

**She
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book three



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

Appreciation

The publication of these books is not due to the efforts of the publishers, but rather to the prayers of many people dedicated to the Virgin Mary who have performed penance and prayed for the promulgation of her message.

It is due also to St. Joseph, who has provided the things necessary for publication.

Publishers Note

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

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

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

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

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transcription.....Carole Virgils
typesetting.....Ester Persanyi
proofing.....Elizabeth Sheridan
photography.....George Maysey
plates.....Bill Mironik
art.....Walter Lo
graphic design.....Cory Vitale
printing.....Crane-Howard Litho

EUSEBIO GARCIA DE PESQUERA O.F.M.

**SHE WENT
IN HASTE
TO THE
MOUNTAIN**

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY GERARD SULL & OTTO MILLER

**THE
EVENTS**

OF

GARABANDAL

Book Three



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



Santander, July 8, 1965

*Eugenio,
Apostolic Bishop,
Administrator of Santander*



Dedicated to

ST. JOSEPH

FOSTER

FATHER

OF

GOD



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Eucharistic Miracle or Sacrilegious Fraud?

About the same time as the feast of Corpus Christi on June 22nd, 1962, began an event that has, more than anything else about Garabandal, aroused discussion and doubt; an event that would be named the *Miracle of the Host*.

Returning to Conchita's diary:

As we had so often insisted that the Virgin and the Angel perform a miracle, on June 22nd,⁽¹⁾ when I was receiving Holy Communion from the Angel, he told me:

***I am going to perform a miracle. Not I: God, through my intercession and yours.*⁽²⁾**

And I said:

And what is it going to be?

And he told me:

When I give you Holy Communion, the Sacred Host will be seen on your tongue.

And I thought it over⁽³⁾ and said:

Surely, when I receive Communion from you, the Host is seen on my tongue!

And he told me that it wasn't so, that the people around me didn't see It; but that on the day when he would perform the miracle, It would be seen.

And I said to him:

***But that's very small!*⁽⁴⁾**

1. We have seen that Fr. Valentín noted on June 22, following the feastday of Corpus Christi: «*There were no apparitions.*» Was Conchita mistaken then as to the date? Or was this an error of the pastor who at times made his notes from what others told him? Conchita's short ecstasy to receive Communion could have occurred unnoticed by everyone or almost everyone since the ecstasies for the Mystical Communion were brief and frequently without witnesses.

2. One of Conchita's maladroito expressions. She should have said *by means of us*. The Angel told her that she and he would serve as instruments for the accomplishment of a prodigy. Conchita has often improperly used the word *intercession*.

3. The girl was very surprised by what she had just heard the Angel say. It had never occurred to her that the Sacred Host, so visible to them during their ecstasies, could remain completely invisible to the spectators.

4. The miracle announced by the Angel seemed very small to Conchita; she doubted that it would make an impression. She used the term *milagruco* which signifies a very small miracle in the idiom of her country.

And he laughed. And that day, after telling me this, he left.

On the following day, as there wasn't a Mass in the village, after reciting a rosary in the Cuadro,⁽⁵⁾ I went to pray a Station at the church.

And before I went inside, the Angel appeared to me, smiling very much, and he spoke to me as usual:

Pray the "I Confess" and consider that you are going to receive God.

And then he gave me Communion.

And he told me to say the "Soul of Christ" with him. And I did it.

When I had made my thanksgiving, I asked the Angel:

And when is the miracle going to be?

And he told me:

The Virgin will tell you that.

And then he left. This apparition was on June 29th.

Conchita, who frequently confuses dates in her diary,⁽⁶⁾ seems to incur here an obvious contradiction. She has just told us that the meeting with the Angel was **on the following day** after June 22nd. For this reason, it would not have been June 29th, but June 23rd, which in that year fell on Saturday. This confusion must have been due to the fact that the following Friday, June 29th (feast of the holy apostles Peter and Paul), was the day on which she learned the date of the *little miracle*.

After the Angel told me that he was going to perform a miracle, I told it to the other girls: Loli, Jacinta, and Mari Cruz.

I told them that the Angel was going to perform a miracle with us.

At night on that date, while asking the Angel when the miracle would be, the Virgin came.

She came smiling very much as usual.

5. Since the preceding winter, on the Virgin's request, the girls had to go every morning to pray the rosary at the *Cuadro*, each one at her own time; the time for Conchita was 8 o'clock in the morning.

6. It should be taken into account that she wrote the diary many months after the episode that she is here relating.



“When is the miracle?”

And I said to her:

The Angel St. Michael told me that through his intercession and mine,⁽⁷⁾ God, Our Lord, was going to perform a miracle.

**She didn't say anything to me and I said,
*When is the miracle?***

And she told me:

On Friday, the 29th,⁽⁸⁾ you will hear a voice that will tell you.

And I said to her:

Whose voice will this be?

7. Here should be repeated what was said in footnote 2.

8. In the original, crossed out and erased, there perhaps could be read 30, rather than 29; but there is no doubt that Friday was the 29th.

And she didn't say anything to me . . .

Friday came, and as the Virgin had told me, I felt a voice while at the Pines which told me:

July 18th would be when the miracle would occur.

The voice that I felt said to me:

The little miracle, as you say.

But let us not go too fast. June 29th, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, has always been held in Spain with great festivities. Falling that year on Friday, as has been indicated, it gave the occasion for a holiday weekend, leaving three days free for vacation, as the people were off work on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. A good occasion for people from the various distant provinces to meet in Garabandal. And actually that is what happened.

An Unforgettable Holiday Weekend

Among the many people who came was a lawyer from Palencia named Luis Navas Carrillo. Not satisfied merely with devoutly living those days, he also made a report of them, which now serves us well for that period of the year 1962:

«After passing through the mountain pass at Piedras Luengas and from there viewing on the left the fantastic panorama of the Picos de Europa mountains, we took the narrow and tortuous highway that went down to the rapids of the Nansa River. And it was well into the afternoon when we came to Cossío. It was June 29th.

We began the ascent to Garabandal. The temperature was pleasant and the sky clear. During the way up, I couldn't put out of my mind the

memory of another day that was very different — the dark and stormy October 18th that I had experienced in the same place. Today the soft mountain breeze purified our lungs and prepared our spirits for the possible beneficial actions of the Virgin Mary.

In the village, we had time to rest about an hour and a half. Afterward, at nightfall, they told us that the girls were walking through one of the streets, already in ecstasy. We easily found them and joined a group of people who were following them toward the Pines. We lost them from view a little beyond the Cuadro since — according to the instructions that had been given by the Most Holy Virgin, as they said — we all were to stay at a distance.⁽⁹⁾ There we were waiting, a little anguished, since some heard, or thought they heard faint

9. It may have been during the ecstasy at the Pines that Conchita heard the voice that was foretold, telling her the date of the *milagru* (little miracle); or it may have been during the day while she was walking alone through the area.



“The girls were walking through one of the streets, already in ecstasy.”

shrieks, that in the silence of the night and darkness had to remind many of the screams on the night of Corpus Christi.

After a while the girls appeared and they came down toward us. And they stayed rather close; sufficiently close so that with illumination from a powerful flashlight we were able to observe how they fell and how they got up off the stony ground. The beams of light from the flashlights that the girls themselves carried, and with which they had gone out of their houses to come to the rendezvous with the Virgin, lent a special charm to the scene. Not far from them, Mari Loli's father and Jacinta's mother could be distinguished slightly in front of the others.

The silence, which seemed a strange echo on that serene and starry night, helped us to meditate.⁽¹⁰⁾

After the ecstasy had ended, the girls showed tears on their faces and serious and sad expressions that contrasted with the joyful countenances that they usually had.

The impressions from that first day tempered my spirit so as to understand better this array of things that were beyond reason and the senses, that only could be comprehended by opening wide the eyes of faith.

June 30th, Saturday

This was the most moving of the three days that I spent at the time in Garabandal.

At the beginning of the evening, we were waiting in Conchita's house. Her mother told her to put on her boots, sensing that the time was drawing near. A little later the girl fell into ecstasy, went out from her home, and drawing with her all the strangers and many from the village, went praying the rosary through the streets and alleys. Some of the decades were recited, others were sung. The voice of the girl in ecstasy, so musical, so full of real, sincere and profound piety, penetrated into us, and immersed us in a sensation of well-being and serenity.

10. The affairs of Garabandal always brought those who were watching them, and who were not too frivolous, to this attitude of respect, silence and meditation.

I had never seen the girls walking backwards;



but I had heard talk about it, and actually with a certain repugnance bordering on ridicule. Now I can testify that *that* by its harmony, by its grace and rhythm, appeared to be a thrilling celestial dance.

On the way, the seer came up to Fidelín's car. She stopped and made the sign of the cross on the



hood and windshield. It occurred to me that perhaps the Virgin wanted to bless and show her approval this way to the only taxi driver who, at the time, was taking the risk of bringing people over those dangerous roads.

Not long afterwards, the visionary went to search for Mari Cruz. The door of her house was locked. Conchita knocked on it forcefully and persistently until it was opened. Then she went up the steep staircase, came to the place where her companion was, and put the crucifix on her lips. It appeared that Conchita didn't forget Mari Cruz even during her vision, asking the Virgin to appear to Mari Cruz with the same frequency as with the others.

Afterward, to my great surprise, she took us to the cemetery, through those solitary and

somber trails. In front of the gate, she stopped for a while and solemnly made the sign of the cross toward the inside, as imparting a blessing upon the graves.⁽¹¹⁾

On returning, she entered the house of her aunt Maximina. And finally came the time for *the race*, which for me was a genuine novelty. Before starting it, she stopped and extended her arms slightly; she went like a wind through the winding path, without touching the walls, the fences, or the stones that were scattered everywhere — without forgetting the low balconies, against which one could hang his head, as happened to me. We couldn't follow her, much less catch up to her.

When she returned, we all went toward the church, and in the churchyard itself a remarkable rosary concluded what had lasted so long and contained so many incidents. There the *Salve* was sung and the *Credo* recited. My attention was certainly attracted when the girl, after *Holy Catholic Church*, clearly added *Apostolic and Roman*. They told me that she only did this when she recited the *Credo* in ecstasy.⁽¹²⁾

Mari Loli had the second vision of that Saturday night. I was there to see the beginning in her home. She went up some almost perpendicular stairs; she began going through different rooms, and right away her father sensed that she was looking for her rubber sandals. He put them near the girl's feet. She had hardly put them on when she fell violently on her knees, and leaned backwards till she struck her head smack against the floor. Her father Ceferino, told Jacinta, who was present, to ask her:⁽¹³⁾

— *What did that smack on your head do to you?*

We all saw the girl in ecstasy open her lips in a slight smile and answer:

— *What smack?*

A little later, Jacinta went into ecstasy too. The two went into the street and began their march toward the Pines while saying the second rosary of the night. On the hilltop they fell on their knees. Afterwards, they went backwards . . . By their attitude they gave the impression that the weight of the world was lying upon them and crushing them.

The descent from the hill, backwards, was amazing. Instead of coming down by the regular straight way, they took a transverse shortcut, without following any trail, after going over an almost vertical cliff of considerable height. It seemed to me that the figure that they were seeing was moving quite gradually, so that they could glide slowly toward the village.

And down below, I don't think there was a street or alley that didn't see the passage of the night rosary procession. Even the young men singing and drinking in a tavern couldn't avoid it, since the girls entered the tavern and gave them the crucifix to kiss; they certainly took on an attitude of complete respect.⁽¹⁴⁾

During these marches back and forth, Mari Loli lost one of her sandals; a little later, she began to retrace her way back, while walking backwards, until her bare foot touched against the lost sandal. Without lowering her head and without using her hands, she put it on her foot.

Seconds later, graciously raising her arms, she began to run at dizzying speed, avoiding all types of obstacles. Suddenly, she stopped beside a stranger of elegant appearance: this was Concepción Zorrilla, a member of the cast of a foreign theatrical company that had performed in Madrid several days previously. This woman,

11. Christians realize that *the dead* are not in the tombs. The dead in the essential part of their being — their soul or their spirit — are in another location. What is in the grave is not the *person* but his remains or dust, which deserve great care, and from which afterward will come the restoration and the life after the resurrection.

12. The *Credo* that is ordinarily said outside the Mass is more brief than this; in speaking of the Church, it only says: *I believe in One Holy Catholic Church*, without the *Apostolic and Roman*. Perhaps the child, inspired from above — and therefore not comprehending the reason — was warning in advance against certain *ecumenical* attitudes that were going to come and which would lead the Church into confusion.

13. As has already been mentioned in the early chapters, the girl in ecstasy was not able to establish communication with anyone except another visionary in the normal state.

14. The young men's attitude is not unexpected. Rather negative toward the practice of religion as all those of that age and environment are inclined, they were furthermore habituated to the things that were happening in their village every day; perhaps also, a little tired of them. How could they be expected to renounce all their leisure time!

before returning to her native Uruguay, had detoured from the route to Paris, desiring to go up to that remote spot on the Spanish map in search of . . .

What she was searching for — certainly an answer to her doubts and worries — she must have found when the girl in ecstasy, with her gaze upwards and without turning her head toward her, held out her arm, giving her the crucifix to kiss. She refused it two times, but had to give in to the sweet persistence of the girl and put her lips on the sacred image, while big tears ran down from her eyes. She herself confessed later that, if she had held back from the crucifix, she had done it only because she considered herself completely unworthy to give it her kiss.

On the day she left, I had the opportunity of taking her photograph with Mari Loli, and I sent it to her so that she could forever remember, in her distant native land, the unforgettable moments of her visit to Garabandal.⁽¹⁵⁾

15. Dr. Puncernau, the neuro-psychiatrist from Barcelona, described his experiences in this case in the pamphlet, *Psychological Phenomena of Garabandal*, but he puts Conchita in the place of Loli:

«In Ceferino's tavern there was a young woman from Uruguay who worked in the *Follies Bergère* of Paris. We soon started up a conversation. She told me that she not only didn't believe in these supposed apparitions, but she didn't believe in anything about religion. She had come to Garabandal simply out of curiosity. After a while I suggested going outside to see what was happening with the visionaries.

We saw them at a distance (being hidden ourselves in the shadows of the house) as they headed toward the little village church, praying the rosary. From our hidden observation point we saw what was happening.

Soon we saw Conchita, in a trance, detach herself from the procession and make her way — walking normally, but with an unusual swiftness — toward us, who were all staying hidden in the shadows, leaning against the wall of the house.

She was carrying a little crucifix in her hand.

I thought, *She has found out that I am a doctor, and now is coming to make something of it. But how could she have seen me?*

But no, she headed toward my companion and put the crucifix very forcefully on her lips so that she kissed it once, twice, and a third time.

The Virgin Mary was for the dancers of the *Follies Bergère* too.

Afterwards Conchita, still in the trance, joined the other girls and continued praying the rosary.

As previously with Conchita's rosary, this one also ended in the courtyard of the church with the singing of a *Salve Regina*.

My curiosity led me to ask why the girls in ecstasy came so often to the church, knowing that for them, in those circumstances, it was always closed. The answer had been given sometime before, through the voice of the girls themselves:

The reason is that the Virgin likes to go near to where Jesus is.»

In days like these, the presence of priests and religious could not be missing. With regard to their presence, Luis Navas says in his report:

«I was greatly pleased to see the deference that the girls held toward priests; it was worthy of St. Teresa of Jesus. There were four priests there in the village on that Saturday, June 30th; and the Virgin had to be happy since, according to the girls: *The Virgin likes priests and people without faith to come.*⁽¹⁶⁾

During Loli's vision in her home, a Passionist Father and a Carmelite Father stayed respectfully on their knees. The girl gently lifted both of them up, making them stand on their feet. On the following day the Passionist Father told me, *I weighed 78 kilos and on top of that, I*

My companion, the ballerina, was weeping unstopably, with deep heartfelt sobs, so inconsolable that I thought she was having an attack. I accompanied her to the wooden benches propped against the outside wall of Ceferino's tavern.

The crowd gathered around. I tried to calm her down.

She was finally able to tell that she had thought in her mind, *"If it is true that the Virgin is appearing, then let one of the girls come to give me a sign."*

— *Hardly had I thought this when Conchita came running toward me to give me the crucifix to kiss. I didn't want to kiss it, and I held her hand back. But with exceptional strength she forced the crucifix against my lips, and I had no other choice but to kiss it once, twice, and a third time — I, the unbeliever, the atheist, who believed in nothing. This shook me intensely.*

We met days later on the train back to Bilbao. And I know, since we wrote each other several times, that she left the *Follies Bergère* and went back to her family in Uruguay.»

16. As in so many other points, Garabandal was coming in advance to warn about the other imminent crisis of doctrine concerning the priesthood. The furious *desacralization*, that soon would show itself in the clergy, could not at that time be foreseen.



Dr. Puncernau with Mari Cruz and Loli at the Pines

used force to make myself stay down; nevertheless, the girl raised me to my feet with the greatest of ease.⁽¹⁷⁾ The Carmelite Father edified me with his humility and silence. He had come that very afternoon from Burgos and he spent almost his entire stay with the people, distributing and investing scapulars. I felt nostalgic, recalling the month of May in my student years at the Instituto de Burgos.»

On Sunday, July 1st, much the same history took place as on the two previous days. Luis Navas tells of it:

«On this day, we had a longer wait. The first apparition, which was Conchita's, began at ten at night. The people had left her home, thinking that nothing would happen. I had the good fortune of going out at the time to seek a paralytic girl, whom I had advised to remain at Conchita's house until the people came to pick

17. Maximina writes about this in her letters to the Pifarré family; but she says Conchita was the one in ecstasy, similar to the misnaming of the visionary in the case of the woman from Uruguay.

her up. There I met Doctor Puncernau from Barcelona.⁽¹⁸⁾ Conchita fell violently on her knees and began the vision. She offered the crucifix to us to kiss; when the doctor's turn came, the girl did something different: with a single movement of her extended arms, she gave it to him three times to kiss.

Before the vision began, I had complained to Conchita that she had never offered me the crucifix. Because of this, I felt a considerable consolation on seeing how she presented it to me, since I well knew that the girls don't act by their own volition in giving the crucifix to kiss or in holding up holy cards and rosaries toward the Vision; they do it according to the directions of the Virgin. This helped me to understand something I had read about Padre

18. This doctor, an eminent neuro-psychiatrist, who practiced and taught in the capital of Cataluña, tenaciously studied the affairs of Garabandal and came to the conclusion, repeatedly expressed by him, that *«from the medical and scientific point of view, I have found no satisfactory physiological or psychological explanation for these events which have produced such extraordinary phenomena.»*

Pio, Many times God makes me forget certain people for whom I had intended expressly to pray, and He presents others to me for whose salvation I should intercede.

The doctor had handed Conchita a letter in order that she might ask the Virgin for the cure of a patient. On the following day, I saw the girl write the answer she had received; later she gave it to the doctor with the request not to open the letter until he was in the presence of the sick person, who was dying of an incurable illness according to what I heard.»

From what Luis Navas described of the second apparition which concerned Loli, this is what seems to have the greatest interest:

«The time for giving the crucifix to kiss was thrilling. Kissing it themselves first, as was their custom; then, giving it first to the Virgin and then to the person . . . When it came to the time for eight persons who had come that day from Cádiz, I was really edified by the reverence and faith with which they kissed the crucifix.

Loli's ecstasy had lasted an hour and twenty minutes. Eighty minutes that seemed to me to be ten! Something very strong must have held my attention to lose the notion of time like this.

After a clear, moonlit night, I awoke to a magnificent dawn. It was the day of departure. I made up my mind once again to keep the resolution made on the previous trip: to recite daily the holy family rosary, remembering in difficult times and lukewarmness the words transmitted from the Virgin by the visionaries: *Hail Marys are the flowers that please her the most.*

With a farewell to the Passionist priest and a great desire to return again, we ended our stay at San Sebastián de Garabandal on Monday, July 2, 1962.»

The News Spreads; Expectation Mounts

Luis Navas Carrillo left Garabandal without

knowing anything of the *little miracle (milagruco)* that the Angel had foretold. But on the same day as his departure, Monday, July 2nd, 1962 — the anniversary of the first apparition of the Virgin — a person came to the village who was going to be the first to know about it, after the girls.

The first person whom I told that the Angel was going to perform a miracle was a priest: Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva.



Fr. de la Riva and *child witnesses*

And on the same day I told it to Mari Cruz, Loli, and Jacinta too.⁽¹⁹⁾

Conchita does not give the date or the circumstances of her communication; we know them, thanks to the *Memorias* of Fr. de la Riva himself:

«On the 2nd of July, 1962, I went up to Garabandal, desiring to spend several days of vacation.

19. According to the text, it would seem that Conchita had revealed the date of the miracle first to Fr. De la Riva, then to her companions. But by what follows and by other information available, one arrives at the conclusion that her companions were the first ones notified; afterwards, by mutual agreement, the girls informed Fr. de la Riva.



Visionaries in front of *Virgin's Pine*

During the course of the afternoon, I was with the young visionaries at the Pines. They were playing and I was seated next to them, very pleased to note their happiness; they were playing a game called *los tios*.⁽²⁰⁾

Their happiness at this moment was equal to that which they felt, but tried to hide, when they had their famous *calls*.

Suddenly Conchita came up to me and said unexpectedly:

— *I am going to tell you what the Angel's miracle consists of.*

Certainly curious, but refusing to show my feelings, I told her that if it was a secret, she shouldn't reveal it to me . . . She was thoughtful for a few seconds, then she returned to the other three girls, as if to consult them:

— *Shouldn't he be told?*

All three, from the place where they were playing (near what was called the *Virgin's Pine*),

answered in a single voice:

— *Yes. Yes.*

Then I got up and said to them:

— *All right, but you are going to tell me individually.*⁽²¹⁾

Conchita spoke first, then her companions. And they all told me the same thing:

— *They are going to see the Host . . .*

On coming down from the Pines, Loli told her father about the news and the nature of the miracle. Learning this, Conchita was very angry:

— *Now — she said to her mother — there certainly won't be a miracle because Loli has mentioned it to her father . . .*

Then I learned what the predicted miracle would consist of, and I had the chance to be the first to know about it; but I didn't know the date on which it would take place. On the eve of

20. Similar to *Hide and Seek*.

21. A very shrewd decision by the priest; thus it was easy for him to discern if it was something fabricated by the girls.

July 5th, I returned back to my parish in Barro and Conchita still didn't know the date.»

I think that my fellow priest from Barro is in error because we have seen how, during the ecstasy of June 29th, the young girl heard the voice that said to her:

July 18th would be when the miracle would occur . . . the little miracle (milagrucu), as you say.

At the time the girl still could not reveal the date. This can be seen from her diary:

During the Communion that the Angel gave me, I asked when I would be able to tell that there was going to be a miracle and what it was going to be.

And he told me *in the fifteen days before.*⁽²²⁾

When the apparition ended, the people from the village asked me if the Angel had told me anything about the miracle (since I had already said to the village that the Angel was going to perform a miracle) . . .

But they didn't believe much.

When the day came in which I had to announce the date, I told it to the village and I wrote letters . . .

I have seen the text of some of those letters and they are similar to the one printed in the Mexican edition of Conchita's Diary:

«A few words to tell you great news for me, and I think for you also. The Angel told me that he was going to perform a sign; and the sign is that — when I receive Communion — the Host will be seen on me. It is soon, during this month, on the 18th.

For me it really doesn't seem a miracle; since I thought that they always saw it on me. Will they believe then?»

22. Strictly holding to *15 days before*, Conchita could have been able to tell Fr. de la Riva the date of the miracle before he left Garabandal on July 5th. Why did she not do it? Was she waiting for some sign to begin spreading the news? Or did she have some other reason for hiding the time from the priest?

This letter is dated July 6th, the day after Fr. de la Riva had left Garabandal. Four days later, Conchita wrote to Dr. Celestino Ortiz in Santander:

Ave María

San Sebastián,

July 10th, 1962

Dear Doctor Celestino,

Just a few words to tell you that the Angel told me that on the 18th of this month they are going to see the Host on my tongue when I receive Communion.

Well, nothing more. Love,⁽²³⁾

Conchita González

Mr. Ruiloba had gone up to Garabandal during those days, something he did frequently. On saying farewell to Conchita, she gave him a letter to give personally to the Reverend Father Francisco Odriozola, the «factotum» of the Commission.

Plácido Ruiloba faithfully fulfilled what was asked of him; and he learned the contents of the letter since the recipient himself, Father Francisco, read it to him. The letter said the same as the others that we know; but it added some lines strongly requesting Father Francisco to come to Garabandal on the day foretold . . . *«Don't worry and come, since even the children in the village won't recognize you.»*⁽²⁴⁾

Doctor Ortiz, after having received the letter, used his first free day to go up to Garabandal to better inform himself about what was so tersely written by the girl. He was able to converse alone with her and spoke in this way:

— Conchita, I don't know if you understand the importance of all this. A miracle predicted for a fixed date is a very great miracle . . . ⁽²⁵⁾

23. The girls at this time were disposed to be friendly to everyone, especially those whom they met most frequently there.

24. Because of his actions, Fr. Francisco Odriozola was well aware that the people in the village did not hold him in high esteem. Conchita is trying now to give him confidence, with the indication that sufficient time had passed so that many things would be forgotten.

25. Besides the value that the miracle might have in itself, it had another value of no less quality: that of prophecy.

— But to me this seems to be a very little miracle. Later the Virgin's miracle will come, and that will be a MIRACLE! Then there won't be any doubt.

— *Maybe. I just don't believe that the miracle that you mention will happen . . .*

— You don't believe? Then do me this favor. You know Father Francisco Odriozola. I've written him to come . . . But in case he hasn't received the letter, you go in person to tell him . . . So that he doesn't miss coming on July 18th! He will see the miracle. I assure you that nothing will happen to him because here in the village even the little children don't know him.

— *Conchita, do you know how distasteful it is for me to tell news like this to a man whom I barely know . . . Besides, he is secretary of the Commission . . . And on top of everything else the village says terrible things about him, since he doesn't believe in the apparitions . . .*

— If it is distasteful for you to do what I ask, offer it up to the Virgin!

* * *

As the girl sent out notices, and news spread out, and expectation increased, there was also an increase in the apprehension of some of those who were *responsible*. They trembled before the possibility of a new swarm of people, followed by a dismal disaster. October 18th was still fresh in their memories!

I wrote letters.

But Father Valentín, who doubted that the miracle would happen, told me not to write any more letters, since perhaps it might not happen.

And there was a man in the village, Eustaquio Cuenca,⁽²⁶⁾ who told me the same thing as Father Valentín, that I shouldn't write any more letters.

And I said to them that the Virgin and Angel had told me to predict the miracle.

26. It has already been said that this man was an *indiano* of the village, and different from the others by his better economic situation.

But the people of the village didn't believe it.⁽²⁷⁾

As can be imagined, on the days before July 18th, which in that year fell on Wednesday — as the previously heralded October 18th had fallen on Wednesday — the influx of visitors to Garabandal began. Many set out on the way, taking advantage of the previous weekend, and so many came on Saturday, July 14th. Among these was the attorney from Palencia, Luis Navas Carrillo, who this time came accompanied by his aged mother. All were able to assist on that same night at a long, very interesting, and moving ecstasy of Mari Loli . . . But they waited in vain for one to happen to Conchita, who never missed having one on Saturday. When they retired for sleep, it was 5 o'clock Sunday morning. And they had to get up early, since the only Mass of the day, celebrated by Fr. Valentín, had been scheduled for 9 o'clock. They could take, if they were able, a long siesta to make up for the loss of sleep at night.

All Sunday long pilgrims continued to arrive. Luis Navas remembers that at 1 o'clock in the afternoon, while they were waiting for the beginning of the rosary in the church, the fine rain typical of the Cantabrian mountains was falling. In the village appeared a large gathering of people «**who came from Córdoba and other places, also a priest from El Aaiún,⁽²⁸⁾ who accidentally found himself in the neighboring village of Celis.**»

The following Monday, July 16th, had a special distinction, since it was the feastday of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Luis Nava's notes for this day read:

«**We celebrated the feastday of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, but without a Mass, since the Mass on that day took place in the village of Cossío. This made me think of a Communion by the Angel. Since there was no priest to distribute**

27. The attitude of firm resistance that the people of Garabandal had against the girls' phenomena has been shown enough; their hearts were too hard to believe in the truth of those things.

On July 14th, 1962, Luis Navas set out to take down impressions throughout the village «*from the greatest number of persons possible.*» He spent a long time with Mari Cruz' mother who made this revealing statement: «*I believe my daughter when she says that she sees the Virgin; but I'm not so sure that she actually does see the Virgin.*»

In September of 1963, Jacinta's mother, María, said to Fr. Laffineur: «*I certainly believe when I see an ecstasy; when the ecstasy is over, I don't believe anymore.*»

28. A small town on the African coast. It was the capital of Spanish Sahara.

Communion, it could well be expected that the Angel would come as on other occasions to give Communion to the girls.

I went up early to the Pines; there I was enjoying the marvelous view and the pleasant temperature, since it was a sunny day . . . Looking down, I made out one of the visionaries, without being able to distinguish which one of them it was, seated in the Cuadro, together with two or three other persons. I supposed that she was waiting for Communion, and I went down in a hurry . . . It was Mari Loli who was praying her morning rosary; I joined devoutly in the prayer and waited . . . Nothing happened and I went down to the village. I soon learned that Conchita hadn't gone to the Pines, as I had hoped, because she had forgotten and eaten some bread; but that she would go up a few hours later, toward one o'clock.

We accompanied her there. Some clouds began to appear in the sky while we were waiting. We prayed a Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, later an entire rosary. Some birds that were flying back and forth accompanied us with their singing.

As the clouds thickened, the sun gradually faded, as did my hope of being able to see — only one time! — the extraordinary phenomenon of the Mystical Communion about which I had heard so much said. Conchita waited standing up, sheltering herself against one of the nine pines there, protecting herself from a wet breeze that began to blow, and which was turning cold. The sky became completely overcast and the Angel didn't appear, in spite of waiting until about four in the afternoon.

Rather disappointed, we went down to the village to eat. And I took a siesta, expecting that later, most probably, we would have to spend the night standing up.

The rosary in the church was not at the time for holy days, but instead at nightfall, as on working days. Hardly had the girls gone outside, when Mari Loli went into ecstasy near her house, accompanied by Jacinta.»

We are familiar with what followed since it has been repeated so many times: walks through the

streets of the village, marvelous ascents and descents on the trail to the Pines (frontwards, backwards), prayers, songs, holding out the crucifix to those present . . . As almost always, the episode ended in the church courtyard, and Luis Navas tells us about the ending:

«It was a moving scene that penetrated to the depths of my heart when the girls with angelic smiles, completely transfigured by a radiant beauty, raised themselves lightly on their toes, offering their two cheeks to the Vision's kiss. And after this, alternating, each one effortlessly lifted up the other in her arms to reach the mysterious Apparition, and again kiss and be kissed.⁽²⁹⁾

Previously during the rosary the girls had recited the Credo; and, as was their custom whenever they prayed it in ecstasy, they added to *Catholic Church* the words *Apostolic and Roman*. In a similar way, they introduced an innovation in some final invocations. In place of saying *True Apparition of Our Lady, Queen and Patron of the Montaña*, they said, *Our Lady and Queen of all Creation*.⁽³⁰⁾

This universal title makes me feel that Our Lady is sending a call to all her children. She makes it understood that her messages here do not have a restricted or local character.»

There was still more as the night of July 16th wore on. Navas Carrillo terminated his notes like this:

«I came to the conclusion that mere curiosity, if it could well be the initial reason for making

29. These positions, which undoubtedly were due to the Vision being elevated in front of them when they wished to reach her to give the final kiss, are seen in several photographs taken by the spectators.

30. From the days of the holy bishop of Santander, José Eguino Trecu (†1961), there had been established in the diocesan churches the practice of concluding the rosary with the invocation *Our Lady of the True Apparition, Queen and Mother of the Montaña, pray for us*. This invocation was repeated three times, followed each time by a Hail Mary.

It is due to this bishop that Mary, under the title of *La Bien Aparecida (The True Apparition)* was proclaimed patroness of Santander, a territory covered with Marian sanctuaries. The sanctuary of Our Lady of the True Apparition is perched on a gorgeous hill overlooking the valley of the Asón River with views of Udalía and Ampuero, and is cared for by a community of Trinitarian fathers. The statue was taken from Santander during the last years of Bishop Eguino Trecu's episcopate to be solemnly crowned in the sanctuary.



“Each one effortlessly lifted up the other in her arms to reach the mysterious Apparition.”

the trip to Garabandal, soon dissipates, since it does not have its proper place there. What is felt here brings one, little by little, to prayer and sacrifice, to taste the peace and serenity of this little Mount Tabor.»⁽³¹⁾

* * *

On July 17th, Tuesday, the arrival of pilgrims took on an accelerated pace, as would be expected, and everyone's thoughts were on what was going to happen on the next day . . . according to Conchita's prediction . . .

Our lawyer from Palencia seems to have dedicated the hours of this day to reflecting on the unusual *normality* of the girls who for more than a year had been plunged into the daily *abnormality* of most unsettling phenomena:

«I spoke to the pastor of the village, and he told me that he had just received a report, completely favorable in this regard, from Doctor

Ricardo Puncernau, a psychiatrist from Barcelona. This doctor had associated with the girls for several days, both individually and collectively. He had taken walks with them. He had expressed his impressions and doubts to them, which they always received with friendliness and good nature.

My study was limited to observing them, especially when they played with the other girls. I was pleased at the way Mari Cruz fought with a girl who was bothering her. Actually, she fought with a certain mildness, and only insofar as was necessary to stop the girl's annoying attitude.

In the prayers that they said in the normal state, I didn't notice anything special. I even had the impression that Conchita, for example, did not pronounce the words clearly, especially the Ave Marías, and she reminded me of some persons who pray from the pulpit as if they were in a hurry to finish. With regard to punctuality, that was not a quality that characterized them. Many times I saw them come late to church, sometimes

31. Mount Tabor in Palestine is considered the mountain of Our Lord's Transfiguration, where His glory was shown to three of His apostles.



“She made repeated trips from the fields to her home, carrying enormous stacks of hay.”

one, sometimes another. I assisted at two of Jacinta's rosaries in the Cuadro at 6 in the morning; and besides the great sacrifice that could be supposed for a girl of her age to get up so early, her prayer had nothing special about it; frequently she opened her mouth and yawned.⁽³²⁾

32. As already was pointed out in another place, only those unfamiliar with the life of the spirit would be scandalized by the girls' weaknesses. A basic tenet in theology is *Grace does not destroy nature*. It does not destroy it, nor does it change it . . . suddenly. And the condition of our nature is rather pitiful. The special graces that a soul receives (even those *very special* graces that could be expected in Garabandal) certainly create a necessity or requirement to change, to go on from better to better; but they do not cause it . . . and souls can respond with various degrees of fidelity. Some might say, *If the apparitions were truly authentic, the girls, after such a long time of close contact with the Virgin, would have to be different than they are.*

Actually, the apostles were in close contact with Jesus for a longer period of time — three years — and at the hour of His death, what were they like? If anyone does not know, the Gospel tells the story.

I do not pretend to make saints out of the visionaries since they unquestionably have many faults. I only mean to say that their real and apparent faults and weaknesses cannot be used as a proof against the ecstasies which they said they had, and which so many others were able to observe.

In summary, it appears that the girls, with the exception of their visions, were not distinguishable from other girls of the village, and didn't show the influence of anything that wasn't natural, something that amazed people.

It was the same with regard to their daily chores. I remember that one early morning we had gone to bed at 6:00 a.m. in broad daylight; and at 10:00 María Dolores was in church, assisting at Mass. A little later I watched as she made repeated trips from the fields to her home, carrying enormous stacks of hay on her shoulders. I was able to take pictures.

On the evening of July 17th, I noticed that Mari Loli was missing at the rosary. When we left, her mother was walking around searching for her with a worried look. A young boy and I went up to the Pines in case she could be found there following some *call*; but all that was there were the nine trees, like sentinels in the night. After we returned to the village, María Dolores was found in the home of some friends from Aguilar de Campoo where — absorbed in conversation — the time had passed without her

noticing it. Her father scolded and punished her; it hurt me to see such chagrin in that little child, the instrument which Our Lady had used to give me so many and such unmerited signs of love. But Loli must have understood her father's reasons; since if her face appeared hurt, no sign of protest or rebellion against the one exercising authority could be found on it.»

Awaiting the Hour

This brief notation by Luis Navas Carrillo gives us an idea of the atmosphere in Garabandal on the evening of July 17th, 1962:

«During the day, countless cars had come. The houses were full, making it very difficult to find a bed in which to sleep. Once again many people used the stables for sleeping.»

But many gave up their sleep in order not to miss the scenes on that night, which was almost completely occupied by vigils and ecstasies. Jacinta's came first; later, at 5:15 in the morning, with the first rays of dawn, came Mari Loli's ecstasy. She was initially at the Cuadro, and later made her way toward the church, accompanied by a group of people— Luis Navas among them:

«I went ahead to enter the church and I saw a visiting priest, already dressed in the sacred vestments, who was getting the altar ready to say Mass. He couldn't hide the surprise that the unexpected coming of that parade caused him and began to say, *Don't enter! Don't enter!* As if the girl's entrance would bring upon him some grave responsibility!

His fears ended immediately since the visionary, despite the door being open, stopped at the entrance, and falling on her knees there, came out of the trance. I remember at that time, as on other occasions after the time when the ecclesiastical authorities ordered the church doors closed during the girls' ecstasies, that they stopped at the entrance of the church, and at times were heard to whisper, *Oh what doesn't the bishop want?* They always adopted an attitude of complete obedience and submission.»

The day of July 18th, which began in such an unusual way, continued with a climate much different

from other days. For the visitors, there was the special waiting for the miracle predicted by Conchita; for the villagers, there was the special *fiesta*, the big celebration of the year, when they met again with their distant relatives and friends, the day on which all the houses were full of happy people wearing their best clothes and eating lavishly. Officially the feastday was to honor St. Sebastián, patron saint of the village, who was martyred by being pierced with arrows. For some time, the feastday had been moved from January 20th, the actual feastday of the saint, to this date in July (a holiday in Spain) in order to allow better weather and opportunity for the arrival of relatives and guests.

«Well into the morning» — said Luis Navas — «we assisted at a chanted high Mass, in which 3 priests officiated;⁽³³⁾ the sermon was preached by a friend of mine from Burgos, who was stationed in San Vicente de la Barquera.⁽³⁴⁾ It was beautiful to see so many Communion, especially with the strangers who had come for the miracle; the Hosts had to be broken into particles.»

At noon the festive atmosphere reached its peak. But as the afternoon hours waned, impatience and unrest began to increase among those waiting . . . Nothing was happening, nor were there any signs that something was going to happen!

«As time passed» — wrote Luis Navas — «our restlessness grew, until it came to reach a level of actual anguish as the afternoon wore on.

We blamed the dance⁽³⁵⁾ as the cause of the delay, and perhaps the failure of the prodigy to take place; and full of confusion, we made a multitude of conjectures . . . I personally was not asking anything for myself since I had no need of a miracle to believe in the apparitions.

33. In those days the rite of *concelebration* had not been established. Solemn High Mass was performed by three persons: the priest who celebrated, a deacon, and a sub-deacon. It was what in the villages was called the *Mass of Three*, and was celebrated only on important feast days; otherwise, the feast days did not carry as much importance.

34. For many years, the Heart of Mary (Claretian) fathers came to the parish church from that village on the coast of Santander. Frequently some of them traveled around to preach in the villages of the area.

35. The dance was a *sine qua non* with the young men during the village holiday. The people at Garabandal did not know how to stop it, in spite of Conchita's announcement; and it was held, according to custom, near to her house.

However, it deeply grieved me that, since what had been predicted was not happening, the good opinions of countless people, principally those who had come for the first time to Garabandal, were being put down together with their faith. I couldn't forget the episode of October 18th, and at that time, the girls hadn't predicted any prodigy!»

In order to better support his hopes during the anguishing wait, as Mr. Navas wrote:

«I kept in my mind that days previously the visionary had addressed a letter to a priest in Santander, Father Odriozola, inviting him to be present when the Angel gave her Communion. She had foretold this fact in unmistakable terms, with firmness and absolute sureness. She didn't mention the hour, and the solar day wouldn't end until 1:20 on our watches;⁽³⁶⁾ but each minute that went by increased my anxiety and made me think of what would happen with that priest whom the girl had so insistently requested to be there. Later, they told me that he had sent a representative in his place . . .»

According to the reports made, the person sent by Father Odriozola was an attorney from Santander, Mr. R. M.,⁽³⁷⁾ who comported himself in Garabandal according to the most *orthodox* line of the Commission:

«Toward 5 in the afternoon, he proposed to Conchita that she stop all this . . . That he would give her the broadest pardon on behalf of the bishop . . . That if she wanted to leave for Santander, he himself would take her with great pleasure . . . The Marquis of Santa María, who was present there in the girl's home, couldn't contain himself and engaged in a heated argument with the lawyer, who ended up going away in bad humor.»

(A report from another witness)

Conchita's house naturally had to be, on that evening of July 18th, the center of maximum anticipation. Whoever could get in at the time and stay in the house had to be considered definitely privileged; the priests easily obtained such privileges,

36. For many years the official time in Spain had been 60 minutes ahead of the solar time, so as to synchronize better with the rest of Europe.

37. This refers to Regino Mateo, born in the land of Reinosa but residing in the Santander capital; he was a lawyer.

as would be expected. Paquina de la Roza Velarde, the wife of Dr. Ortiz, remembers that there were present there, besides close relatives of the visionary, a young girl from Aguilar (daughter of Rafael Fontaneda); a priest from Madrid, Fr. Justo; a Franciscan, Fr. Bravo; a Jesuit from Comillas; and a Dominican priest from Asturias. This Dominican priest — Etelvino González — furnishes us information to help relive again those tense hours of July 18th.

Weeks later, on August 10th, the new bishop of Santander, Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal, wrote to Fr. Etelvino requesting him to answer a questionnaire that he was sending him: a long questionnaire that had been composed by the secretary of the Commission. He charged Fr. Etelvino to proceed with '*the strictest secrecy*', and at the same time consider '*the exceptional importance of his describing the facts objectively, with simplicity and brevity*'.

The letter was answered by Fr. Etelvino after a month delay, for which he asked pardon.

Of the 41 questions on the questionnaire, he only answered 23, since he did not have direct knowledge on the content of the others.

«In order to be as exact and objective as possible, I have tried, in describing this, to limit myself to those details and facts of which I was personally a witness. I have avoided not only reporting what I merely heard, but also as much as possible, mixing my own personal opinion in this.»

Before beginning his answers, he confided to the bishops something that had to be his own personal opinion. He mentions . . .

«. . . the unhappy impression that it made on me in seeing Conchita surrounded in her home by gifts, and circled by wealthy people who apparently came there frequently and gave the impression of having made Garabandal their domain. I was not the only one to lament this; among the priests and faithful this was mentioned very unfavorably, leading at times to conclusions that were definitely not favorable. Without falling to this extreme, I think that the circumstances to which I am referring prevent a clear visualization of what could be happening at the bottom of these *events*, which

seem more and more confusing.»⁽³⁸⁾

What this eyewitness then says — detrimentally — illustrates what was happening around Conchita on the night of July 18th, 1962.

First question — *Were you in the kitchen of Conchita's home before she went into 'rapture'?*

Answer — I passed the evening in Conchita's house, in the kitchen and principally on the second floor,⁽³⁹⁾ in company with several secular priests, a Franciscan priest, a Jesuit priest and a seminarian. During the time immediately prior to the rapture, I was practically absent, except for intervals.

