the girl herself was not there . . . Father José Ramón García de la Riva describes it to us in his *Memorias*:<sup>(25)</sup>

«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.

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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.

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 the name of her husband, which the woman had absolutely not revealed to anyone.»

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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) . . . »

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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 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.<sup>(26)</sup>

—*Have you ever seen her clothed in the Carmelite dress?*

—She always comes clothed in white and with a dark blue cloak. Only on the feastday of Mount Carmel, July 16, 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 lightening 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.»**

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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 GREATEST OF THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN"**

# 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) 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 prophesied 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.

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. Through 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; 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 Prophecy!  
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.**



**The trail of prayer and penance that ascended up to Garabandal.**

**T**HE ABSOLUTE EXTREME IN GRATITUDE IS DUE  
THE ONE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENG-  
LISH PUBLICATION OF FATHER EUSEBIO GARCÍA DE  
PESQUERA'S HISTORY OF THE GARABANDAL APPAR-  
ITIONS. FROM THE START OF TRANSLATION TO THE  
FINAL PLATE, EVERYTHING WAS ENTRUSTED TO HIS  
STRENGTH AND GUIDANCE. THIS WORK IS A RESULT  
OF THE POWERFUL INTERCESSION OF THE MAN GOD  
MADE WORTHY TO BE THE SPOUSE OF THE VIRGIN  
MARY AND THE FOSTER FATHER OF GOD.



Walter Timothy Co 1979