Second question — *What was the mental attitude*

38. What Father Etelvino speaks about is certainly lamentable, and it is not the only case to be pointed out and regretted. I am sorry to say that some of those who are considered — or consider themselves — as *Garabandalistas* of the first rank have done very poor service to its cause. And I am afraid that it is the same with the girls themselves and their families, at least some of them, who have not always shown sufficiently high example with regard to generosity and detachment in their actions.

But from this, one cannot draw a decisive proof against the supernaturalism of those unexplainable phenomena; but only the conclusion that, as so many times has happened in the Story of Salvation, the instruments with which God works are not always the best, nor do they immediately lose their natural tendency to fall; especially if they remain in some respects attached to their own selves. The plain people of Garabandal were immersed in phenomena that were so much beyond them. Did they not have the right to expect from their religious guides in the diocese something better and quite different from what they received? Did these guides in this case fulfill their own obligations with their aloof policies of distrust, remoteness, and partial *non-intervention*.

39. Conchita was on the same floor during almost all the afternoon of the feast day according to the testimony given by Father Etelvino González to questions asked by the Commission:

«Conchita stayed upstairs from the middle of the afternoon. In all this time, I believe that she only came down to the kitchen about two times. In her room, on whose balcony she stayed almost all afternoon, she was accompanied by various friends whose names I do not know. Everyone played; (it is not to be forgotten that it was the afternoon of the village fiesta) but I noted in her an air as if a little absent. She laughed, she answered the questions with serenity, and wrote on holycards with an admirable facility for composition.

During the afternoon, she was very accessible and agreeable to the priests. She even came one time to tell me, *I would like the priests to be near to me, bending down (surely in respect for the Lord Whom she was expecting to receive), referring to the moment that was awaited.*»

of the young girl?

Answer — The general tone, during the time that I saw her, was of sureness concerning the accomplishment of the prediction and care in preparing spiritually for it; praying and making us pray; we prayed a Station to the Blessed Sacrament and two rosaries. At the same time the girl showed herself uncertain over what should be done about a dance that had been organized in front of her home; she wanted to have the music, but indicated weakly that they should stop dancing.»

The dancing had a bad effect on many of those who had gone up to the village. Conchita herself reports this:

Next to my house there was a holiday dance.

There were the two things together: some were praying the rosary, and others were dancing.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Some of the people wanted to stop the dancing, since they were afraid that if there were a dance, there wouldn't be a miracle.

And at one time, a man among those who wanted to stop the dancing, Ignacio Rubio, asked me if I wanted the dancing to stop.

I told him that, dance or no dance, the miracle would happen.

And then they didn't discuss the dancing anymore.

Perhaps the man whom Conchita mentions is the same person about whom we have another report:

«A spectator, a professor from Granada, asked assistance from someone influential in the village to convince the young boys that the dancing should stop. With this assistance he went up to the boys and offered to pay the musicians to play on the next three Sundays . . .

— *Who told you this?* — someone asked — *Conchita?*

40. The contrast is notable. What a strange melange men make. And what a melange there is in each man, too. The task of life is to put everything in order, above all, interior order, eliminating what prevents us from going to heaven, putting everything that can bring us there in its place.

— Yes. (Actually Conchita hadn't said this.)

— *Let's go see* — said the young boy, and taking the arm of his questioner, he went in search of the girl:

— *We are coming to see, Conchita. Did the Virgin tell you that we shouldn't dance?*

— *No. Not exactly that. You can dance, but you shouldn't offend God, Our Lord.*⁽⁴¹⁾

The young boy left satisfied, and naturally the dance continued on for some time.»

If the few people huddled in Conchita's house were perturbed by this, and were upset because they were waiting in vain during the final hours of July 18th, we can imagine how it must have been with those not present there who could only learn about what was happening through vague rumors. We have Luis Navas' testimony:

«I was in the house of María Dolores, together with her father, the marquis of Santa María, a friend of his, and some other persons whom I don't remember. Someone came to tell us that one of the priests who was in Conchita's house had already gone and was leaving the village; and also that they had even locked the house. I could imagine what Conchita's mother was like, after her daughter had not had either the customary apparition on Saturday or one on Sunday, or Communion from the Angel on Monday, July 16th, the feastday of Our Lady of Mount Carmel . . .

Among ourselves, someone thought that if the Communion didn't take place, it could well be in order to test our faith. Others were of the opinion, on the contrary, that the cause could have been some fault of pride in the girl. And there was not lacking someone to say that he had found all these things of the miracle of the Host very strange from the beginning. But in general we resisted thinking that the visionary had made all this up to try to force the events.»

Conchita perfectly sensed the atmosphere that surrounded her:

When night came, the people were upset.

But since the Angel and the Virgin had told me that the miracle would come, I had no fear, since neither the

Virgin nor the Angel had ever told me that a thing would happen and it didn't happen.



“The miracle would come.”

The tension of waiting in the circles closest to Conchita is well reflected in this detail that the wife of Doctor Ortiz gives us:

«Everyone kept silent. Her brother, seated on the fireplace, had been dozing. Suddenly, he jumped up and said, speaking to Conchita, *I can't bear this anymore. I am going to bed. You have deceived us all terribly!* No one answered. Then the young boy said the same thing again and got up to leave.

— *No! Don't go* — Conchita called to him — *Wait just a little longer.*»

The girl had to feel that the moment was coming:

At 10 at night, I had a call, and at 12, another, and after . . .

1:40 a.m.

It is beyond all doubt that on the night between July 18th and 19th in 1962, in the village of San Sebastián de Garabandal, *something* happened that was going to matter very much in the history of the events taking place there.

41. Here is something very important and often very difficult. Unfortunately amusements are so frequently directed to the harmful service of sensuality.

We have a brief report that gives this *something* as it happened internally, as further reports will describe it as seen externally.

At two o'clock, the Angel appeared to me in my room.

In my home were my mother Aniceta, my brother Aniceto, and an uncle, Elías, and a cousin, Luciuca, and a person from Aguilar, María del Carmen Fontaneda.

And the Angel was with me for a while⁽⁴²⁾ and he told me, as on other days:

Pray the "I Confess" and think of Whom you are going to receive.

And I did this. And afterwards he gave me Communion.

And after giving me Communion, he told me to say the "Soul of Christ,"

And to make my thanksgiving,

And to hold out my tongue with the Sacred Host,

Until he left and the Virgin came.

And I did this.

We cannot designate the exact time that Conchita's ecstasy started. We have just seen that she said, **at 2 o'clock**, but her chronometric accuracy cannot be trusted. All the witnesses agree that the affair happened some time after July 18th ended, after one o'clock at night. the concordance of information from several witnesses makes it certain that the disputed trance began between 1:30 and 1:40.

A little before it started, Conchita, who had gone down for a while to the kitchen, went up again to the upper floor. One of the persons there, Dr. Ortiz' wife, says this expressly:

«After a while, Conchita went upstairs again, and a little while later, I saw her come down with her hands joined.»

In her room upstairs for almost an hour was a

42. It must be remembered that the long periods of time in ecstasy seemed minutes to the girls.

And it is also to be remembered that they could move long distances in their trances and make long swift walks without losing the sensation of being still in the same place. Since they did not leave the light that enveloped their field of vision, they did not have the normal faculty to *sense* the change of locations.

man not easily disposed to religious fervor: Elías González Cuenca. Although he was Conchita's carnal uncle he did not have much faith in his niece, nor did he maintain cordial relations with her family. Let us hear his testimony.⁽⁴³⁾

«It was after 12:30. I was drinking beer with someone at Elena's house when we heard a commotion in the crowd. And at the time, I went in its direction and entered her house — to see mischievously if I would see something that I didn't like. She is my niece by blood; but even so, I think that there have been three times that I have gone in there. I was with her in her house about an hour. She, her mother, her brother Cetuco, a little girl and I were praying. And later her mother went down to the kitchen leaving the four of us alone.⁽⁴⁴⁾

After a while, her brother said, *Do you see what time it is? It is today already. Nothing!*

And Conchita answered, *The time has not yet passed.*

A few minutes later she fell into ecstasy. We were seated on her bed, and she was speaking with us when suddenly she fell there to the side of me against the door.»

Soon the girl got up, left her room and began to descend majestically down the stairway. Dr. Ortiz' wife stated:

«I saw her go down with her hands joined in front of her chest, her head turned backwards, her mouth slightly open, and with an expression of marvelous happiness!»

Father Bravo, a professor from the University of Comillas, a specialist in the spiritual life, looking at the young girl transfigured like this, could only repeat, *How marvelous! How marvelous!*

Those that were in the house intended to follow close to Conchita as she went outside. However, they found themselves prevented by the masses of people who were waiting impatiently, and literally threw themselves on top of her, seeking to get the best place for observation.

Dr. Ortiz' wife stated: ***«I went out on the street***

43. This was recorded on a tape recorder.

44. Father Etelvino González had left for awhile since after 10:30 Conchita had indicated to those present, *You can go eat if you wish*, giving them to understand that what they were expecting was not going to take place for awhile.



Site of the miracle

and I couldn't follow her.»

Uncle Elías said, *«I went out after her into the crowd; but they knocked me down.»*

And they pushed Father Bravo so much that he was almost bowled over; he had to forget being in the first ranks. Miguel, Conchita's brother, and some other husky young men attempted to protect the girl as she walked.

Luis Navas wrote:

«It was 15 or 20 minutes before two in the morning, when just after going out in the street, and no farther than turning a corner to the left — in the place least expected — in front of the house of her friend Olguita, the visionary fell on her knees and the Communion took place. It was a wet place, hardly agreeable, since at times dirty water from the homes was dumped there.»

The visionary was removed from all this, being unaware of her own movements and positions; the only thing that she knew was that:

The angel appeared to me in my room . . . etc.

It is indisputable that in the girl's open mouth and upon her graciously extended tongue there was seen for some time the white Host of Communion, since testimony of this has been signed and sworn to by many witnesses . . . Although it was in the middle of the night, the scene and the protagonist were adequately illuminated.

Concerning this, there is a report that has special value because of the situation of its proponent and because of the *official nature* of his testimony. The questions were put in writing by the Commission at Santander through a diocesan prelate, and the answers were also given in writing by the Dominican previously mentioned: Fr. Etelevino González.

— *«What time was it? Had July 18th passed?*

— *It was exactly a quarter to two in the early morning of July 19th.*

— *Was there sufficient light?*



“a white body of the same size and shape as the hosts used for Communion”

— Yes. There was a full moon. Furthermore, there were many flashlights around the girl even before the object predicted appeared on her tongue. I myself, with my back to her (from a distance of about a meter), on hearing the shout, “*The Host!*”, turned around in front of her, focusing on my flashlight on her open mouth.

— *Did you see something in her mouth like the Host used for Communion?*

— Yes. With complete certainty.

— *Before it was in the girl's mouth, did you*

see the Host outside of it, for example in the hands of the supposed angel, while she was making the sign of the cross, or in the path from the hands of the angel to the mouth of the girl?

— As I had my back turned, trying to hold back the crowd, I didn't see it appear.

— *What was the host like?*

— The object was a white body of the same size and shape as the Hosts used for Communion; perhaps somewhat thicker. It gave the impression of being somewhat spongy and it adhered perfectly to her tongue.

— *How long did the phenomenon last?*

— I estimate about 45 seconds; perhaps 60.

— *Did you hear the girl speak with the alleged angel? What did he say?*

— I didn't see or hear her speak.

— *What effects did this cause in you?*

— I distinguished three periods:

A) With my back to the girl, on hearing the shout: "*The Host! Miracle!*" I turned around, not believing it was true.

B) On seeing It with my eyes, I was impressed and completely absorbed in the examination of the "*Host.*"

C) Finally, I attempted to impose silence and reverence (since there was obviously the presence of the white body with characteristics similar to the Hosts of Communion.)»

Miracle or Fraud?

This *fact* cannot be denied or evaded: that a Host was seen on Conchita's tongue like those used for Communion. But is this fact enough to call it an authentic miracle?

For some, a miracle was unquestionable from the first moment; for others, doubts began immediately and have not yet dissipated.

As men debate about the works of men, they are inclined to debate about the works of God, too. And to God this does not seem to matter, since He never takes away all the problems in such a way that disbelief and resistance to belief would be impossible. He never forces us to believe. We are merely given adequate information and sufficient leads to bring us to an attitude of faith based on good reasonable logic.

Whoever avoids searching into obscure areas ends up finding total security. The rich man of the parable said to the patriarch Abraham, *If Lazarus, risen from the dead, goes to my brothers, they will not refuse his testimony.* The patriarch (and it was Jesus Himself who spoke through him) answered: *If they do not accept Moses and the prophets, they will not accept one who has risen from the dead either.*

And so on the night of the *milagruco* began the doubts, the suspicions, the twisted interpretations.

Conchita was told to remain with her tongue extended after having received the Host, until . . .

. . . the Virgin would come.

And I did it like this.

And when the Virgin came, she told me:

They all still do not believe.

The girl found out the truth of this as soon as she returned to her house, once the long trance had ended. For the trance was long; the Communion was only the beginning.

While many were keeping watch around the girl's home, hoping for what might happen there (and these were the ones who saw, some well, some not so well, the things just described), others situated themselves in the *calleja*, thinking that there, at the site of so many other miraculous happenings, Conchita's miraculous Communion would transpire.

Among these was Luis Navas; expectantly he ran to the Cuadro, seeking to secure the best observation point. But there he had to wait, although he tried to do it with resignation:

«I expressed» — he wrote — «my resignation to the Virgin while waiting there, *If we don't have the good fortune to see the miracle, at least let it be realized!* I didn't want to think of the consequences that would result from the non-realization of the predicted miracle, or the methods that might be adopted by the Commission, reticent from the start to admit any possibility of the apparitions being supernatural.

When Conchita came to the Cuadro . . . (*As we have seen, the Virgin appeared to her after the Communion. Then began an ecstatic march, whose first stop was apparently the Calleja, where the lawyer from Palencia was waiting with the other people.*) . . . **I didn't know whether she had received Communion. But I noticed that she held her mouth open. I saw this clearly since I found myself in the advantageous position that I had secured previously in case there would take place there, as was probable, the miracle that everyone was awaiting.**

After being there some time, the visionary

descended backwards toward the village, and I followed her with difficulty through the streets, since I had lost my glasses. It was at that time that I learned that she had already received Communion, and how it had occurred. There was nothing more for me to do than ask pardon for having doubted at the last hour, and to accept not having seen anything.

During the ecstasy, the visionary went in front of the church twice,⁽⁴⁵⁾ prayed the rosary through the streets,⁽⁴⁶⁾ visited the cemetery, and on returning from there, had barely passed over the little brook when she knelt down and advanced in this position about 50 meters. Finally she sang the

45. Luis Navas noted something that particularly attracted his attention: the «open mouth of Conchita»; but he does not give more detail. Nevertheless, there are other testimonies that speak of something very remarkable in this regard.

Félix Gallego, a doctor from Polanco (Santander), tells how he, while going with the girl toward the church after the miracle, saw perfectly a halo of light in the back of her open mouth. That same night, on returning to his home in Polanco, he wrote down a report that days later he gave to Father Valentín for him to take, if it seemed useful, to his superiors at the chancery.

And I myself was able to receive an unequivocal testimony from a woman from Madrid, María Paloma Fernández-Pacheco de Larrauri. She had come to the village in the early morning of July 18th, and was spending the day waiting like so many others . . . When Conchita finally left her house in ecstasy, this woman, who had been waiting a long time outside, could not follow her because of the commotion and the people throwing themselves on top of her. Resigned and silent, she went down another street and was walking aimlessly when she perceived, muffled and far away, the noise of those who were coming with the visionary. Soon above the noise that was breaking the silence of the night, she heard a woman shout excitedly: *Oh! She's carrying it in her mouth!*

She rushed toward the sound and found there, at the entrance of the church, a spectacle that she will never be able to forget. Within the churchyard in the middle of the people who had arranged themselves in a wide circle, or perhaps rather a rectangle, Conchita was moving in ecstasy. Flashlights were converging on her with their beams of light, but surpassing that light was another light which shone from the mouth of the girl with an unusual resplendence.

Mrs. Paloma succeeded in situating herself well on the left side of the courtyard and was able to observe perfectly, for some minutes, this extraordinary phenomenon in front of her. *«It was»* — she said — *«as if in the center of her wide-open mouth, on the tongue of the child, there were a host or "forma" of concentrated light, around which radiated a little halo of light of a different kind.»*

This phenomenon was definitely observed by other persons too, some of whom did not want to talk about it for fear of being considered hysterical or subject to hallucinations.

46. Conchita wrote, **And she told me to pray the rosary, and I prayed it.**



“All still do not believe.”

Salve and went to conclude the vision where it had begun almost two hours previously, but not before offering the many articles placed on the kitchen table to be kissed.»

It was at this time that the girl began to see evidence of what the Virgin had mentioned when she appeared to the girl after Communion: ***All still do not believe.***

She was . . . as anyone would be after an extraordinary favor from heaven. We know this through reliable testimony. The Commission had asked in its questionnaire:

— *«Is it true that Conchita, on returning home, smiled and avoided questions? Was she agitated?»*

Fr. Etelvino answered:

— *«She was calm when I saw her . . . She spoke calmly and happily.»*

Among the people in Conchita's kitchen at the end of the ecstasy was Dr. Ortiz's wife. She remembers that they were telling the girl:

— *How happy you must be Conchita! Finally the miracle has come.*



“You don’t believe.”

— *Yes, but the Virgin told me that many, in spite of seeing it, do not believe . . . And I think one of these is Plácido.*

At that moment, Plácido arrived. The girl smiled broadly and said to him:

— *You, you don't believe?*

— *Not much* — the man replied, trying in vain to smile.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Plácido Ruiloba had been pushed away by the crowd and could not see the Host with his own eyes. Afterwards the Franciscan Fr. Justo, who had seen it and was full of doubts, relayed to him what he felt . . .

Dr. Ortiz's wife heard Fr. Justo speaking to Fr. Bravo:

— *I was tempted to take the Host with my hand, to see if it was real . . .*

— *Didn't that seem to be tempting God?*

47. According to a witness' report, Plácido said then to Conchita: «*Liar! You've deceived us!*»

Undisturbed, the girl replied with a smile: «*The Virgin told me: In spite of everything, some do not believe!*»

A Franciscan father, Father Justo, didn't believe what he had seen.

And he said to the people that he hadn't seen it, that it was a lie, that it was I who had done this . . .

In the writings of Luis Navas are these lines:

«**In the days prior to July 18th Conchita had expressed her concern that many people would not witness the event, and as a consequence would not believe it . . . This prediction was verified because some didn't except it (*the presentation of the miracle seemed too much to them*), because many didn't see it, and because for other reasons the people in general were rather cold . . . And I think that during the time before the miracle was accomplished everyone doubted, more or less, that it would take place.**»

Soon the Commission at Santander was deluged with a flood of comments, suspicions, and questions, all coming from the *unconvinced*.

And it was not hard for the Commission to think that there had been no miracle.

But *something* had definitely happened, because of which there was no other way out than to seek to offer *explanations*. The Commission members thought that by seeking evidence against Garabandal they were fulfilling their duty; but the rest of us might think that they did not accomplish another duty, a first and more important one: to be there at the place of the event, following everything that was occurring from the best point of observation.

The Commission members assert their right to speak out publicly and express their opinions on the events. That being the case, the least that could be asked of them would be to be there in the forefront of everyone else following, observing, and studying the events. It was not this way!

The letter in which Conchita invited them to be present at Garabandal on the 18th of July may or may not have been inspired by God; nevertheless those called had a serious obligation not to lose an occasion (that could well have been of great importance) to bring more light on the complete study that was entrusted to them. Instead of this, initially they showed no concern. Later when collecting information from witnesses, by design they sought

only witnesses from whom they expected unfavorable testimony.

What would have happened if the *responsible* persons in the diocesan chancery had been at the appointed spot on the day fixed by God?

God can perform things very well without man; but the History of Salvation shows us how certain divine designs have gone astray because of lack of human cooperation. God does not have to yield to our desires . . . How often He could say to us: *Since you attempt to come to the light through your own ways, and not through Mine, you will remain in the darkness!*

On July 18th, 1962, a thing that could have decisively clarified the mystery of Garabandal ended by leaving it like it was, or perhaps even more obscure. Whose fault was this?

* * *

It seems that the official Commission in Santander first of all doubted the actuality of the *fact* of the Host on Conchita's tongue, attributing it to suggestion, madness or the collective hysteria of those who saw it. Afterwards, in the face of irrefutable proofs, especially the photographic pictures that had been taken, they maintained a hypothesis of fraud: *Conchita, aided by others, had put this over with great talent . . .*

In the questionnaire presented weeks later to Fr. Etelvino González, there is a collection of questions from which it can be seen that the Commission took seriously the many things that were said about the peculiar circumstances around the *miracle*. Their questions themselves clearly reveal this:

«Is it true that Conchita and her cousin Luciuca Fernández González didn't stop laughing nervously and playing with their hands?»

At midnight did you see her write some words to her Uncle Elías González Cuenca?»

Is it true that on the back of the paper she drew two feminine figures?»

Did you identify them as Luciuca and Conchita?»

Is it true that on the drawing Luciuca brought her hand to Conchita's mouth?»

Is it true that Conchita avoided being accompanied by the priests present there?»

At 1:20, did her mother tell her to change her dress?»

With regard to this, did Conchita go upstairs?»

Who were the persons there upstairs?»

What purpose could her going upstairs have?»

How long did she delay in coming down?»

On coming down, did she go back into the kitchen?»

Did she come down in rapture?»

Did she have her mouth closed?»

Did she cover it with the crucifix?»

Did you notice anything strange in her mouth?»⁽⁴⁸⁾

We do not know the answers to any of these questions. Fr. Etelvino answered only the ones we have previously mentioned, and refrained from responding to these with excellent reasons:

«I don't know because at the time I was absent from the house. At that time I didn't hear anything about the writing or the drawing; I heard about it days later from people who said they had heard it discussed by a priest.»

The last question of the Commission was this:

— «Could the possibility of fraud be considered?»

The Dominican father answered simply:

— «I think that's not impossible.»

But we can well think that the Commission, with all these questions, had determined not just the simple possibility, but the actual probability that the alleged *motions* of Conchita had been designed to *stage* the miracle with the aid of her uncle and cousin. Taking advantage of some of her comings and goings, the girl had secretly put what she had prepared in her mouth, and thereupon the *ecstasy* began . . .

What is it that they could have prepared? A question from the Commission puts it down specifically:

«The "host," could it have been a piece

48. Naturally, I do not criticize the Commission for trying to bring all the hidden elements out into the open; I criticize their actions for not *being open*, actions which have given reason to think that they were only interested in confirming adverse points, only calling for testimony and accepting it from those who were able to present something unfavorable.

from a game of Bristol, a wafer made from flour, a pharmaceutical product?»

Fr. Etelvino answered:

— «I've never seen a Bristol piece so thick, but it well could have resembled a wafer made of flour.»

* * *

So many and such labored allegations can be easily torn down, since it was shown that at the moment of the Communion, when the girl opened her mouth and held out her tongue, the tongue appeared completely bare, and then . . .

Several premier witnesses say something overwhelming in this regard; but the Commission has never called them to testify or given any credence to their testimony.

The stonemason of the village, José Díez Contero,



familiarly called Pepe Díez, enjoyed a privileged position for minutely following the *Communion*, since he was at Conchita's one side, holding her arm and protecting her, while her brother Miguel was on her other side. And Pepe Díez never tires of explaining — with remarkable forcefulness — how he illuminated the girl's mouth with his flashlight very carefully during the time before and after she opened it:

«When I saw that she held out her tongue, and that there was nothing at all on it, I had, I think, the worst moment in my life. *Oh heavens!* — I said to myself — *This is terrible. Nothing is seen here!* And on saying this, I lit up the whole interior of her mouth with my flashlight. Suddenly without the girl moving her tongue in the least — in a most unexplainable way — there appeared on top of it, as if suddenly coming forth, a white, round thing, which seemed to grow . . . I don't know how long it lasted; perhaps two or three minutes.»

Conchita's brother Miguel, who was on the other side of the girl, was able to make the same meticulous observations that Pepe Díez made. Serafín, her older brother, could not come to Garabandal on July 18th, but he returned a few days later. Miguel went to greet him, and as soon as the two brothers met, the question came up:

— *What happened with the miracle of the Host?*

— I swear it's true. I saw it. I saw perfectly how she held out her tongue, bare without anything on it, and without putting it inside, a white Host suddenly came forth.

— *Are you really sure?*

— Completely. I swear it was so.

— *Well, it's enough for me that you say it.*

A long time later, during one of Fr. Laffineur's stays⁽⁴⁹⁾ in Garabandal, he and Serafín were speaking about the miracle of the Host, and of its closest witnesses . . .

FATHER LAFFINEUR — For me, the real witness is Pepe Díez.

SERAFIN — *I'm not going to argue about it; but for me, the real witness is Miguel, my brother. Perhaps you don't see it that way, since he's Conchita's brother . . . But look. Out in the fields, in the places where we had to go to work, Miguel and I spoke about this miracle many times. He has always told me that he saw it perfectly; that the miracle was true. He held Conchita by one arm and Pepe Díez held the other when she fell on her knees for the Communion.*

The whole family's honor is at stake in regard to the truth of this happening. Miguel knows it, and considering his character, if he holds it with such firmness against the opinions of so many people, it's because he's very sure there was no fraud.⁽⁵⁰⁾

In spite of this, neither Miguel nor Pepe Díez made a report to the bishop's Commission. Two other of the witnesses did not make a report either: a farmer from the neighboring country, Benjamín Gómez; and an industrial worker from a distant city, Alejandro Damians.

49. This Belgian priest who lived in France is already well known to the reader; he died on November 28th, 1970.

50. Father Laffineur's statement was given in a conference at Saragossa on December 8th, 1968.

The first of these, Benjamín Gómez, was not



given to religious fervor as he admitted:⁽⁵¹⁾

51. Benjamin Gómez has spoken many times with almost the same words about his extraordinary experience at Garabandal. Here we are following the report that was recorded on a tape recorder by a man in Santander.

«Prior to being in Garabandal, I was not what I am now. Let us not say that I didn't believe in God, since sometimes I thought about those things; but I put it aside, as if it had no importance. Was it my age? Was it my weak head? The fact is that now I feel differently. And this change began here.⁽⁵²⁾ In my opinion, things have happened here that are divine — that are not of this world.»

Benjamín Gómez was a native of Liébana; but he had lived for years in Pesués, downstream from Puente Nansa. News had soon come to him of the unusual things that were happening in San Sebastián de Garabandal. And one day he finally decided to go up to the place. At the beginning, he did not attract attention by doing this — there were so many who were going there! But it did not take long until townspeople began to talk about his devotion and started making jokes about him, and at times harassed him — even the pastor, who was opposed to Garabandal.

Garabandal attracted Benjamín. But that did not change the deficiency in his practice of religion:

«In spite of coming, I was still holding back, and missing Mass on Sunday didn't matter to me . . . until it came to July 18th.

I remember it well. After midnight, many people began to leave; I was glad they left, since it would be easier to see. It was well past one o'clock and I was waiting near Conchita's house when the young girl came out. A little later she fell on her knees in ecstasy, and I was able to be very near to her, and to see everything at leisure.

The young girl opened her mouth, but in no hurry. She was in no hurry for anything there. She opened her mouth, I say, and I set myself to watch with all my attention. I committed the rudeness of not allowing others to see. I recognized this, but I wanted to check everything well . . . I looked into her open mouth again and again; and neither on the top of her mouth, nor beneath her tongue, nor in any part of her

52. The event of July 18th left a definite mark on Benjamín. His religious life prior to this could be well described by what he himself said: «I went 23 years without going to confession . . . I didn't concern myself with God except to blaspheme Him . . .»

mouth could anything be seen. There was nothing there at all!

The tongue was like this, without anything; and then the Host appeared suddenly, and was seen by everyone for some time, sufficient time so that all who were there would see. I saw it well.

The color could not be compared with anything. It seemed most like snow when the sun rises and gives it splendor in the blinding light. But it was not quite that way; it was white, like I have never seen anything whiter . . . I stayed still and continued to watch. Finally she closed her mouth and left the place still in ecstasy.

I swear before God and all the saints that what I say is true.»

We have what Alejandro Damians from Barce-



lona experienced and put down in writing. First of all he tells about the unusual circumstances on star-

ting out on his journey, which only was decided on at the last hour on Monday, July 16th. Concerning these circumstances, Mr. Damians says there was . . .

« . . . a detail which was destined to be of the greatest importance. Before leaving Barcelona, my cousin lent me a friend's movie camera, giving me brief instructions on how it should be operated, since my knowledge in these things was absolutely nil.

I passed almost all of July 18th near to Conchita's house with my wife, a friend, several priests, and some other people.

Two circumstances joined together to cause doubt as to whether or not the hoped-for prodigy would take place: the *atmosphere of fiesta* that reigned in the village and the *presence of priests*. (It was known that normally the Angel did not come to give Communion if there were priests in the village who could do it.)

And so, between doubts, wishful thinking, boredom and hope, the long day went by. The discouragement and the lack of belief were general when we saw that, by the clock, July 18th had ended without anything happening. But toward 1:00 at night, after some had started to leave the village, there spread the news that, according to the solar time, the day would not end until 1:25 in the morning.⁽⁵³⁾

53. It seems that there has been excessive attention put on determining if the moment of the miracle fell or did not fall within the chronological limits of July 18th. Those who are in favor of the miracle have made some distinctions between official time and sun time. Those who were opposed, like the Commission, saw the hour as one more proof of deceit. In the questionnaire sent to Father Etelvino González, there was a double question; «*What hour was it? Had July 18th already passed?*» I would ask if it had not occurred to the Commission that this *difficulty* of the time, rather than being opposed, speaks in favor of the authenticity of the miracle. If the affair had been staged by the girl and her accomplices, they would have taken great care to keep within the limitations of the announcement so that no one could have anything to criticize, and the scene would have occurred definitely within the time predicted. The actual happening shows that neither the will of the girl, nor the impatience of those who surrounded her, had any effect.

In this episode at Garabandal, similar to what has so often occurred in the Bible, things and sayings have to be understood according to common opinion. And in the understanding of people who do not live by a clock, the days are separated simply the night; the day itself begins with getting up in the morning and lasts until going to bed again.

A little later they asked those of us who were in Conchita's house to leave, and I stayed at the door in company with a friend of the family to prevent the entrance of other people. From my place of watching I held in my view the kitchen and the stairway that led to the upper floor, where Conchita was.

There the ecstasy took place; but we didn't learn about it until we saw her coming down the stairway with that classical attitude in which her features are softened and embellished in an extraordinary way.

As she stepped out the door, the waiting crowd opened just enough space to permit her passage, and immediately closed in around her like an overflowing river. I saw people fall on the ground and get stepped on by the others. To my knowledge, no one was injured. But the sight of that fantastic multitude on the run, pushing one another, couldn't have been more terrifying.⁽⁵⁴⁾

I also had intended to follow Conchita; but five or six meters of heads were between the two of us. From time to time I distinguished her by the light from the flashlights, but without good visibility. She had barely gone outside when she turned to the left. Then she swerved to the left again. And right there in the center of the street, which is rather wide, she fell suddenly on her knees.

Her fall was so unexpected that the thrust of the crowd, by the force of inertia, pushed the people several meters beyond her. Thus, unexpectedly, I saw myself suddenly to the right

54. In this near riot, the Commission wanted to find further proofs against Garabandal, as another question of their questionnaire shows:

Was the climate of shoving, rushing, jostling, etc. proper for a Eucharistic event?

Fr. Etelvino responded without much perspective:

«No. It seems to me it would be rather improper for several reasons.»

I would remind both him and the members of the Commission about what so often occurred around Jesus; for example in the episode of the woman with the hemorrhage. (Luke 8: 33-45)

Certainly reverence and proper decorum are required for a proper relationship with God; but this is not easy to be maintained when strong feelings pull on people. Fortunately God is more understanding than men.

and less than half a meter from her face. I firmly withstood the shoving of those coming from behind, and I succeeded in not being displaced from the privileged place in which I had fallen.

There was a relative calm. I should point out that, slightly before the middle of the night, the clouds previously covering the sky dissipated. And a multitude of stars began to shine around the moon. By their light and the numerous flashlights that lit up the street, I could clearly see Conchita with her mouth open and tongue extended, in the normal position for receiving Communion. She was more beautiful than ever! Her expression, her gestures, far from provoking laughter or being ridiculous, were of impressive and moving mysticism.

Soon, without being able to say how, without Conchita having changed her position or expression in the least, the Sacred Host appeared on her tongue.

It is impossible to describe the sensation that I felt at that moment! And that I still feel today on remembering it. It was something that engorged the heart in the chest, overflowing it with sweetness, and that made the eyes water with an almost uncontainable need to cry.⁽⁵⁵⁾

Later they told me that Conchita had been immobile some two minutes, with the Sacred Host on her tongue, until she swallowed it normally. And then she kissed the crucifix that she carried in her hand.

I was unaware of the time that passed by. I only remember, as if in a dream, the voices that were shouting for me to stoop down. And I also remember feeling a hard whack on my head.

55. I recently heard the impression of another qualified witness: Pepe Díez.

He told me that what he has always described about the miracle of the host is the actual thing that he personally observed very close up . . . But he also said that whenever he described it, it seemed that what he said did not actually correspond to the reality, since everything that he could say did not come close to what there was; it was only a pale reflection.

He could find no words to express what he had experienced.

While observing the thing on that night, he was neither nervous nor excited, but in control of himself and engaged only in observing with the greatest attention. It was only when it was all over that he felt a tremendous sensation; the thrill of experiencing something that could not be repeated in his lifetime.

God is Here!

Then I remembered that I was carrying the motion picture camera around my neck. And without paying attention to the complaints, I remained standing, focused the camera, pressed the trigger, and filmed the last moments of Conchita's Communion. I had never before taken a picture; I barely remembered my cousin's instructions. It seemed doubtful that anything would result from this. And furthermore, there was — I noticed this later — the fact that the visibility was totally inadequate, since I had to operate by light from flashlights.

When the roll came back from being developed, I found myself with almost a new *miracle*: on the film appeared 79 photographs filming the scene. The shoving of the people surrounding me had caused me to be unsuccessful in centering the picture well on many of the frames; but several had taken the picture with complete accuracy.⁽⁵⁶⁾



I don't know what most people think of all these things, nor the decision that the Church will adopt. The only thing of which I can be sure — and I hold this without any kind of doubt — is that on July 18th, 1962, in San Sebastián de Garabandal, two miracles occurred. The first, Conchita's Communion, displayed a supernatural character of enormous proportions; the second, very small showed proof of the infinite condescension of the Virgin toward me, because only through her condescension was I able to be present so close to the prodigy and have it clearly impressed on my film.»

56. Some of these pictures are well known since they have appeared in various publications about Garabandal.

We see then, that there are formal statements from the closest witnesses in favor of the authenticity of the miracle of July 18th. These declarations are not only uncategorical affirmations of the actuality of the miracle, but they also furnish us with some interior experiences that are of great value in judging its origin.

We have seen what Pepe Díez said and continues to say.

And also what Benjamín Gómez confesses without human respect, «*For myself, there was the place that I truly believed in God!*»

Alejandro Damians continues his report:

«When Conchita got up after having received Communion and continued on her way, I couldn't follow her. I had no strength. I withdrew to a corner and there remained entirely alone, leaning on a wall, holding onto the motion picture camera with the little strength that I had left.

I don't know how long I was there. When a calm relaxation replaced the tenseness in my muscles caused by the excitement, I set out walking through the village, with slow steps, without a fixed aim.»

These words describe a lot, but they are not the only ones available to aid us in assessing some of the extraordinary interior experiences that Mr. Damians had on that unforgettable night.

On that same night, in the same place as Alejandro Damians, as close to Conchita as he was, better prepared and more ready than he to film the whole scene, was a man who had come from Paris expressly to do this. He was Doctor Caux,⁽⁵⁷⁾ of great professional prestige among French movie makers. What he *felt* in Garabandal on that night, in contrast to what Mr. Damians *felt*, we can estimate through a conversation that took place between them a year later, on August 15th, 1963.

DR. CAUX — «So you were the one who made the

57. I have the address and telephone number of this man.

film of Conchita's Communion . . . How glad I am to meet you, to talk about that day! Do you mind if I ask some questions?

MR. DAMIANS — *I'm glad to meet you too. Ask whatever you want.*

DR. CAUX — I read your report closely; but I would like more information.

MR. DAMIANS — *You might know that — although the report is complete — there is something that I couldn't put down: what I felt within, I wasn't able to describe.*

DR. CAUX — Tell me, were you watching all the time?

MR. DAMIANS — *From the time I saw myself next to the girl, I didn't look at anything else except her. I can swear that I didn't take my eyes off her tongue for a moment. Obviously I could have blinked, but as you know, that is a matter of a slight fraction of a second. And I saw how — with a speed too fast for the human eye — the Host formed on her tongue. To explain it better, I might say without the passing of a split second.*

DR. CAUX — Why didn't you film it from the beginning?

MR. DAMIANS — *I was struck speechless; stupefied! When I came to myself — I don't know if it actually was this way, since I wasn't able to remember how I filmed it — I took the camera and, in a hurry, was able to take the last seconds of the miracle.*

DR. CAUX — Did it occur to you to touch the Host?

MR. DAMIANS — *No.*

DR. CAUX — Was the girl's tongue in the normal position?

MR. DAMIANS — *I would say that it was held out more than it would ordinarily be extended for receiving Communion.*

DR. CAUX — Now permit me a question that I've wanted to ask for a long time: Did you feel at that moment, a joy so tremendous, so beyond this world, that you couldn't compare it with anything

else, that you wouldn't exchange it for anything, even for a thousand million pesetas, for example?

MR. DAMIANS — *That's a question that I've been asked more than once, and almost with the same words. I certainly wouldn't exchange the happiness that I felt during those moments for a thousand million pesetas, nor for anything in the world. It was a joy so intense, so profound, that I can't explain it, nor can I compare it with anything. It was something exceptional! Something for which I'd give my life, and which didn't allow me later to follow the girl's ecstasy, or to go with my wife, or with anyone; I was only able to take shelter in a corner and sob in silence.*

DR. CAUX — I'm delighted to hear this! Actually that is what I suspected. There still remain two things that I'd like very much to know: What was the reason for such a great joy? And were you in the state of grace at the time? Pardon my forwardness; don't answer if you don't want to.

MR. DAMIANS — *I'll answer gladly. I was in grace with God; and my enormous emotion wasn't caused by the miracle itself, or by seeing the girl with the white object on her tongue. (Some said that the Host had a cross in the center; others, that the cross was double; I didn't see any of this.)*

I'm going to tell something great: the thing that I did see, and that had a tremendous effect on me, was finding myself with the Living and True God. I wouldn't exchange anything in the world for this. If God wants me to see the Miracle that is predicted, I'll be delighted; but if it is not that way, what can I say? I see that it would be difficult for anything in the world to make an impression like the one I had in SEEING HIM during that solemn and magnificent moment in my life.

DR. CAUX — You don't know how happy you make me, on the one hand, and how miserable on the other. I felt the same as you, but in reverse!

Listen to this. I came all prepared to film the affair; I had everything completely ready. And everything went bad for me and I wasn't able to film anything. Only at the last moment, in the

last fraction of a second, did I manage to see the Host, which was disappearing, being swallowed by the girl. At that moment, I was struck by a terrible pain, a horrible pain that overwhelmed me! *The pain of a God that I had come to catch a glimpse of and Who was going away from me . . .*

It was only at that moment that I thought — I had not thought about it before — that I was in mortal sin. I wept like you, but from pain! I understood what sin was and what hell was . . . It was useless for my wife to try to console me; nor could I explain anything, nor could she understand me. That pain was something too great to share or be solaced.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Because of this, I believe that only if God permits me to see the Miracle — now that I try to be always in His grace — will there depart from me this pain so profound that I think it's going to kill me, and which still continues piercing my heart. On that night in Garabandal, I even had the impression that the people were avoiding me, as if they saw my sins!

MR. DAMIANS — *I understand everything, my friend. I have to tell you that on that day it wasn't only your impression that the people didn't like you; it was the truth. The village thought that you had come with a woman who wasn't your wife; and they even asked me to find a way to throw you out. Now I understand why God didn't permit them to do it. You suffered more pain by staying than you would have by being roughly expelled.*

DR. CAUX — You're right. I'd have really preferred that to have happened. But now I know what God is, and what He wants of me, what the hell is of not seeing God and how this pain — I would give more than my whole fortune to avoid it — was relieved in confession, and now again with the hope of seeing the Miracle some day.

Whatever people say, and although many

58. To understand something both about the joy of Mr. Damians and the suffering of Dr. Caux, the teaching of Catholic theology has to be taken into account:

— That heaven consists above all in the joy of the perfect vision of God.

— That hell is above all the horrible existence in having lost God forever.

ridicule me, I cannot abandon the service of the Garabandal cause, to which I owe something as profound as it is unknown and terribly magnificent, something that I hope will depart from me, and be eased on the day of the Miracle. The view of hell moves me to try to move the world myself, announcing what has happened and what is going to happen, so that it can be saved. My family was the first to think that I was crazy, although now they don't think that way. But I assure you that nothing that anyone thinks of me matters; the only thing that matters to me is God.»

This conversation between the man from Barcelona and the doctor from Paris has extraordinary value for its theological implications and scope. Unfortunately, we will have to omit commenting on it here, so as not to lengthen the chapter unduly. However, I want to add what was said in a letter written in April of 1970 by María Teresa le Pelletier de Glatigny:

«One afternoon in Paris, Doctor Caux told us confidentially what he had felt on that night in Garabandal. Among other things, he told me how at the exact moment of the miracle, he had *lived* and experienced what human words could not convey: what it is to lose God — the true pain of hell. At the same time, he was filled with all the horror of being in mortal sin. *Pray for me, Señora* — he told me at the end — *in order that I may never fall again into sin, now that I have experienced its terrible meaning.*»

This page from the story of Garabandal is of superlative worth to anyone who looks at it. Nevertheless, by an assembly of circumstances that cannot be explained, a thick cloud of doubt and suspicion has hovered permanently over the event.

The Diocesan Commission Says NO

Mr. Damians wrote at the end of his report, «I don't know what most people think of all these things, nor the decision the Church will adopt.»

The Church has still not adopted a decision. But

those who said they were acting in the name and with the powers of the Church immediately took a stance: not to admit the actuality of the miracle. As a consequence, there was no other way for them to explain what had happened than to say it was the result of a well-staged fraud.

The principal perpetrator of the fraud could be none other than Conchita. But she could not have done it alone. Immediately the accomplices appeared: her uncle Elías and her cousin Luciuca. Some of those who were in Garabandal on that night began to single them out; and the Commission, with its propensity for negative positions, did not hesitate in taking their point of view.

It did not matter that some of these people, whose testimony in the beginning contributed to confuse the issue, later retracted their testimony.

For example, Fr. Justo wrote to Conchita from his residence two or three days later:

«I saw the Host on your tongue perfectly; but I was disturbed by not having seen it from the beginning. On leaving your home and going behind you, with the intention of not missing a thing, I had the misfortune of falling and of being jostled by a larger number of people. When I recovered from the shock and wanted to get near you, the Host was already in your mouth.»

The devil tempted me and I came to think evil . . . Afterwards, having spent some sleepless nights, I have come to think more evenly. And now I am once again sure that it is God Who gives you His protection.»

The favorable testimonies that could have been taken from many persons who *had seen everything* meant nothing to the Commission.

Doctor Ortiz compiled the names and addresses of some 26 witnesses. And Father Valentín took statements from some more. In his notes, Doctor Ortiz wrote:

«Everyone agrees that the Host was of an exceptional whiteness. And some added that it seemed somewhat thicker than normal. Those who saw the event from the beginning, expressed it like this: *It was as if suddenly the Host came forth from her tongue.* They said too that the miracle was not followed by cries or shouts, but only by some minutes of silence until the girl, still in

ecstasy, left the place.»

It is pointless to show the ridiculousness of the suspicions against Uncle Elías. The people from Garabandal never took them seriously since they knew what this man was: the least suited for such a thing. Nevertheless, Plácido Ruiloba, to dissipate better every doubt, submitted him later to an interrogation that was recorded on a tape recorder. (It took place in Santander, in the home of a woman born in Garabandal.) Whoever hears or reads the dialogue between the educated man from the city and the uneducated man from the village will see the complete inconsistency of the accusations and suspicions that were heaped on Uncle Elías.

It is not surprising that Uncle Elías, by this time, having had enough, replied to a remark from Mr. Ruiloba: *The first thing that they should do* (referring to the priests who had talked like this about him) *is take off their cassocks.* Who would have thought at the time that not many years later Uncle Elías' strong words would become a reality?

In spite of all this, trusting fully in some of the witnesses (which did not fulfill their duty to observe the matter directly), the Commission has continued in the opinion that the miracle of July 18th, 1962, did not happen.

Sometime later one of those who had been there in Garabandal met Fr. Francisco Odriozola in Santander. He mentioned how much he had been surprised that Fr. Odriozola had not come to witness a thing so important. He who was called the «*factotum*» of the Commission replied that he had done well in not going, since it was only a fraud: the visionary had taken the pretext of changing her skirt and blouse to put some hosts in her mouth and then had performed the comedy of the miracle.

How could you say such a thing if you weren't present? the amazed questioner exclaimed.

For a response, Fr. Odriozola spun around and walked away.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Time has passed, but he has not changed his opinion.

In the early part of May, 1963, François Henri,

59. Episode published by F. Corteville in *L'Impartial*, September-October, 1970.

a Frenchman from Paris who had come previously to Garabandal with Dr. Caux, came again. He told Conchita that in Santander he had spoken with the Commission members and that Fr. Francisco Odriozola had pointed out to him: *The miracle of the host was pure fraud. Conchita went out of her house already carrying on her tongue a piece of bread that she had prepared.*

The girl was grieved. She then wrote a letter for Fr. Odriozola, and handed it to the Frenchman to deliver personally.⁽⁶⁰⁾

«The Frenchman told me that you think that I put the Host on my tongue. And that later I fell on my knees. And that I stuck out my tongue to show the Host. And that before that I was alone in my room . . . I had gone to change my dress. And during all the time that I was upstairs, my mother, my two brothers, a cousin, an uncle and one of the Fontanedas were present. And I was upstairs a quarter of an hour, and the Angel appeared to me. And afterward I went out on the street with many people and priests.

It isn't true that I put the Host on my tongue. What a responsibility for me that would be before God! Doesn't it seem that I would have to have some schooling to think that up? And furthermore, I would have to think that the people would observe me. And I wouldn't be smart enough to do a thing like that.

And so St. Michael was the one who put the visible Host on my tongue for the people. And on that day I didn't fake the ecstasy either.»⁽⁶¹⁾

* * *

Obviously on July 18th, 1962, Garabandal, the

60. Maximina González wrote a letter on May 3rd, 1963 to the Pifarré family:

«A Frenchman has been in my house for 6 days now. He is a very good man and has come several times. He is very interested in the apparitions. On his way here he spoke with one of the Commission members at Santander; it seems to me it was the secretary. Conchita sent the following card to this Commission member, whose name is Francisco Odriozola . . .»

The copy that Maximina gives matches exactly with the test given in this book.

61. With this, Conchita alludes also to the fact, known and admitted by her, that sometimes the girls had the frivolousness to fake part of an ecstasy.



“On that day I didn't fake the ecstasy.”

site of so many events and actualities in the History of Salvation, soon became converted into a sign of contradiction. (Luke 2: 34) Some would consider the *miracru* decisively favorable; but others . . .

In his *Memorias* Father José Ramón García de la Riva condensed his impressions of that day like this:

«No member of the Commission came to the place; the *delegate* who took their place saw nothing since the commotion prevented him. Who would be surprised? God alone can name the conditions. And the conditions put down were not followed by those who were called. Those who should have been there, were not.

As a result of this event, there spread out the rumor that all had been a fraud.»

One cannot evade here a comparison with the distant echo of another story of long ago:

Some of the guards came into the city and told the chief priests all the things that had been done (*after the Resurrection of Jesus*) . . . And being assembled together with the ancients, taking counsel, they gave a great sum of money to the soldiers, saying: "Say his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep . . ." And this word was spread abroad among the Jews even unto this day.

(Matt. 28: 11-15)

And so July 18th, 1962, the day that had seemed destined to be decisive in the history of Garabandal, ended in many respects as a miserable failure.





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After the 18th of
July

The *Miracle of the Host* left marks in people's minds, and a trail of changes in their lives.

Some were more suspicious than ever about Garabandal. (We have already seen the opinion that the Commission made). Conversely, others believed more than ever in it.

Now for the first time, or at least with an intensity previously unknown, a regrettable thing came about. The village divided into opposing opinions. Hostility, even antagonism, developed between the parents of the visionaries.

Explosion of Opinions

Concerning the days that followed immediately after July 18th, we have a valuable store of information in the notes taken by the lawyer from Palencia, Luis Navas Carrillo. Although he speaks with great prudence and delicateness, it is not hard to detect the attitude of the village in his remarks:

«After 11:00 on the morning of Thursday, July 19th, a sunny and warm day, I left for Torrelavega to take my mother and sister to the train.

In the village only a few still remained from the great number of strangers who had come for July 18th. There were two young girls from Reinosa camping near Conchita's house, a teacher from Cadiz and his wife and two daughters, and perhaps a few more.

During the trip to Torrelavega, we were of course exchanging opinions about all that had happened. I was preoccupied with the tremendous effect that the apparitions had made on my mother, and I tried to convince her that she shouldn't get so worked up and heated in defending their credibility. Nevertheless, I felt a joy in seeing her stirred so much, telling about the many things that had left a mark in her heart, an old heart of 70 years, but which still maintained its good sense. Listening to her, tears filled our eyes, for she spoke in words favorable toward everything that she had seen and heard. And who can resist the person who lives and breathes what he says?

Loli's father was waiting for me at the Hostal

Gloria in Torrelavega. We stayed for dinner and returned together to the village. There we met the pastor, Father Valentín, who was going to Santander to report to the bishop everything that had happened on the previous day.

We got back at nightfall in sufficient time to be present at the first apparition, the only one of the day, which was his daughter's . . . She kept us up until after 4:30 in the morning . . . And at six o'clock, when I had barely fallen asleep, Jacinta's father called me to pray the rosary at the *calleja*. The girl was waiting there, seated on the rocks. We prayed the rosary in silence and solitude. And then we went to the church, in front of whose doors, still locked, we said the prayers for a Visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Then I understood the sacrifice that was entailed for a girl like Jacinta to get up every day at six in the morning to go to the *cuadro* and pray the first rosary of the day there. Although in the beginning this had been a command from the Virgin, it had not been commanded for months, and still the girl continued coming just to please the Blue and White Lady.»

Among the various things that Mr Navas wrote down in his notes on July 20th, Friday, I do not want to omit these:

«After eating, so as to be prepared for what could happen during the night, I took a long nap. (I had adapted my sleeping hours to the girls.) The room in which I was reposing was like a cave; it was chilly and had none of the flies that were so numerous in the village due to the cattle. I had the feeling of being in a catacomb, in an atmosphere of great recollection and devotion, worthy of the Spiritual Exercises, with an interior joy, under the loving glance and direction of the *Queen and Mistress of Heaven and Earth*, according to the title that the visionaries had given her in their ecstasies.

During the day, while discussing with the people her unfulfilled hope of receiving Communion that day from the hands of the Angel, Conchita said: *How unfortunate that the Angel didn't come!* And responding to people about the reason for her receiving Communion more frequently than the others, she replied, *Because I'm the worst of all.* They told me that this answer was given to her by the Angel when



"I'm the worst of all."

the girl had insisted on knowing the reason for the difference.

On July 21st, Saturday, when we had barely slept an hour, Jacinta's father woke me up again by knocking on the window of my room. It was getting to be 6:00 o'clock and the girl was going to the *cuadro* to pray the customary dawn rosary. We also went there, accompanied by an old woman. We found Jacinta seated; she had placed some paper on top of the rocks to avoid the wetness from the heavy rainfall.

As on the previous day, we went to the church after finishing the rosary. In the courtyard we prayed a Visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament . . .»

The day passed without notable episodes, until 1:00 at night when the first ecstasy occurred. It was Loli's, in the kitchen of her home. The lawyer from Palencia described it:

«It was something marvelous. I couldn't imagine anything comparable. The silence was absolute and the attention complete. The girl offered the Vision whatever had been deposited on the table for this purpose. I had put there a collection of holycards bought in Cabezón de la Sal, and the theme of which was the titles of the litany. With greater dexterity than a card player, the girl opened the holycards in a fan and held them up very graciously like that to be kissed by the Vision . . . She was completely transfigured. Her face was radiant and full of light; the expression didn't belong to her, but to an angel. It seemed as if she were radiating a supernatural halo and we were all immersed in a sensation of serenity and peace, as if being under the gaze of Our Lady.»

Concerning Conchita's ecstasy, which followed Loli's, Luis Navas writes:

«She went out of her house and through the various streets of the village; she made a complete circle around the church; she went to the cemetery and knelt at the gate. We went with her to the *cuadro*, and from there she descended backwards in a marvelous ecstatic dance. The rosary was recited and later we sang the Salve. The voice of the visionary didn't belong to this world. There were still other trips through the village. The girl's expression was held constantly in an ineffable smile, very different from the almost ironical quality that she had many times out of the ecstasies.



“radiant and full of light”

Toward the end, when she began giving back the chains and medals, she noticed that she had dropped a medal. She asked the Vision about it and was astonished at the response she received, since she was heard to say, *But how could I lose it near the church if I haven't gone out of the house?* After the ecstasy she was also astonished in seeing us all perspiring, while she had no sign of exertion or fatigue. And the affair had lasted until 4:30 in the morning! We went to bed happy since the Virgin had presented us a night which for me was happier and richer in the interior life than July 18th itself.»⁽¹⁾

Luis Navas used Sunday, July 22nd to speak at leisure with the four girls:

«They were the ones who brought up the subject of the miracle on July 18th. I noticed some of them, especially Jacinta, had still not spoken about it to their companion Conchita. And I was surprised at the attitude that was then adopted. Jacinta, a timid girl, soon showed herself harsh, always taking the initiative and displaying in her speech a series of judgments and opinions that surely were those beginning to be circulated through the village. And so there came to my knowledge some of what the people thought and what they usually were careful not to mention in the presence of strangers.



“Jacinta, a timid girl, soon showed herself harsh.”

1. Dr. Puncernau writes in his pamphlet about another night at Garabandal:

«I went out on the streets. It was a cold, starry night. For a person from Barcelona, the stars shone with unusual brilliance.

I thought that the Mother of Heaven truly watched over and protected with open arms the inhabitants and visitors at Garabandal.

Passing through the dark and lonely streets of the village, I also had the feeling of being protected.

In spite of the masses of people who came to Garabandal, no unpleasant accident ever occurred that I know about.»

While Jacinta was stating the remarks that were running through the village concerning the disputed Communion of the Angel, she gave me the impression that she was identifying with those remarks, or at least partially accepted them, since she took on a very personal tone in what she said. Loli hardly opened her mouth. Mari Cruz enclosed herself in her habitual silence. And Conchita merely smiled before these absurdities reflecting the bad disposition and bitterness of ignorant people inclined to suspicion. And all this, even though some of the villagers had been able to be present up close to the Communion, not leaving them room for doubt.

It pained me that these open cracks in the friendship between the families of the visionaries existed, and were coming to the surface like this, and that they were also having an effect on the girls themselves. Several times I mentioned in the houses there that the Virgin wanted the four girls to be united, and that they couldn't be separated . . .

They were humanizing the realm of the supernatural that was rising up from the apparitions with proofs and signs more evident each day. This made me remember the scene of the Gospel in which the mother of the sons of Zebedee asked Christ to reserve the first two places in His kingdom for her sons. Here also, each family was endeavoring to make their daughter stand out as if distinguished by special signs as proof of the predilection of the Vision and the people for her. Perhaps Jacinta was irritated by the distinction that this supposed for Conchita, if the event of the miraculous Communion is regarded with the eyes of the flesh, and not those of the spirit and faith.»

Luis Navas ended this dialogue, which he said was «*characterized by a sharpness that was unusual in Jacinta*», with words that were conciliatory and Christian in sentiment.

This episode is revealing, not only for showing the atmosphere existing in the village after that memorable day, but also for illustrating once again the co-existence of high divine gifts with low human weaknesses. These must displease God; but He has infinite patience, waiting for souls to overcome their faults.

The multitude of supernatural favors that the

visionaries at Garabandal received from God did not substantially change their human nature, strongly influenced by the bad inclinations that we call *vices* or *capital sins*. Their failures should have urged them to a moral fight against their inclinations. The girls were certainly not free from them, and outflows of their weak human nature would inexorably appear on more than one occasion.

We should not then be surprised that a certain feeling of envy was shown with regard to the marked distinction that Conchita had on July 18th. And making it worse were the parents' village rivalries and their neighbors' vicious comments.



“from the hands of the Angel”

On Monday, July 23rd, writes Luis Navas:

«After 10:00 in the morning, I was sitting at the door of Mari Loli's house. And she told me that right after the visit that she had made following her morning rosary, she had received Communion near the church door from the hands of the Angel. I didn't expect this because for some time only Conchita had been receiving Communion like this . . . She also told me that she had asked the Angel

for the reason why he had not given Communion to them too on July 18th, since the people of the village had commented that certainly it had been due to their being bad. The Angel answered that it wasn't so.

Jacinta arrived shortly afterwards, and Mari Loli told her about the Communion. My attention was drawn when Jacinta didn't answer and continued into the interior of the store in search of bread, leaving her best friend deserted.»

Of the things that Mr. Navas Carrillo continued to write, I am only putting down those that have the greatest interest for us:

«Observing the ecstasies of the girls produces different effects in people. While it makes some more fervent, it almost scandalizes others, confirming their disbelief.⁽²⁾»

I have been informed of another very meaningful episode that occurred some time later. Loli's newest little brother had just been born. One day she fell into ecstasy near to him, and was heard to speak about him, showing astonishment at one time. *How? So very little and already in mortal sin?*

She didn't put the crucifix on his lips until the child was baptized.⁽³⁾

One day the girls, speaking about the sins that most offend God, put in second place those that were committed in marriage. They used words whose significance was certainly beyond their rudimentary education.»

On that Monday, July 23rd, Luis Navas said

2. This can be considered with the prophecy about Jesus. Behold this child—the aged Simeon told Mary at the Presentation in the Temple—is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted. (Luke 2:34)

3. Once again Garabandal comes ahead of its time to indicate deviations that would soon show themselves openly in the Church.

And today no one can be unaware—just a few years after Loli's ecstasy— what at that time only the most learned could have perceived: the attack by the *new theology* on the old Christian dogma concerning original sin. This attack has not stopped in spite of the unequivocal words of Paul VI that proclaimed again in the *Credo of the People of God* (June 29th, 1968) what has always been believed by the Roman Catholic Church about original sin.

farewell to Garabandal. The result of his stay he expressed in this way:

«Fortified by pure air, both spiritual and material, my continued meditations led me to accept with internal joy the troubles of this life, and also to look without excessive fear at death, which, at the end of everything, is no more than a frontier . . .

I felt a burning desire (and I petitioned the Mother of God and Our Mother many times) to be truly good, not halfway; for example, correcting my brusqueness, my stubbornness, my obstinacy, which together with a frankness that is sometimes excessive, are the origin of much discourtesy and many disagreements. Trying to defend the truth, I haven't always been charitable. And I need to be convinced that, if charity is given, sanctity is earned.»

It would be magnificent if every pilgrimage to Garabandal produced the same effects!

* * *

On the following Wednesday, July 25th, all over Spain there was a big celebration: the feast day of its patron and Father in the Faith, the Apostle St. James. It was the second time during the apparitions that this holy day took place in Garabandal. Would something happen on this day?

Leafing through a mixed-up stack of references and testimonies referring to this time, I found this statement from María Herrero de Gallardo, who wrote down what she heard from Father Valentín months later:

«You see, Señora, that at times I tell you things that I don't tell anyone else, since I know that you receive them well and think about them, while many others find them ridiculous.

For example, I remember the feast day of St. James the Apostle. It was almost midnight and about twenty people were watching the girls' ecstasy. At times I looked at the sky, a beautiful summer sky covered with stars, with here and there a little white cloud drifting by. Suddenly — I saw this with my own eyes, and the persons that I mentioned also saw it — our patron St. James appeared on a beautiful white horse, like the tradition described in Spanish history. For a few minutes he seemed to make a path across the sky,

disappearing at times behind white clouds and reappearing again. It was really wonderful.»

I find no great difficulty in accepting that this happened. And I would point out further how opportune would be a new appearance and intervention of the *Defender of the Spanish Main*, when once again it is the hour of a great battle for the faith of its people against many enemies within and without. If he was needed so much in the days of horses and swords, he is needed much more today against enemies wielding more sinister weapons in the heart of the land dedicated to the apostle called the *Son of Thunder*.⁽⁴⁾

Expert Witnesses

Three days later, on Sunday, July 28th, there came to Garabandal for the first time an illustrious priest from Madrid: Father Enrique Valcarce Alfayate.⁽⁵⁾ He made a digest of his observations in a report that he wrote later in Comillas and that bears the date of July 30th, 1962.

In it he describes a most remarkable experience: his own participation in one of the girls' ecstatic marches:

«After the rosary, I remained praying for a while in the church. Suddenly Dr. Ortiz came in and told me to go outside if I wanted to see the girls in ecstasy. I went out immediately. They were walking with the people behind them. I pushed my way through and managed to join Mari Loli and Conchita, who were walking together, holding arms. Later I was told that the other two, Jacinta and Mari Cruz, were going in the same way with another group of people down a different street.»⁽⁶⁾

4. Mark 3: 17

5. A cardinal for many years in the diocese of Madrid with important functions and duties there, this priest came from the area of Leon in Bierzo, where his brother was a parish priest.

6. On August 2nd, Maximina wrote a letter to the Pifarrè family: **«Saturday (July 22) was extremely moving. There were many people and the four girls had an apparition. They went separated in pairs. As there were so many people, it was better that way: some in one direction and others in another. The four girls sang the rosary together—in different places. While we were with Loli and Conchita at the Pines, the singing of the people going with the other two girls through the village could be heard perfectly. All were singing at the same time up above and down below. Look, it made a marvelous sensation. It seemed that I saw Dr. Ortiz singing with all his might. Good, we all sing whatever we can.»**



“tremendous and amazing”

The phenomena as a whole were for me something tremendous and amazing. The fast walk over really rough terrain, almost inaccessible, strewn with the worst obstacles . . . running at times at incredible speeds, both forwards and backwards, as if the girls had wings on their feet . . . with their heads tilted sharply backwards,

with their eyes unblinking and fixed constantly on the alleged vision . . .

The trip was made while singing the holy rosary (the girls leading and the people in the village following) except for the Our Fathers and certain ejaculations which the girls said

with great devotion, very slowly and with deep feeling. Furthermore their singing was beautifully intoned, with dulcet voices and excellent harmony.

The walk lasted from about 10:15 at night until after 11:30. During almost all this time, I was able to go with them, hanging on either to Loli's or Conchita's arm. By holding on this way, I was able to follow them in spite of many obstacles, running swiftly and with a strange sensation of security. The falls and stumbles that I made at times always happened to me when I let go of the girls.⁽⁷⁾

The end of it all took place at the church doors, which were locked. First of all Loli raised Conchita in her arms, higher than Loli herself, and then Conchita did the same with Mari Loli. After kneeling down and suddenly recovering their normal state, they looked around with a smile, which later they shared with all of us.»

To these experiences on Saturday, Fr. Enrique added those of the following Sunday, July 29th, which he also spent in Garabandal. On Father Valentin's request he celebrated Mass in the village at 9:00 in the morning.

And the *personal impression* of his experiences he wrote down in a report at Comillas:

«The rivalry displayed against Conchita by the other three didn't make a good impression on me.⁽⁸⁾ Nor the prefixing of the time for the

7. It should be pointed out that Father Enrique Valcarce was advanced in both years and kilograms and was not exactly in shape for an obstacle course. Only when he was hanging onto the girls did he feel extremely light.

—Heavens, Reverend Father—someone said—*be careful on these streets at such speed, or you'll kill yourself.*

—Don't worry—he answered—I *feel as though I have lost 40 years.*

8. Father Enrique put down in his report:

«I had the good luck that the first persons whom I met were the alleged visionaries. I had just heard that on that day, Saturday, July 28th, Mari Loli had received Communion from the hands of an angel, and only she. Meeting then with Conchita, I immediately told her that I had learned that Mari Loli had received Communion. Right

ecstasy; nor the fact of the walks, seemingly senseless,⁽⁹⁾ around the church, to the Pines from the church, and from the church to the Pines or the cemetery, through the streets of the village, time and time again.⁽¹⁰⁾



“The facts do not have a natural explanation.”



Nevertheless, taken as a whole, everything that I have tried to describe was truly exceptional and amazing. It is certain that it is not a product of disease, either psychiatric or organic. It seems to me, therefore, that the facts do not have a natural explanation.

away she answered me with a certain air of reproach: *I myself receive many more times than anyone else; I—almost every day; they—very few times.*»

If the report of Father Enrique reproduces *faithfully* the words and tone of Conchita, it should be recognized that the girl was still far from perfection, like Jesus' disciples who, even at the time of the Last Supper, were disputing among themselves **which of them was the greatest.** (Luke 22: 24)

9. At the time of making his report, it seems this way to Father Enrique; but it should be pointed out that he had different feelings when he was taking part in these things.

10. It is easy to answer these and the other difficulties of Father Enrique, understandable in someone with only brief experience with Garabandal. Those who have attentively followed it from the beginning can see clearer in the matters that were obscure to him.



“expression of great beauty”

The girls show an expression of great beauty when they are in ecstasy, an expression frequently angelic (for example, with Mari Loli). But in the normal state, they are quite withdrawn, and very taciturn.

The remarks that I have just made should not be taken out of proportion. The very matter of the rivalry that I thought was found between Conchita and the other girls is good proof that this is not an act concocted by the four girls together. What leaves me the most confused is the matter of the senseless walks, which seem to be without basis.

But I recognize that I lack material for judgment so as to take definitive position. I would have to go many times to the village and observe everything more minutely.

Therefore, if no medical explanation can be found for these phenomena, I consequently reject the explanation saying it was an act concocted either by the girls themselves, or by third parties. But I don't go so far as to say it is a supernatural phenomena due to Our Lady.

Then, what is it? *I don't know.*»

If the illustrious priest from Madrid left Garabandal without knowing the cause of it, or without venturing to express his opinion, it was not the same with two visitors who arrived in the village at the very time he was leaving. Their names should be mentioned, since they comprise part of this enigmatic story. They were Dr. Ricardo Puncernau, a distinguished neurologist from Barcelona, and Fr. Luis López Retenaga, a professor of theology in the diocesan seminary at San Sebastián.

I cannot give the exact dates of their arrivals; but certainly they were in Garabandal in the early days of August, 1962; and for the neurologist, it was not the first visit, although perhaps it was the first for the priest.

The attorney Luis Navas left Garabandal on July 23rd and was not planning to return until Saturday, August 11th, to be there for the feast of the Assumption. But he returned a week earlier as he explained:

«I was with my in-laws in Santander. I aroused their curiosity first, and then their interest in Garabandal, in such a way that we agreed to return there on Saturday, August 4th. On that day, after having enjoyed a beautiful and sunny morning at the beach, we ate and set out for San Sebastián de Garabandal.

I was very happy to renew friendships there that had been formed during the apparitions. Dr. Puncernau was there, having come from Barcelona, this time with his wife and oldest son. I single him out from the rest because of his position as the neurologist who prepared a complete report for the pastor about the visionaries' irrefutable normalness before and after their ecstasies. Also, I met many priests and religious there, among whom was one from the province of San Sebastián who had the intention of informing the bishop of his diocese about all these things.»

This priest from the Basque province of San Sebastián undoubtedly was Fr. Luis López Retenaga, although Mr. Navas does not mention his name.⁽¹¹⁾

«As on other occasions, the people had hardly gone outside after the rosary on that Saturday,

11. I do not want to pass over the appearance of Fr. Luis Retenaga in Garabandal since he was to assume an important role in the observation and judgment of these phenomena. Perhaps it could be said that he was for the events of 1962 what Fr. Ramón María Andreu was for those of 1961.

He was soon able to capture the confidence of the seers and their families, which assured him a privileged place for following the events near at hand.

As a result of his observations and reflections, he composed a long three part report addressed to Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal, the bishop of Santander at the time. The first part was completed in San Sebastián on December 18th, 1962; the second, in the same city on April 6th, 1963; and the third on April 9th of the same year. We will refer several times to this report in what is still left of our story.

Our Lady's day, when Conchita and María Dolores were in ecstasy at the very door of the church. I was very happy about this since I had not seen them together in ecstasy since that famous October 18th of the previous year, the day of the message; although on that occasion, the four girls had been together.

They went out holding hands, as if Mari Loli were letting herself be docilely led by her older sister, obeying the suggestions of the Vision.»

What the attorney goes on to narrate coincides with what Fr. Enrique Valcarce wrote in his report about the happenings of the previous Saturday. From this we can see that within the almost continual variations of the phenomena, there was a certain uniformity of procedure.

From the pastor Fr. Valentín we have some brief notes that complement those of Luis Navas and Maximina González, helping us to better re-create in our minds the atmosphere at Garabandal during the early days of August, 1962:

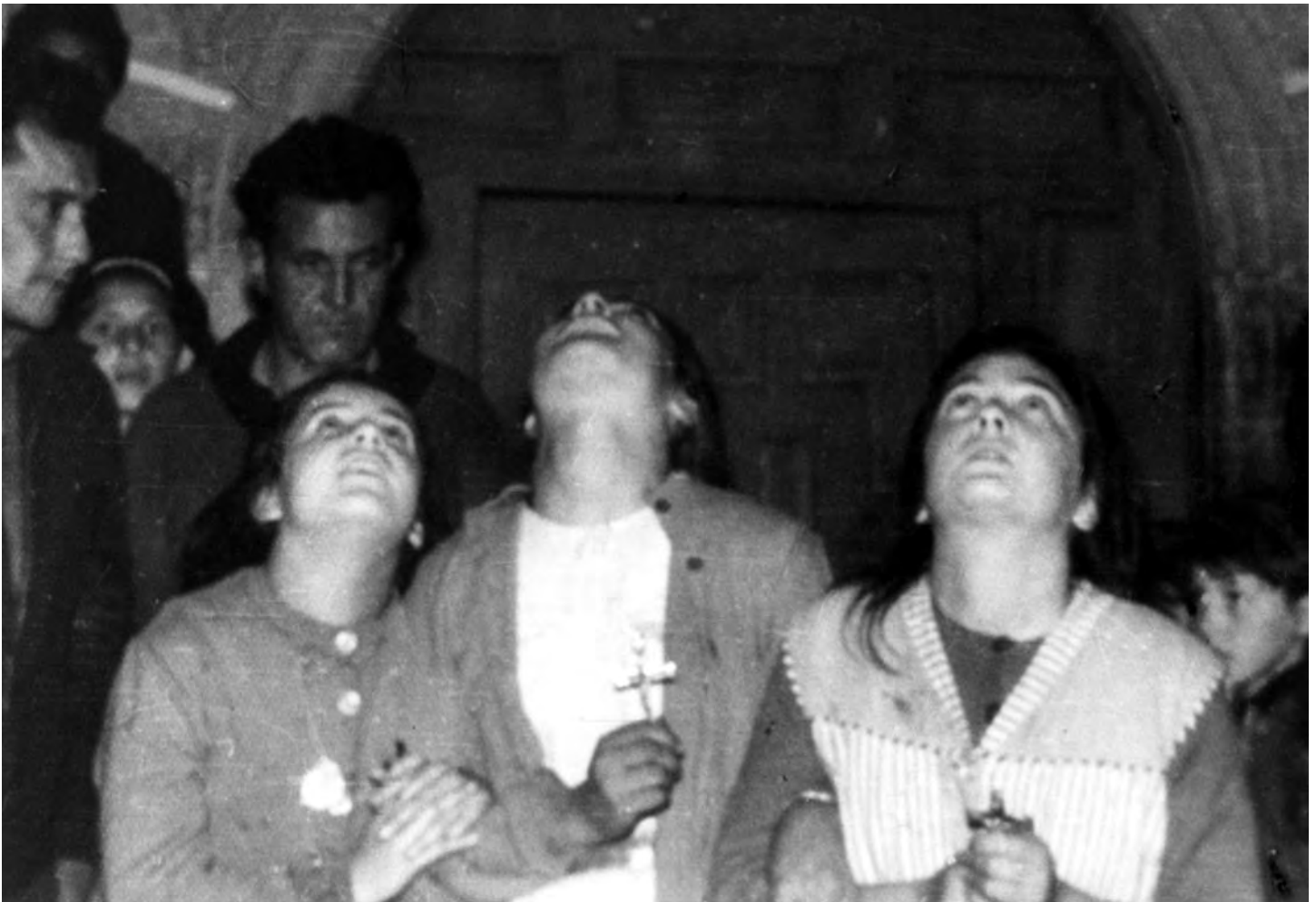
«August 3rd. At 4:00 in the morning, Loli went into ecstasy in her home. There were many people from Barcelona, Madrid, Santander . . . a diocesan priest, a Claretian Father and a Jesuit. She gave the articles to be kissed to the Vision, and afterwards she returned them to their owners. She didn't leave her home.

August 4th. At 9:30, after the rosary, the four girls went into ecstasy. They went toward the *cuadro*. Later they went to the Pines praying the rosary. During the Hail Mary, they said, *Hail Mary, Mother of God and Our Mother*.⁽¹²⁾

12. Fr. Valentín was struck by the addition of *our Mother* to the recitation of the Hail Mary. And he was not the only one—Luis Navas, the lawyer from Palencia, who was present that day, wrote:

«We had never heard them say it this way, *Mother of God and our Mother*. The village priest took note of this very interesting detail that so much reflects the maternal character of the Virgin. The visionaries' way of speaking, with their even-pitched, soft, delicate, melodious voices filled our souls with tranquility, as though we were feeling Our Lady above our heads.»

We can understand Mr. Navas' sentiments. But if the new form of the Hail Mary was a novelty to him, certainly it was not to Fr. Valentín, unless it was due to the tone and the persistence of the girls, since *Mother of God and our Mother* was heard for the first time in Garabandal on August 1st of the previous year, as has been mentioned.



“Hail Mary, Mother of God and Our Mother.”

They descended backwards toward the church; they walked around it. It lasted about an hour. There were two professors from San Sebastián, a Claretian priest, a Jesuit — Father Alba, from Barcelona — and Father José Ramón.»⁽¹³⁾

* * *

And so at the beginning of the second August of apparitions in Garabandal we see that the phenomena continued without eclipse. And the questions continued . . . without answers. The inquisitive came and went, but also those who seriously sought to understand the reasons and the explanations for all these things.

13. We already know one of these two professors at San Sebastián: Fr. José Ramón, the pastor of Barro. As for the Jesuit from Barcelona, Fr. Alba, it could be said that he was a distinguished apostle, deeply appreciated in religious and spiritual circles in the city of Ciudad Condal. Who then was the Claretian father that Fr. Valentín mentions? Certainly it was the missionary father spoke of in Maximina’s letter; in another report the name of Fr. Ellacuria has been seen.

As can be seen, a fine contingent of visiting priests.

The memory of July 18th lingered on, the day of the *Miracle of the Host*.

Now we see better that the unequivocally predicted miracle or *milagrucu* came mainly to call attention to the most important treasure that we have in our Christian and ecclesiastical heritage: *the actual presence of the God-man among us as our daily nourishment*.

However, as so often occurs in the affairs of God, this served also as a test, as a means **for the fall and for the rise of many**. (Luke 2:34) Some believed more than ever; others doubted more than ever. Some became fervent; some lost interest; and some took on a spirit most opposed to the Eucharist: that of discord, hostility, jealousy.

* * *

The hidden mystery, in spite of everything, continued onward. The expectation of its final outcome did not die with the defections in the ranks of the first followers; soon new disciples came forth from those called at the last hour.



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The Unsearchable Ways of God

For more than a year, on the high mountain at Garabandal, strange and incomprehensible affairs were transpiring . . . disturbing to the **wise and prudent**. (Luke 10:21)

They could not understand the purpose of this.

They could not understand why this was taking place there.

If God wanted to communicate something, He could do it in a more direct and simple manner, without such a barrage of strange affairs.

And He could do it soon.

The hope and expectation were taking too long. And there were reasons for not accepting as *coming from God — Who is the Light* — this melange of phenomena that even after such a long time was not clear as to its plan or purpose.

Things of God — think the learned — necessarily have to be more intelligible. *They* walk on the terrain of reason. But for the learned and unlearned alike, this proclamation from God was written in the Old Testament centuries ago:

**My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor your ways My ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are exalted above the earth,
So are My ways exalted above your ways,
And My thoughts above your thoughts.** (Is. 55:8-9)

And with the coming of the Word into the world, the situation did not change. In the middle of the New Testament stands this formidable statement from the greatest preacher of the Gospel:

**Oh, the depth of the riches
Of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!
How incomprehensible are His judgments,
And how unsearchable His ways.** (Rom.11:33)

Today it is often said that the important thing is the Bible; that is everything.

All right, but is the Bible a series of lessons logically co-ordinated, perfectly explained, and easily intelligible? If there are broad ways, they are those of the Bible, that is to say, the ways of the History of Salvation.

If there are ways of confusion, they are those of God in the courses of that History.

In attempting to explain to people what the Bible was, a scriptural scholar wrote in a popular review:

“Open the Holy Book, what do we find there? Many think they will find sublime ideas and marvelous theories concerning God, man, and the world. What a disillusion! Next to exciting stories, we find others very trivial, harsh, and unacceptable to our mentality.

All these texts confuse us. Why? Because of the inaccurate idea of God’s revelation to us. We imagine God as a type of theology professor, as a preacher who *speaks well and says elegant things*.

God reveals Himself to us, coming down to meet us, walking with us, adapting himself to our steps — even our stumblings, falls, ignorance. Jesus spoke to His disciples of **things that you cannot understand now; the Spirit of Truth will give you the understanding of everything later**.

These words express better than any theory the pedagogy always used by God in His revelation. He knows that it is not possible to give everything in the first lesson. Such love! He adapts Himself to us. When we were children, He spoke to us as children. That is to say, He limited Himself to being at our side, without our even noticing Him. And He does not hurry to take away our stubbornness. The Bible is the history of the perennial association and conversation between God and man.”

(*El Santo* — January, 1972)

It seems to me that it is not difficult to understand the Virgin’s association and conversation with us — through the girls — which has been the basis of the amazing story of Garabandal.

Mysterious Monotony

During the whole month of August, 1962, the second August at Garabandal during the apparitions, the marvelous and upsetting *monotony* continued.

The *monotony* consisted in what was occurring there, what had never occurred anywhere else:

ecstasies, prayers, inimitable songs, walks of an astounding grace and agility⁽¹⁾ to the Pines, to the graveyard, through the streets of the village, around the church . . .

Fr. Valentín's notes and other people's reports narrate essentially the same thing through the month of August. But from time to time came forth an interesting and revealing point. For example:

«August 18th. During an apparition on that day, Saturday, Conchita said to the Virgin, *You pray very much! To Whom do you pray? . . . To Jesus? You pray to Him? . . . Even though He is your Son! Why? . . . Who is God?*⁽²⁾ . . . *Oh! Only one God.*

She said too: *Why don't you let Mari Cruz see you? See how sad she is! Be with me half the time and with Mari Cruz the other half.*»



“To Whom do you pray?”

1. There are numerous testimonies about the amazing mobility during the ecstatic marches. José Luis González Quevedo, born in Santander and for many years a resident of New York, went several times to see the ecstasies during the first summer of the events in 1961. He was so impressed that he cannot forget what he experienced there in spite of the long time that has since passed.

On one afternoon he was accompanying Conchita in ecstasy. Suddenly the girl rushed forward like a flash in the direction that would have taken her straight to a crash against a wall he saw in the background. This man, who was then young and athletic, raced after her to catch her and stop her in time; but he could not reach her, nor was his intervention necessary. He told me:

«When there were only a few centimeters left before smashing and hurting herself against the wall, the girl, who couldn't see ahead of her because of the position of her head, stopped abruptly, unexplainably. And I arrived in time to see her smiling broadly with a marvelous expression . . . It was something that I could never forget.»

But I do not want to pass over a letter that Maximina González wrote to Dr. Ortiz on the following Sunday, which is dated simply *August, 1962*:⁽³⁾

« . . . I didn't hear it personally, but some of those who were there heard it, among them a priest. And it was on one of those nights that Conchita came to my home, where I was lodging some people from Catalana.⁽⁴⁾ My children were sleeping on a mattress laid on the floor, and I had put chairs around it so that no one would see them like this. Conchita came in ecstasy and went into the downstairs rooms and made the sign of the cross over the beds. And then she went where some children of the people from Catalana were sleeping and she gave them the crucifix to kiss.

Then Conchita left; but she stopped on the stairway and said a few things. And later she let out a laugh and turned around and went straight toward where I had hidden my children. (I was perspiring with dread that they would be seen on the floor like that.) She made her way through the chairs and fell on her knees next to the children. She spoke for a while and at that time she was heard to say, *Oh! So he is going to be a priest?*

And she gave the cross to both of them, but to the little boy she made a cross at his feet — only the little boy.

I mentioned this yesterday, Saturday, to a missionary priest from Bilbao who was in my home for a while. And he told me that the cross that Conchita made at the feet of the little boy

2. We have another *response* here in anticipation of the deviations and errors that were then secretly developing with regard to the Faith, and which only after the Council would come into the open concerning a dogma so fundamental to Christianity as the Divinity of Christ. The Holy See finally had to intervene—perhaps somewhat too late—with a document from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, published in March of 1972.

As in so many other matters, also in regard to the Divinity of Christ, the *new theologies* of today have succeeded in popularizing the old heresies.

3. By one of Maximina's letters to the Pifarrés in Barcelona, we can situate the date since it is dated «*Monday, August 20*», and begins like this: «*Asunción, if you could have seen what happened last night!*»

4. Maximina used to provide lodging in her home for the visitors to Garabandal. This time she over-committed herself to such a point that there were no beds left for her own daughter and son to sleep in.

was something very mysterious . . .⁽⁵⁾ I don't know how he explained it to me, but I'm very happy. Fr. Luis Retenaga prayed for the child and blessed him many times; and it could be that the Virgin heard him, since my son from his youth has been saying that he wants to be a priest. May God will it! May he be a good one.⁽⁶⁾

Today, Sunday, Conchita and Loli fell into ecstasy on going out from the rosary, which was at night⁽⁷⁾ They walked like this for some time. Jacinta and Mari Cruz walked by themselves since they went into ecstasy a little later. And afterwards the four joined together, went up together to the Pines, and came down backwards. If you could have seen how they descended through the worst paths! It was very dark. Everyone was coming down with great difficulty, while they came down without stumbling. They walked through the entire village backwards, praying two rosaries. It lasted a long time. Last night Mari Cruz' ecstasy lasted a very long time; they said about two and a half hours.»

We have some brief notes from Fr. Valentin that complement those of Luis Navas and Maximina González, helping us to re-create better in our minds the atmosphere at Garabandal during the

5. I do not understand the explanation of the missionary father (who surely was the *Claretian* that Father Valentín mentions in his notes, since those of the congregation founded by St. Anthony Claret are officially called *Missionary Sons of the Heart of Mary*). But it well might be related to the ancient words of Isaiah (52:7), repeated later by Nahum (2:1), and finally applied by St. Paul (Romans 10:15) to the Church and the preachers of the Gospel, to the traveling missionaries: **How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things.**

6. This desire of a good Christian mother like Maximina is understandable; and also her concern for his *being good*, for there is nothing more lamentable than a priest unfaithful to his calling.

The boy to whom this refers, Pepe Luis, after starting his studies at the seminary near to Fr. Retenaga in Rentería (Guipuzcoa), continued for some years at Comillas (Santander).

After this, prior to being ordained, he did leave the seminary. During his first Christmas vacation in 1964, his cousin Conchita wrote him a beautiful prayer entitled *The Prayer of a Young Seminarian*. The students in our seminaries today could be inspired by the letter and the spirit of this prayer.

7. Normally the rosary was said on Sundays at an hour different from the weekdays, when it was recited at night-fall after the people had returned from work. On Sundays it was said at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Maximina notes this; and she should know, since she was the one who ordinarily led it.

early part of August, 1962:

«August 22nd. The four fell into ecstasy; first Loli and Conchita; afterwards, Jacinta; and finally, Mari Cruz. The latter, on coming down from the Pines, went to the house of Daniela (who was in bed, with her leg in bad condition, impossible for her to walk). And she gave the crucifix to her to kiss. Daniela jumped from the bed and said that she was cured. I think that there was some suggestion, but she jumped up and went up the stairs as if she had nothing wrong. We will see what happens tomorrow.»

Fr. Valentín did not hide his disbelief that this was really a miraculous cure. However Fr. de la Riva added to the words of the Garabandal pastor some words of his own:

«I was at the village, and I heard the joyful shouts of the people who had seen what had happened, and were discussing it as if it were a miracle. I was able to see later that there was no natural explanation for what happened. Daniela went to have an X-ray taken of herself and a complete cure was reported. She is now married and has children, which wouldn't have been possible with the disease she had in her hip.»

As the month was about to end, on Wednesday, August 29th, something occurred that seems very important, although Fr. Valentín dispatches it in a few words:

«Loli had an apparition in her home at 5:30. She gave the articles to the Vision to be kissed. An Anglican woman was very much moved.⁽⁸⁾ She wanted to be baptized.»⁽⁹⁾

* * *

The visitors at Garabandal were numerous during the month of August, since it is a vacation month and the Santander area is a traditional resort area during the summertime.

We know from Fr. Valentín, for example, that on August 8th, besides the two priests from San

8. The Anglican Church originated in the 16th century during the rise of Protestantism when Henry VIII, king of England, broke away from the Papacy in Rome. The Anglican Church was imposed with force as the official religion, and although it had its hierarchy and *ecclesiastical* organization, it recognized the king as its supreme head.

9. Meaning with the Catholic rite, since it is supposed that she had already been baptized in the Anglican Church.

Sebastián previously mentioned, there were many people from Asturias in the village. On the 12th there were two Monsignors from Oviedo: Monsignor Novalin and Monsignor Rafael Somohano. On the 15th, feast of the Assumption, an Augustinian and a Franciscan priest and two nuns were there; on the 16th, three priests from Palencia; on the 17th, 200 visitors, among whom were the son of Carrero Blanco (the Spanish Vice-president), and another son of the mayor of Madrid, Count Santa Marta de Babío, two religious brothers of Martín Artajo, Mr. Alberto, secretary of the Attorney General and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Javier, who held a high position in the prestigious *Editorial Católica*.

Among the many qualified visitors in Garabandal during those days, we have to single out the pastor from Barro, Fr. de la Riva. His stay was a long one and he sought to use all his time to the maximum. A page from his *Memorias* tells us his experiences during those days:

«I went down every day to Cossío to celebrate the Mass.⁽¹⁰⁾ Then I would go back up to the village again and ask where I could find the young seer that I wanted to see. Then I took the road leading to the pasture where she was working.⁽¹¹⁾ In the evening I returned to the village.

At nightfall there was the rosary in the church, then the apparitions, frequently very lengthy. All this greatly exhausted me.»

This exhaustion that was wearing him down led him one afternoon, perhaps on August 11th,⁽¹²⁾ Saturday, to refrain from accompanying the visionaries in their ecstatic marches. On going outside after the rosary, instead of following Jacinta who was marching at the time through the village in a trance, he accompanied the girl's mother to her home and there began to eat dinner. After dinner, with its anecdotes of the apparitions, Fr. de la Riva went to Maximina's home where he was lodging and went to bed.

10. In order to dissuade priests from going to Garabandal, they were not permitted to celebrate Mass in the village church; and we know how difficult was the road to Cossío.

11. These stables were generally a long way from the village and reached by steep and difficult trails.

12. I name this date since according to the notes of Fr. Valentín there were three seminarians in the village on this day. Fr. de la Riva, who gives no date in his report says nevertheless: «I asked a seminarian from Balboa . . .»

«I was a little sad» — he said — «for not having gone to the apparitions that day like the other villagers and the visitors . . . In a brief prayer before going to bed, I asked the Virgin to give me a sign that she wasn't angry with me for not going to the apparitions after the rosary. And I fell asleep like a log.

After several hours, I heard someone running and the voice of Nandín (*Fernando, Loli's brother*) saying, *Maximina, open up! Loli is here*. I turned on the light, looked at my watch, and saw that it was a quarter to four in the morning. I said to myself, *It has to be almost an hour that Loli is in ecstasy*.⁽¹³⁾

In the meantime, people were knocking at the door of my room. I sat up quickly on the bed and said, *Come in*. The door opened with a bang and Loli appeared in ecstasy. She fell on her knees and began to crawl on them, little by little, toward the wall that was facing me. This made me greatly wonder since I still didn't know that, when the girls visited the homes in ecstasy, almost the first thing that they did was to pray for the departed from the family. On the wall in front of me was a large photograph of Maximina and her husband, who had been dead for years. Kneeling under the photograph, Loli prayed for some time.

Then she pivoted and on her knees and went toward my bed. With the crucifix that she held in her hand, she first made the sign of the cross over the pillow, and then she put it on my lips while smiling. She continued smiling, turned around and began to make her way toward the door, still on her knees. When she came to the doorway, she stood up and went out that way.

Then I said to myself, *The Virgin is in the village . . . and you are still in bed!*. I dressed quickly and ran toward the church. On passing by Loli's house, I noticed that the girl was in the kitchen still in ecstasy.»

Naturally Fr. de la Riva went inside, and soon became aware that the girl was then speaking about what had happened in Maximina's house.

After the ecstasy, there were two questions: the

13. The seminarian told Father de la Riva that Loli had predicted an apparition for 3 o'clock.



“Loli appeared in ecstasy.”

first, to find out why the trance had begun much later than the hour predicted (which had been at 3:00 a.m.); and the second, to explain the reason why Loli went unexpectedly to Maximina's house.

Loli answered the first question by saying that «*The Virgin wanted to show her displeasure this way*», because on that night some women had joked about the apparitions. They had asked the girl if the Virgin painted her nails, if she combed her hair, if she wore a bracelet . . .

No one could answer the second question adequately. Ceferino could only say that his daughter, without his understanding the reason, «*immediately on being in ecstasy, at about 3:45 in the morning, had gone running toward Maximina's house.*»

«Then I was aware» — declared Fr. de la Riva — «that the Virgin had deigned to hear my petition, giving me the *sign* that I had requested.»

And the proof was not for his benefit alone.

The Eucharist in the Forefront

It is unquestionable that if Garabandal began as a spectacular *Marian Epiphany*, it soon revealed itself also as an attempt to promote Eucharistic devotion. And in this regard, it can be recognized that it was coming just at the right time, since surrounding the *Mysterium Fidei*, the Eucharist, there was then beginning to emerge the enormous crisis of doctrine and devotion that is so well known to everyone today.

This Eucharistic dimension of Garabandal had a special importance during the second year, 1962, as the reader may have noticed.

Among the many episodes that took place almost monotonously in the mystery of Garabandal during the month of August, there was a *Mystical Communion* on Monday, August 6th. This was not the only day for these Communions. From Fr. Valentín's notes, we know about other days in August on which they took place. Furthermore, the priest's

notes on August 2nd specifically state: «*Conchita says that from the 18th of July, whenever there isn't a Mass; and Loli too*». This sentence cannot be interpreted in any other way than that Conchita and Loli ordinarily were receiving Communion from the hands of the Angel whenever they were not receiving it from the hands of a priest. If such Communions passed unnoticed many times in the village, it was due to the time and place in which they occurred.

Before returning to August 6th, let us see what happened on the previous day, Sunday, that Fr. Valentín described in his notes:

«Today Conchita came to Mass after the Sanctus and came up then to receive Communion. Since she had missed the Mass and it was a day of obligation, I didn't give her Communion. I did the same with a man from Cataluña and two seminarians; but I finally gave Communion to the seminarians, since they told me that they were going to hear Mass in the evening.»

What could be thought of the pastor's attitude? He is correct, provided that Conchita was culpable of being late — something which Fr. Valentín had no way of knowing — or if it was something habitual with her. And was this the case? I do not know; but I have an article written by Mr. González-Gay of Santander:⁽¹⁴⁾

«On the previous night the girls had been in ecstasy for a long time, causing them to retire very late for sleep. (Father Valentín himself corroborates this, noting: «*At four in the morning Conchita and Loli had an apparition; it lasted 45 minutes.*») The pastor rang the bell at eight o'clock. Conchita and her mother, who didn't hear the bell, came into the church when the Mass was already past the Offertory. At the proper time, Conchita went with the other people to receive communion, kneeling down at the Communion rail. But Father Valentín skipped over her twice while distributing the Sacred Host. He didn't want to give her Communion since he had seen that she had come late for Mass. Two big tears rolled out from the girl's eyes, and she returned to her place. The holy Mass ended, and going outside, she ran from the church in the direction of the Pines . . .»

14. In a short series of articles entitled *What hasn't been written about Garabandal* that appeared in the weekly *Qué Pasa* (Madrid) during 1968.

This was the incident of Sunday, August 5th; but the episode that really interests us pertains to the following day, Monday, Father Valentín starts his brief annotation like this:

«August 6th. Today I said Mass at nine in the morning. Loli and Jacinta received Communion. Conchita was not at Mass, but at 11:30 she went to the Pines⁽¹⁵⁾ where there were three brothers of St. John of God.»⁽¹⁶⁾

Since a report was made by these three brothers let us examine it:

«Arriving from various areas, we had joined some other Brothers in our house at Celorio (Asturias),⁽¹⁷⁾ to make the Spiritual Exercises which were to begin in the afternoon or evening on Monday, the 6th of August. During supper on Sunday, August 5th, four of us brothers decided to go up to San Sebastián de Garabandal. When the hour to leave arrived on August 6th, Brother Juan Bosco called the other three. One of them came to the door and said, *I'm not going. I'm backing out.*⁽¹⁸⁾

The three of us left for Llanes at once . . . We arrived at Cossío about 9:00 in the morning. From there six kilometers of very bad road

15. Fr. Valentín's note seems inaccurate. But it should not be judged too quickly. I found this in a letter from Maximina to the Pifarré family, dated August 7:

«The pastor said that on Monday the Mass would be at 11:00. Afterwards it was changed and he came to say it at 9:00. We didn't know it, and since the bells aren't heard well here, we missed the Mass; and the pastor doesn't like to give Communion if it is not during the Mass.»

16. Although St. John of God was born in Portugal, it was in Granada that he became known for his heroic charity toward the sick especially the mentally ill. Here began the Order of Hospitalers, so blessed and specialized in the care of the mentally ill, crippled, and retarded children.

The brothers mentioned in this episode were, according to their religious names: Brother Luis Gonzaga, Brother Juan Bosco, and Brother Miguel of the Saints.

17. Celorio is a beautiful little coastal village in the district of Llanes. It had a famous seashore monastery from which there still remains a church (now the parochial church) and also some buildings which have been used for years as a retreat house. Not far from the retreat house is the property belonging to the Brothers of St. John of God.

Celorio is the neighboring parish to Barro, the parish of Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva.

18. A small piece of information which everyone can interpret as he wishes: a few years later, the same one who *backed out* of his promise to go to Garabandal, also *backed out* of his religious promises, leaving the order.

separated us from San Sebastián de Garabandal. We began inquiring about a way to go up as quickly as possible. And a storekeeper advised us that Fidelín, a young taxi driver, would be arriving sooner or later with a group of people who were coming down from San Sebastián de Garabandal. Soon we saw them. There was a psychiatrist from Barcelona with his family, who spoke favorably about the phenomena.

We came into San Sebastián de Garabandal about 10:15. The Taxi stopped near the house of Mari Cruz, one of the visionaries. She was on her balcony with her older sister. We indicated that we wanted to speak with her. And after a while, at the suggestion of her sister, she came down toward us. She greeted us timidly, and immediately we began our questions . . .



Mari Cruz on her balcony

At the end of about ten minutes, Jacinta came out on the street. She greeted us with an angelical smile. And we began to besiege her with questions too. We took several photographs of the girls, and then some men from Andalucía arrived and joined the conversation. Without our noticing it, the girls withdrew.

The men from Andalucía insistently urged us to stay for the night, since that was the time for the apparitions. We didn't know what to do. And seeing the perplexity we had because of our lack of permission and the requirements of our schedule (that same night we had to begin our retreat), the taxi driver voluntarily offered to take us to Celorio in his taxi. Everything having been arranged like this, we set out to go up the hill where the apparitions took place.

But prior to this a priest appeared, a native of Beasaían (Guipúzcoa), who was spending several days in San Sebastián de Garabandal. This priest, according to what people from Andalucía informed us, had been the object of a grace from the Most Holy Virgin through the mediation of Conchita (one of the visionaries). We greeted him and suggested that he tell us what had happened to him on the previous night. His answer was: *Come and see*. He was very excited and he left.⁽¹⁹⁾

Finally, we went up to the Pines. It is a pleasant place. Once there, we quietly began to eat some sandwiches.

Just after eating, a girl about 14 years of age appeared, accompanied by three other little girls of approximately 2, 5, and 6 years of age. We asked her if she was Conchita, and with total simplicity and frankness she answered: *Yes*. Surprised and happy, we began to accost her with one question after another.

It occurred to us to offer her one of our sandwiches, and what was our surprise on hearing her answer:

— *No, since I have to receive Communion here.*

We were perplexed and intrigued. We asked her how that was going to be. She answered with the same naturalness as at the beginning:

— *Because the Angel is going to give me Communion, since I couldn't receive it in the parish church.*⁽²⁰⁾

19. This is what happened to that priest, according to a letter from Maximina to the Pifarré family of the 7th:

«This Sunday (August 5th) there were also some priests here from San Sebastián. And one, by his appearance, was rather sick. And it seemed that he was going to go to Germany since it is said that there is a great shortage of priests there (for the Spanish immigrants). And Conchita said in ecstasy: *The Virgin told me that you will be cured*. This priest was greatly moved. After the ecstasy she repeated this again, that the place didn't matter, that wherever he was, there would be many souls to save.»

20. I think that Conchita's words are a good answer to the surprise that Father Valentín mentions in his notes on Monday, August 6th, 1962:

«I don't understand this: the girl has always said that the Angel only gives Communion when there isn't a priest in the village.» (He had been there and celebrated Mass at 9

Between doubt and joy — since perhaps we were going to be witnesses of something supernatural — we asked her if she was sure that the Angel was going to come, since we were there. And she answered with an awesome sureness:

— *Yes.*

After that, we continued to harass her with questions related, as would be expected, to her visions and the things that had happened to her. And she answered everything with such simplicity that we were amazed, since she spoke of events that were truly extraordinary. The conversation lasted about an hour and a half.

She told us many things, among them that

in the morning, a Mass at which Conchita did not attend.)

It seems obvious that if the Angel came to give Communion as a substitute for the priest, he could do it not only when there was no priest in the village; but also when there was one of the visionaries who through no fault of their own could not come to the church to utilize the priest's services. We have information from the pastor from Barro, who was present, about what happened on this day:

«The pastor, Fr. Valentín, had authorized the abbot Retenaga and also another priest and myself to celebrate Mass in the village church on condition that the doors would be closed. The abbot Retenaga celebrated the first Mass; I celebrated the second; then I served the Mass of my colleague. It occurred to me to ask the Virgin for the grace that Conchita could receive Communion on that day. And if we weren't able to give her Communion ourselves, I added to myself, *that the Angel would bring it to her*. The girls had a real desire of receiving Communion; but due to their occupations, they couldn't always receive it.

I then noticed that there were some people talking outside the church. Their number increased. They tried to get in, but finding the door closed, they stayed where they were, talking under the roof overhang.»

Under such conditions, how could he get out of the church to advise Conchita? Father José Ramón mentions how he arranged to leave furtively and run to Conchita's house. Continuing his report:

«I arrived while her mother was cooking the hot food that Conchita had to bring to her brothers in the mountains for their lunch. I asked to see Conchita and her mother answered in a sharp tone:

—*You priests, you are going to spoil my daughter. Look, I don't know how long she has been at the Pines with some priests, when she ought to be on the road taking lunch to her brothers. By now they should be really hungry.*

—I want to tell Conchita that if she wishes to receive Communion, she can do it now . . .

—*Receive Communion, receive Communion! Duty before devotion! One thing above all. She should already be over there with her brothers!*»



“Joining her hands in the position for receiving Communion, she went into ecstasy.”

she had written to several people, by order of the Most Holy Virgin, without ever having seen or known them. She told us that she had spoken with a dead Jesuit priest in four languages: German, French, English and Greek. (This priest died on the day after he had a vision of the Most Holy Virgin). She told us how the Virgin had kissed them, how she indicated at times if a word had a “b” or a “v”.⁽²¹⁾

We shot some photographs of her and the three girls that she had brought along. Afterwards came a few seconds of silence, and we saw that she was walking toward the place where the Angel was accustomed to appear. We noticed her going away, and one of us exclaimed, *Look! She's leaving*. She heard this.

21. Spoken Spanish makes no distinction between a ‘b’ and a ‘v’, pronouncing them both like a ‘b’.

She looked at us with a pleasant smile. And taking a few more steps, she fell on her knees, turning her head backwards, forming an angle — it seemed to us — of about 60 degrees. And joining her hands in the position for receiving Communion, she went into ecstasy.

Facing this scene, two of us automatically fell on our knees, one at the side of Conchita, and the other about three steps in front of her. The third, who was carrying a camera, used it to take snapshots. The one at her side got up to observe her expression, her eyes, mouth, gestures, etc. We saw that once on her knees and in the position described, she made the sign of the cross in a very slow and devout way, as she whispered some words and struck her chest three times. This finished, she opened her mouth and with devotion held out her tongue in the customary way of receiving Communion.

And later, as she slowly closed her mouth, those at her side heard a noise as if something was passing down her throat.

She remained a few seconds in the same position as at the beginning and whispered something that we didn't understand. During this, she turned around on her knees, and still keeping the same position, turned toward Brother Luis. Somewhat frightened, he drew back from her, but seeing that the girl followed him on her knees, he stopped.

Then the girl took his scapular in her hands, stood on her feet, and lifting it up in a most solemn way, made as though to present it to



someone. Lowering the scapular, she fell on her knees again, and still in the same position, was motionless for a few seconds. A little later she went toward Brother Miguel, also on her knees, and repeated the same performance as before. Going on, she went to Brother Juan Bosco. But before the girl took Brother Juan Bosco's scapular, Brother Miguel tied them both together — his and Brother Juan's. However, the girl, still looking upwards, separated them, and taking Brother Juan Bosco's scapular, did the same as with the previous ones.

The whole performance finished, the girl knelt down again at the place where she had

begun the ecstasy. She stayed there for a few seconds, whispering words that we weren't able to hear. She made the sign of the cross, and got up on her feet very naturally. And in the normal state, she smiled at us, put back a ribbon that had fallen from her hair as a consequence of the ecstatic position and . . .



"whispering words that we weren't able to hear"

We began immediately to question her:

— *You have received Communion?*

— Yes.

— *Why did you take our scapulars and lift them up?*

— The Angel asked me to do it so that he could kiss them.

— *Did you speak with the Angel?*

— Yes.

“Loli receives Mystical Communion.”



— *What did he tell you? Did he tell you anything about us?*

— The Angel knows that you are here. And he told me that he had brought me here because of you. And he also told me that the Lord and the Virgin were pleased with you.

— *Did he tell you something for any of us?*

— Yes. He gave me a message for each of you.

— *Then tell it to us.*

— No, I have to tell it first to the Virgin, because the Angel told me to tell it to the Virgin before you.

— *Then you will tell us?*

— Yes, yes.

— *And the first of the scapulars that you held up — do you know whom it belonged to?*

— The first belonged to Brother Luis.

— *And the second?*

— To Brother Miguel.

— *And the third?*

— To Brother Juan.

She said this thinking a little beforehand, as if trying to remember. We were aware that we had told her our names rapidly before the ecstasy. On asking her which Angel usually gave her Communion, and on hearing that it was St. Michael, we took advantage of this to point out Brother Miguel's name, and right afterwards our other two names, so that she could pray for us.

— *What did the Angel look like?*

— He had a blue cloak, pink wings and slightly long hair with the ends curled up. While saying this, she made a gesture with her hair, to give us a more graphic description.

During the conversation, both before and after the ecstasy, she continually called us *'Fathers'*. When the ecstasy was over, after one of the times that she called us *'Fathers'* again, we indicated that we were Brothers. On hearing this, she exclaimed, *Oh! That's the reason the Angel told me "the Brothers."* And at the time I told him that you weren't my brothers, and the Angel smiled. Now it's all clear.

We started going back toward the village. The topic of the messages came up again:

— *Is the message for us grave?*

— And what is "grave"?

— *Well, is it good or bad?*

— No, no. It's good.

— *But are you really going to tell us?*

— Yes, yes. Really.

We noticed that we hadn't given her our address. On passing down the slope situated between the Pines and the village, the girl told us, *They say that I come down backwards through here, through these stones.*

Coming to the village, we took a light lunch and returned to our residence, giving thanks to the Lord for that which filled our souls with such joy.»⁽²²⁾

Conchita got back to her home with the three brothers of St. John of God (whom everyone thought were priests) at the time when her mother was speaking in the sharp way that we saw with the pastor from Barro. As soon as Conchita came up to her mother, she began to get a scolding for being late. Conchita could only answer, submissively, with her head down.

— *It was due to the Angel giving me Communion.*

— *The Angel! The Angel! Good thing it was that way. But get going, since it's time that your brothers have lunch.*

Neither ecstasies nor apparitions freed them, or any of the other inhabitants of Garabandal, from the hard work of gaining their daily bread. But that other bread should also be remembered, no less necessary, the bread which one does not gain by the sweat of one's brow.

22. The thrill of that August Monday did not easily fade from the memory of the three fortunate brothers. Even on August 12th, Brother Miguel of the Saints at the Psychiatric Institute of Mondragón wrote to Conchita like this:

«Dear Conchita,

Since so many people pass through over there, I don't know if you still remember Brother Miguel of the Saints. I am one of the three brothers of St. John of God who were there on the past August 6th, and were witnesses to the time that the Archangel St. Michael gave you Communion.

What moments were those! As time passes, I am more impressed each day by what my eyes saw . . .

Greetings to your mother. Tell her that everything that is happening with you can be from no place but heaven. Through some things that have happened, I see in a clear manner that the hand of the Most Holy Virgin is there. We await hearing from you.»

In the synagogue at Capernaum, on the day after the most spectacular of His miracles — the multiplication of the loaves of bread — Jesus was facing the multitudes of Israel, who no sooner hoped than they were disappointed:

Amen I say to you, you seek Me, not because you have seen signs, but because you have eaten of the loaves and have been filled. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for that which endures until life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you.
(John 6:26-27)

In Garabandal, with the display of Communion from the Angel's hands, God came to inculcate the same doctrine again. And a state of affairs would

develop that He would have to condemn three years later with a denunciation truly prophetic:

**The Eucharist:
It is being given less and less importance.**

* * *

The Angel at Garabandal came to tell each son of the Church what many centuries previously the Angel of Israel had said to the fleeing prophet Elias:

**Arise, eat;
for you have a great way to go.**
(III Kings 19: 7)





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A Miracle on the Horizon

If the month of August during the second year in Garabandal was marked with a special Eucharistic sign by repeated Mystical Communions, the following month of September will pass into history as the month of the great prophecy. What was foretold for the future of Garabandal in that month would forevermore be the principal expectation of those who believe that the events were supernatural.

The month began brilliantly. September 1st was a Saturday, the day dedicated to Mary.

After the rosary in the evening, at nine o'clock (we are extracting this from Father Valentín's journal,) Conchita fell into ecstasy at the doors of the church. Two minutes later Loli and Jacinta went into a trance; and two minutes later, Mari Cruz too. At this period, it was very unusual for the four girls to have an ecstasy on the same day and at the same time. In the ecstatic walk, Conchita went alone; Mari Cruz went alone too; Jacinta and Loli were together; a large crowd accompanied and followed them.

First they went to the Pines where they prayed a rosary. They continued praying on the way down, *backwards*. Loli, Jacinta and Conchita were together. Mari Cruz followed alone the entire time, which was for her about 45 minutes. They went to the cemetery. They made circles around the church.

All this, though interesting, was nothing outstanding and what we could call the *normal* routine of Garabandal.

But three days later something new, of great proportion, occurred.

Recorded on Tape

September 4th, 1962 was a Tuesday. According to Fr. Valentín's annotations, toward 11:00 in the morning, Conchita fell into ecstasy at the door of the church, and there received Communion from the hand of the Angel; somewhat later, the same thing happened to Loli.

The afternoon passed; the night began, and at 1:30 Conchita had an ecstasy again. She went to the graveyard, made her way through the streets of

the village, prayed the rosary, sang the Salve. On entering her home, she fell on her knees and said farewell to the Vision. As she was speaking, a person near to her — not satisfied with just hearing what the girl was saying — held a microphone to her lips. What he recorded confirmed afterwards what his ears had not understood well.

«You say there's going to be a miracle? . . . And the miracle is going to be that? . . . And the Virgin will be seen? . . . And when? . . . So long away? . . . With me alone . . . No. I don't want that . . . Don't do that! Perform it with the four . . .»

Such words could not but cause repercussions, and soon began to be the foremost reason for comments and expectation.

Five days later, on Sunday, September 9th, Dr. Ortiz in Santander noted in his agenda concerning Garabandal:

«My wife and I with her cousin María López-Dóriga were at Maximina's house. Conchita came to present a gift as we were beginning to eat. We invited her, and soon Maximina began talking in jest:

— We already know your secret . . . That there is going to be a miracle! You can't deny it, since it has been recorded on tape.

Conchita smiled, and after a moment of silence said, Yes, there's going to be a miracle. The Virgin told me, and it's going to be very great . . .

— When will it be?

— I don't know.

— Then none of us will see it.

— Everyone will see it who is here. And the Pope, from wherever he is. And also Padre Pio. Everyday I pray that the miracle will be with everybody. But don't say anything to anyone.

— Not even to Fr. Ramón and Fr. Retenaga?

— Well . . . to them . . . yes.»

On that very night of September 9th, as it progressed into the early morning of September 10th, Conchita was heard again (and this was recorded on a tape recorder too):

«When you perform the miracle, perform it with all (the four of us). I don't want to be alone by myself. Look! With everyone, do you want

that? You aren't telling me? Should I tell it so that she will know?»⁽¹⁾

This matter is useful to alert those who believe in Garabandal and encourage them to keep watching.

Naturally those who came to the village, especially if they belonged to the circle related to the girls' families, soon noticed what was in the air.

On September 24th from Hotel Real in Santander, María Herrero de Gallardo wrote to her sister in Madrid to tell her about her last visits to the site of the apparitions:

«The other day, while in Conchita's house, there was a very interesting conversation, with two psychiatrists and three priests⁽²⁾ present . . . Fr. Valentín told me that Conchita, according to his words, had to tell him something under the seal of confession, because of which — he added laughing — he could not tell me anything about it. What I know for certain is that the next *proof* (of the truth of the apparitions) is going to be, according to what the girls say, much greater than the day of Conchita's visible Communion.»

Two weeks later on October 7th, she wrote her sister another letter from Santander:

«Friday, two days ago, I was back in Garabandal again. No one was there . . . And during all the time that I spent there, the girls and their mothers told me about such marvels that it seemed a bottomless well from which they were pulling up, little by little, a multitude of things. How I profited by it and how I remembered you! We went to see Conchita at the time she was going outside for the rosary with her mother . . . Two women who were coming with me hung on to her and I wasn't able to ask her anything on the way to church. I took Aniceta by the arm and tried to question her about

1. I do not know what this could refer: perhaps to Loli who seemed destined to share many things.

2. Concerning the three priests, María Herrero says: «Jesuit, Passionist, and pastor.» From the notes of Dr. Ortiz, it comes out that the Jesuit was Fr. Argila and the pastor Fr. Antonio Yllensa Borrás of San Cucufate. It seems that both came with Dr. Puncernau and were considering, according to Fr. Valentín, «bringing information to the archbishop of Barcelona.» The Passionist had to be Fr. Eliseo, whom the lawyer Luis Navas speaks about in his report.

Of the psychiatrists, the only one we know for sure is the previously mentioned Dr. Ricardo Puncernau.

when the announced miracle was going to be.

— *I don't know. Possibly Conchita doesn't know either . . . What I can tell you is that the other time* (July 28th) *she told me: "Mama, there's going to be a little miracle." And today she told me: "There's going to be a very great miracle!"*»

* * *

And so from the information that I have been able to gather, it was in September, 1962, that the prediction of the great miracle was made for the first time in a clear and open way. A miracle which, for what later began to be said about it and because of its outstanding singularity, soon began to be called "*The Miracle.*"

The first announcements about it reported:

- That it was going to be «*very great*».
- That everyone in Garabandal when it was performed would see it.
- That the Pope would see it «*wherever he would be*», and «*also Padre Pio.*»

But Conchita, who seemed to be the only seer who had anything to do with the Miracle, still did not know the date on which it would take place.

And for the moment, the news of the Miracle could not be unrestrictedly divulged. We have heard the girl's words in Maximina's house in front of Dr. Ortiz and his wife, and what she told Fr. Valentín «*under the seal of confession.*»

But the news was not shrouded in total secrecy. Perhaps Loli's questions during her ecstasy on Monday, September 17th refer to this; and also Conchita's on September 18th:

LOLI: *Yes, should I write today? . . . Most Holy Virgin, then should I tell it? . . . When can it be said? . . . He's waiting for me to tell him by letter or when I see him . . . Good, I'll tell it . . .*

CONCHITA: *Can I tell it to Father Valentín tomorrow? . . . In confession? . . . To whom else can I tell it? . . . To the bishop? . . . Did Loli tell it to Father Andreu? . . . Do I tell it to him? . . . No? . . . When? . . .*

Perhaps the person to whom Loli communicated

the announcement was Fr. José Ramón de la Riva, since among his papers I have seen a small holy card of the Virgin with these lines on its back, written in poor penmanship:

San Sebastián

October 8, 1962

The Virgin told us there is going to be a miracle.

*With all my love,
María Dolores Mazón
(For Father José Ramón)*



“foretold to me”

The prediction of *the Miracle* is unmistakably confirmed by these lines from Conchita's diary:⁽³⁾

The Most Holy Virgin has foretold to me a great Miracle,

that God Our Lord is going to perform through her intercession.

As the chastisement is very great, as we merit;

the Miracle also is immeasurably great, as the world needs.

3. According to my information, the girl began the diary in September of 1962, and ended it in the spring of 1963.

Among the Marvels

We have previously seen how María Herrero de Gallardo wrote in her letter of «such marvels that it seemed to be a bottomless well from which they were pulling up a multitude of things.»

If the Miracle was the *news* of September, it was not the only thing of interest in that month. It is certain that the days of September, 1962 were some of the most *eventful* in the astounding evolution of Garabandal. This can be gathered from reading Fr. Valentín's notes for the month.

The Visionaries' Mystical Communion

Conchita and Loli received Communion from the Angel on all, or almost all, of the days on which they could not receive it from a priest. Mrs. Herrero de Gallardo wrote about one of these Communion in a letter dated September 24th:

«The day that I was there, Conchita received Communion at 2:30 in the afternoon in front of the church door. A Jesuit from Cataluña, who saw it, told me about it. It had pleased him very much because the body, the hands, the eyes . . . had a manner of moving that was completely opposite to the agitated gesticulations of hysteria . . .»⁽⁴⁾

This Jesuit priest must have been Fr. Argila (whom Dr. Ortíz mentions), and he must have

4. We have another valuable observation from a specialist in the matter (Dr. Puncernau):

«The entrance and the departure from the trance merits special attention.

They said that they had three calls . . .

They said, *I have already had one call . . . I've had two calls . . .* The length of time between the calls was extremely variable.

One time when I knew that they had two calls, I managed to talk with them, attempting to distract them . . . And especially to make them talk about something that interested them. In the middle of a sentence, they suddenly fell on their knees in the state of trance as if struck by lightning — in spite of being observed to be interested in what they were discussing.

This drew my attention. This is not the normal way to enter into a hypnotic trance, especially if the person has not been conditioned to a sign or signal. Among the spectators I was never able to find such a sign. Or even to know of what it could consist.»



... for worthy reception.



The Angel instructed the girls in proper preparation . . .

come from Barcelona with the pastor of San Cucufate, Fr. Antonio Yllensa Borrás, and the neuropsychiatrist Dr. Ricardo Puncernau. Fr. Valentín calls him P. Aguilar in his notes and says that on Saturday, September 22nd, he saw a Mystical Communion for the first time, and that *«he was very much impressed»*.

Luis Navas, the lawyer from Palencia tells us of the same effect it had on him when he was finally able to view a Communion of this type on October 2nd, after ardently longing for it:

«A little before 6:30 in the morning, we set out for the church. It was still dark. A meter and a half from the doors, Loli fell on her knees and went into a trance. This was something that impressed me more than anything else I have seen in the visionaries. The devotion in making the sign of the cross, the drama of the tongue extending and then withdrawing, the movement of the throat as if she were swallowing something . . . The prayer of thanksgiving . . . Everything seemed so dramatic to me, as if deserving the greatest respect.»

Speaking of this type of Communion, Father Valentín wrote on September 10th:

«The ecstasy usually lasts only a few minutes, but it is moving. The girl falls on her knees, softly says the "Confiteor", makes the sign of the cross, joins her hands on her chest, holds out her tongue; and it is seen perfectly how she swallows. She makes the sign of the cross again, and is heard to say in a low voice, "Soul of Christ, sanctify me . . ." Once again she makes the sign of the cross and is back in the normal state. It seems the prayers after Communion are said by the Angel.»

What the pastor notes on September 22nd is interesting:

«The girls always keep the fast until the hour that they receive Communion — the fast according to the old custom.» (*without eating or drinking anything after 12:00 midnight*)

Waiting for the Ecstasies

As has already been shown, when the Virgin was the one who was going to appear, the ecstasies were always preceded with three mysterious *calls* . . . We find observations about these calls in Fr. Valentín's notes on September 6th:

«The children were accustomed to wait until 10:30 at night. If by that hour they hadn't received the first call, they went to bed. However, if they received a call before going to bed, then they would wait up for the apparition until the time it came, even though they fell asleep. They didn't want to go to sleep, since the Virgin had told them that they should wait up and *make sacrifices* . . . In other things, they each led a normal life at home and helped their mothers.»⁽⁵⁾

On the night of September 5th, Fr. Valentín told Loli that it was very late, that it would be better not to wait for an apparition. But she answered that the *calls* were unmistakable, that the apparition would come, and that because of this, although she was half asleep, she did not want to go to bed. And so the penance of waiting night after night was no small one, either for the girls themselves or for their families and those who accompanied them.

Evidently, the wonderful phenomena of Garabandal were not given as free entertainment . . . In Fr. Valentín's notes (*Monday, September 24*) appear these lines:

«The girls led a life of true sacrifice. Conchita's mother told me that her daughter slept



5. God never calls any of those on earth — a time for merit — to a life of easy convenience.



village chapel dedicated to the Virgin of Health

better on a chair than in her bed, because she spent the night sitting down, waiting for the apparition like all of us. She slept with her head leaning on the wall. And the next day she didn't fail to walk to work. The four girls worked, swept, cleaned, went to the river to wash, and did everything like the other girls. Because of this, they were seen very little on working days; but on Sundays they played in the streets like the other young children in the village. In spite of the little that they slept and rested, they looked strong and healthy . . .»

* * *

Besides the marvelous *normalness* that extended throughout September, there were some days that had their own particular note.

For example, there was the night that bridged September 5th to September 6th, Wednesday to Thursday. There were many people from Barcelona, Madrid, Bilbao, Santander, and Seville. But probably the person with the most special invitation from heaven was an English Protestant (Anglican), who had been there once before. She was watching the ecstasy that Loli was having in her home when suddenly the girl, in a very special way, gave her the cross to kiss several times, and one of the times she left it applied to her lips for some time.

«Barbara» — read Fr. Valentín's notes — «was blanched white, very excited. When the ecstasy was over, I spoke to her. She was sure that all this was the work of the Virgin, and she was already disposed to becoming a Catholic.»

That night when she passed by the English woman in ecstasy, Conchita also stopped very significantly and gave her the cross to kiss.

On the night of September 7th to the 8th, Loli had an apparition alone, toward 3:45 in the early morning. During the ecstasy, among other things she was heard to say, «*Is it the feastday of the Virgin of Health? Is it your feastday?*» The village had a little chapel dedicated to Mary under the title of The Virgin of Health, and its celebration (like so many other of Mary's titles and appellations) was on September 8th, the feastday of the Nativity of Our Lady.

«When Loli's ecstasy ended» — as we read in Fr. Valentín's notes — «we met Jacinta and her brothers who were going to the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Light, which is six hours of hiking by foot on trails across the mountains.»⁽⁶⁾ They

6. This hermitage or sanctuary of Mary was on the other side of the Peña Sagra Mountains, on the slope facing Liébana.

carried a flashlight for illumination. The first thing that they did was to pray a rosary in the Cuadro. (Jacinta prayed there every day at six in the morning.) Jacinta was full of joy, and was making the sacrifice of getting up early in the morning and the long hike to ask the Virgin to return to see her soon . . . She and Mari Cruz are the ones who see the Virgin the least. Later I learned that Mari Cruz also had gone to another sanctuary to request the same . . .»



Mari Cruz and Jacinta

September 16th, Sunday, was memorable and instructive. We read in Fr. Valentín's journal:

«There was a man in the village who was half-crazy, and he was doing ridiculous things that could have been very wrongly interpreted by the visitors who didn't know his mental condition. He had been in an insane asylum for a year, and now he was staying here. This was causing trouble and annoyance, and he had to be sent away.

During the ecstasy on that day, Loli and Conchita went to the house where this disturbed man called Alfonso was. And with a crucifix

they made a cross there on the pillow on his bed. And while passing by him, they gave him the crucifix to kiss several times. The disturbed man was struck to his knees.

That night Fr. Anzizu⁽⁷⁾ commented: *What a lesson in charity the girls gave us.* Everyone who had been talking about the necessity of throwing the insane man from the village was touched; above all, the Cardinal's secretary, Fr. Guillermo Hausschildt, who had thought of refusing him Communion. He said: *It is clear the Virgin wanted to give us a lesson.*

Conchita was asked why she had gone to the place where the deranged man was and had repeatedly given him the crucifix to kiss. And she answered, *The Virgin told us: "you despise him; but I love him."*

A response like this put us down, making us see our great lack of charity.»

Perhaps the words that Conchita was heard to say during the ecstasy had some relation with this unforgettable lesson from the Mother of God: *«When you come down here to earth, why do you come? To save the world?»* Surely mental cases are not the only ones who need salvation; nor are they the cases that need it the most.

* * *

The neuropsychiatrist from Barcelona, Dr. Puncernau, who had carefully studied the girls previously, continued his studies and examinations during these days. He discussed his findings with a colleague, the pediatrician from Santander, Dr. Ortiz, who wrote:

«Jacinta's father asked me to please be present; and it was no wonder, since they had had enough of doctors' inquisitions.

I asked Puncernau for his conclusions.

He answered, *I have no doubt about the complete normality of the girls; since the facts can't*

7. The two priests mentioned here came from Argentina, accompanying Cardinal Caggiano (Archbishop of Rosario, who was journeying at the time to Rome to participate in the coming Ecumenical Council). These priests took advantage of their passage through Spain to take a trip to Garabandal. The impression that they received there could not have been better, especially for Fr. Anzizu. He openly declared his intention of speaking in Rome about the extraordinary phenomena.

be attributed to any illness. With regard to this matter, this is the third time that I have come to Garabandal with the intention of studying the visionaries. If I would have seen anything suspicious, I would have said it immediately.

In that we were in agreement.»

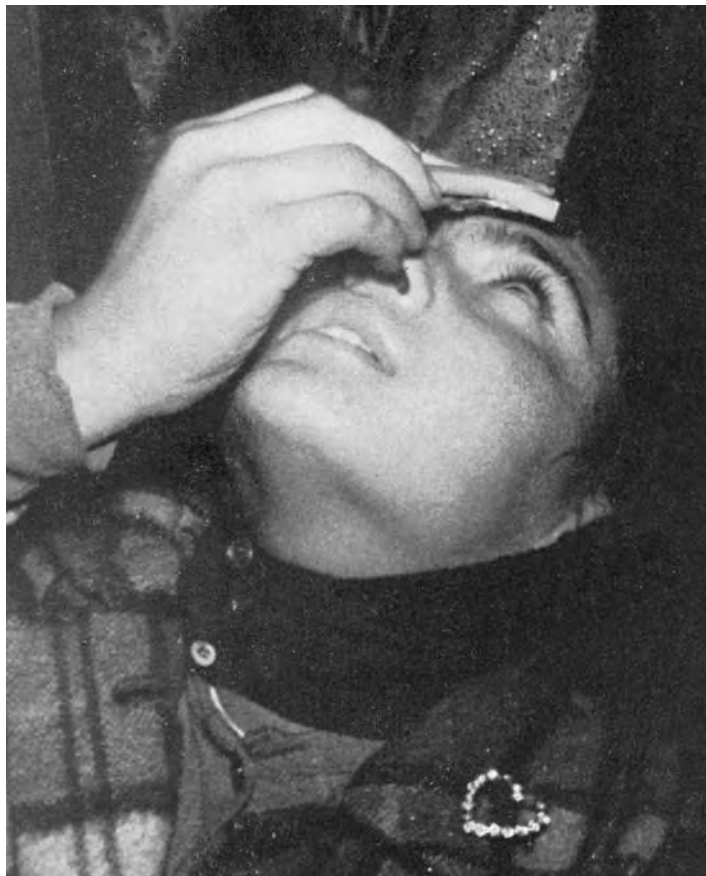
On several of these days, the girls' words and phrases were recorded on tape. Although many of the words had only insignificant meaning, at times others came forth of greater scope:

«Most Holy Virgin, let me not abandon you! Let me love you all my life! Oh! That I may never leave you. That I may love you always, always, until death. Most Holy Virgin, do not refuse us help.»

(Loli, on the night of September 12th-13th)

«What is heaven like? . . . In heaven there are no chairs? . . . Do they walk there? . . . Is there fire in purgatory? . . . Do they come out burned? . . . One cannot enter into heaven even with a very little sin? . . . How can they paint you so ugly, since you are so beautiful? . . .»

(Conchita, September 25th)



“. . . a nun or a wife?”

«Does the conversion of sinners cost much? . . . I pray so that many come and be converted, and the good become better . . . Is it better to be a nun or a wife? . . . If you wish, make it so that I may be at 14 years — they say that at 16, one cannot . . . Ease the pain of my brother,⁽⁸⁾ who suffers much from his stomach — don't take it away.»

(Conchita on the same date)

A Torch Dies Out

The Light of Garabandal came from the start through four reflectors. But in the month of September, 1962, one of them would fade out.

During these days the youngest of the four visionaries, Mari Cruz González, stopped having apparitions.

She had one on September 1st, as has been noted, and it must have been important, judging from its duration: 45 minutes. But on the other days the girl had to wait in vain. It was mentioned how she had made a little pilgrimage to implore the Virgin to visit her again.

Perhaps as a result of this pressing supplication, the Virgin returned, since we see in Fr. Valentín's journal:

«September 18th: In the morning, Loli and Conchita received Communion from the hands of the Angel. In the afternoon at 5:30, the other two girls had an apparition. They came together in the street, traveled through the village, prayed the rosary, went up to the Pines, and descended backwards; it ended at the church doors. I asked Loli why the Angel didn't give Communion to Mari Cruz and Jacinta. And she

8. It seems clear that Conchita was asking to be able to enter the convent at 14 years of age. And she was asking for a special grace, since she had learned that there was nothing that could be done until 16 years of age, as someone had told her. Canon Law fixes this age of 16 years as the minimum for being able to take religious vows.

The brother about whom she speaks in this last petition was Aniceto —familiarily called Cetuco—who was suffering from the pains of an illness that a few years later would bring him to his death, an exemplary death at the hospital in Burgos, lovingly cared for by his only sister, Conchita.



Mari Cruz

told me that she didn't know, that perhaps they were better and for that reason, didn't need it.»

September 18th had to be the last gleam of light from the lamp of Mari Cruz,⁽⁹⁾ since from that time on it appears to have been definitely extinguished. María Herrero de Gallardo, writes from Santander on October 7th:

«I went to Mari Cruz' house to bring her some cakes, and she told me that a month had passed without seeing the Virgin . . .»

And Dr. Ortiz, who went up one more time to Garabandal with Plácido Ruiloba on Saturday, November 24th, notes on this day:

«The three girls were singing in ecstasy at Mari Cruz's door. They were asking that she see the Virgin again . . . I asked Mari Cruz, in front of her mother, if she was continuing to go up to say the rosary in the Cuadro at six in the morning.

— *No, now I pray it in the house.*

— *But didn't the Virgin tell you to pray it there in the Calleja?*

— *Yes.*

— *Why don't you do it then?*

Without letting the girl speak, her mother quickly intervened to say that she hadn't stopped her, that she hadn't said anything . . .

I insisted, glancing at Mari Cruz . . .

— *Then who stopped you from going there?*

9. A few days later, Dr. Puncernau paid special attention to Mari Cruz:

«I gave her my wedding ring to give to the Virgin to kiss, as was the custom to do.

She was very pleased and put my ring on one of her fingers.

Three days passed and Mari Cruz didn't have an apparition, nor did she enter into a trance. On the night before I had to leave I said to her, *You'll have to give back my ring, since this morning at 3 I have to leave.*

—*Let me have it a little longer . . . Perhaps I will have an apparition tonight.* I left it with her.

The other three entered into ecstasy. The three girls went walking in a trance, holding arms. Mari Cruz approached, she took the arm of one of the others, raised her head and walked like this ten or twelve steps to see if the trance would take her too. But there was no trance. She detached herself sorrowfully. Without saying a word she returned the ring and went away with her head held low.

I have to say though that the ring was kissed on another occasion, during one of Conchita's ecstasies. I mention this so that it can be seen that the ecstasies came when they came . . . not when the girls wanted them to come.»

Why don't you go?

The girl blushed, but she didn't answer.

Later, I was with Jacinta, and I asked her the same, if she was still going to the Calleja . . .

— *Yes, I go every day at six in the morning. I have never stopped doing it. One day it occurred to me to ask the Virgin if I could change the hours. She told me yes, that I could change it. But later I preferred to continue as before, so that the same thing doesn't happen to me that happened to Mari Cruz.*

— *What happened to Mari Cruz?*

— *In September she stopped praying the rosary in the Calleja as the Virgin had told her, and since that time she hasn't seen her again!»*



“She stopped saying the rosary.”

The flame from Mari Cruz was definitely out. Was this something that had to happen according to God's plans, without anyone's fault? Was it someone's fault? If there was a fault, whose was it? The girl's? Her parents' or family's? I know of no one who is in a position to give a competent answer to these questions. Let us leave them then to the judgment of God and not meddle in what is above our competence. But this does not mean that we should renounce thinking about the matter, seeking

to find, as Jacinta seems to have done, a salu-tary lesson . . .

Jacinta herself should have feared at the time that her own *light* was going to be extinguished.

The month of September had begun well for her, since on the first and second days she was seen in ecstasy beside her companions. But an entire week followed without an apparition, and poor Jacinta, although silently resigned, had to be consumed with desire, anxiety and worry. And so on the early morning of September 8th she undertook with her brothers the difficult pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Light, as we have seen.

The pilgrimage seems to have had an immediate effect, since on the following day, September 9th, Fr. Valentín mentions:

«On going out from the rosary at 8:30 at night, Conchita and Jacinta went into ecstasy; they went to Loli's home, holding arms . . .» *But this was an isolated favor, since on October 7th, he notes again: «Jacinta hasn't had an apparition for more than 20 days.»*

How this affected the girl can be gathered from these sentences found in a letter from María Herrero, written in Santander on October 7th:

«On returning from Mari Cruz's home, I met Jacinta, thin and sad. She told me that 26 days had passed without seeing the Virgin, since the Nativity of Mary. I don't think she ever went so long without seeing her. I gave her the cakes. She took them; but she remained for some time with them in her hands, as if not knowing what to do, with an expression of sorrow that appalled me.»

In Jacinta's case, as a great consolation for her, all this was only a frightening test. On October 8th, Fr. Valentín notes:

«Jacinta had an apparition, after a month of not having one.» *And he adds later: «She also had one on October 9th, 11th, 13th and 14th.»*

Maximina writes on her part to Eloísa de la Roza Velarde, Dr. Ortiz' sister-in-law, in a letter dated November 8th:

«The apparitions continue as usual. I see nothing extraordinary at present. Loli continues having apparitions every day, ordinarily at 4:00 or 5:00 in the early morning. Conchita has

ones that are known about on four days of the week (Tuesday and Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday), frequently also at the same hour of the morning, and she almost always goes outside on the street. Jacinta also has apparitions on many days. *But Mari Cruz has not had one for many months.»*



The mystery of Garabandal was continuing its march . . . Almost monotonously, disturbing many, inspiring some. How would it end?

One of the protagonists was already out of the picture. Another had long eclipses between apparitions.

But the affair, as a whole, was not diminishing, but rather seemed to be getting stronger, even taking on new force.

How would it conclude?

How long would it last?

What would its final outcome be!

For now, one important thing is known for certain:

***There would be a miracle,
an exceptional miracle.
Dawn was on the horizon.***



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The Bells of the Last Council

During the autumn days of 1962, the main topic of conversation in the Catholic Church—and also in other Churches called Christian—was the inauguration of the Ecumenical Council that His Holiness John XXIII had convoked.⁽¹⁾

It was to be called *Vatican II* because of the site of its celebration; it was to be the most *ecumenical* of all those celebrated until then, both by the number and by the variety of its participants.⁽²⁾

The proceeding had enormous expectation; it was being accompanied with enormous hope . . . And so anticipation for the Council was resounding throughout the world long before the heavy bronze bells of St. Peter's rang out their symphony over Rome on the morning of October 11th.⁽³⁾

Garabandal could not withdraw from the impact of such an event. Because of this, attention to what was being prepared in Rome intertwined at the mountain village with the course of its own proper *affairs* that were so marvelous all the time, so unusual from time to time. From the latter, we know some particularly intriguing happenings which still have not been made clear.

Strange Phenomena

In a letter that María Herrero wrote to her sister on September 24th, this sentence can be read:

1. On the 25th of January, 1959, in the basilica of St. Paul outside the walls of Rome, John XXIII publicly announced his proposition to convoke a new Ecumenical Council. Then he immediately began with the preparations—preparations that were foreseen to be long and complicated.

There was first a period *anti-preparatory*, which lasted a little more than a year. Following this on June 5th, 1960 began the *preparation* properly called, with the formation of Commissions, Sub-Commissions, and Secretariats. Finally on December 25th, 1961, the Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis* convoked the Council for the fall of 1962. The exact date of the opening was fixed a little later for October 11th, the feast of the Maternity of Mary.

2. Approximately 3,000 Fathers of the Council, bishops for the most part, came to Rome — men of every race, language and condition. Without the spectacular development in the means of communication during the past decades, the assembly of such a widely dispersed congregation would not have been possible.

3. It has already been mentioned that the solemn opening of the Council took place on this day.

«I told you on the phone about the fire; they have taken the earth to analyze it.»

From this brief remark, we have no idea what she was referring to; but fortunately this woman used the occasion to send a report in French to the Holy Office at Rome about information that she had heard from Fr. Valentín:

«One day there were many people in Garabandal. Some of the visitors made a fire under the Pines to cook or keep warm. They left, thinking that they had put out the fire. Days passed, and that fire could not be extinguished, in spite of doing everything that was possible to put it out.

I myself, on coming to the village during those days, could notice the strange brilliance that was there above the Pines. It was because of this that I asked the pastor about it. And Father Valentín explained to me the origin of the phenomenon and what had been done to end it. He added that the thing had lasted for weeks; and that seen from afar, it seemed during the day to be a column of smoke and during the night a diffuse of brilliance.

There were not lacking the learned in geology — he concluded, smiling with a certain gracious slyness — who were determined to give an explanation for the phenomenon. We will see. For the moment, they have taken some samples of this earth that burns to examine them in the laboratory.»

This is all that I can say about this undeniable and curious phenomenon; and this is rather little, since I was not able to obtain more information.

Some passages from the bible come to mind here:

**And the Lord went before them to show the way,
By day in a pillar of cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire:
that He might be the guide of their journey day and night.**

**There never failed the pillar of cloud by day,
nor the pillar of fire by night, before the people.**

(Exodus 13:21-22)

**And I will show wonders in the heavens,
and on earth blood and fire and columns of smoke.**

(Joel 2:30)

Every person can have his own considerations about this . . . One thing is certain: in Holy Scripture, the column of smoke and the column of fire, the dark cloud and the devouring flame, are always used in connection with manifestations of the Divine Presence.

And I might add that these were not the only cases of unexplainable fire reported in Garabandal. The people there speak about what had mysteriously happened to a man in the village on a night that he was passing by the Pines; and also about what happened to the son of Simón and María on an early morning before dawn when he was going down toward Cossío to catch a bus.

Mrs. Herrero de Gallardo was speaking with Mr. Illera (a person well known in Santander) in the Hotel Real of that city, on September 2nd, 1965. From his lips she heard this utterance:

«I'm not the person to say if the events of Garabandal are true or false; that's the task of the Church. But I'm able to give testimony of what I've seen, since I followed the things that were happening there in 1961 and 1962 with great interest. What I'm going to tell you now took place in 1964, when the apparitions had already ended.⁽⁴⁾

I had gone up to the village and was walking back and forth when suddenly, in a completely clear and cloudless sky, a very thick black cloud came forth and hovered above the Pines. I was looking at it, very astounded — not knowing how to explain where it had come from. The cloud seemed to grow bigger, became darker, more threatening . . .

I was looking at it, very astonished on my part, when suddenly the cloud broke in half. And as if coming forth from within it, appeared a little brilliance, or if you will, a little white cloud, very bright, which increased in size and increased in size again, until it engulfed and made the imposing black cloud disappear. For a length of time that I could not say for certain—several minutes anyhow—the brilliant white cloud stayed there, crowning the Pines; and suddenly, unexplainably, disappeared, leaving a sky as blue and transparent as though nothing

4. The *apparitions* did not end until November of 1965; but an almost complete eclipse occurred after the winter of 1963.

had passed through it.»

The fact seems undeniable, and it could be a basis for many comments and interpretations. Was all this a prophetic announcement of something that was going to happen? And if so, to whose future was it referring? That of Garabandal, so despised by some *clerics*, so rejected by many bishops? Or the Church after the Council, according to some revealing words of Paul VI that we will quote later.⁽⁵⁾

Concerning this enigma, only God can give satisfactory answers.

Congregation at Rome Siege at Garabandal

In the village, the final days of September were used to prepare for the coming Council. We know this from the writings of Luis Navas, the attorney from Palencia, who came again on Tuesday, September 25th. His first night there was a night of *vigil*, particularly difficult. And so he took advantage of the following day to sleep:

«I awoke at 3:00 in the afternoon. I used the afternoon to arrange my notes, and towards 7 o'clock I headed toward the church, since the time for the rosary was coming.

There was a sermon at the end; the pastor had enjoined Father Eliseo⁽⁶⁾ to preach for several days on the Council. I remember on that day he spoke to us about the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and he said that He would come forth in our souls as a *fountain of living water that flowed to eternal life.*»

With the Council being discussed in their environment, and since the girls talked in their ecstasies about the things that drew their attention each day, it is no wonder that Conchita was heard to say in a trance:

5. Homily on the feastday of St. Peter, given in the Vatican basilica on June 29th, 1972.

6. This seems to have been a Passionist Father, that is, a member of the Congregation of the Passion founded in 1720 by St. Paul of the Cross.



“Will it be a success?”

«The Council, is it the greatest of all? . . . Will it be a success? . . . How good! . . . That way they will know you better, and you will be very happy . . . Why do they paint you so ugly, when you are so beautiful?»⁽⁷⁾

It would be extremely interesting to know the words that came from the Vision in those intervals of silence that separated the girl’s questions and statements. Perhaps we could know that way how God appraised the activities and the end result— at that time unforeseeable— of the last Council of the Church. Today, many years later, the people’s

7. The words that follow were transcribed by Louis Navas from a tape recording made by a Basque priest who was in Garabandal on those days. (Fr. Valentín places the girl’s ecstasy on the morning of September 26th.)

«The whole night (between the 25th and 26th) they passed in vigil at Conchita’s home, until six in the morning. And when at that time a priest—there were six from outside the diocese—was reciting the Angelus, the girl fell on her knees and presented the crucifix to be kissed, starting with all the priests. She went outside into the village, she went to the Cuadro. It lasted about an hour. She was heard to say something about the Council . . .»

opinions are tremendously varied. Some think that the Council was the starting-point of an authentic Church, of a Church that finally had found itself. For them only the *post-conciliar* has value. Others say, or at least think, that the Council has provoked the worst revolution and the greatest crisis in the history of the Church.

What the girl said concerning the Council was not all questions; there was an exclamation which lends itself to diverse interpretations: *«How good! . . . That way they will know you better, and you will be very happy . . .»*

From this, I presume that the Virgin was saying something about what was going to happen in the Council with regard to her.

From the beginning it was planned to dedicate a complete *document* to the subject of the Blessed Virgin. The document was in time elaborated by the Commission in charge, and in time given to each of the Conciliar Fathers for his prior study. But before the time for its debate came to the

assembly itself, there came a decision to . . .

On October 24th, 1963, during the second session of the Council, the dogmatic constitution of the Church was being debated. The question was brought to the floor as to whether a whole conciliar document should be dedicated to the Virgin, proper to her and her alone, or whether just a chapter should be dedicated to her within the dogmatic constitution that was then being debated.

The unexpected question caused a tremendous reaction, and was heatedly debated with unusual vigor. Five days later, on October 29th the decision came by vote. By a narrow margin the majority decided that there would not be a conciliar document to speak about the Virgin alone; what the Council allotted to her was a chapter within the dogmatic constitution of the Church.

In Garabandal one year before this, on the early September morning about which we have just been speaking, well could the Virgin talk to Conchita about what the Council was thinking about doing for her, and also of what would actually take place. There would be no more than a chapter for her; but although brief, it would be substantial, and as a consequence, a good basis for excellent Marian instruction. Perhaps it was this that made the girl exclaim: *«How good! That way they will know you better and you will be very happy.»*



“They will know you better.”

Nevertheless, there has been a feeling in certain Catholic circles that the Council was the origin of a chill or halt in traditional Marian devotion. Does this feeling correspond to the facts? There are many who affirm it does. Is such a feeling without basis? Others maintain it is. And there are some who say that a chill or halt had to come, and that it

was coming at the right time.

Let us return to our story, where we find ourselves still in the days in which the Council was not a *fait accompli*; when it was for the hierarchy only a matter of preparation and conjecture, and for the faithful: expectation, prayer and hope.

* * *

During the last days of September and early days of October, 1962, an ancient saying was re-enacted: *All roads lead to Rome*. All the roads saw the passage of Catholic bishops with their retinue answering the call of St. Peter's successor.

The Bishop of Santander was leaving for Rome too. But before departing, on a day as distinguished as October 7th, the feastday of the Most Holy Rosary, he signed his name to a new «Nota» on Garabandal, influenced by the Commission. It pronounced the following:

The Special Commission, which has studied the events that have been happening in the village of San Sebastián de Garabandal, ratifies its previous declarations, judging that the phenomena lack all sign of supernatural character and have a natural explanation.

As a consequence, and with our desire that all the people of our diocese be properly informed, and that all who have any connection with the events have secure direction, in fulfillment of our pastoral obligation, and in making use of our authority:

1) *We confirm in all its statements the official «Notas» of this bishopric of Santander dated on August 26th and October 24th of 1961.*

2) *We prohibit all priests, both in the diocese and outside the diocese, and all religious, even those exempt, from going to the location mentioned without express permission from the diocesan chancery.*

3) *We repeat to all the faithful the warning that they should abstain from fomenting the atmosphere created by the display of those events; and because of this, they should refrain from going to the village for this reason.*

In a question of such seriousness, we hope

that you will all be prompt in complying with these regulations.

Eugenio, Bishop of Santander⁽⁸⁾

It can be seen how the Commission in charge of Garabandal continues singing the same song in the same key. **"The phenomena lack all sign of supernatural character, and have a natural explanation."** Brilliant deduction! A double affirmation that the Commission pretends to impose, without ever giving evidence or explanations. The members of the Commission would demand that we trust absolutely in their word, that is to say, in their competence and authority.

We would be glad to do so, if there were not so many indications of the inadequate way of procedure in which they carried out this matter. We would do so if we did not have the evaluations of others; who as for quality are on the same plane as they; and as for quantity leave them far behind. And furthermore, these others have followed the progression of the phenomena much closer at hand and with greater attention.

We can observe that if the *official* evaluation of the phenomena continues on the same key, the disciplinary announcements are accentuating in hostility. What Doroteo Fernández stated in his last «Nota» of October 24th, 1961: **"The priests should abstain absolutely from whatever could contribute to creating confusion among the Christian people,"** is changed in this first «Nota» from the new bishop to: **"We prohibit all priests . . . From going to the location mentioned."**

The 1961 statement: **"The faithful should not let themselves be seduced by every wind of doctrine,"** has progressed into: **"They should abstain from fomenting the atmosphere . . . They should refrain from going to the village."**⁽⁹⁾

With such pronouncements began the siege of Garabandal. Or perhaps it could be said that they

8. Bishop Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal was the new titular bishop. It had been several months since he had succeeded the apostolic administrator Bishop Doroteo Fernández as head of the diocese. And so Bishop Beitia was the second of the Bishops from Santander who had to face the question of Garabandal. With what result? On being nominated for the bishopric of Santander, a long and fruitful episcopate was expected, perhaps due to the holy memory of Bishop José Iguino Treco; but the hopes did not last long.

were coming to close in the circle already existing, since for many months, there had existed a situation very much like a *state of siege*.

The effects of that third episcopal «Nota»—the first by Bishop Beitia—certainly did not give complete satisfaction to the Commission; but it was sufficiently derogatory so that there could be noted a considerable drop in the number of visitors and interested people coming to the village. On the back of a postcard, which was dated October 25th, Mari Loli wrote to the pastor of Barro:

«Many fewer people are coming than came before the publication of the Nota from the bishop; but every day someone comes.»

And Fr. Luis López Retenaga, from the seminary of San Sebastián, remarks in a report written two months later:

«The Nota from the bishopric of Santander on October 7th has plunged many eyewitnesses of the phenomena into unusual confusion, since they had come to the conclusion that the phenomena were caused by supernatural intervention. It has instilled in them an interior struggle, in which the conclusions of their reasons have to yield to the requirements of a life of faith. »

This statement from the distinguished priest seems a little exaggerated to me. No *life of faith* coerces us to share the opinion of the diocesan chancery in matters not *defined*—in this case, not definable—where different points of view can be held for different reasons.

What is obliged by a life of faith is to comply with what is legitimately commanded. Neither priests nor faithful have the obligation to think like their bishop in what refers to Garabandal; but they do have an obligation to obey the specific regulations that—within his authority—he establishes.

The harsh Episcopal «Nota» produced the result

9. I do not know what the bishop from Santander feared for the faithful who were going there. The testimonies that we have indicate that the visitors never suffered any peril. Here is what Luis Navas said on Friday, September 28th, 1962:

«It was a day of thick fog at the base of the mountains, which was degenerating into rain. In the afternoon we assisted at the rosary and Father Elísio spoke to us about the Virgin. At that time I had no desire to be at Lourdes or Fatima. I had the sensation of being under the direct influence, immediate and maternal, of Our Lady.»

intended. In Spain during those days, when a bishop spoke, it was as if he spoke with the voice of infallibility. A bishop was, for a vast majority of people, the Church itself. As a consequence, the matter of Garabandal was placed in a situation of suspect and quarantine.

But what importance did this have? In Rome they were turning on all the lights: the Catholic spectacle of the century was about to begin.

The night of October 10th, the great vigil, was a night of waiting and excitement. I do not know if the pope slept much, or if those responsible for the Council slept well that night.

But I do know that far from the Eternal City, in little Garabandal, poor and now suspect, a vigil was being held on that night too. An excerpt from the *Memorias* of the pastor of Barro summarizes it:

«I passing the night of October 10th to 11th in a vigil in Conchita's kitchen. On the 10th, the press had published the *Nota* of the bishop, signed on October 7th.

I had come to Garabandal with the Spanish ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Alberto Mestas. That night we were waiting in the kitchen of the house. For amusement during the long vigil, we were playing 'educational questions' with Conchita. *Let's see who comes the closest to giving the time the Virgin will come*, she said. Each of us gave a time; Conchita herself gave hers. For my part, I said it would be 8 o'clock in the morning, since that was the time when the Council was going to start.

Everyone's time was passing, even Conchita's. And everyone was succumbing to sleep; some even retired. I decided to stay awake, intending to advise the others when the girl's ecstasy came. And actually sleep didn't come to me that night . . .

Conchita's radio was playing, and when it began to broadcast the solemn ceremony of the inauguration of the Council with the procession of the Conciliary Fathers, I noticed that the girl started to go into ecstasy. As I had foreseen, the trance coincided exactly with the time for the Council . . .»

But it was not only this great event that was



“coincided exactly with the time for the Council.”

discussed in those minutes of converse with heaven. After the ecstasy, the visionary was questioned. Had she asked the Virgin any questions? Yes, she had asked *«why the bishop had given the Nota that had come in the newspaper on the previous day.*

—And what did the Virgin answer?

—*The Virgin didn't answer, she only smiled.»*

Perhaps the pretensions of some, the fears of others had made her smile . . . The pretensions of those seeking to end this, the fears of those who were thinking that this could end . . . How many of our activities make God laugh! Indulgently, and at times not so indulgently. *Why have the gentiles raged: and the people devised vain things? . . . He that dwells in heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them.* (Psalms 2:1-5)

Well could it be that the Virgin smiled on that occasion, seeing the future of Garabandal, above and beyond all the episcopal *«Notas»*, so full of zeal.

Would she be smiling also, viewing the future of the Church, beyond the grandiose and sometimes agitated conciliar sessions?

We do not know. But we do know that the Holy Father certainly smiled at that time, and with unbounded optimism, before the unparalleled change

that he expected in the Church as a result of the Council. On that Tuesday morning, at the inaugural ceremony, October 11th, 1962, the feast of the Maternity of Mary, John XXIII spoke to the Fathers of the Council:

Venerable Brothers: Today the Holy Church rejoices, because by virtue of a special gift from Divine Providence, the longed for day of the solemn inauguration of Ecumenical Council Vatican II has come.

It seems necessary for us to say that we do not think as prophets of doom who only foretell catastrophic events . . .

Here we are united, in the Vatican Basilica, at a turning point in the history of the Church, where heaven and earth are united in these difficult times . . . The Council now starting appears in the Church as a guide promising a brilliant light. Now it is only the dawn, the first announcement of the day to come. With what joy our heart is filled!

Certainly good words and good sentiments. Years later, what we now have in the Church, does it correspond to what an optimistic pontiff was expecting from the Council on its inaugural day?

I do not know how to answer that. And within the Church, many conflicting opinions are found.

The immediate successor to that pontiff, Pope Paul VI himself, bursts forth in praise of the Council's work as he laments the many things that have occurred in the time after the Council . . .

Among his complaints, certainly none is more disturbing and more spontaneous than that of June 29th, 1972 on the feastday of St. Peter:

We regret to have to stave off the wave of profanation, desacralization, and secularization which arises, which oppresses, which seeks to confound and surpass religious sentiment, and even make it disappear . . .

If one were to ask us what the Church is today, could one calmly compare its situation with the words that Peter has left us in heritage?⁽¹⁰⁾ Can we be calm?

It was believed that after the Council would come a day of sunshine for the Church. What has come is a day of clouds, of storms, of darkness, of groping, of uncertainty . . . We

predicted ecumenism, and each day we separate more one from another. We are digging abysses, instead of filling them.

*How could this have occurred? We confide to you our thought: a power has intervened, an adverse power. We have mentioned his name: **the devil** . . .*

It is said that a satanic breath has entered through a crack in the Temple of God. There are doubts, uncertainties, problems, restlessness, dissatisfaction, confrontation. People do not have confidence in the Church. They have more confidence in the first worldly prophet who speaks through a newspaper or social movement . . . To follow him . . . Doubt has entered into our conscience, and it has entered across windows that should have been open to the light. Doubt has come with respect to everything that exists, to everything that we know . . .

All this was unforeseeable on that morning of October, 1962, when in Rome the bells of St. Peter's were ringing joyously, and in Garabandal the young girl was asking the Virgin about the Council.

Yes, completely unforeseeable . . . to men; but not to Her who was coming to that lost mountain village because she saw what was going to come.

A New Miracle

In spite of the episcopal *quasi-interdict*⁽¹¹⁾ that bore down on the phenomena and the location that served for the scenario, the flame was not quenched.

The girls, influenced by the Virgin, respected the ordinances of legitimate authority better than anyone else. We read in an excerpt from Fr. López Retenaga:

«Although they were aware of the Nota from the bishop, they continued to have the unalterable peace that characterized them; and this peace was aligned with a clear understanding of the obedience that was required from others. I have a letter from Conchita in which she points out the presence of four priests in the village, making it known that — although she was pleased in seeing the priests there — it would have been better for them to obey the bishop.»

10. This refers to words from the first epistle of St. Peter (2:9) that he had mentioned at the beginning of his homily.

11. The *interdict* is one of the grave penalties that the Church formerly used to punish major trespasses of its members.



“Her face was truly transfigured.”

Yes, the girls showed themselves totally submissive to legitimate authority; but they had no reason to share that authority’s opinion on the events. It was evident to them that what was happening did not depend on them, nor on anything or anyone that they knew. Everyone who talked to them could observe this. María Herrero de Gallardo, for example, was speaking with Loli on the vigil of that same October 7th on which the bishop of Santander, before leaving for Rome, put his signature on the official «Nota» that we have just mentioned. During this conversation, the woman asked the girl:

«—Tell me, Loli. Which Virgin do you see?

—*There’s only one Virgin*»—replied the girl—*«although she can have different names, like the Virgin of Mount Caramel, the Virgin of the Rosary, the Virgin of the Pillar . . .*

—Well then, which Virgin do you see?»

Loli described once again the Virgin that she and her companions had seen so many times, and concluded with enthusiasm:

«—*But there is nothing like her eyes. They are not like anything or anyone in the world.*

I’m not able to describe them, I can only say that they are so very beautiful that one cannot do anything except look at them.»

Hours after this conversation, toward 1:30 in the night, Loli’s ecstasy came. María Herrero de Gallardo observed:

«*She fell on her knees there in the kitchen, leaning against the left wall. Her face was truly transfigured, and her hair fell on her shoulders in a very lovely way. Her eyes were absorbed, looking up toward the ceiling where stacks of garlic, onions, and sausages were hanging.*⁽¹²⁾ It was a totally domestic scene, but nevertheless, full of charm and supernatural elevation.»

During the ecstasy, as on many other occasions, Loli stood up and was presenting many articles that the visitors had placed there for the Virgin’s kiss. On that night there was special attention to Mass missals. Let us listen again to María de Gallardo:

12. I do not think that anyone will be surprised by these things hanging in the kitchen of a village house.

«It was thrilling to see how the Apparition seemed to be kissing these missals page by page, pausing specially on some of them. She also kissed the holy cards that were in them . . . We learned later that the Virgin had spoken to the girl about the owners of the articles that she was kissing, even giving some personal messages, as in the case of a young Mexican who was there, for whom there was something about the death of his father . . .

When the long ecstasy ended, I came up to Loli and told her:

—Loli, when you were turning the pages of the missal, you turned them somewhat in a hurry. I'm afraid that the Virgin kissed them somewhat in a hurry too.

—Oh no!—the girl replied at once, very energetically—the Most Holy Virgin didn't do it in a hurry. **SHE DOES EVERYTHING WELL.**»

Magnificent praise! The highest there could be. Could there be something superior in moral quality to doing what has to be done always in the way it should be done?

In considering the Virgin's *style* of doing things, Loli could only repeat what had long ago been said of Jesus' style by the multitudes from Galilee who had seen him act: **Full of admiration, they exclaimed: He does all things well!** (Mark 7:37)



“She does everything well.”

The girls had no reason to doubt the genuineness and origin of what was happening to them; but the spectators were not satisfied and wanted a spectacular miracle.

Amid predictions, waiting and hoping for the Miracle, the weeks of the second autumn slipped by.

On October 25th, 1962, Thursday, a fortnight after the inauguration of the Council, Loli wrote to Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva on the postcard previously mentioned: *«We already know the date of the miracle; but I'm not able to tell about it; when I can, I'll tell it.»*

And on October 30th, there is a resumé in the brief notes of Fr. Valentín:

«After the rosary, the three (*Loli, Jacinta, and Conchita*) fell into ecstasy, and as usual went to the Pines. They came down on their knees most of the way, praying the rosary . . . On the 30th, they gave a written card to their parents upon which they foretold what comprised the miracle that the Virgin was going to perform. And for days they have been talking about it.»⁽¹³⁾

13. Thanks to Maximina's letter (from the many written to the Pifarré family in Barcelona that Mrs. Asunción Pifarré treasures), we can know exactly when the prediction of Loli and Jacinta's "miracle" first began. The letter dated October 10th starts like this:

«Today there was a notice read in all the churches of the diocese that no priest or religious should come to the village: a notice put out by the bishop saying this is not true.

And perhaps it is a coincidence that today I am writing to the bishop and yesterday Jacinta and Loli said that there was going to be a miracle very soon. They didn't know that the bishop had given this order. Jacinta has gone over a month without an apparition and hasn't said more about the miracle than Conchita . . . They say that it is going to be very soon; they certainly will say the day. It is to be seen if I am given time enough to advise you! As I find out, I'll tell you . . . So we don't all miss seeing the miracle clearly! Loli's mother said that it was going to be during the Council. I don't know if that is what she heard from Loli . . .»

Twelve days later, on October 22nd, Maximina wrote another letter:

«Well Asunción, everything remains the same concerning the apparition. Now I am going to tell you (but don't you tell anyone) what Conchita told me. She said that Loli and Jacinta's miracle was going to be very soon, that to see this miracle the girls would have to be seen too. But Conchita's miracle is different. It is going to be very great, and everyone who is here will see it, even though they don't see her . . . The other two girls told me that theirs would probably be no later than a month.»

On November 2nd, Friday and the day dedicated to the departed (All Souls Day), Dr. Celestino Ortiz, his wife, a brother of hers called Fernando, and their friend Plácido Ruiloba were in Conchita's house in Garabandal. They were discussing the bishop's return to Santander. Then Conchita intervened:

—*The Virgin told me that I can tell the bishop, Fr. Valentín, and my mother about the Miracle.*

—Have you already told it to the bishop?

—*No . . . But . . . Do you want to take it to him?*

Those present showed indecision. Finally Plácido said: *Yes, I'll go with it. Why not!* And actually, on the following day, November 3rd, Plácido Ruiloba presented himself at the bishop's residence in Santander with a rather bulky envelope that Conchita had entrusted to him. He wanted to give it to the bishop with his own hand, but in order not to have to wait too long or annoy the bishop, he ended up handing it to his personal secretary Father Diego, for him to forward it on.

Twenty days later, Dr. Celestino Ortiz and Mr. Plácido Ruiloba returned again to the village. On the night of the 24th to the 25th there were several ecstasies that Mr. Ruiloba recorded on his tape recorder. On the last with Conchita, at six in the morning, there were things concerning the miracle that the girl later confirmed in the normal state:

● *That the miracle will be at 8:30 in the evening, as on the first apparition.*

● *That it would last a quarter of an hour.*

● *That it would be seen in the sky, and so clearly, that there would be no doubt that it was coming from God.*

● *That the sick who came with faith on that day would be cured.*⁽¹⁴⁾

14. I have further confirmation of this from Maximina's letter to the Pifarré family on November 25th:

«At seven-thirty this morning, Conchita had an apparition. And the Virgin told her that the miracle would be at eight-thirty in the evening, and that the sick would be cured, and that all of us in the village would see the Miracle, even though we were away from it, provided that we were in sight of the village, since Conchita's Miracle, as I already told you, will be seen in the sky . . .

We are white with snow, and if you could see how the girls walk on their knees to get to the Pines, backwards, through all the ruts and all the snow! It frightens me to see them; and furthermore, it is snowing very much with a terrible freezing wind.»

«After the ecstasy»—said Dr. Ortiz—«the girl was radiant with joy. We insisted that she tell us the day of the Miracle; but she said that the time hadn't come, and that we should have patience. She could only say the date eight days in advance, but that the Miracle would definitely come, since the Virgin had said it, and she could not lie.»

These remarks from the two men from Santander are confirmed by what can be read in the notes of Fr. Valentín:

«In the early hours of the morning (November 25th), Conchita had an ecstasy in which she said that *her miracle*⁽¹⁵⁾ would take place at 8:30 in the evening, the same hour on which the first apparition of the Angel had occurred on June 18th, 1961. She said also that during her miracle the sick would be cured.»

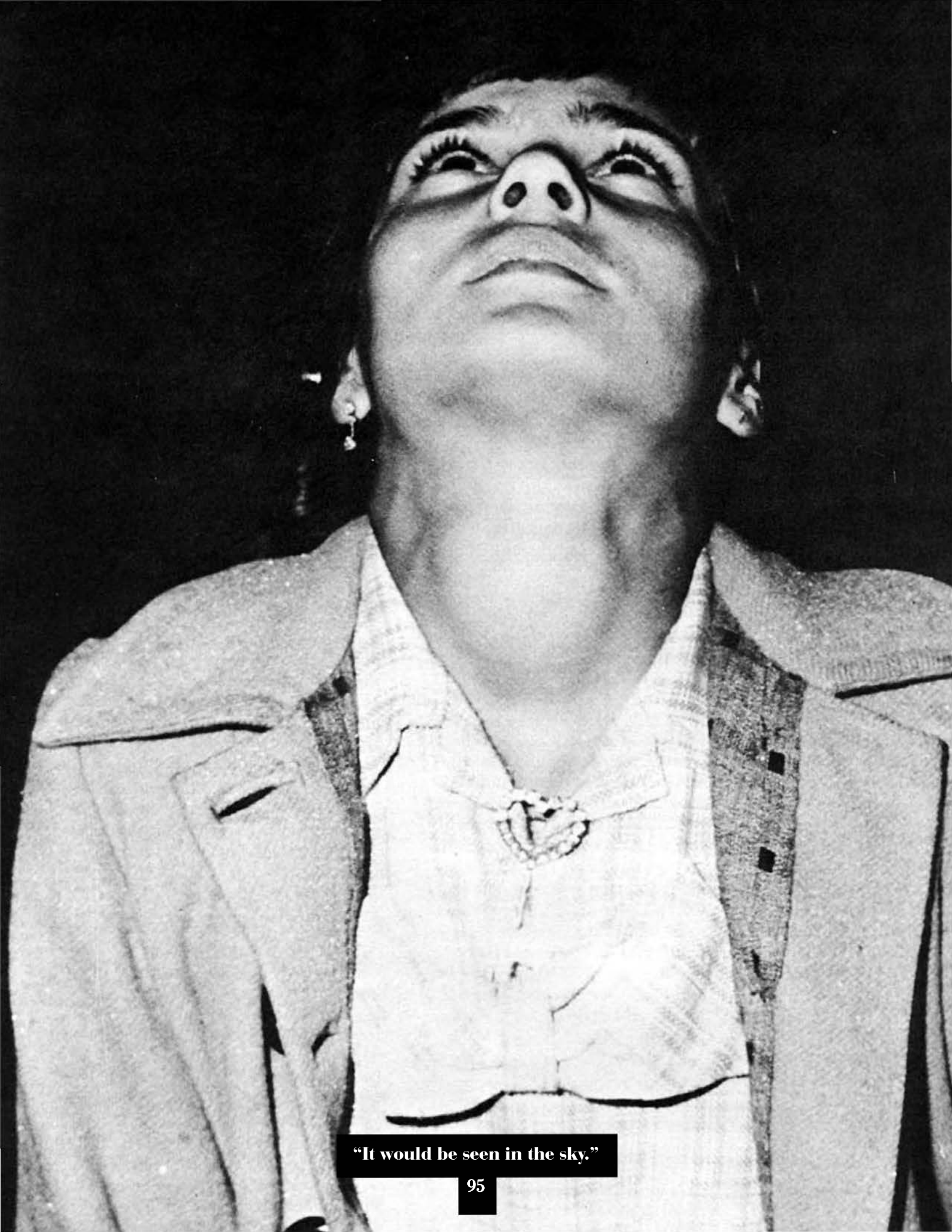
Stories with a Message

If the Miracle drew much attention during those autumn days in 1962, it did not slow down the march of events. Neither the natural nor the supernatural life can be lived only with expectation.

The weather was stormy on the night of November 4th. In Loli's house there was a vigil, waiting for the time of the apparition. Toward 3:00 in the morning, the wind began to blow fiercely; there was threat of a rainstorm. At that time Loli's mother told her to gather the laundry that had been left hanging outside. Loli was inclined to obey; but there could clearly be seen in her the resistance or dread that was caused by having to go out of the house at that hour. She was heading toward the door with a flashlight shining in her hand when she fell into ecstasy. She made the sign of the cross repeatedly, held out the crucifix to be kissed by those in the area, and went outside. A little later, and still in ecstasy, she returned to the house with the laundry gathered up.

As soon as she came out of the trance, she was asked what happened. And the girl explained

15. Note the expression *her miracle*. For some time Loli and Jacinta had been speaking on their part of a miracle, and it did not coincide with the one announced by Conchita. Further on we will return to this topic.



"It would be seen in the sky."



“I’m certain that I’m really seeing the Virgin.”

that it had been very hard for her to obey her mother with regard to the laundry, since she was afraid to go out alone . . . The Virgin had seen two things: her good will, and her fear. And she had come to accompany her, as a Mother.

This story gives a basis for many considerations: the Virgin’s goodness; the convenience of relying on God for all our needs, even the smallest; how it pleases God when we do our duties in spite of difficulties and our natural repugnance . . .

During the vigil on that night, a conversation took place in front of Loli concerning peculiar phenomena that appeared at first glance to be supernatural, yet could have a natural explanation due to hidden abilities that the human mind might have . . . When it was finished, someone asked the girl if the conversation had made her doubt that she was really seeing the Virgin:

«Oh no! I’m certain that I’m really seeing the Virgin. What has been said doesn’t disturb me.»

A few days, or rather a few nights afterward (on the morning of November 8th), Loli was asked what she felt when kissing the Virgin.

«It is difficult to explain . . . I don't feel the warmth of the Virgin on my lips or any other sensation of her face. I only notice that my lips come to her and from there they can go no further . . . but it is marvelous.»⁽¹⁶⁾

* * *

During the month of November, the girls were naturally concerned about the faithful departed. Because of this, they visited the cemetery in ecstasy. Conchita was especially outstanding in this. To illustrate, here is an excerpt from Maximina's letter to Dr. Ortiz on November 6, 1962:

«The apparitions, as you know, continue as usual. Now on many days the rosary is sung through the village. Conchita goes to the cemetery very often, and the other day she and María Dolores went. They walked singing the rosary— now they've told us all to sing it—and we went with them to the cemetery. There they stopped singing it and recited it with great devotion. They had never entered within, but on that day, Conchita opened the gate and we went in. Oh! You couldn't understand how

16. These details are taken from the notes of Fr. Valentín and Fr. de la Riva.

great was the reverence that inspired in us!

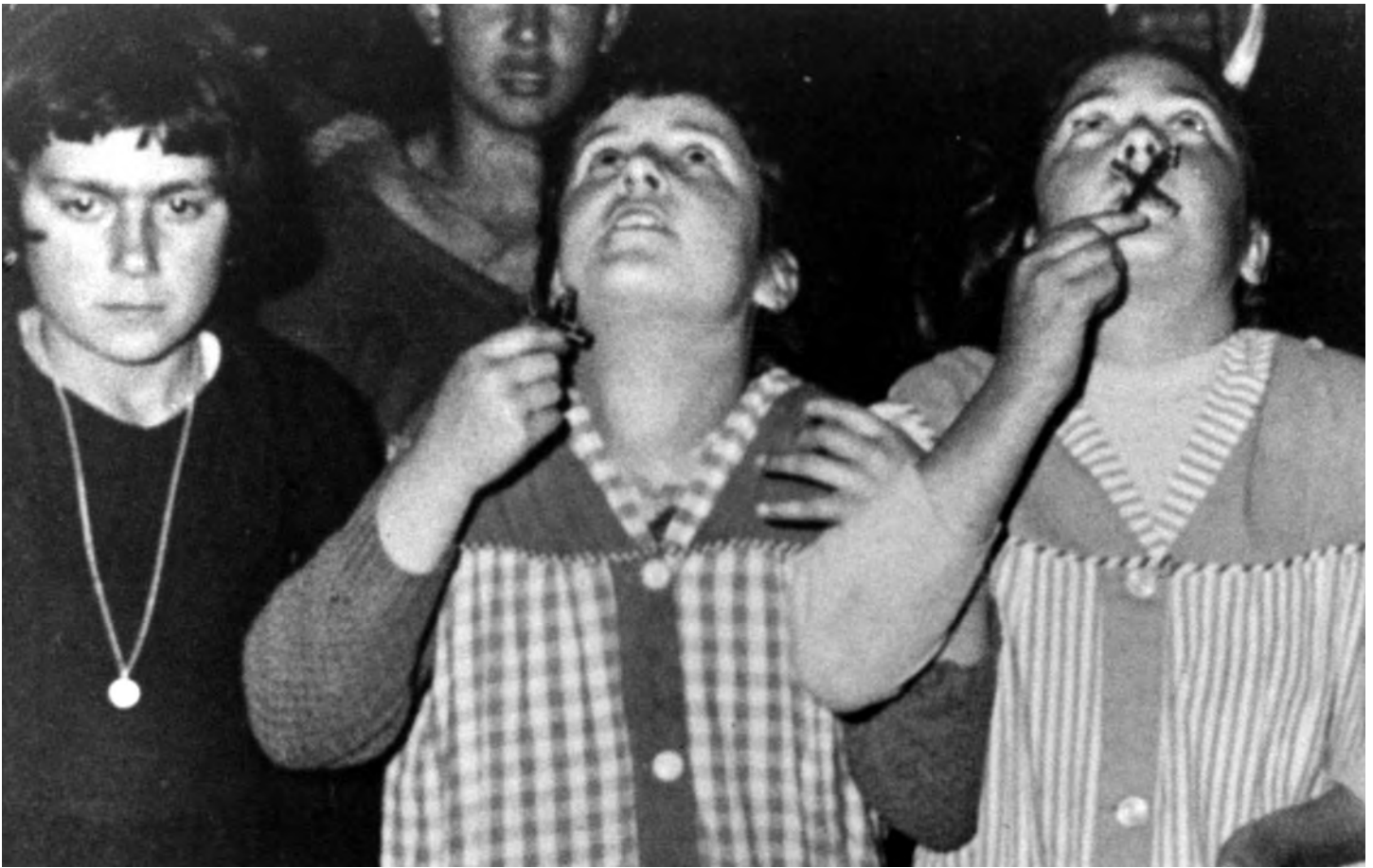
First they went to the place where Conchita's father was. They knelt down with tremendous devotion, placing the cross on the ground; and afterwards, they gave it to the Virgin to kiss. What the one girl did, the other did also. Afterwards, they went to the tomb of my husband. They also knelt down . . . This affected me . . . From there they came to me and gave me the crucifix to kiss many times. Then they went to another tomb. And then to the place where my mother . . . You know how they hold their heads in ecstasy without seeing anything. And how they found the graves!

We don't know what this means. I can only say that my husband, in the two years that he was with me, was very good to me. And my mother suffered very much in this world. She was very devoted to the Virgin. I almost always saw her with the habit of Our Lady of Sorrows;⁽¹⁷⁾ and while living, I never saw her in a quarrel with anyone. So we don't know what the girls' going to their places in the cemetery means . . . »

17. In the Spanish towns at the time, people frequently promised to wear the *habit* for a specified time. These promises were made as an act of penance and devotion to obtain special graces by the intercession of a saint or the Virgin Mary. The habits worn most frequently in the honor of the Virgin were those of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (brown) and those of Our Lady of Sorrows (black).



“How they found the graves!”



“absolutely insensible to what was around them . . . their faces always looking upwards.”

Witnessing the things done by the girls in those November days were some people from France who were in Garabandal for the first time, and who worked very hard afterwards in defense of its authenticity. Among them was Father Materne Laffineur — at times also called José — well known by the pen name of *Doctor Bonance*. What they observed at the time can be found in the widely read book *L'Etoile dans la Montagne* (Star on the Mountain):

«During the days of November in 1962 when we watched the group ecstasies, they started after the recitation of the rosary in the church.»

The book goes on to describe one of the ecstasies in detail:

«As soon as they left with the spectators to return home, the rapture caught three of them: Conchita, María Dolores and Jacinta. The three young girls ran through the village, holding on to each other's arms with crucifixes in their hands. With their faces looking upward, they seemed unusually beautiful by the illumination from the flashlights. Absolutely insensible to what was around them, unconscious even that

they were moving, the girls were followed by the townspeople who recited the rosary with them or sang hymns.

They went up swiftly to the Pines which overlook the village, and descended backwards down the incredibly rocky trail, their faces always looking upwards, risking being killed a hundred times!

Returning to the church, they made a circle around it, and suddenly let out an astonishing laugh — a laugh that was luminous, and at the same time like the tinkling of little bells, a laugh that scandalized us at first . . . How could one actually laugh in the presence of the Virgin, even with a laugh so beautiful?

Up to five times on that night, they set out across the village, always in ecstasy, drawing with them the gathering crowd. They made a stop at the cemetery, undoubtedly out of compassion for the souls in purgatory.

Then, after a last detour in front of the closed door of the church, they lifted each other up to

give a kiss to the Virgin, whom they were seeing above them, and to receive her kiss. Finally, they fell on their knees more sharply than at the start. Without a transition, they became abruptly the simple and smiling children that we knew. The mysterious reflection that transfigured their faces in ecstasy had disappeared . . . Later we asked Conchita the reason for the laugh that had disturbed us:

—*Because the Virgin herself laughed!*

—*Why?*

—*Because we were singing so badly!*

That was correct; our tape recorders testified to it!»

If by this report from the French witnesses, we can get an idea of what the group ecstasies were like at that time; by another report of theirs, we can picture what the individual ecstasies were:

«One morning in her home, having recited the Angelus,⁽¹⁸⁾ Conchita fell suddenly on her knees. She was transformed with a glowing beauty, supra-terrestrial. Her face, naturally pleasant, was as if refined; a type of interior light glowed from it. She seemed to be nothing more than love, drawn toward Her who was attracting the girl's gaze above her. Nevertheless, her body had a weight so extraordinary that one of the watchers, a muscular man, taking her under the elbows, couldn't lift her up!

On standing up by herself, she held the crucifix in her hand, and made a majestic sign of

18. The recitation of the Angelus seemed especially indicated to precede the apparition.

We have seen Fr. Valentín's notation on September 26th:

«At six in the morning when a priest—there were five from outside the diocese—was reciting the Angelus, the girl (Conchita) fell on her knees in ecstasy . . .»

And from the following month, October, there is a reference from María Herrero de Gallardo:

«I was alone with another person in Conchita's house, since all the others had gone to see Loli's ecstasy. Conchita was waiting impatiently at the time, since she already had two calls . . . At 2:30 in the morning I said to the girl, *Let's pray the Angelus*. She said to me, *You say it*. The three of us got down on our knees and I began, *The Angel of the Lord announced unto Mary* . . . We finished the prayer and repeated three times the Glory be to the Father. On finishing the third Gloria, Conchita fell in ecstasy.

The same thing occurred in front of me on at least three occasions, which makes me think that the Angelus must be a prayer especially pleasing to the Virgin.»

the cross on herself; then she presented the crucifix to be kissed by Our Lady and then held it to the lips of each of us.

Then without looking around her, she went upstairs, gave the Virgin to kiss—on Her request—a statue of the infant Jesus of Prague, and came back down to the kitchen. It is impossible to describe the attitude of the young girl, her eyes raised up, not looking at the steps that she was descending with a majesty that one could call the comportment of a queen.

The apparition stopped as it had begun, abruptly. The child then approached one of the people present⁽¹⁹⁾ and told her: *The Virgin gave me a message for you*. Then she went to look for a holy card on which she wrote several words that corresponded to the stranger's intimate problems, problems absolutely unknown to the child.» (*L'Étoile dans la Montagne*)

Pleasure and Penance

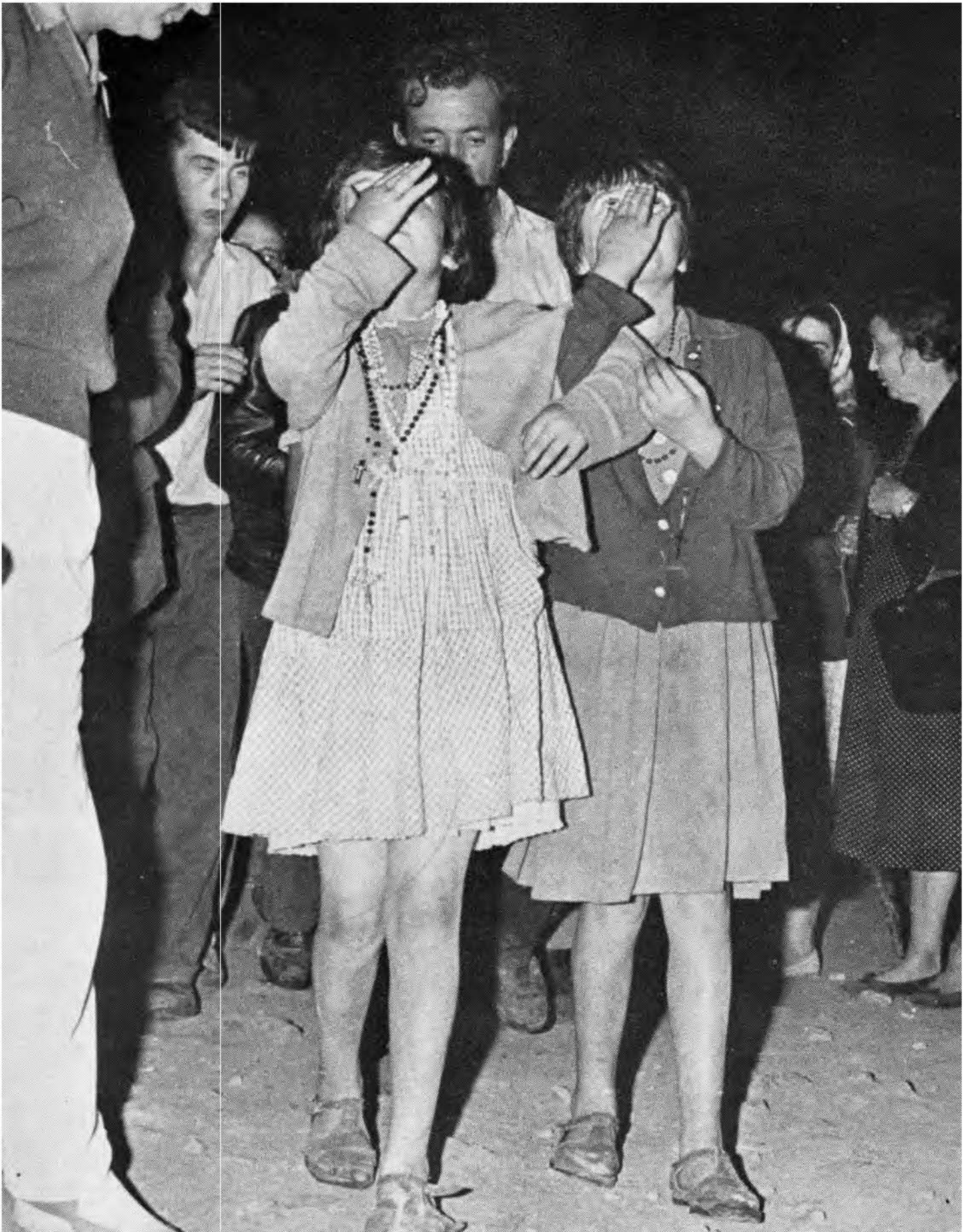
The same French people to whom we are indebted for the previous reports, help us again with some brief notes to understand better how the exceptional mystery was lived in Garabandal during the days of November, 1962:

«When the Virgin announced her visit like this (*by calls*), neither the parents nor the visionaries went to bed. We passed the evenings with Conchita, her mother, her brother Seraffín, and other visitors . . . Who could describe the charm of those evenings, of those nights of waiting, interspersed with prayers, hymns and conversation, as each one thanked the Virgin for her infinite kindness.»

It is easy to understand why the vigils caused great joy in those who experienced them as an isolated and amazing novelty in their lives. But the people for whom the vigils were intermixed with the routine of daily life for a long time, felt fatigue increase night after night . . .

As an aid to understand better the penances

19. This probably refers to Baroness María Theresa Le Pelletier de Glatigny, a collaborator with Fr. Laffineur.



The raptures at Garabandal spanned the period of Vatican II. Does this have a significance?

entailed in these nights at Garabandal during that season, here is an excerpt from a letter that Maximina wrote on November 22nd to Dr. Ortiz' sister-in-law Eloísa de la Roza Velarde:

«On Saturday we went up to the Pines, praying the rosary in pouring rain . . . Later we went to the cemetery, and there we were stuck in mud up to our ears. On Sunday, the same thing: we went up to the Pines. Everything was covered with snow; the people were sliding and rolling down, but they went up anyhow! Later the girls went down backwards on their knees, through all the snow and the roughest places; later, to the cemetery, under the hail and with a bitter wind . . . On Tuesday, the same thing, and through the same places. On Wednesday it was a better night, but freezing cold . . .»

Dr. Ortiz confided to me what the daughter of Tiva (Primitiva), a resident of Garabandal, told him:

«On the night of December 1st, I had a very painful toothache, on account of which I had not gone to bed. On that night at 3:00 in the morning, I heard a noise in Jacinta's house. I looked out and saw the girl go outside in ecstasy on an infernal night of ice and rain. I felt sorry for her and went down to keep her company. When I got there, her mother, María, was going out of the house in a very bad mood, while saying, *A night like this, another one like this . . . I'm not going to allow her again. I'll barricade the door shut . . .*

In the street we met María Dolores, in ecstasy

20. Maximina, in a letter to the Pifarré family on December 27th, also describes this fact:

«Look. If this isn't true, how do the girls do everything that they do these days when then weather is very bad and freezing? And up to now none of them has become sick. How is it possible that night after night for more than a year now they have been able to endure such cold and loss of sleep?»

We can picture those winter nights at Garabandal from Maximina's letter to the Pifarrés on December 13th:

«This morning at 5:15 I heard a knocking on the door of the house. I got up and went out. There was Conchita in ecstasy with her mother, her brother, and three other women . . . We went outside; we went through the whole village praying the rosary. Then we sang the Salve and several songs as usual. Look, our lips were freezing. I carried an umbrella, but I couldn't hold it up because of the cold and the weight of the snow. It was a terrible morning, snowing with thunder and a wind that blew snow into our faces and on our legs, making us shiver.»

too, and completely alone. Then I went to tell her mother, Julia. The two girls joined together with the three of us behind them. We went up to the Pines twice, praying the rosary; as usual we ran through the village . . . The night was really stormy and María's mood didn't leave her. Julia tried to calm her, *Woman, what are we going to do? These are the affairs of God . . . Today I have to console you; other times you have consoled me . . .*»

The penitential aspect that these *charming* vigils in Garabandal had acquired could not be denied. Conchita wrote to Fr. José Ramón, the pastor of Barro, on November 29th:

«I have just received your letter, which I'm going to answer, although I didn't think I would be writing to you now, since I have to sleep! Yesterday I had two apparitions and the last one was at 4 o'clock in the morning; and so I didn't sleep at all.»

It was no wonder that the girls occasionally made minor complaints such as that which Luis Navas heard from Conchita:

«*Why don't you let me eat? Before you prevented me from sleeping, now also from eating. In heaven, obviously, it isn't necessary to eat . . . with seeing God! . . . But since I don't see God I have to eat.*»

Although the visionaries certainly were practicing penance, miraculously the penance did not affect their physical or psychological health in the slightest way. Doctor Ortiz wrote at the end of September:

«I am amazed by the girls, that in spite of spending the majority of nights without sleep— as a consequence, without sufficient rest for the body— their general and psychological state is better all the time.»(20)

* * *

In the autumn of 1962, important matters for the Church were happening in the Council at Rome. But perhaps more important for the Church were those that were happening in *poor Garabandal of the apparitions*.

Only God can measure things that are immeasurable by human standards.



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Toward the End

1962 was a year crammed with events in the process of Garabandal. There were innumerable apparitions by the Virgin, numerous *Mystical Communion*s, certain exceptional episodes like the *nights of the «gritos» or screams*, the *Miracle of the Host* on July 18th, and furthermore the increasing predictions of a great Miracle.

It was the Miracle that was beginning to appear as the finale of the whole process. On the one hand, it would come to put a definite *seal of authenticity* on the origin of so many and such extraordinary phenomena; on the other hand, it would come to give the last opportunity for salvation before the great catastrophe.

With the Miracle in sight, one could begin looking for a final outcome, since certainly no one could think that these phenomena would continue like this indefinitely.

And so the Miracle was being discussed more and more in the statements of the girls and was increasing in importance in the hopes of the pilgrims.

More News More Expectation

The winter of 1963 began on the heights of Garabandal without an interruption in the *normal* march of the apparitions. The three girls who remained — Jacinta, Loli, and Conchita — were accustomed to have their ecstasies individually. But at times the three joined together, and the ecstatic march that resulted was singularly beautiful. In Fr. Valentín's notes of December 3rd, 1962, there is this excerpt:

«Today our attention was attracted by their way of walking. A total synchronization of movements was observed. The three held their step perfectly, in the manner of a military march. They only lost the rhythm when they had to avoid some difficult obstacle, or on the rare occasions when they stumbled; but immediately they regained the cadence. Loli attracted the most attention because she has a natural tendency to walk with shorter steps than the other two, probably because she is much smaller.

On this day, Conchita came out of ecstasy before the other two;⁽¹⁾ and it was observed that, while the other two continued in their rhythmic step, perfectly synchronized, Conchita began to walk in her normal way. There was also another unusual thing on this day. We had always seen that when the three girls marched in ecstasy, Conchita infallibly occupied the center position. Today it was not this way; she constantly occupied a position on the side. Jacinta went in the center, Loli at the left, and Conchita at the right.»

December 6th was a Tuesday, the day before the vigil of the Immaculate Conception. Long before dusk had settled, toward 5:30, Conchita had an ecstasy that lasted 90 minutes. When it was over, the girl made two important announcements concerning the Miracle:

1) *One day, a little before the Miracle will be performed, something will happen that will cause many people to stop believing in the apparitions of Garabandal. The doubts and desertions will not be due to an excessive delay of the Miracle.*

2) *On the day of the Miracle, the note that she signed in Santander (stating the apparitions were*

1. In Garabandal during these December days was a man from Barcelona named Francisco Clapes Maymó, who was kind enough to send me a copy of his notes from this period. In the notes pertaining to the night between December 2nd and 3rd, I see Fr. Valentín's statements confirmed:

«Conchita ended the ecstasy first, and she continued holding the arms of Jacinta and María Dolores (Loli).

María Dolores had an expression of sorrow.

Ceferino, who was listening beside María Dolores in ecstasy, said that from what he had heard this was diabolical, and they were discussing this . . .

Conchita said the meeting that they had in ecstasy in a room of her house was not diabolical, but from the Virgin.»

This meeting took place on the previous afternoon, December 2, and we know of it from the testimony of this same Mr. Clapes Maymó:

«At 6:20 in the afternoon Conchita fell into ecstasy while playing, and on seeing her, María Dolores and Jacinta had an ecstasy too.

They didn't say the rosary. They made tours through the village, coming to the church several times. At the beginning of the ecstasy the three entered Conchita's house, went up to her room, making signs so that no one would follow them. They were upstairs for a while. We don't know what they did or said.» (It might be asked whether this private audience might not have been for the Virgin to reveal the date of the Miracle.)

not authentic) would disappear.⁽²⁾

* * *

Two days later came the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the most solemn Marian feast and the one best observed in Spain. Furthermore, it was Conchita's nameday. Almost at the beginning of the day, at 3 o'clock in the morning, the girl was favored with an ecstasy. Part of what she said in conversation with the apparition was recorded on a tape recorder. Some of her phrases had an astounding childishness, if it is taken into account that she was approaching her 14th birthday. For example with regard to the Infant whom the Virgin brought this time:

«Today they brought an infant to me that doesn't seem like the one that you bring . . .⁽³⁾ And how long since you've come with the Infant! He hasn't grown at all! Look, He's the same as He was . . . Where has He been? Where has He been? . . . Oh! When the Infant doesn't come where does He stay? In heaven! In a cradle? . . . Oh! But you can't be here and there!»

Interspersed with these childlike remarks and other unintelligible expressions, there also were heard words obviously related to the Miracle. But they did not spell out anything new, leaving up in the air any explanation that might have been given by the mysterious conversationalist.

The same kind of thing occurred in the ecstasy that Jacinta had almost immediately afterward. There were similar childish questions as:

«Do you sometimes shiver there when snow comes like this? . . . But the snow comes from there up above.»

Together with these remarks, there were other

2. This refers to the paper that she signed — on pressure from Dr. Piñal — when she was taken to the capital at Santander at the end of July, 1961. (See chapter VI of Part One.)

The information about December 6th was taken from the notes of Fr. Valentín.

Mr. Clapes Maymó gives his version as an eyewitness:

«Conchita had an ecstasy that went from 5:35 to 6:40 in the morning . . .

When she was normal again, she said that the paper the doctor in Santander had made her sign — stating that the apparitions were false and that she was insane — would disappear by the Virgin's command.

She said too that just before the Miracle almost no one would believe in Garabandal . . .»

points of interest that could not be completely understood:

«I want that day to come, to be part of it . . . You know why I want that day to come? My father doesn't believe . . . Oh! After the Miracle comes, will the people believe? . . . A week is enough? . . . when will the people see you?»

The topic of the Miracle filled the air in Garabandal in those final weeks of 1962. Fr. Valentín's notes, which end during these days, give as almost the last piece of information:

«On this day of December 15th, Conchita told Mercedes Salisachs that a totally paralyzed man would be cured on the day of the Miracle, wherever he was.»⁽⁴⁾



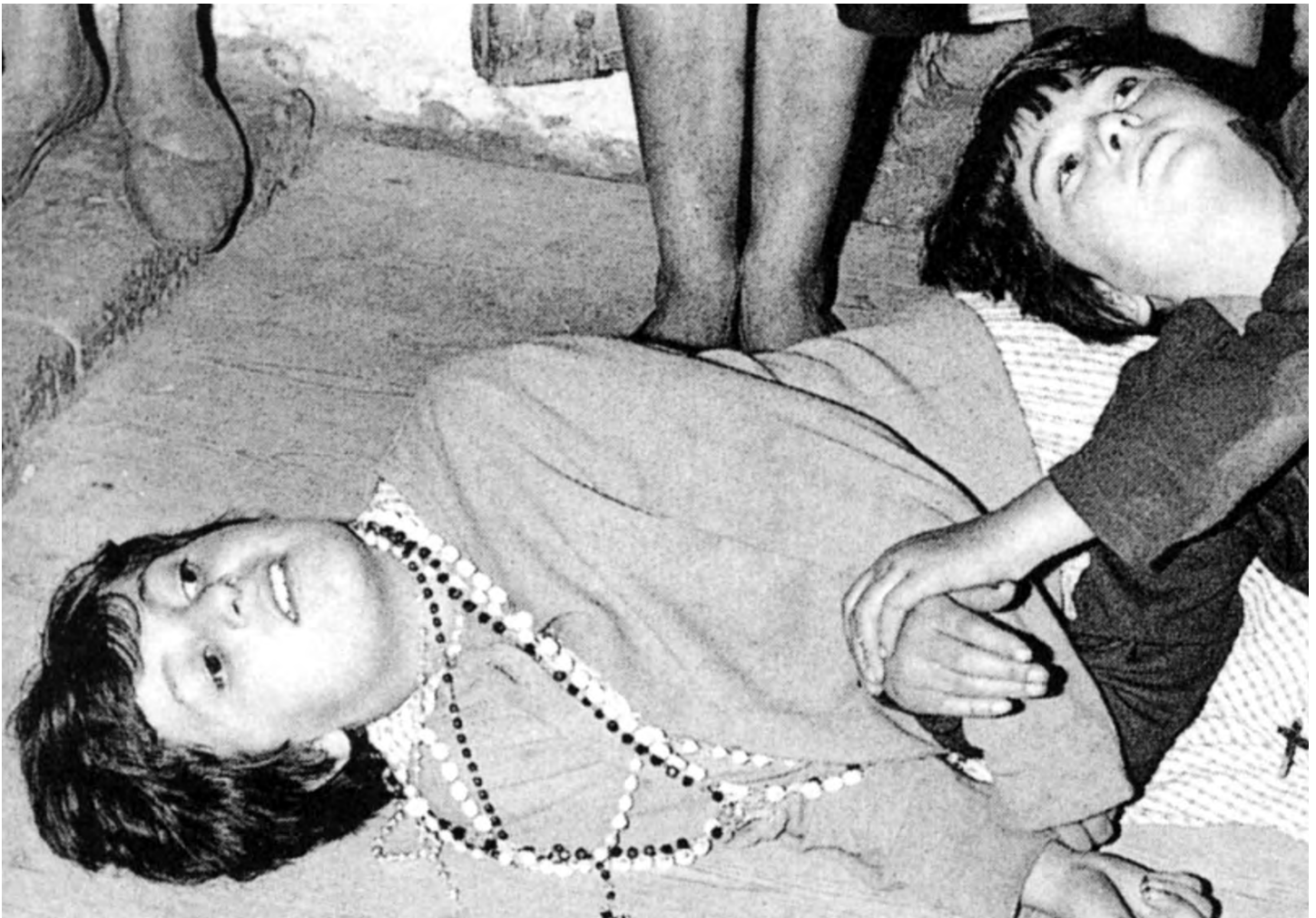
«A totally paralyzed man would be cured.»

3. A young woman from Madrid, Paloma Fernandez-Pacheco, was present on that day in Garabandal with her husband Mr. de Larrauri. She wrote me several observations:

«The infant about whom Conchita talked in ecstasy was the Infant Jesus of the Nativity that I brought. I myself took the reel of tape that recorded the conversation to the NO-DO laboratories. It was rather long, and at times the Virgin's voice seemed to be heard. At NO-DO they told me that the tape had two voices on it. But that they were not at the same volume, as they were very different in tone and pitch. (I don't remember well the technical words they used.) They were amazed . . .»

4. Clapes Maymó also confirms this information. On the morning of December 10:

«Conchita had an ecstasy between 5:27 and 5:37 (ten minutes). Accompanying her were Mrs. (Mercedes) Salisachs, a lady friend, Felix (An ex-seminarian from Bilbao), a young child from Colunga (Asturias) and Mrs. Salisachs' chauffeur . . . She said that a paralyzed child — known by this woman — for whom she had asked Conchita to pray, would be cured wherever he was» (on the day of the Miracle).



“The apparitions continue as usual.”

In an atmosphere like this, what produced the tremendous crisis that abruptly dashed the hopes and annihilated most of the enthusiasm?

Weariness & Disillusion

On December 28th, Maximina wrote to Eloísa de la Roza Velarde, the sister-in-law of Dr. Ortiz. Together with complaints about the absence of liturgical services for Christmas,⁽⁵⁾ there was a brief

5. «On Christmas Day, we didn't have a midnight Mass or a dawn Mass; that is, we had none, either at night or during the day. So we didn't know it was Christmas. Fr. Valentín didn't come up because of foul weather.»

But if the celebration of Mass was missing on Christmas Day for the townspeople of Garabandal, the special favor of God was not missing, and it came through the seers.

Maximina wrote:

«On Christmas Eve, Jacinta and Loli were at the Pines

remark about the situation:

«The apparitions continue as usual; but we haven't learned more about the miracle.» (She mentions the sentiments of two people from Asturias who were staying in her house because of a sign that they received, and then she continues.) «This caused no effect on those who are here since we have done all this. We hope to see something greater and I don't know when we'll see it, since it seems that the girls don't say anything about the miracle. It seems, according to what we have heard, that Loli and Jacinta's miracle is going to be this year. But it remains to be seen if it will be this year. The main thing is that it will be! Since we are afraid that it will not be. Conchita says that hers won't be delayed . . .»

at 12:00 at night. And the weather was very bad that night, snowing and very cold. Conchita spent all night in her kitchen and at 4:00 in the morning went in ecstasy to the Pines, and from there came down a good part of the way on her knees on top of the snow, and later she went to the cemetery . . .»

From these lines and from other references of this period, it can be clearly seen that at the end of 1962 rumors were circulating of two predicted miracles. One miracle was being forecast by Conchita in her statements; another, by Loli and Jacinta in their remarks, foretelling a different miracle.⁽⁶⁾ It appears that Loli and Jacinta were talking about *their miracle* as if it were to be very near; and the people, either because they heard this, or because they misunderstood, were convinced that the miracle would happen before the year ended.⁽⁷⁾

But the year did end and what was hoped for did not materialize. Oppressive dejection and bitter disenchantment began to descend on the parents, the townspeople, and the pilgrims. Not only because the miracle had not been performed on the date that they expected, but also because of the fear that it would never be performed. «**The main thing is that it will be!**» — we have heard Maximina say— «**Since we fear that it will not be.**»

And this was the beginning of the *great crisis of the winter of 1963*.

* * *

Unquestionably we now find ourselves before

6. It is certain that in the last months of 1962 the people were waiting for two miracles that had been predicted separately: one — more immediate — *that of Loli and Jacinta*; the other, *that of Conchita*.

Jacinta and Loli spoke definitely of *their miracle*; but there are reasons to question whether it had initially been their idea.

I finally was able to speak with Jacinta in Santander on November 10th, 1973. I questioned her on the matter, and from her words, these things were brought out clearly:

1) The Virgin had never clearly promised her a miracle. Whenever she had petitioned the Virgin «*so that the people would believe*» as an answer she had only obtained silence and a vague «*They will believe. They will believe.*»

2) That it was Conchita who put in her mind and Loli's the idea of an imminent miracle in which the two of them would take part. And in this sense and because of Conchita's words they spoke of *their miracle*.

It is hard to explain what Conchita sought in staging this.

7. From October to December, Maximina's frequent letters to the Pifarré family touch time and again on the subject of «*Jacinta and Loli's miracle*» . . . It was presented as being so imminent — from what the girls said — that Maximina repeatedly expressed her fear that she would not be able to warn them in time to make the trip from Barcelona to Garabandal. (At the time there was no telephone in the village that she could use.) At times she even held back mailing the letters she had written during those days, thinking the girls might tell her the date at any moment . . .

one of the most complicated and least clear of the episodes about Garabandal.

I have tried to bring it clearly into the open; but this has not been possible for two reasons:

1) Because of the lack of sufficient testimonies and written reports.

2) Because I was not able to investigate on the site, speaking with the visionaries and the villagers, due to the closed and ill-natured opposition of Bishop Cirarda.

But if it is not possible to bring it out clearly into the open, at least it can be partially brought out.

In February of 1963, Fr. Luis López Retenaga made another visit to Garabandal lasting three days, from the 22nd to the 24th. Afterwards he dictated a report for the prevailing bishop of Santander, Bishop Beitia Aldazábal (the visit to the site of the apparitions had been made with the bishop's express authorization), and in that report we find some very valuable information:

«**This is the fourth time that I have visited the mountain village . . . During my previous visit, in the final months of the past year, I heard of rumors that were circulating with regard to the realization, rather imminent, of a *miracle* predicted by Loli and Jacinta.**»

It was not possible in those circumstances to check personally on the accuracy of such predictions. But I know that at the beginning of the month of January of the present year, seeing that the hoped-for miracle predicted by the two girls was not crystallizing into reality, the hopes of many people were seen to fall. Not only the families but also the majority of the villagers felt themselves cheated and humiliated.

Subject to the rough manners and the extreme attitudes that are characteristic of the masses, the people changed the admiration that they felt for the girls into an attitude of rejection and distrust, converting them into a continuous object of their complaints. Such an attitude was directed principally against Conchita, who always has been considered as the most responsible, or culpable of the four . . .»

These lines help us to understand the feeling in the village at the beginning of 1963; but we would



“You will find a Virgin.”

also like to know how such a situation came about. And this is what Fr. López Retenaga says:

«Conchita mentioned to me that on returning one day from Cabezón de la Sal, Loli and Jacinta were speaking of a miracle that had occurred to them and which consisted in burying a statue of the Virgin in order to tell the people later when they were in ecstasy, *Dig here and you will find a Virgin.*



“She spoke of some *magic powders.*”

Conchita took it for a joke, and continuing in the same line of jesting,⁽⁸⁾ she spoke of some *magic powders* that had the power to suspend whoever took them up in the air . . . The three girls then tried the marvelous powders, which

8. Conchita has always shown a good sense of humor.

were nothing more than dentifrice.⁽⁹⁾ Only Loli, perhaps because of the mixture of the marvelous and ingenuousness in which she had been involved for the preceding year and a half, seemed to take the thing seriously, and tried the powders with the hope of seeing herself suspended in the air.



“a practical joke”

Conchita assured me that her involvement in this incident was no more than this: a practical joke.»⁽¹⁰⁾

9. What Fr. Retenaga says here is confirmed by some lines from Conchita's letter to the daughter of Eloísa de la Roza, on February 18th:

«You know what has happened . . . Well there's trouble here now. Some of those who believed in the apparitions now believe nothing, due to the problems there have been lately. And furthermore, do you know the cause of this mess? Because of some toothpowder that I gave Loli and Jacinta, telling them it would raise them up in the air . . .»

10. Fr. Retenaga records Conchita's version like this, giving her a better appearance than her companions. But I was finally able to record Jacinta's version, and according to it the affair was somewhat different. She told me that Conchita was the real inventor of the plan to bury a statue, etc., in the accomplishment of which she wanted to drag in the other two, remaining herself very clearly on the sidelines. And if Loli and Jacinta did not carry through with the plan, it was due to fear of the possible presence or intervention of the devil.

And with regard to the powders, I am afraid that this was not such an innocent *joke* as Conchita wanted Fr. Retenaga to believe . . . Anyhow the other two took it so seriously that Loli got sick to her stomach due to the repeated doses that she ingested with the hope of rising up into the air.

But the joke, as has been pointed out, brought many disagreeable consequences.

It is difficult to understand the whole affair with proper perspective. But if we can accept the matter of the *dental powders* as Conchita's practical joke (to which the other girls did not catch on), we cannot be so indulgent before the matter of burying the statue . . .

How could these girls calmly think up such a deceitful scheme?

Objectively: They had to recognize their actions were not upright and honest, if not absolutely reproachable.

Subjectively: What degree of culpability did they have?

It is impossible for me to say, because of insufficient information for judgment.

But I am inclined to think that, at least on the part of Loli and Jacinta, it was another display of the regrettable and almost unconscious *frivolousness* that they had shown in the previous year with their *faked ecstasies*.

Fr. Luis López Retenaga seems to think the same way in his report:

«I have to point out, that whoever judges the psychology of the girls, basing it on the maturity of judgment and reflection proper to an adult, well-educated person, will encounter many problems. I have already noted in my first report, as a general appraisal, the noticeable psychological backwardness of the girls as compared to girls of the same age from our industrial towns and cities. Together with their candid and ingenuous psychology, the girls have for a year and a half been presenting to the Vision things varying from the most puerile pranks to the most serious and urgent problems brought by the spectators. The spectators were seeking more to find the marvelous and striking than to adhere to the demands of the message proclaimed by the girls . . . And I think that in the mixture of these two psychological worlds, that of the girls and that of the crowds, is the explanation as to how there could come about things ranging from *jokes* up to the expectation of a great miracle.»

Together with the constant pressure made by the crowds on the *subconscious state* of the girls — habituated to experiencing the supernatural as something of everyday life — there were also other pressures that disturbed the pure flow of the *events* at Garabandal.

Fr. Retenaga adds something further here: «**A certain long-standing antagonism between the families of the girls.**»

This was the situation. Conchita was coming, little by little, but progressively more each day, into the forefront of attention. Perhaps the families and the friends of the other girls — because of village envies which we know about — were annoyed in a thousand ways, bringing them unconsciously to a certain desire not to be less: If Conchita had *her* miracle, why should not they likewise have *theirs*?

To this should be added, it seems to me, the urge to find an end or conclusion to all this. The families had to feel rather tired of the unending series of phenomena that had already lost much of their first excitement, but which were continuing to be a constant reason for preoccupation during the day and for loss of sleep at night. How and when was this going to end? For it seemed to be coming to the time when it was going to end. And that it should terminate in something that was *worth the trouble*.

«**To those who are here**» — remarked Maximina in her letter — «**this doesn't make any impression, since we have done all this. We hope to see something greater . . .**»

Perhaps at the time, the children thought to confront the situation by the announcement of a miracle. Since the Virgin had given them to understand with her repeated, «*They will believe, they will believe,*» that something marvelous was going to occur, why not speak about it with her (and even put pressure on her) by predicting a prodigy which could not wait?⁽¹¹⁾

11. It appears that talk about the proximate miracle began during the second half of October, since on October 25th, Maximina wrote to Dr. Ortiz' sister-in-law:

«It is seen that there is going to be a miracle: that of Loli and Jacinta. They already know the date, but have not told us yet. It's going to be very soon, and I believe it's going to be that they will be raised up in the air . . . Conchita's is going to be — if it is true what they say — something very great. Everyone in the village will see it. Conchita's miracle may take place in the sky.»



**“This doesn’t make any impression.
We hope to see something greater.”**

I do not seek to justify the girls, but only to clarify the circumstances that could have lessened, perhaps substantially, their responsibility in a procedure that merits being condemned.

Well then, if what they sought was to force an outcome, they obtained it. However, the outcome that came was certainly very different from what they would have imagined.

After 19 Months, the Final Period?

We must return now, in these high points of our story, to Conchita's diary, which helped us so much in the beginning, but which is not of equal service for the second half of 1962. She says on the final pages:



“We would deny that we had seen the Virgin.”

At the beginning of it all, the Virgin told the four of us — Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz, and myself — that:

— we would contradict each other,

— that our families wouldn't get along well,

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

Obviously we were very surprised that she told us these things.



“The Virgin told us at the beginning.”

And everything that the Virgin told us at the beginning happened during the month of January, 1963.

We came to contradict each other.

And we even denied that we had seen the Virgin.

We even went one day to confess it.

But we felt inside that the Angel and the Most Holy Virgin had appeared to us, since they had brought a peace and internal joy to our souls, and a great desire to love them with our whole hearts.

For their smile and their speech and what they told us made us love them, love them very much, and give ourselves completely to them.

When we went to confession, it was without thinking about it, without believing that it was a sin.

We went because the parish priest told us that we should go to confession.

And we, I don't know how it was, well . . .

We doubted a little, but a doubt of a type that seems from the devil, who wants us to deny the Virgin.



“Father Valentín Marichalar gave us . . . penance.”

And afterwards, we told our parents that we hadn't seen the Virgin; but that the *calls* and the Miracle of the Sacred Host were true.

In my heart, I was surprised to say these things.

But my conscience was completely calm about having seen the Most Holy Virgin.

And the parish priest, Father Valentín Marichalar, gave us ten rosaries and five Our Fathers for penance.

And after we had said this, in a few days, the Virgin appeared to us again.

We have extensive material here in Conchita's words describing a precise, long-standing prophecy, which finally is fulfilled.

We are facing the development of the so-called denials (*negations*) of the girls. But more than denials or *negations*, we might speak of tremendous doubts or darkneses, which they were not capable of interpreting or of expressing. The whole process had been long and complicated. Its herald

breeze appeared in Mari Cruz, who found herself for some time — especially after the total cessation of her ecstasies during the previous September — in a special situation. On this follows now the storm of *negations* in January of 1963, during which the remaining visionaries are implicated. Conchita and her two companions will soon recover from this, as we will see later on. But in August of 1966, a new tempest of confusion in the girls concerning the apparitions will blast forth.



“a natural explanation”

The events will then be publicly denounced by the newly appointed Bishop Puchol, who personally disliked this affair,⁽¹²⁾ in a questionable «Nota» on March 17th, 1967:

«There have been no apparitions. There has been no message. All the events that happened have a natural explanation.»

As now we are relating the facts, and are still in January of 1963, I do not wish to comment on the contents of that «Nota», the circumstances that preceded its composition, or the consequences that

12. Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal, who three years previously had entered the bishop's mansion at Santander, was relieved of his pastoral duties on his own request in 1965. Vicente Puchol Montís succeeded him as bishop in August, 1965.

When the nomination was publicized, a Madrid canon wrote to Fr. Lucio Rodrigo of the Pontifical University at Comillas, warning him that «Garabandal had a great enemy in the new bishop», as he turned out to be.

Bishop Puchol died tragically in an automobile accident on May 8th, the feast of the apparition of St. Michael the Archangel at Mount Gargano in Italy.

followed it. The day will come to bring everything into the open. What I want to say here is that such a phenomenon of doubts and *negations* is not something exclusive to Garabandal,⁽¹³⁾ nor is it substantial evidence against the truth of the *events*.

Let us return to the first *negations* of the visionaries in January of 1963. It can immediately be seen that they clearly showed wavering and hesitation. The girls themselves did not understand what was happening, and were surprised by what they had said — in such contrast with what they personally felt. It could be said that a strange and mysterious force — Conchita names it: **the devil** — brought them to express something that did not agree with their most undeniable experiences.⁽¹⁴⁾

The priest from the seminary in San Sebastián, Father Luis López Retenaga, in his third report to Bishop Beitia, gave his impressions of what he perceived in the girls during the Holy Week of 1963:

«In the face of the joke that was converted into the miracle that failed, they saw themselves

13. For example, it is known that the venerable Father Hoyos — the Spanish Jesuit associated with the apparitions and promises of the Sacred Heart of Jesus — sometime after the phenomenon had happened to him, fell into such doubts and scruples concerning the authenticity of his apparitions that he came to believe to his dismay that he was the greatest deceiver in the world, a sinner unworthy of pardon. And a similar thing happened to Bernadette Soubirous, the seer from Lourdes, during her convent life at Nevers; but the church certainly knew how to evaluate Bernadette's doubts or *negations*, elevating her to the supreme honor of the altars, after a long process according to ecclesiastical law.

I believe, referring to the masters of mystical theology, that it is not difficult to explain the *contradictions* of the seers at Garabandal, nor is it hard to understand what value should be attributed to them.

14. We can speak also of *pressures* that are not attributable to the action of the devil. In the beginning of April, Luis Navas was once again at Garabandal; he was upset by this new situation, so different from what he had experienced there on previous occasions. Trying to find an explanation, he began speaking to various people, and after being with Loli «**he drew**» — he said — «**the conclusion that Ceferino had put pressure on his daughter when the miracle did not come in September as he expected . . .**»

Actually, Ceferino was always one of the hardest to convince with regard to believing personally in the truth of the phenomena. Not that he did not understand them, nor that he could not explain them; but to believe in them was something different. In his case, as in the other families of the visionaries, could well be said what Jesus mentioned in his day: **A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, and among his own kindred, and in his own house.** (Mark 6:4)

pressured by their families and many people (to admit that all had been a lie). This pressure was seen by them as an argument from authority, and they fell into real doubts concerning the origin of what had happened to them . . . Conchita, in the general uncertainty and trusting in the people as knowing more than she, in spite of her internal conviction of having seen a marvelous being, ended up declaring to the pastor also that all had been a lie, except the miracle of the Host . . .»

It is clear that these days of January were tremendously painful for the visionaries because of their own internal sufferings and the troubles and discords which developed in their families due to the general confusion.

Because they were not completely responsible for what they had said, the Virgin did not completely withdraw her favors: **And after we had said this, in a few days the Virgin appeared to us again.**

But the process had been set in motion and complications were developing internally and externally.

And Ceferino, Loli's father, had told a commission of doctors to come; their names were Alejandro Gasca, Félix Gallego and Celestino Ortiz.⁽¹⁵⁾

And on the night that they came, they began to question Mari Cruz, Jacinta and Loli, and their parents about the reason that they were saying that they weren't seeing the Virgin . . .

And I don't know what they thought.

What I do know is that they said that I performed the miracle of the Host, And they explained it their way.

15. Dr. Alejandro Gasca was in practice at Santander; later he held an important post in the Health Department at Saragossa. Dr. Félix Gallego was practicing at Requejada Polanco near Torrelavega. As for Dr. Ortiz, he is already well known to the reader.

There are reasons to believe that in the answers that the three doctors received there came out strongly the «*long standing antagonism*» between the families of the visionaries that Fr. Luis López Retenaga mentioned in his report.

The major attack was, as usual, against Conchita. Some looked at her hostilely because they believed that she had inspired or was the one principally responsible for all this; others, because they resented her role as the leading figure.



"The Virgin appeared to us again."



“controlled by the devil”

Obviously they didn't know what they were saying at the time.

And they allowed themselves to be controlled by the devil.

And after that day, they didn't have any more apparitions.

I had apparitions on the same night, and until the 20th of January.

After that I didn't see her again.

As can be seen, we are in an important period concerning Garabandal. After so many months of being enveloped in light, there comes a complete eclipse, perhaps final. And it seems that the girls and their families are not without fault. Now things can return to tranquility. Now there is nothing to occupy them: neither the miracle that they were awaiting with such impatience, nor the apparitions which they formerly had so surely. There was little except the memory of what had existed . . . And the message to be fulfilled.

* * *

When did the complete cutting off of the ecstasies and apparitions occur?

The date for Conchita we know, since she herself mentions it in her diary; her last day was: **the 20th of January**. We can notice the peculiar fact that this was the feastday of Saint Sebastián the martyr, the patron of the village, from whose name the parish is titled. In that year it was on a Sunday.

For Jacinta and Loli, we only know for certain that it was slightly before that, as Conchita also tells us in the same place. Examining some letters from Maximina, which Doctor Ortiz gave me, I have come to the conclusion that the last day for them was between January 8th and 16th, since in a letter dated on the 8th of January she speaks normally of the apparitions and in another, dated on January 16th, she describes a *new situation*.

We read on January 8th:

«**The miracle, which apparently was going to be so soon, is taking a long time. But don't be worried since they think the same thing. They say that it won't be delayed. The date has still not passed. Now they go very often to the Pines. Every night Conchita comes down the entire hill and a good part of the path backwards on her knees; she always goes alone now. The other two go together, holding arms. Every**



“holding arms”



“an apparition every night”

night that they go, they come down backwards too. Loli, you know, has an apparition every night; but she only goes outside on the nights that the other girl goes out . . .»

And she says on January 16th:

«You know everything that is happening . . . Conchita is the only one who sees the Virgin. That is certain; the others deny that they see her. This is so you will be informed . . .»

We are also informed of the effects that were caused in the village by this unexpected turn of events. We have some information in Maximina's letters; the one from the 16th says:

«Here there are families who gloat over this affair being uncertain. You know, there is a lot of jealousy. And there are other families who believe more than ever. I say that she is my niece and I believe in her. The poor child could not lie. But I believe very little in the apparitions. Heavens! Doesn't it seem, if this doesn't happen, that it's going to be the ruin of many people? You can imagine how much trouble there is around here . . .»

And another letter dated February 11th to the same recipient, Eloísa de la Roza Velarda, reads:

«Since the apparitions aren't seen anymore, there is nothing in particular around here. I



“Conchita is the only one who sees the Virgin.”



“She didn’t say goodbye.”

came to doubt everything completely; today I am once again convinced that there was something here . . . »

During these days, Conchita wrote a postcard to María Herrero de Gallardo, which was received in Madrid on February 18th, and in it is said:

«You ask me if it's true that we don't have apparitions. Yes, it has been some time since we have had them . . . I don't know when the Virgin will appear to me again, since she didn't say goodbye, nor did she say anything to us. Here the people are very disappointed.»⁽¹⁶⁾

And so then, 1962, the second year of Garabandal — so important, so filled with events — came

unexpectedly to the crisis of January, 1963.

If Garabandal seemed to be marked from the beginning by huge question marks, this abrupt shutting off of the proceedings — «*She didn't say goodbye, nor did she say anything to us.*» — leaves us hanging more than ever, with all conceivable answers up in the air.

But this painful finale cannot make us forget that 1962 was a year of wondrous marvels⁽¹⁷⁾ whose marks remain in hundreds of persons who had the good fortune to see them, in many more who did not see them but who believe in them with all their heart.⁽¹⁸⁾

All these marvels had one single purpose: to awaken our attention toward the incomprehensible mystery of . . .

Emmanuel: God with us

16. Jacinta also stated that the Virgin stopped appearing to her in January of 1963, «*without saying goodbye or giving an explanation.*»

But of those visits, of which she now has only a vague recollection, there still remain wonderful memories.

In her visits, the Virgin had listened and talked with a marvelous delicateness and gentleness. The girls had never seen her with a severe look or the least sign of irritation. Whenever she came, after listening with smiling patience and intense interest, she used her turn to speak in instructing the girls, little by little, in the elements of the spiritual life. Jacinta remembers most of all, besides the instructions on prayer and the manner of praying, the things that she told them about the priesthood and priests. «*I believe that struck me the most and left in my mind such esteem and veneration for them that I'm not able to explain it.*»

17. There has come to us an astounding prediction.

On the night of December 19th to the 20th, Wednesday to Thursday, there was something very important, according to the notes of Mr. Clapes Maymó:

«Conchita had an ecstasy from 3:15 to 5:15. It began in her house. Mrs. Salisachs, Nati, her mother, and her brother Serafín were present. She went out from the house, went through the village, went up to the Cuadro and came down backwards, went into the cemetery, to the house of Mari Cruz . . .

During the ecstasy she was heard to say, *Mercedes* (Salisachs) *said that Saint Malachy had prophesied about the Popes and that only two are left . . .*

After the ecstasy, Conchita told us the Virgin's response: *After the present* (John the 23rd) *there were still three; after that there would be no more.*»

18. Fr. Retenaga, in composing his first report on Garabandal in December of 1962, resumés the Christian scope of the phenomena:

«*What the girls ask of our world today in the name of the Virgin is «more prayer, more penance, more Eucharistic life.*»

This latter — *more Eucharistic life* — characterizes the second year at Garabandal, as the *Marian Epiphany* seemed to characterize the first year.

We have seen how the girls' visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the *Mystical Communions* increased. I do not know when the last Mystical Communion occurred; but I do know the last time Conchita was waiting for one. It was on the first Friday of January, 1963, as Maximina explained in her letter that day to Dr. Ortiz. After praying the rosary early in the morning at the *calleja*, as she did every day, Conchita and her relatives went down to the church to pray a Station to the Blessed Sacrament. In the courtyard, the girl had an apparition, and minutes later, began to cry.

«*We asked her*» — Maximina wrote — «*why she was crying, and she told us: Because the Angel didn't give me Communion.*»

— But today is First Friday and the pastor will come to say Mass in the village!

— *That's true. I forgot that. And the Angel didn't tell me anything . . .*

Here we have another little proof, since if she would have said that the Angel had given her Communion, we would have known right away that she was lying.»

The good woman is referring to something that was well known and repeated: the Angel only came to give Communion when there were no priests there who could give It.



PART THREE

Marán Atha: **The Lord Returns**

1963-1965



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A Year of Interlude

With the crisis that erupted in January of this year began the first of the long parentheses in the amazing unfolding of the Garabandal mystery.

The course of the apparitions abruptly stops, without the girls knowing the reason, without the Virgin giving them the least explanation, without even a word of farewell. As Conchita wrote on February 18th to María Herrero de Gallardo:

«It has been some time since we have had an apparition . . . I don't know when She will return, because She didn't say goodbye; nor did She say anything to us.»

All that had filled the village during months and months — over a year and a half — was thus strangely shut off, with only something very indefinite hanging in the air: the promise and the hope of a great final Miracle.

Certainly no one would have imagined that the affairs of Garabandal could last indefinitely. But to end like this? The long impressive display of phenomena did not match with such a poor conclusion. And problems were augmenting since, if it had been difficult to understand what was happening at the time it was going on, it was more difficult to understand what had happened when it was over.

Long Weeks of Dismay

The crisis of January 1963 closed what might be called the *first phase of Garabandal*, an astounding and unforgettable phase, in which the Virgin appeared to want to live in the secluded village, associating day and night with the simple children, who were *her children*: the visionaries, the people who lived there, the innumerable pilgrims.

Now was to come an intermission — and a long one — that would last throughout 1963 and 1964. The girls and their supporters had to live almost exclusively from memories and hopes: memories of so many things that had been, hopes of many others that could still be.

And at the time, for many weeks, what reigned was dismay.

It was mentioned in the preceding chapter; but

there are additional points to add.

On February 13th Conchita wrote to Fr. de la Riva, the pastor of Barro:

«I have just received your letter which I am now answering. It's true that the atmosphere today in the village is very different from what it was when you were here. Hardly anyone believes. My mother doesn't; neither does my aunt Maximina. Nor does the whole village . . . To me that doesn't matter, since I have seen Her. They aren't going to make me believe otherwise. Concerning the miracle, I'm like you — waiting for it . . .»

What she said about Maximina was correct;⁽¹⁾ but it seems that deep inside the good woman was recovering, because during these same dates she wrote a letter to the sister-in-law of Dr. Ortiz, Eloísa de la Roza:

«Around here, as the apparitions aren't coming back, there's nothing in particular. I had come to doubt everything completely; but today I am once again convinced that there was something here . . .»

The crisis of disillusion involved the girls also, as has been mentioned; but they also recovered rapidly, judging from what Conchita wrote:

Now Loli and Jacinta have come back to reality, to believing that they have seen the Most Holy Virgin.

Really, how could they not believe?

This brought them back together with a new frame of mind and a better relationship. Maximina, in the letter just mentioned, writes:

1. The letters to the Pifarré family eloquently reflect her sorrow and dismay:

«Dear Asunción: Here I am, loaded down with troubles and problems.» (January 11)

«I received your letter, and writing you caused me tremendous sorrow, not being able to say what I feel . . . It seems to me that nothing here has been from God; I don't know what it is . . . I already told you in another letter what happened with Loli and Jacinta, that for a long time they didn't have an apparition. Well, now it's come about that Conchita for the past eight days isn't having apparitions either. Do you think the Virgin is going to part without saying anything? The apparition has gone, but they don't know if she will return. I don't believe anything. All this is nothing, and there's no one here who believes . . .» (January 28)

The Case of Mari Cruz

«You know, with all the trouble there was among the children, they are now very friendly. It can be seen that they seem to like each other very much. At the present time, they are running past where I am, very content and happy.»

How long did the visionaries' recovery last? On March 7 when Conchita writes again to Fr. de la Riva, she begins by apologizing for her delay in answering him and then says:

«As I don't see the Virgin now, I don't know what to write. Some priests have been here, and on Friday a priest is supposed to come for confession.⁽²⁾ I miss you very much. Do you still believe so much? I don't believe anything. How does that strike you? . . .»

I have the impression that beginning in January 1963 the *doubts* and *denials* in Conchita, Mari Loli and Jacinta followed a strange line of discontinuity. They appeared and disappeared in a continuous succession of phases. No sooner had the dark and obscure days come, then other days arrived in which they believed they saw everything clearly. What was evident was that they were not, nor could they be, the same girls that they had been in Garabandal during the first stage, in the happy days of the two previous years.

Mari Cruz continued a path of separation and rejection very different from the others. In January, when the crisis of the other three girls came about, she hardened in her attitude and began to say openly that she had never seen anything, that the apparitions were a lie . . .

In her diary's final pages, Conchita writes:

Mari Cruz still continues saying that she hasn't seen the Most Holy Virgin.

As her attitude since then has been so obstinate and sustained, it is not surprising that this visionary has been particularly utilized by the enemies of Garabandal to discredit it.⁽³⁾ We cannot then, ignore . . .

2. We know that this was the Franciscan priest Félix Larazábal, since Conchita says in a letter to the daughter of Eloísa de la Roza Velarde on March 9th: «He was the one who was here when we were screaming on the feast of Corpus Christi.»

3. A Jesuit priest from a neighboring parish distinguished himself in this; he is now an ex-Jesuit and an ex-priest.

Many things have been said about the possible causes of her persistent negative attitude. But, in one way or another, they almost always end up pointing to an inner state of resentment or bitterness against the other visionaries or their families. This could be blamed on the odious distinctions that many of those who most frequented the village made between the girls. I am obliged to treat this distasteful topic; I do not want to spend too much time on it; I only want to bring out information that could clarify it. This information makes me think that the negative attitude of the visionary in question, rather than being the fruit of an interior animosity, was the result of heavy pressures put on her.

On April 6, 1963, Fr. Retenaga wrote in his second report to Bishop Beitia:

«Months before the confused situation that came about last January, there was already a rather general feeling that this girl had prevented the apparitions. And the reason is that every sign of heavenly origin cannot come to destroy the law, but to perfect it.⁽⁴⁾ Because of this, the apparitions could not override the need for the girls to obey their parents.

A curious thing in this regard was told me by Loli's father, Ceferino: *On the occasions that I seriously told my daughter to go to bed without waiting for the hour scheduled for the apparition, the apparition didn't occur, although the girl had received calls. On the contrary, when I didn't really oblige her, since I was speaking in jest or only wanted to test her, then the apparition didn't fail . . .*

The village, in its simplicity, had an underlying religious attitude. In this environment, with regard to the case of Mari Cruz, I have heard opinions explaining what happened to the child as due to a lack of deep religion in her parents. They — without bad will, but lacking deep faith — had more or less unconsciously opposed the designs of God, perhaps to avoid the troubles that situations like those of Garabandal always bring with them.

4. An allusion to what Jesus proclaimed at the start of his Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 5:17-18)



A visitor to the village wrote me last February 5th that Mari Cruz had denied that she had seen the Virgin; but — the visitor added — his attention had been strongly attracted to the fact that Mari Cruz, while denying, was constantly looking fixedly at her mother. When she disputed the ecstasies that she herself had witnessed, her mother interrupted to try to explain them as arising from illness . . .

During my last visit to the village, the *fiesta del gallo*⁽⁵⁾ was going on, consisting of a special luncheon that the children from the village — boys for one part and the girls for another — had organized on the Sunday of the carnival.

I took advantage of the occasion to be with Mari Cruz, who — after some resistance — permitted me to talk with her. The marked nervousness of the girl contrasted noticeably with the naturalness and spontaneity with which Conchita, Loli, and Jacinta had previously spoken to me.

To the question whether she had seen the Most Holy Virgin, she responded nervously, *No it was a lie . . .*

— Could you now endure those ecstasies that you sometimes had up to two hours long, in which they pinched you, etc?

— *I don't know.*

— Were you ill, as your mother says?

— *No, Señor.*

— Why did you look so fixedly at your mother when I asked you if you had seen the Virgin?

— *I don't know.*

— Several times after the ecstasies, the pastor with other priests and doctors questioned the four of you separately, one after the other. All of you agreed exactly on the details that you gave concerning the Vision . . . How can you explain this, if now you say that you have never seen the Most Holy Virgin?

Response: complete silence.

— If you haven't seen the Virgin, as you say now, then the four of you had to agree to fake false ecstasies. And you must have practiced many times to do it as well as you did it, no?

— *No, Señor. We never did that.*

— Well, there is another thing: Were you afraid of going to jail for telling lies?



“I was telling a lie.”

The face of the girl contorted in a long nervous laugh. Finally she said: *Yes, Señor . . .* She hesitated again and concluded, with an obvious desire of getting out of this: *I was afraid because I was telling a lie, and they could have found us out.*»

Anyone who can read needs no help to perceive the underlying basis of this dialogue. The girl was trying to maintain a position that she did not feel, but which she was forced to hold. Once again she was *between the sword and the wall*: the wall was the facts that could not be put down or forgotten; the sword was strong pressure that forced her to go against everything that she felt.

5. In that year it fell on February 24th.

At times Mari Cruz said that «*Fear forced her to fake ecstasies day after day . . .*» But anyone who knows Garabandal well, knows that this statement does not stand up against two irrefutable facts:

First, that she often went for weeks with *the desire of having an apparition* during the times that her companions were having them without her.

Secondly, that several times she was surprised in ecstasy in places where there was not a single spectator to incite her to fake an ecstasy.

Fr. Retenaga concluded:

«During my last sojourn in San Sebastián de Garabandal, my attention was forcefully called to the fact that Conchita, Loli and Jacinta confessed and then received Communion on those days, while Mari Cruz didn't confess or receive Communion.» Although this cannot be given too much importance, it can be an indication.

Not long after the interview with Mari Cruz, another episode occurred that was reported in *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*:

«One day in March, 1963, we found ourselves in a little store at the village, in company of a Spanish friend, a lawyer. After a while Mari Cruz came. She stopped at the entrance and gave us a look full of sadness. She was then 13 years old. Her face was pale, drawn . . . She repeated: *No, I have never seen the Virgin*. She did not make a motion and her monotonous voice seemed to be coming from another world.



“I have never seen the Virgin.”

Our Spanish friend, for a considerable time, besieged her with questions and comments

without success. He didn't draw anything out of her besides the *No, I have never seen the Virgin*, that she repeated endlessly, and always in the same tone.

Finally she left without saluting us, which is very unusual in the village of Garabandal, where the people always show themselves so courteous. Our friend, the lawyer, could not prevent himself from saying, *We have just seen a phantom; that was not Mari Cruz who spoke.*»

New Phenomena: Locutions

The raging waves of the great disillusion that were dashing against Garabandal during the winter of 1963 reached also, as we have seen, the one who seemed the most secure of the four: Conchita. Not only with regard to the truth of what had occurred, but also with regard to the fulfillment of what she had predicted.

I also doubted a little that the Miracle would come.

And one day, while in my room, doubting if the Miracle would really come, I head a voice that said:

Conchita, do not doubt that my Son will perform a Miracle.

I felt this inside; but as clear as if it came through my ears; or even clearer.

It was without words.

It left me a peace . . . A joy!

More than when I see Her.

And the first person to whom I told this was Plácido.⁽⁶⁾

And later he told it to the others.

They are called locutions.

And they could be called a voice of joy, a voice of happiness, a voice of peace.

6. Plácido Ruiloba, a businessman from the capital of Santander, whose name comes up many times in this story.



“What happiness! With the Most Holy Virgin within me!”

**And then, I didn't doubt anything again.
But the days passed.
And the voice didn't return.
That made me suffer.**

**But I understand: how could God go
on giving me such happiness so often,
without meriting it?**

**The locutions did me much good.
Much, very much.**

**Because it was as if the Most Holy
Virgin were within me.**

What happiness!

**I prefer the locution more than the
apparitions, since during the locution, I
have her in my very self.**

**Oh! What happiness, with the Most
Holy Virgin within me!**

And what a shame, to be so bad!

But that is the world.

These sentences were almost the last in Conchita's unfinished diary. They bring out new⁽⁷⁾ phenomena that came to supplant and extend the apparitions. They differed from the apparitions not only in content, but also in frequency: the locutions occurred on few occasions.

The first locution — which Conchita mentions in her diary — took place at the beginning of Lent in March of 1963. There was a month lapse before another occurred.

**At the end of the month, again I heard
that voice of interior happiness without
words, in the church.**

The adolescent girl — having just had her 14th birthday — was at that time living a period of special fervor. In Maximina's letter of February 11th, it can be read:

«Conchita, when she is home, (*that is, not working in the fields*) spends almost the whole day in church. In the morning she goes there to pray a rosary and some women go with her; in the afternoon she goes to spend most of the day there. She doesn't know what it is to get weary.

7. New in the affairs of Garabandal; but very ancient in the course of Catholic mysticism.

The other day I asked her, *What do you like most: to play or to be in the church?* And she said to me, *I like both things very much.*»⁽⁸⁾

An interval of one month between locutions seemed to become routine,⁽⁹⁾ since on November 28th of that same year, Conchita wrote to María Herrero de Gallardo:

«You say that I should tell you things about the Virgin. What am I going to tell you, if I don't see her now? Only that I talk to her once each month. I still haven't spoken with her this month. Tomorrow or the day after, she will speak to me.»

María de Gallardo added a note that said: «On the following day, November 29th, she had the locution that she was expecting.»

* * *

But we are indebted to Fr. Retenaga for the best information on the Garabandal locutions. Quoting from his third report, finished in September of 1963:

«I traveled to Garabandal to aid the parish priest during the past Holy Week.⁽¹⁰⁾ In Santander, I had already heard rumors that were circulating among the people concerning Conchita's and Loli's new and extraordinary phenomenon.

Julia González, Loli's mother, talked to me about a conversation she had in March with her daughter concerning the new phenomenon that Loli didn't know how to explain.

During Holy Week, the girls talked to me repeatedly about the *internal visions* that they appeared to be having. I was able to examine

8. A sincere and most human answer, which reveals how *normal* Conchita was. What 14 year old girl would not like to amuse herself, with the world just beginning to spread open before her? Merit is in knowing how to renounce at times the desire for pleasure out of higher motives, so as to attend to matters that are more important, although less pleasurable. Here again is seen the theological axiom that *grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it.*

9. This was affirmed by Maximina's letter of July 7 to Mrs. Asunción Pifarré:

«I don't know if I've told you that Conchita and Loli have locutions — which is something like talking to the Virgin without seeing her . . . They told me that they feel a great joy when they have these locutions. I think that they have them once a month.»

10. In that year it fell between the 7th and the 14th of April.

Conchita and Loli separately, and I came to the conclusion that this concerned *locutions*, as later I informed Bishop Beitia of Santander in a conversation with him on April 17th.



“I hear it without hearing.”

Conchita told me that the new phenomenon had already happened to her several times. On asking her to explain it better, she told me, *I hear something; yet I hear it without hearing.*

The new phenomenon began in March, when she had been suffering since the past January due to the absence of the Virgin. Assailed by many people's doubts, she also had begun to waver. And one day on her knees at home, with considerable anguish, she heard the Virgin say (without speaking): *Do not doubt that my Son will perform a miracle.* After that time her confidence with respect to the miracle ⁽¹¹⁾ was evident in the unalterable peace that she now enjoys. She confessed to me that at the same time she heard *without hearing* other things for the good of her own soul and souls of others.

The mystics have described their difficulties in explaining the high spiritual communications that they receive from God. In Conchita and Loli the matter was complicated by their

11. A letter that Conchita wrote to Father Odriozola in the early days of May ended this way:

«I am certain also that the Miracle will come, since the Virgin told me, and also the date of the Miracle, and in what it will consist . . . I am as certain that the Miracle will come as I am that two and two equal four.»

poor vocabulary. Their education was very limited, especially with regard to religion. During the time of the apparitions, they still asked what the word *council* meant; and several times they asked me about words that seemed very ordinary to all of us. Living without a resident priest in the village had made it difficult for their religious formation. Today, the minds of the girls are much more enlightened than previously; but they stumble with great difficulty in describing their interior experiences.

In my first investigation I noticed that Conchita didn't know that the same phenomenon had been given to Loli. (And likewise Loli didn't know about Conchita). But both, when separated, coincided with each other in their answers to me. Both insisted that neither their feelings nor their imagination had played any part in what had happened to them.

Not satisfied with the first examination, on returning from Garabandal to my quarters, I composed a list of questions and took advantage of Conchita's trip to Lourdes⁽¹²⁾ to complete

12. This trip, arranged by Fr. Retenaga, had its story. On May 9th Conchita wrote to Fr. José Ramón, the pastor of Barro:

«I still don't know if we are going to Lourdes. My mother thinks we won't go, since she prayed that if this were true, that we would go; and if it were a lie, we would stay. And she thinks that we won't go.»

Seven days later, on May 16th, another letter was addressed to the same person:

«Yesterday I received your card, and I am responding to tell you that today I am leaving (for Rentería or San Sebastián to join there with the pilgrims from the diocese of Guipuzcoana) to go on Saturday to Lourdes.»

We have the testimony of Father Retenaga on Conchita's attitude during her first visit to Lourdes:

«Among the 1,300 Spanish pilgrims who were wandering enthusiastically in the locale where the apparitions had taken place, amid the religious emotion aroused in them by being near the grotto during the baths for the sick, before the devotion felt during the Benediction of the sick with the Blessed Sacrament, before the striking spectacle of the candlelight procession, etc., I can assure you that Conchita, though 14 years old, was the person who gave me the greatest impression of equilibrium, prudence and calmness, with a piety based more on the tranquil security of faith and virtue than on passing fluctuation of emotion. If she were afflicted by any psychiatric illness, as had been said on occasion and repeated, could she have remained like that? Would she not have fallen inevitably into an *ecstasy*?»



“My Son will perform a miracle.”

my information. Later (in the month of July) I continued questioning her; and afterward, apart from her, I questioned Loli.»

Following are the most interesting answers to Fr. Retenaga's questionnaire:

To the question as to whether the interior voices had been heard by their physical ears, the two girls responded definitely: «*No Señor.*»

Also they absolutely rejected any suggestion that it could have been their imagination or that they could have been dreaming. Opposing this latter idea, Conchita stated: «*It was during the day*», and Loli: «*It was when I was wide awake.*»

They denied likewise that they could have these interior voices when they wanted . . . «*Listen Lolita*» — Fr. Retenaga said — «*since Jesus is in the tabernacle and you receive Him every day, holding Him that way, you are able to hear His words whenever you want, isn't that right?*»

Oh! No Señor. If I could hear His words whenever I wanted, I would be hearing them all the time.»

Conchita said that her locutions always came when she was in prayer: sometimes in her home, but ordinarily in the church. Loli said the same thing, declaring that twice she heard them in her room unexpectedly; another time, while she was praying at the Cuadro in the calleja; and the rest of the time in the church, one of these times after receiving Holy Communion.

Most interesting was the response to Fr. Retenaga's question as to whether they would choose an apparition, a Communion, or a locution. «*Communion!*» They responded without hesitation.

«**Understand**» — noted Fr. Retenaga — «**the words of that answer, taking into account the state of happiness and the effects that followed for them from the apparitions and locutions, in contrast with the aridity and dryness that so often accompanied their Communions.**»

During their locutions, many things must have been discussed by the visionaries that we will never know. This is clear from some of the remarks made by Father Retenaga:

«One day Conchita told me that she gave a reply to a man who wasn't a Catholic; she also took another reply — which she was required to keep secret — to a young man who overtly didn't believe in God or in priests.⁽¹³⁾ And with regard to herself, she had been told secrets concerning her actual life and her future, but she didn't specify what they were, since she lacked express permission from the Virgin.»

But still more expressive was what happened to Loli:

«I had asked Loli to put some things in writing . . . I was speaking with her on the afternoon of July 25th when she told me that very morning she had wanted to write what I had asked her, and she was all set to begin. But a force from above held back her arm. At the same time, she was told in a locution: *Do not write anything for him right now.*»

I hid my astonishment and told her that it was natural for her not to write anything about it, since what she wanted to tell me had slipped her mind. She answered that she remembered everything perfectly, but that she wasn't able to write because of the force from above that held back her arm . . . And that she had many other things that she couldn't mention either.»

From these incidents, it can be seen that we still do not know a considerable portion of what actually happened in Garabandal . . . Is that surprising? Everything there was of such extraordinary proportions, both in duration and in intensity.

* * *

The Most Holy Virgin was the first to intervene in the *locutions* that extended throughout 1963; later Our Lord took part.

The locutions of the Virgin were imbued with her magnificent maternal attitude. In the locution of July 25th that was mentioned — the feast of St.

13. Things like this were the basis for people to think that Conchita read consciences. On November 8th, 1966, Conchita mentioned to the Mother Superior of the school at Burgos:

«I think back many times to what happened in my village. There were those who came there because they believed that I read consciences. This made me laugh. How was I going to read consciences? The Virgin advised me about the things that I told some people at the time.»



“Change your ways.”

James the Apostle, Patron Saint of Spain — the Virgin called Loli's attention to an attitude of the girl that could well be defined as a fault of vanity. «*Change your ways*» — she said — «*and do not do it again.*» With regard to this, here is an interesting dialogue:

FATHER RETENAGA — «After that reprimand, were you hurt, like a child who is disciplined by his parents?

LOLI — *No, Señor.*

FATHER RETENAGA — Then, you didn't take it seriously?

LOLI — *No Señor. I can't explain it; but what I felt was a mixture of pain and consolation, or confidence, since there is no mother who is so understanding and good as the one we have in heaven, the Most Holy Virgin . . . »*

The locutions of Jesus had their own particular singularity. Conchita points this out in the last lines

of her diary:

But I like even more to have Jesus within me . . .

— Jesus, who give me the cross to purify me,

— And also to see if with my crosses I can do something for the world.

Two and a half years later (November 9th, 1966), she said to Sister María Nieves at her school in Burgos: «*The apparitions and locutions of the Virgin fill me with happiness; but the locutions of Jesus are even better . . . They seem to be something superior.*»

We have an illustration of these locutions, since one day Conchita wrote down in front of Father Retenaga, who was in Garabandal at the time, what she heard that very day⁽¹⁴⁾ after having

14. The version given here basically follows the text from Fr. Retenaga's letter; logical punctuations and separations were put in so that the contents can be better understood.

received Communion during the Mass he celebrated on July 10th, 1963:

(Though not part of *Conchita's Diary*, the girl wrote this shortly after her unfinished diary and its importance dictates the heavy print given to it here.)

I was making my thanksgiving and praying for things. He answered me . . .

I asked Him to give me a cross since I was living without suffering — except the suffering of not having a cross.

And he answered: Yes. I will give you a cross.

And with much feeling, I went on praying . . .

And I said to Him, *Why is the Miracle coming? . . . to convert many people?*

He answered, *To convert the whole world.*

— Will Russia be converted?

— *It also will be converted; and so everyone will love Our Hearts.*⁽¹⁵⁾

— Will the chastisement come afterwards?

(He didn't answer me.)

— Why do you come to my poor heart, without my meriting it?

— *I certainly do not come for you; I come for everyone.*

— When the Miracle comes, will it be as though I were the only one who saw the Virgin?

15. Here the word *hearts* is used for *persons*. Conchita translates in her common vocabulary what she had received intellectually in a locution; in ordinary common Spanish expression the *Sacred Heart of Jesus* is the same as *Jesus*, just as the *Immaculate Heart of Mary* is the same as *The Virgin Mary*.

What is meant in the text of the locution is that mankind will have a new and better attitude towards Jesus and Mary after the general conversion brought on by the Miracle.

— He answered me, *By your sacrifices, your patience, I will allow you to intercede for the accomplishment of the Miracle.*

And I said to Him: *Wouldn't it be better for me to be with all the others; or if not, that You don't use any of us to intercede?*

— No.

— Will I go to heaven?

— *You should love much and pray to Our Hearts.*

— When will You give me a cross?

(He didn't answer me.)

— What will I be?

(He didn't answer me; He only told me that everywhere that I would be, I would have much to suffer.)

— Am I going to die soon?

— *You have to stay on the earth to help the world.*

— I am very small. I couldn't help in anything.

— *With your prayers and sufferings, you will help the world.*⁽¹⁶⁾

— When does one go to heaven? . . . when one dies?

— *One never dies.*

(I thought that we didn't go to heaven until we were resurrected.)⁽¹⁷⁾

16. What Conchita says is useful for all persons of good will. All can and should do something . . . *Oh Mystery truly tremendous that is never sufficiently pondered!* — exclaimed Pius XII in his encyclical "Mystici Corporis"— *That the salvation of some souls depends upon the prayers and voluntary sacrifices of others.*

17. Death for the Christian is not the final end, but rather the passing from the present state into another very different state — which can be extremely marvelous or extremely horrible. The soul enters immediately into the new state; the body has to wait for the resurrection.

I asked Him if St. Peter was at the gate of heaven to receive us; and He told me *No*.⁽¹⁸⁾

While I was in this conversation, in this prayer with God, I felt myself out of the world.

Jesus also told me that now His Heart should be loved.

Concerning priests . . .

He told me that I must pray much:

● ***so that they would be holy and fulfill their duties;***

● ***so that they would make others better;***

● ***so that they would make Me known to those who do not know Me;***

● ***so that they would make Me loved by those who know Me and do not love Me.***

* * *

This page from the history of the *locutions* in Garabandal is magnificent . . .

What material for reflection!

But if this page from Conchita's life is well known, not so well known is a page from Loli's, which is equally valuable and instructive, and gives us new insight into the mystical phenomena with which the two visionaries were favored in 1963.

18. Conchita expresses ingeniously the common belief — mentioned in so many jokes — that St. Peter is the gate-keeper of heaven. This belief has no more basis than being the erroneous interpretation of the words spoken by Jesus to his apostle during the episode at Caesarea Philippi. (Matt. 16:19)

Reading the text of this locution shows well the truth of what Conchita said later to the Mother Superior in the school at Burgos:

«The Lord is very serious, and when He speaks to me, He seems concerned for everyone. The Virgin, as if more for me . . .»
(Nov. 17, 1966)

However the Virgin's style was not that different:
«When we spoke about things too personal, she didn't answer us; she was very concerned about the others.»

(April 21, 1967)

It is reported in a letter to Fr. Retenaga, dated October 13th, 1963:

«Reverend Father Luis,

So that you see that I do what I promise, I am going to tell you a few things . . .

The Virgin has made me know when a priest is in sin. She has helped me to know that he needs many prayers and sacrifices.⁽¹⁹⁾

Also she has given me to understand *the Crucifixion in the Holy Mass*,⁽²⁰⁾ since I comprehend the humility, the sacrifice for the world.

She has also made me recognize *when a person needs prayers to be said for him*. And one time she told me about a person who didn't pray the rosary, and that person told me to write a note for him. And in it I wrote down that he should pray the rosary. And he then began to cry and said to me, *Who told you that I don't pray the rosary?* And later he wrote and told me that since that day he had not missed saying it.

Well, Father, at another time I will tell you more, because now I am writing from my bed, since tomorrow I have to gather hay in the pasture, which is a long way from the village, and I have to get up early . . .

Today is another day and I am going to see if I have more time to write. Well, I spoke with the Virgin in a locution and asked her to give me a cross to *suffer for priests*. She told me to *bear everything with patience*⁽²¹⁾ and to be most humble, which was what pleased God the most.

And I said to her, *Am I going to die soon?*

And she said to me, *No. You have to remain in the world to suffer. In whatever place you*

19. There are numerous incidents demonstrating that Garabandal has always given preferential importance and solicitude for priests, antecedent to the greatest crisis in the priesthood that the Church has ever known.

20. Also in advance of the time when the primary meaning of the Catholic Mass, that of sacrifice — *the sacrifice of the Cross* — would be forgotten or lost by most people, the Virgin Mary would come to repeat this lesson.

21. The Curé d'Ars used to repeat: *One hour of patience is worth more before God than several days of penance.*

are, you will suffer.

And I said to her, *Let my parents believe!*⁽²²⁾



“Suffer with patience.”

And she said to me, *They do not believe, so that you will have more to suffer. Suffer with patience.*

She also told me, *Pray the rosary every day.*

She told me, *Pray for priests, since there are some who need more sacrifices for them every day.*

And again I said to her, *Why don't my parents believe?*

And she said to me, *Because you have to suffer. You have much to suffer in this world.*

And I said to her, *What sacrifices should I make?*

She said to me, *You have to be more obedient.*

I told her that one time I was going down the

22. It is known that Loli's parents, especially Ceferino, held the greatest doubt about the truth of what was happening to their daughter; and she found this to be a heavy cross.

road, and suddenly a man with long hair appeared to me in a long coat, and said to me, *I am hungry.* And as I was carrying my lunch in my hand, I gave it to him. And suddenly he disappeared, without my knowing how. And I was very frightened. And I said to her, *Who was that man?* And she smiled and didn't tell me.

I'm not writing more. Don't say that I don't write much.⁽²³⁾ Goodbye.

María Dolores Mazón»

This letter does not require learned commentaries, but it should be re-read.

It is evident that any similarity between the instruction that the Virgin gave her *children* at Garabandal and that which is now given to many children by our *new theologians*, is purely coincidental.

No wonder. Today what is stressed is the *importance of the individual*, while in the school of Mary, the main focus has always been on the ancient pattern of *giving oneself to God and denying one's very self.*

* * *

It could be said that the phenomena of locutions filled 1963, Garabandal's third year. But there was something else that made a much more spectacular mark; an unequivocal prediction of immeasurable importance:

Only Three Popes Remain!

In the early days of June, not only what is called the *Catholic world*, but the entire world was closely following what was happening in the pope's chamber at the Vatican.

There struggling in his last agony, was the one who had captured more swiftly and amply than

23. This letter is exceptionally long. I have seen many letters written by the visionaries, and I can verify that almost all of them were very short.

anyone before, the admiration of almost everyone, and the love of a great many.

The final curtain was inexorably descending on Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the man called Pope John XXIII.

And the world was watching breathlessly for many days as he painfully died.

On June 3rd came the sudden notice that at last the flame had gone out. The Pope was dead.

As in so many other belfries throughout the world, the crude rustic bells in the church tower in Garabandal tolled for his death.

But beneath the clanging bells at Garabandal, a comment was made, very different from those made in other parts of the world.

* * *

The sound from the belltower came to the little kitchen where the widow Aniceta González and her daughter Conchita were on that afternoon.

— *Listen; they are ringing the bells!* — the daughter exclaimed immediately.

— *It's for the Pope* — said the mother.

— *Certainly . . . Now only three remain.*

Surprised, Aniceta raised her head:

— *What are you saying?*

— *What I heard. That only three popes remain.*

— *And where did you pick that up?*

— *I didn't pick it up; the Virgin told it to me.*

It would be helpful if Conchita would have explained to us when and how she heard this. But even lacking her explanation, we have sufficient reason to think that this occurred during the *locutions*, and presumably during the month of May, the month of Mary:

In a locution, since the apparitions had ceased since January, as described, and in their place were the locutions.

During the month of May, since these locutions were occurring at intervals approximately once per month, and during the locution in May she had talked about the Pope with his terminal illness.

Aniceta, amazed by what she had heard, reacted logically:

— *Then, you mean that the end of the world is coming?*

— *The Virgin didn't tell me "the end of the world," but "the end of the times."*

— *Aren't they the same?*

— *I don't know.*⁽²⁴⁾

News of this amazing prediction soon spread out; it was not shouted aloud, but spoken quietly from person to person.

During those days Paquina de la Roza Velarde (Dr. Ortiz' wife) was in the village. One morning a funeral mass for the dead pope was to be said in the parish church, and the bells began to ring early in the morning. Paquina, Maximina, another woman and Conchita, after having prayed the rosary in the Calleja (How delightful were those rosaries in the silence and freshness of the morning!) made their way to the church. On their way they were speaking of the current news:

— *Perhaps with the pope's death, the Council*⁽²⁵⁾

24. Maximina, Conchita's aunt and godmother, was present on the scene, judging from her letter which I saw in the Pifarré collection, dated June 5:

«*On the day that the Holy Father died, when it was mentioned here that he died, I was with Conchita and she said: Oh, now only three more remain!*

Slightly irritated, her mother spoke to her like this: What do you know?

And she answered with great conviction, Well, I know, since the Virgin told me this.

Her mother didn't like her to say things like this since, although it could be seen that she believed, you know she always had the fear that this wasn't true . . . »

25. Vatican II, convoked and inaugurated by John XXIII, had only finished one session (October-December, 1962) during which it had taken a direction that certainly was not what its planners had intended. The Council had just begun, and it was expected to continue, but all this depended on what the new Pope would decide.

will end too, since . . .

Conchita: *Another pope will come and the Council will continue.*

— Well, I agree that another pope will come; but as for the Council . . . Perhaps the new pope won't think like John XXIII.

— *Another pope will come and the Council will continue.*

— You seem to be very certain of that; but I don't see it so certain. It could well happen otherwise.

— *I'm telling you, and I repeat: another pope will come and the Council will continue. And I also tell you that only three popes remain . . .*

Dr. Ortiz' wife quickly recovered from her surprise and responded to Conchita:

— Oh, you are saying that from the prophecy of St. Malachy . . .

— *St. Malachy? That's the first time I heard of that. The Virgin told me that after this Pope (John XXIII) there remain only three; and afterwards, the end of the times.*

— Do you mean the end of the world is coming?

— *The Virgin told me, "the end of the times."*

— That isn't the same?

— *I don't know.*

This episode is historically accurate⁽²⁶⁾ and Conchita's statement cannot be taken for a simple, off-hand remark, since she subsequently repeated it very seriously in the same words.

One time she told it to the eminent professor Father Lucio Rodrigo⁽²⁷⁾ at the Pontifical University

26. Conchita spoke again about the three Popes that remained and the end of the times. It happened in Maximina's house during the First Communion dinner of her son, Pepe Luis, to which Mrs. Ortiz was invited. Conchita repeated the same thing, without being able to give the explanations that the listeners' curiosity desired.

27. † March 30th, 1973. On his deathbed he declared that he had received an unequivocal sign from heaven about the truth of Garabandal.

in Comillas. This Father, on the occasion of a visit by Conchita and her mother,⁽²⁸⁾ asked the young girl if she had really said what had been attributed to her.

Conchita told him, **«Yes Father. It's true. The Virgin told me that after John XXIII only three popes remain, and this one, (Paul VI) is the first of those three.»**

In October of 1966, Conchita became a boarder in the college of the teaching sisters of the Immaculate Conception at Burgos. On November 1st, the Feast of All Saints, she talked confidentially with the director of the center, Mother Nieves García. Among other things, she said this, which the religious sister wrote down very carefully:

«One day I said to the Virgin, 'Will the end of the world be during the time of these events?'

And she told me, 'No, the end of the times.'

After Paul VI, there will be only two more popes; and then the end of the times will come.»

28. For some time Aniceta and Conchita traveled regularly to the seminary at Comillas — taking advantage of the cars of friends and acquaintances — to have their confessions heard by this priest.



Fr. Rodrigo with Conchita, Aniceta, and Fr. de la Riva

Father Rodrigo wrote to Father Ramón on November 13th, 1965:

«A fortnight ago on Tuesday, the pastor of Barro brought Aniceta and Conchita to me . . . While I was alone with Conchita, she confirmed that the Virgin had told her on the death of John XXIII that there remain only 3 Popes (counting the present) until the end of the times.»

In this letter there is another interesting thing:

«She (Conchita) also told me: As the people were talking about trips to space, I asked the Virgin if there were persons living out there, and she told me: "Yes," but she didn't add anything more.»

If it cannot be accepted that Conchita invented such a definite and compromising prediction, neither could it be held that the prophecy of St. Malachy suggested it to her. First, because she was completely unaware of it; and secondly, because this prophecy and her prediction do not agree.

This prophecy concerning the popes, that is so talked about today, came out in 1595. A Benedictine monk from Belgium, Arnold de Wion, published at the time a voluminous work under the title of *Ligum Vitae*. It was a type of general biography of the great personages in his order. In this work were listed a series of 111 divisions or titles in Latin, which he reported as coming from an Irish saint of the twelfth century: St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh. These divisions tended to correspond, one after the other, to the popes that came after Innocent II, who died in 1143.

The authenticity of this enormous prophecy has been discussed endlessly; authenticity in a double sense: in whether it can be truly attributed to the saint, and in whether it really was inspired from above. I doubt if the question will ever be resolved. But there is something that strikes the reader; the amazing accuracy with which many of the *titles* describe the popes to which they correspond.

According to the prophecy of St. Malachy, after John XXIII there still remain five more popes. There are five more titles after his, ending with the name of the last successor of St. Peter. Conchita, on the other hand, speaks of only three. The discrepancy could be only an apparent one if, as some think, a new schism arises in the church, with the elevation of anti-popes. To these could correspond some of these last titles that seem to be in series,⁽²⁹⁾ attributing some to the legitimate popes and others to the false, or anti-popes.

The title of the last pope is given in these words, which if they are true, are shocking in their poignant sobriety:

In persecutione extrema Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae, sedebit Petrus Romanus, qui pascet oves in multis tribulationibus; quibus transactis, civitas septicollis diruetur, et Judex tremendus judicabit populum suum. Finis.

29. The four divisions that follow John XXIII are:

Flos florum = Flower of flowers

De medietate lunae = Half of the moon.

De labore solis = From the work of the sun.

De gloria olivae = From the glory of the olive branch.

"In the final persecution of the Holy Roman Church, Peter the Roman will reign, who will pasture his sheep among multiple tribulations. When these have passed, the city of the seven hills will be destroyed and the terrible judge will judge his people. Finis."

Related to the succession of John XXIII and the possibility of the anti-popes is an episode which curiously is not mentioned either in Fr. Valentin's notes or in the reports of the best-known witnesses of Garabandal.

On the suggestion of the pastor from Barro, who had his part in the episode, I wrote to Margarita Huerta in Madrid, asking for details. She answered on June 18th, 1973:

«Yes, I was in Garabandal during the visit of the false pope, Clement XV. But I can't remember the date; possibly it was during 1963, as you suggest, or perhaps in 1964; I do remember that it was during my summer vacation, between July and August.»

(Concerning the year, there is no room for question. The November, 1972 issue of 'La Verité,' the magazine of Clement XV, contains an interview of the pseudo-pope with a reporter in which the pseudo-pope said, "I was in Garabandal on August 2nd, 1963"⁽³⁰⁾ (Just two months after the death of Pope John)

«He rode into the village in a big limousine, accompanied by two young laymen of about 21 years of age, and another one over 30 years old who seemed to be married.» According to Fr. de la Riva, those that accompanied him were wearing smart uniforms. «He wore an impeccable white cassock, and a similar white skullcap on his head, a ring like bishops wear, and on his chest there was a large cross hanging from a long

30. Surely this August 2 is a printer's error, and should be August 22nd. A letter from Conchita to Father Laffineur makes me think this way:

«San Sebastián de Garabandal

August 23, 1963

Just a few words to tell you that yesterday a car came to the village with a man accompanied by two others. He was dressed in white and carried a large cross on his chest, also a skullcap and a ring. He was French.

He came saying that he was the Pope chosen by God; that Paul VI was elected only by the cardinals. He also said that from the time he was 35 years old, he saw the Virgin and also God, Who was the one who told him to come here . . . »

chain. On seeing him, the people gathered around him immediately, thinking naturally that he was an important character. He gave his ring to kiss and all looked at him with the greatest respect.»

(Perhaps this reception was the basis for what he believed of himself . . . And what he told a reporter from Amsterdam, *“I was received as the true pope. I was taken by the people of the village to the places of the apparitions. It was a triumphal hosanna. As I didn’t know the visionaries or their messages, I felt really surprised by such enthusiasm.”* The poor man had to believe that God had spoken there in his favor . . . But his euphoria was not destined to last long.)

«As neither he nor his companions spoke anything but French, my friend and I began to act as intermediaries. He told me that he had come to visit Garabandal by command of the departed John XXIII, who had confided to him the mission of investigating the events occurring there . . . At the time, I succeeded in getting away from him for a few moments and I went to where Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva had separated himself from the crowd’s commotion. I relayed his declarations to the priest and he told me, *Go and ask him to show you the document that he brings from Rome.*

When I asked him for it, he answered me, *No. I don’t carry any document; John XXIII gave me the order verbally.*

I went to tell this to Fr. José Ramón and he said to me, *I don’t like the sound of this. Only God can know who this character is! Furthermore, I don’t want to know anything about this matter; I’m not looking for trouble. And he walked away.»*

Amused, people came in increasing numbers to see the curious personage, and all thought that they were in front of an important figure of the Church. He then manifested his intention of celebrating Mass for everyone there up high at the Pines, since he carried a portable altar and *had permission to celebrate Mass in all places.* But Margarita Huerta dissuaded him, making him see that would not cause a good impression on the people, since everyone knew of the Bishop of Santander’s prohibitions . . . The man was somewhat dismayed, and

apologized for personally being unaware of such prohibitions, *although for him, they didn’t oblige in any way.*

Margarita could not know that, at the same time in separate conversation, two of his accomplices were telling her friend Fracasado that *he was the authentic Pope, the Pope “Flos florum” predicted by the prophet St. Malachy to follow John XXIII. And that it was he, Clement XV, and not the false Pope Paul VI, who should be obeyed.*

Frustrated with regard to saying mass, Clement XV expressed to Margarita another desire: to talk with the girls of the apparitions. Immediately someone went to find them, but the girls, for some reason (perhaps they had been alerted about this suspicious personality), did not want to come.

Clement XV was irritated, and so at the time Margarita tried to soothe over the situation:

«Understand that the Bishop of Santander has prohibited priests and religious from coming here without written permission. And as you don’t carry any certificate, either your own or from Rome, the people have started to look at you with suspicion.

The he asked me to find a house for him where he could eat and sleep. I took them to Tiva’s house and they invited me to eat with them; I accepted the invitation. Before ending, Clement XV still insisted on his desire of talking with the girls; he said to the oldest of those accompanying him, *Why don’t you go with this woman to Conchita’s house and tell her to come here?* The man answered without even looking at him, *I? Why should I go? In no way will I go.* Clement XV remained without saying a word.»

Finally they went to sleep. And on the next day, very early in the morning, they got away from the village in their limousine.

This sudden *getaway* had its reason. On the previous afternoon, as soon as rumors about this character wanting to pass himself off as the real Pope had come to his ears, Fr. de la Riva went to Ceferino, the Mayor of the village, to tell him this person’s stay would bring many troubles and problems to everyone. Then Ceferino went up to Clement XV to make him know, that if he did not immediately get out of the village, he would be turned

over to the commandant of the civil Guard at Puente Nansa.

The warning had its effect. Clement XV dispensed with his pontifical air. Asking Ceferino not to do anything, he said they would leave right away, and would he permit them only to rest there that night.

* * *

This is the actual history of the episode that Clement XV experienced at Garabandal, and that nine years later in Amsterdam he encapsulated before a reporter in the words we have just seen, *I was received like the true pope. I was taken by the people of the village to the places of the apparitions. It was a triumphal hosanna . . . I felt really surprised by such enthusiasm.*

How is such self-suggestion possible? Or perhaps it is not self-suggestion . . .

In another place in this book, Conchita's statement to the Mother at the college of Burgos on November 12th, 1966 was mentioned,

«You know Father Collin? Now he is passing for a pope. He was in my village. He wanted to talk with me, but my mother didn't let him. Finally they threw him out of the village . . . Well, when I was in Rome, (January, 1966) they showed me a picture in a magazine on which I appeared next to him, and it was written there that he had been with me, and many other lies.»

Obviously, Clement XV wanted to exploit the events of Garabandal to his advantage, just as he has always tried to make people believe that the famous Secret of Fatima was in his favor.⁽³¹⁾

* * *

We have seen how Conchita repeated that she had heard that, after the last pope, there would not come the *end of the world*, but rather the *end of the times*. What is the difference?

This is a difficult question, which would require many pages for clarification. We will only make some brief considerations here, so that the matter will not be completely obscure.

If by *end of the world* is understood the annihilation of the cosmic world that we are acquainted with, we could well say that the end of the world will never come, since the world will not be

destroyed, but substantially changed. To speak therefore of the end of the world is to refer to that final point in history when the existence of man as he is at present will be changed into another form, very different and much better.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth were gone . . . And death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away. And He that sat on the throne said: Behold I make all things new. (Ap. 21: 1-5)

Such a substantial change would certainly comprise a tremendous display of upheaval and destruction; since for man, the worker of iniquity (Matt.13: 41), the change from the temporary state to the permanent will not be smooth.

But the present heavens and earth, by the same word are kept in store, reserved for fire on the day of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men . . . But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burned up. (11 Peter 3: 7-10)

To all this we refer when we speak of the end of the world. If the expression *end of the times* does not mean the same, then it would have to refer to *something prior to it and of exceptional importance*. What would this be? That is the question.

31. But who is this individual?

His name is Michael Collin and he is a fallen-away, former Catholic priest from France.

In the interview just mentioned, he himself resuméd the most important times of his life: *I was baptized in Béchy where I was born. I was ordained a priest by Cardinal Liénart in Lillie. On April 28th, 1935, I was consecrated Bishop by Our Lord at Vaux-le-Metz; and finally, Pope, by God Himself in Sorrento, on October 7, 1950.*

If such direct interventions from heaven to promote him do not seem peculiar, certainly his pathway to being elected is, as he himself describes it:

From my childhood, the Lord let me know that I had to help the world and save it.

And when I was 16 years old, He clearly confided to me the mission of "saving the world." When I made my First Communion, Jesus told me privately, "Miguel, you will be a priest one day; afterwards, bishop; finally, Pope."

From those years, the Lord appeared to me and also the Virgin. When I was still small, I thought that everyone saw them as I. When I didn't understand His words very well. He said to me, "Everything will become clear; we must hope."

And for a long time I doubted like this. But now that I have seen the Most Holy Virgin, clothed in black, shedding tears and asking me to accomplish my mission, I have put all my doubts aside. I will fight until the day on which God reigns on earth as in heaven . . .

In 1950, God himself consecrated me Pope in Sorrento. It was on October 7th, the feast of the Most Holy Rosary. From four until eight in the morning, I was in communication with Him . . . And I descended from St. Peter in a direct spiritual line, through Pius XII . . .

To save the world from an immense deluge, moral and material, and to make straight the Church, which is walking toward the abyss; here is the reason and purpose for my life. And so we have an answer to the secret of Fatima, which announced a "miraculous Pope" to bring this mission to an end.

What got in the way to prevent him from doing this? Miguel-Clemente XV tells us point blank: *Paul VI, friend of Satan . . . On the death of John XXIII, he himself declared, "I don't want to be Pope; there is a French man who is already designated." He knew the secret of Fatima, since Pius XII had spoken to him about it. But later he preferred to be a usurper, and with his lamentable past . . .*

And so from Pope Clement's words, it is easy to understand our misfortune. And it will be much worse:

The nations will be destroyed by an atomic war without precedent, if Clement XV does not officially take over the direction of the Church.

Clement XV has spoken!

TIME certainly will not end until the finish of the present form of existence; an existence that is transitory, subject to succession and change; because of this, the end of time will coincide with the *end of the world*.

But "*the times*" may well not be the same thing as "*time*" . . .

Jesus, in His eschatological discourse,⁽³²⁾ according to the version of St. Luke (21: 24) said about the coming ruin of the Jewish city: **And they shall fall by the edge of the sword; and shall be led away captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the gentiles;⁽³³⁾ until the times of the nations be fulfilled.**

Thus the first chosen people, Israel, will remain dispersed and their capital, the Holy City, abandoned by God as in the grand captivity of Babylon. The gentiles who embrace the faith will then replace the unfaithful Jewish nation as the nation of God. Such a situation will last for a long time: *the times of the nations*. These *times* will be fulfilled when the time comes for Israel once again through a massive conversion to Christianity. The effects of such a conversion would have enormous significance, according to St. Paul:

Have the Jews fallen forever, or have they just stumbled? Obviously they have not fallen forever. But by their fall, salvation has come to the gentiles . . . For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their reception be, but resurrection from the dead!

(Romans 11: 11-15)

History then will take a spectacular turn, unforeseeable and bewildering. Truly there will be *new times*. Is this being heralded by Garabandal for the near future? Can the *end of the times*, which is predicted to follow John XXIII's third successor, be the *consummation of the times of the nations*,

32. It is called this since it speaks of the last events, referring to the final consummation of man's history. The theological study that deals with the last things of the world has received the name of Eschatology (from the Greek word 'eschatos' meaning last).

33. For the Jews, the *gentiles* comprise all other peoples and nations that are not descendents of Abraham, the chosen one of God.

The Israelites, sons and heirs of the promise, constitute a nation completely separate; the other nations are the common masses. Because of this, the word *gentile*, rather than having a religious signification, indicates the condition of being part of the *masses*.

that will pave the way for Israel's great new epoch in the service of God and mankind?

I would be inclined to say yes,⁽³⁴⁾ if it were not for a serious difficulty: the prediction that the third successor of John XXIII would be the *last pope*. It is hard to understand how the Church could exist without a head or a ruler. If there were no head, would not Our Lord have to appear to us, to achieve by His second coming the work which began with His first? That would be the *Parousia*.⁽³⁵⁾

Or would He proceed to the great consummation supposed by the Last Universal Judgment, in which case, the *end of the times* would be practically the same thing as the *end of the world*.

Or would He only change the present state of things in such a way as to prepare the final path for the great consummation. Perhaps St. Paul refers to this when he says:

For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. And when all things shall be subdued under Him, then the Son Himself must be subject also to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

(1 Cor. 15: 25-28)

There is also another possibility: in speaking of

34. Perhaps the fact of presenting herself at Garabandal as Our Lady of Mount Carmel, apart from its theological and mystical meaning (see the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* by St. John of the Cross), has also a mysterious reference to the nearness of the eschatological times.

Mount Carmel has been closely associated with the devotion to the Virgin from the remotest times; but it is also closely associated with the history of Israel (in the decisive hours of the Alliance) and with the activities of the great prophet of the old testament, Elias.

By appearing under her ancient title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in these modern times of the world, does the Virgin want to indicate that she will take decisive action so that the mass conversion of the Jews — that has been waiting for almost two millennia now — will be accomplished, fulfilling that way the *times of the nations*?

Does she want to point out the imminence of the final times when, according to the Apocalypse (11:3-6) the man of Mount Carmel, Elias, will make his last acts as a preacher and witness of the Lord?

These are times in which I think I find a certain mimetic likeness between the sound of the word Garabandal and the sound of the Hebrew or Arab word for Carmel. It is almost as if there were two Carmels: one from the east, and one from the west, both chosen as locations for salvation by the presence of the Virgin.

35. *Parousia* is a biblical and theological term to designate the solemn manifestation of Christ at the end of time.

the three last popes, this could refer to their reigning in Rome like their predecessors. Only in this would they be the last, since perhaps there could later be some extra-Roman pontiffs. Can this possibility be excluded?

The more I think about it, the more I favor the last hypothesis.

The Catholic Church originated in Jerusalem where St. Peter had his seat. Following the falling away of Israel after the Jews put the Messiah to death and violently rejected his works, Saint Peter went to find a place among the *nations*, the gentile people, and his seat was established in Rome which was then the undeniable head of the gentile world.

The succession of Saint Peter was then perpetuated in the Bishop of Rome who was the *Pope* of the Church and the Head of the Episcopal College. From that time the same person was both Bishop of Rome and the *Head* of the Church.

But if Rome would perish or disappear, there would be no more bishops belonging to it. And if Jerusalem would become a converted Israel, a Christian one, a *Holy City* as had so often been predicted by the biblical prophecies, it would become the *city of the great King*. Here the *word of the Lord* would save all peoples and the successor of Saint Peter, the Vicar of Christ, would situate himself. The center of the Church would thus return to its origin.

Rome is called *Babylon* in passages of the New Testament (I Peter 5: 13) and there are many things in the 17th and 19th chapters of the Apocalypse about its destiny . . .

Concise and explicit is the final paragraph of the famous prophecy of Saint Malachy on the popes: *In the last persecution of the Holy Roman Church the throne will be held by Peter the Roman, who will tend his sheep in the midst of Tribulations. When these have passed, the City of the Seven Hills will be destroyed, and the terrible judge will judge his people.*

Mysteries! Mysteries! Mysteries!

But we should not ignore that Garabandal, from the days of 1963, has proclaimed that we are entering into decisive times, perhaps the last that will be marked by the arms of the great clock of history.

With the Miracle in Sight

A magnificent opportunity, prior to the coming epoch of the final times, will be the Miracle that is being foretold more and more.

Fr. Retenaga, in composing his second report in April, 1963, resumés what he has heard on the topic like this:

«Conchita affirms:



- That she knew about the miracle since October, 1961.
- That the Virgin first told it to her alone; but that she told it to the other three later.
- That it will be on Thursday, at 8:30 in the evening, and will last about a quarter of an hour.
- That on that day there would be an ecclesiastical event, and the miracle would come after that event, on the same day.

● That she would announce the miracle to the world eight days in advance.

● That, besides those that were in the village, the Pope and Padre Pio⁽³⁶⁾ would see the miracle. The Virgin did not specifically say which Pope.

● That the sick who were there would be cured, including sinners, since according to the Virgin, they were her children too.»

* * *

There is a tape recorded by Plácido Ruiloba in Garabandal on January 16th, 1963. He was questioning Conchita about a letter that the girl had written to the Bishop:

«— Did you write down the date of the miracle?

— No, since at the time I didn't know it.

36. After Conchita's prediction, Padre Pio's death in September, 1968 caused great dismay among the Garabandalistas, since they all counted on the famous Capuchin from Pietrelcina being alive and present on the day of the Miracle. Many explanations have been given attempting to correlate Conchita's prediction with the fact of his death.

Now we have some reliable information on this matter.

Conchita was dismayed also by the notice of the death of Padre Pio, who was expected to «see the miracle». But several weeks after his death, as dusk settled at Garabandal on October 16, 1968, a telegram from Lourdes arrived, carrying the name of a woman in Rome whom Conchita knew. The telegram urged her to depart immediately by car to receive something on behalf of Padre Pio . . .

Fr. Combe, a French parish priest from Chazay d'Azergues in the diocese of Lyon and a great promoter of the cause of Garabandal, was in Garabandal that day. He and his inseparable collaborator B.L. Ellos took Conchita and Aniceta in their car and set out that night for Lourdes. There on the morning of October 17, Conchita received «on behalf of Padre Pio» a short written message and a large section of the veil that had covered Padre Pio's face after his death. Carrying these presents was the Italian Capuchin Fr. B. (surely Fr. P. Bernardino Cennamo). Fr. B. had been very close to Padre Pio and his secretary Fr. Pellegrino who had signed this message that Padre Pio spoke to him a month before his death. In the message appeared the date «August 22, 1968»

Conchita took advantage of this meeting to ask, «Why did the Virgin tell me that Padre Pio would see the Miracle?»

Father B: «Padre Pio saw it before his death. He himself told us.»

These and other details about the connection between Conchita and Padre Pio can be seen in the French leaflet *Conchita Parle du Padre Pio* that Fr. Combe published.

— Since when have you known it? Since the past week?

— No, since this week. I told the Bishop about what it was going to consist, and other things . . . But not the date.»⁽³⁷⁾

I admit that I do not know the exact meaning of Conchita's remark about not knowing the date. The reader can make his own judgment from another passage of the recorded conversation:

«And what does your brother Serafín say about this?



Serafín

— He says that if the Miracle is not sure, that I should clearly say the truth; that he will take me away from here and bring me wherever I want. But how could Serafín think like this since I told him the date yesterday?

— Well — responded Serafín who was present there — you didn't tell me anything like the date. You told me a thing, a happening, which if it occurs will let me know the Miracle is coming.»

Serafín himself, after reading about this in the first edition of this book, gave me some clarifications when we were in his little hotel in May of 1976.

During the winter of 1963, (the time of the crisis discussed in Part Two, and prior to the denials of

37. I found this information in one of Maximina's letters to the Piffaré family, dated December 15:

«Look, Asunción, don't tell this to anyone. But today Conchita came to my house and told me, Look, Aunt, don't tell this to my mother, but today the Angel told me the date of the Miracle. No one except she and her oldest brother know this.»

the other girls), he felt that as the eldest brother and the *man* of the house, he should take a stand concerning Conchita.

So one night while the family was in the kitchen of the house, he said to Conchita, *You will have to tell us once and for all what this is all about; we can't go on like this. And don't be afraid of what will happen . . . I'm ready to take you away from the village and bring you anywhere you want. If you want to go to school, we can arrange that too . . . But we have to know the truth. All these things about the apparitions: Are they true, or are they something that you made up?*

Conchita replied that it was true, that she had seen the Virgin, that it wasn't something that the girls made up, and that there was no reason to leave the village . . .

The matter remained that way during the night.

But the next day, while Serafín was in the kitchen and his sister upstairs, he heard her call him, *Serafín! Come up a minute.*

The man told me he felt as if his heart missed a beat as he thought, *There it is! She has finally made up her mind. She must have thought about this all night long and is going to tell me that it has all been a fraud.*

— *What do you want?* He asked her on arriving upstairs.

— *So that you can see that all this is true, the Virgin has told me to tell you this . . .*

And she talked to him about the Miracle, and explained in what it was going to consist. Later Conchita wrote it down briefly on the back of a holy card of the Child Jesus, which Serafín keeps concealed and which none of the family has seen. And she told him that it would occur when a definite event in the Church took place, and she also explained it to him. Only in this way does Serafín know the date of the miracle.

Later Serafín and I discussed the following excerpt from a leaflet written by Dr. Puncernau:

«During one of my trips to the pastures, I was alone with Serafín and we were eating in the barn. After eating, I tried to draw him out since

it was said that he knew from Conchita when the Warning would be.

I drew the conclusion that if he knew, he didn't want to say. The only thing that I got definitely from him was that it would be preceded by a special happening in the Church. After many questions and answers, it seemed clear to me from his vague remarks that it would be something like a schism. That is the way I understood it.»

— *And what do you say about Dr. Puncernau's opinion?* I asked Serafín.

— He is free to think what he wants. But I don't think I gave him reasons for such an opinion.

— *But will this happening actually be a schism in the Church?*

— I have nothing to say.

During that May of 1976, I spoke also with



Jacinta's mother, María. She told me that she had heard repeatedly from her daughter that affairs were going to go very bad for the Church, that the Eucharist would constantly be given less importance, that many priests would become worse and worse, and that wickedness would spread everywhere.

It can be noticed that Dr. Puncernau does not speak of the Miracle, but of the Warning. Is this a mistake? Perhaps not.

On a day in September of 1963, some French people were invited to eat dinner with Conchita in a house near the girl's home. She was devouring pastries with the healthy appetite of girls of her age. Someone jokingly asked her about the sacrifices and penance mentioned in the message. Conchita accepted the joke in good humor and laughed. But suddenly she became quiet and seemed to concentrate; her face lit up; and with her hands joined on her chest, she began to speak:

«The Miracle will be on the feastday of a young martyr of the Eucharist, a boy who carried Communion to persecuted Christians. His companions, on seeing him pass by, wanted to force him to stay and take part in their games. Infuriated by his resistance, they ended up hurling stones at him until he was left almost dead. Later a Christian soldier came, who recognized him and carried him in his arms.

One of those present exclaimed: *Oh, that's St. Tarcisius!*»

Conchita, without saying a word, as if she hadn't heard, turned back to her pastries.

After dinner ended and Conchita had left, those at the table exchanged their impressions. The oldest in the group concluded: *It seems that Conchita saw this scene in an ecstasy, but without understanding what martyr it was. I don't think she even knows his name.* (L'Etoile dans la Montagne)

Many think that this description of the *young martyr* adequately points out the day on which the Miracle will occur; and that it is only a matter of glancing at the calendar. However, since Conchita did not tell us the date clearly, she obviously seeks to keep it a secret. By industriously sifting through material and searching through files, we will not be able to discover it. The mystery will never be revealed by mere human ingenuity. The important thing is to know how to wait and be prepared.

One More Apparition

The year 1963 closed at Garabandal with a new visit from the Mother of Heaven. Once again she allowed herself to be seen, but only by Conchita.

It occurred on December 8th, a grand day in Spain, where the feast of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated so solemnly. And it was a big day for Conchita, since it was her nameday.

Long before the first rays of dawn had broken over the icy mountains, a mysterious restlessness — or perhaps a holy inspiration — awoke the young girl. She rose and called her mother. Soon the two of them went out on the street leading to the church. Silence and darkness had settled over the village; nothing was moving, nothing could be heard. It was 5:30 in the morning.

Before the closed doors of the church, Conchita fell on her knees in ecstasy. The temperature was freezing, not conducive to arousing fervor; but the visionary was transported from her locale. Aniceta alone was there as a witness. She heard her daughter conversing with someone, but it was not possible to understand the dialogue at the time.

Later she learned some of what had happened, when Conchita decided to speak:

«The Virgin began by congratulating me on my feastday. And after congratulating me, she said:

— You will not be happy on earth, but you will be in heaven.

Afterward, she told me some things . . . She spoke to me about future happenings . . .

— Can they be known?

— No, she told me not to reveal them.»⁽³⁸⁾

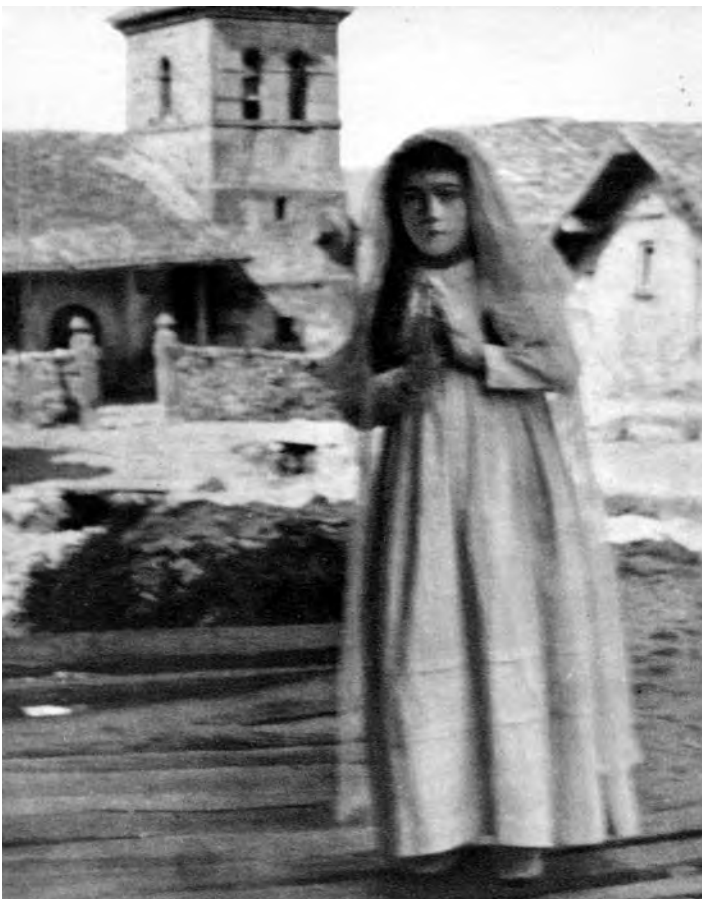
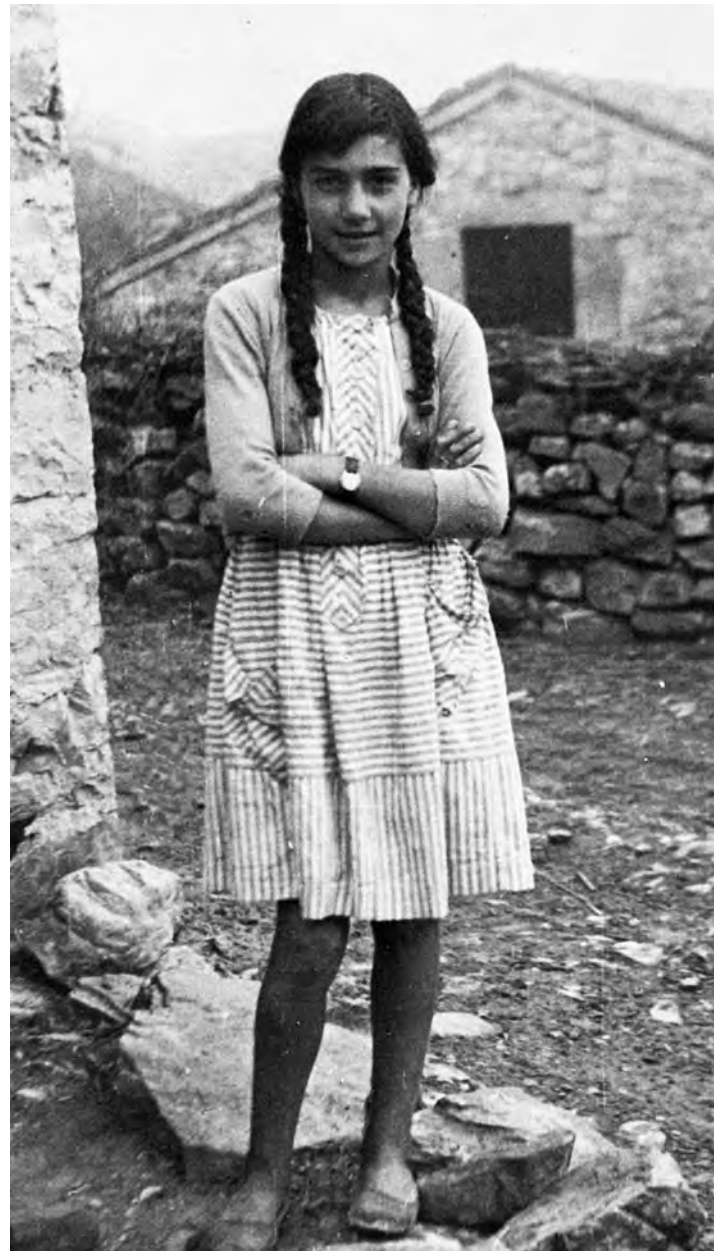
It appears that the Virgin had been making these mysterious communications to Conchita for some time, according to Maximina's letter from the previous November 10th, in which she writes to Eloísa de la Roza:

«Conchita told me about the last locution which she had 10 or 15 days ago — I don't remember exactly what day it was. She told me there was a locution about which she couldn't say anything to anyone, not even in confession. I asked her if it was something good, and she told me that the Virgin never says anything bad.»

* * *

And so amid prophecy, hidden secrets, and expectation, 1963, Garabandal's third year slipped away.

38. *L'Etoile dans la Montagne.*



upper left: Conchita at age three
lower left: on day of First Communion
upper right: at time apparitions began

It had begun with a tremendous upheaval, discouraging many and purifying others.

Then came months of calm and suspense.

Its days closed with words encased in mystery.

But there were some words that are very clear for every one:

**You will not be happy on earth,
but you will be in heaven.**



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1964: Another Year of Interlude

If not much is known about Garabandal during 1963, even less is known about 1964.

The tenor of 1964 was very similar to the previous year. The visionaries continued without apparitions. At least, there are no reports of any, except for what later will be mentioned at the end of the year. In their place were the locutions, as is seen by what Maximina wrote to Dr. Ortiz in Santander in a letter dated March 9th:

«During the last days of February — I don't remember which day — Conchita had a locution. The Virgin gave her a message for some woman. I don't know what it was. She didn't tell me.»

Concerning the girl's advancing spirituality, we have testimony from Maximina, who wrote to the Pifarré family on February 4th:

«I have no doubt about this matter here, since I've heard things said by Conchita that I don't know how to explain — I can't even understand her conversation. The other day she told me that the only cross that she can have is not to love Jesus enough. She said that all the others, great as they may seem to us, have little importance. She told me this many times.»

In another letter to the same family, dated March 23rd, she remarks:

«Conchita continues having a locution every month. She is very fervent. Today she said that she wants the day to come for her to go to the convent. For she would like to go there now. If you could see how good this is . . . The world doesn't attract her at the present; although as is natural, she amuses herself, but always with the young children, and especially with my daughter and those of her age.»

The Return of Father Luis Andreu

Perhaps it was during the locution in February that once again was felt the presence of the departed Fr. Luis Andreu, the *first death of Garabandal*. On the 27th of that month Conchita wrote to his brother, Fr. Ramón:

«You asked me in your letter how we saw Fr. Luis at the Pines. We saw him looking up, saying, *Miracle!* His face was blanched and perspiring, yet at the same time, it had an expression of pleasure.⁽¹⁾ And the Virgin told us at the time that he was seeing her and the miracle that Our Lord was going to perform.

We have spoken with him about 10 or 11 times.

I have learned in a locution with the Virgin that I have to speak with him again.»

When did this new conversation between Conchita and the departed Jesuit occur? I cannot give a definite date. But perhaps it occurred more than once, since midway through the year the visionary wrote again concerning him, and mentioned astounding things in a letter addressed again to his brother, Fr. Ramón, dated August 2nd, 1964:

«On July 18th,⁽²⁾ I had a locution, and during the locution I was told that on the day after the Miracle, they would take your brother from his tomb and find his body incorrupt.»

Between Doubt and Hope

In the meantime, what was happening in the thoughts and feelings of the people? The witnesses who put together the book, *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*, say optimistically:

«All the evidence indicates that the entire year of 1964 was a period of secret meditation and personal retreat for the visionaries. For the people of the mountains and for the entire world alerted by the diffusion of the message, these twelve months were a halt for reflection and examination of conscience concerning one's responsibilities. Speaking humanly, one

1. Father Luis' trance — the only trance mentioned at Garabandal in which anyone besides the girls took part — occurred on the evening of August 8th, 1961. See Chapter VIII of Part One.

2. On this day the village celebrated its principal feast-day. Two years previously the miracle of the Host had occurred on this date.



“I believed when an ecstasy was in front of me.”

might say that during that year, heaven permitted the earth to catch its breath.»

The village was changing its appearance. The same book tells us:

«Land, houses, and even stables were being bought by Spaniards outside the village.⁽³⁾ The bricklayers were busy.

The interior of the church was remodeled⁽⁴⁾ . . . *Thanks to the generosity of an American*, people said.

And the attitude of the village changed along with the external changes.

Peace and harmony were only on the surface. Only the old women, with their wrinkled and withered faces still kept the benevolent look and smile of before. The seers' families were

seen with thinly disguised envy. With regard to the apparitions, discord reigned in place of yesterday's harmony.

Many wavered, finding the wait too long, since the celebrated Miracle didn't seem to be coming. The same men and women who had untiringly followed the four girls in their ecstasies, now showed themselves incapable, except for some silent old people and a few solid souls, to hold on to what they had so many times seen, heard and touched.

The people with an inordinate appetite for miraculous phenomena, had now fallen into spiritual blindness, a form of hardness of heart that could only amaze the visitor. If one were to ask them, *What about the apparitions?* they would answer, *Oh Señor! That was nothing.»*

A good example of this attitude was the statement made to Fr. Laffineur by Jacinta's mother, María: *«Yes, I believed when an ecstasy was in front of me; but when the ecstasy ended, I didn't believe any more . . . I will believe forever if the miracle happens.»* Admirable sentiment of faith!

3. Maximina's letter to the Pifarrés on June 7 says:

«They have bought so much land around here!»

4. «They have remodeled the church. The altar is beautiful.» (Maximina's letter of November 11)

Another example of the people's attitude was recorded in the book, *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*. The Spanish lawyer, who was the interpreter for the book's authors, was going down from Garabandal toward Cossío on a blistering day. On the way he met a woman of the village coming up in the scorching sun and stopped to talk with her:

— Well, Señora, how is it going?

— *It's hot, Señor.*

— Yes, it certainly is. But I mean in regard to the apparitions.

— *Oh!*

— Yes, what do they think at Garabandal?

— *Oh! They don't think anything.*

— Why not anything? I myself saw the ecstasies. And you?

— *Oh! The ecstasies! At the beginning they were true . . . but now!*

— True at the beginning, and not true now?

— *Yes, at the beginning they were true. I'll prove it to you.* (She mentioned to the lawyer something very personal that had occurred to her and her husband during one of Loli's ecstasies.) *Then it was the Virgin who appeared. Why doesn't she start appearing again?*

This conversation on the way from Cossío to Garabandal tells the story . . .

And one might wonder if the poor village people were really responsible for their ignorance because of the neglect in which they had been left by their



“She doesn't have locutions now.”

spiritual guides. But such a frame of mind deserved a lesson, and heaven gave it with its silence during the two long interludes of 1963 and 1964.

Even the *privileges* of the girls seemed to be completely interrupted during the middle of 1964. Maximina wrote to the Pifarrés on June 7th:

«**Conchita says that she doesn't have locutions now. I don't know if this is true, or if she wants to hide them, but she is happy as ever.**»

Throughout August the situation continued the same. Maximina wrote again on August 15th:

«**There is nothing new here at present.**»

The people from the village were constantly fluctuating between doubt and hope. Most of them had more doubt than hope.

It was the people from outside the village who kept the torch of Garabandal burning bright. We have many testimonies of this in Maximina's letters.

For his enthusiastic convictions in favor of the events, Fr. Luis López Retenaga distinguished himself. The village «**was a delight for him.**» He went up to Garabandal whenever he could, almost always accompanied by another priest friend, and stayed there whenever possible.

As to how the visitors acted during that year, we can gather from Maximina's lines on the feast of the Assumption:

«**Today on the feast day of our Lady there were many people in the village. I had a French woman in my home for over a month. She is very virtuous and doesn't cause me any trouble. The people are coming and they all seem to believe. Many priests have come too. An English priest stayed a whole month here; another from Llanes (Asturias), ten days; and also several French priests have come. Many French people came this year and they all seem to be very convinced about what is happening here.**»

Those who went up to the village knew that there had been an arrest in the apparitions and the phenomena; but they hoped, they went searching. What did they hope for? What were they searching for? Besides personal encounter with the world of the divine, they were certainly looking for a proper finale to all this that had promised so much . . . and had been so strangely interrupted . . .



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Before the Finale

Before 1964 was over, Garabandal entered into a phase of reactivation: something that now, from a perspective of the passing years, could be described in the jargon of sports as the *final stretch* or the *last lap*.

On December 8th, feastday of the Immaculate Conception and thus Conchita's nameday, the girl received the singular favor of another visit with the Mother of Heaven. A month later, on January 12th, 1965, she spoke about it briefly to Father Laffineur:

«On the day of the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin congratulated me on my feastday; and she told me that I would see the Angel St. Michael on the coming June 18th.»

A few days later, on January 24th, she wrote again to this priest (whom she familiarly called *Grandfather*):

«I do not remember whether I mentioned in my last letter that on June 18th I was going to see the Angel St. Michael. The Virgin told me this during a locution on my feastday, the feast of the Immaculate Conception.»

And so, with the announcement of the return of St. Michael, the year 1965 began. This had great portent, since the great Archangel was not for minor matters; and his visit, announced so far in advance, certainly could not be of the routine type. He, who had come four years previously to start everything in motion, could well return now to bring it to a close.

* * *

The importance of the coming year was marked out right from its first day.

It was the holiday evening of January 1st, and daylight was fading. Two shepherd children from the village, Joaquina (12 years of age) and Urbano (9 years), were tending their herd of sheep, which they were leading over the little flat area by the Pines.

On coming to the Pines, the children stood staring open-mouthed, discovering Conchita solitary and enraptured beneath a pine tree. How many times had a similar scene been seen there and in the village!

They observed her as closely as the wandering of their sheep permitted. The visionary, with her gaze

fixed upwards, appeared to be in mysterious conversation, since she was speaking and listening.⁽¹⁾

Only later, piece by piece, was learned some segments of the many things that occurred during that exceptional trance.

Conchita wrote Father Laffineur in her letter of January 12th:

«On January 1st I saw the Virgin at the Pines.»

She said nothing about the vision. However, in another letter of February 2nd, while answering the priest's questions, she explained more:

«The Virgin seems to be the same age as the first time I saw her. (July 2nd, 1961) The same as in these past years: about 18 years old.

She wears a white robe and a sky blue mantle.

A prodigious light, which doesn't hurt the eyes, radiates from her and surrounds her completely.

Apart from the ecstasy that I am going to have on June 18th, I don't know whether the apparitions will begin again, either for me or for the four of us.

The Virgin will give a new message, since she said: *Hardly any attention was given to the other.* (That of October 18th, 1961) The Virgin is going to give, therefore, a final message.»

What Conchita says here to the promoter of the cause of Garabandal in France and other countries

1. I finally saw a confirmation of this in a letter from Maximina to the Pifarré family, dated March 8th:

«I think I have already written you about this; namely that on December 8, the feastday of the Immaculate Conception, Conchita had a locution. And she said that the Virgin told her that on June 18th she would have an apparition with the Angel. She doesn't know what he will say or whether she will be alone or with all the other girls. Also on January 1st Conchita had an apparition with the Virgin at the Pines, and it lasted a long time. (She often goes to pray at the Pines.) Two shepherd children, a boy and a girl, found her there in ecstasy. They were the ones who later talked about it; if they had not, perhaps she wouldn't have mentioned it. She came to my house when the ecstasy was over, and she looked quite excited, although very happy . . .

I don't write as much as before, since now there is nothing special to write about.»

is no small matter. But there was still more to say. And finally she did say it; or rather said some of it! But months later.



Fr. Laffineur and visionary

The occasion was Fr. Laffineur's stay in Garabandal to watch the predicted visit of the Angel in June of that year. On the day after the apparition, June 19th, this priest was in Conchita's house, speaking of course of what had happened. And at one time, she said to him:

«After so long a time, the Virgin has spoken to me about so many things! But she hasn't told me to talk or keep quiet about many of them. Because of this, many times I don't know what to do, being afraid of making a mistake . . .

I'm going to give in writing the Warning that I received during the apparition of January 1st, when I was alone at the Pines.»

A Warning for the Whole World

What Conchita wrote was this:

«The Warning, that the Virgin is going to send us, will be like a punishment: to bring the good closer to God, and to warn the others either to convert, or receive what they deserve.

I'm not going to reveal what the Warning consists of. The Virgin didn't say that I should tell it. And concerning this, there is nothing more to be said.

God wishes that, due to the Warning, we would amend our lives and commit fewer sins against Him!»

Fr. Laffineur, having read these words, asked Conchita if the Warning would cause people to die. She then added this remark:

«Dying will not be caused by the Warning itself, but by the effect that we will have on seeing and feeling it.»

If the information written by Conchita to Fr. Laffineur was brief and delayed, it was not the same with what she sent to her aunt and godmother, Maximina González. She spoke to her aunt when she was still under the effect of what she had just learned at the Pines on January 1st:

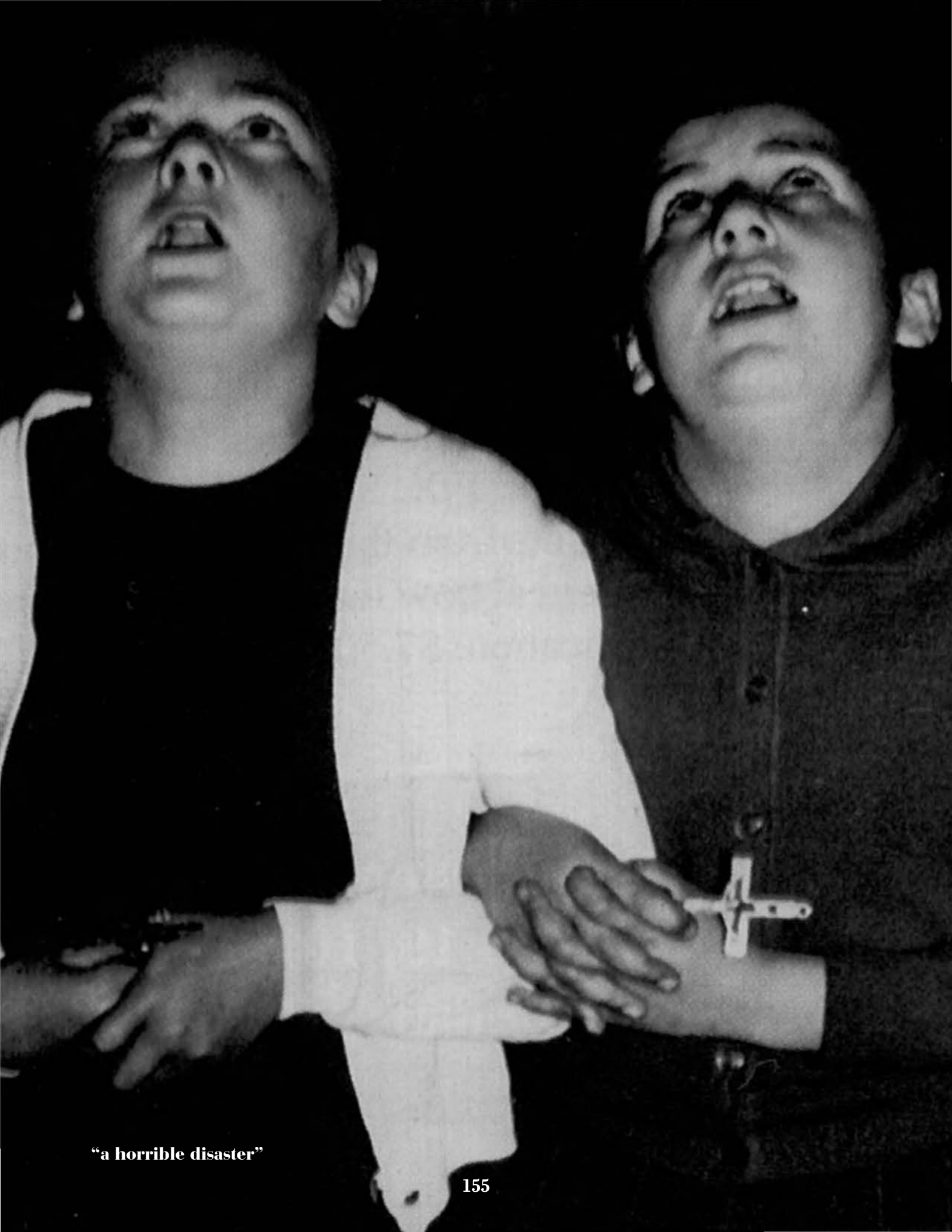
«Before the Miracle, there will be a Warning, so that the world can amend its ways.»



Maximina and visionary

Hearing this, Maximina wanted to know more. The niece explained the warning to her the best she could. From those explanations, the aunt remembered the following, which she wrote down:

«She told me we were going to suffer a horrible disaster some day, in all parts of the world.



“a horrible disaster”

None of us will escape this: the good, so that they may draw nearer to God; the evil, so that they may amend their lives.

She didn't tell me what it was; but that she was expecting it any day. It would come before the Miracle.

She said that it was preferable to die rather than suffer for just five minutes what was going to come.⁽²⁾ She said that it is horrible, that it is a thing clearly from heaven. People in every part of the world will suffer from it.

I said to her: *Why don't you publish it, so that the world may know what is going to happen to it?* And she told me that she was tired of giving warnings and the world was not paying any attention.

She said that the Virgin told her that the world certainly believes that there is a heaven and a hell, but that it can be seen that we think little about it. The Virgin also told her that when we suffer this punishment, all of which we have caused ourselves with our sins, that we should not feel the sufferings and pain for ourselves, but rather that we should suffer everything for her Son, since He is very offended by what we do.

I asked her how long this catastrophe would

2. According to later statements given by Jacinta, and published in July-Sept, 1977 issue of the magazine *Needles*, now titled *Garabandal*:

«The Warning is something that is first seen in the air everywhere in the world and immediately is transmitted into the interior of our souls. It will last for a very little time, but it will seem a very long time because of its effect within us. It will be for the good of our souls — in order to see in ourselves our conscience . . . the good and the bad that we have done . . .»

It will come upon us like a fire from heaven, which we will feel profoundly in our interior. By its light each one will see the state of his soul with complete clearness; he will experience what it is to lose God; he will feel the purifying action of the cleansing flame. Briefly, it will feel like having the Particular Judgment in one's very soul while still alive.

The *purification* of the Warning will be necessary to make us ready to face the Miracle. Otherwise we might not be able to sustain the superhuman and marvelous experience of the Miracle. Perhaps he had not previously undergone the Warning, the early death of Fr. Luis Andreu came about, after he saw on that summer night in 1961 what even the visionaries had not yet seen.

last, and she said that she didn't know; but that we could suffer it both in the night and in the day. I said to her, *Will we die?* And she told me, *I think if that happens, it would be from fright.*

—And if we were in the church praying?

—*I think too that the church would be the best place to pass it, there next to the Blessed Sacrament, so that He could support us, give us strength, and aid us to suffer it better.*

—Since you've told me this, I've done nothing but look at the sky, to see if I can see anything.



“to see if we amend”

—*I too, and when I go to bed, I look and have great fear. Though on the contrary, I have a desire for it to come, to see if we amend our lives, since we don't understand the offenses that we make against the Lord.*

—Well then, when we see that it is coming to us, we can all go to the church.

—*I myself would consider doing that! But perhaps it will come upon us in the darkness and we won't be able . . .*

How horrible it will be! If I could tell it as Conchita told it to me . . . She said that if she didn't already know what the Chastisement was, she would say that the Warning was worse than the Chastisement.»⁽³⁾

From this testimony, written and signed by Maximina, it appears adequately clear that the *Warning* that was revealed to Conchita on January 1st, 1965 will have the following characteristics:

- It will cause terribly afflictive and striking suffering.
- It will have a universal scope; that is, it will reach everyone, in all parts of the world.
- It will be seen that it is *a thing from God*, something that man himself could not perform, leaving him to implore the mercy of God.
- It will come with a purpose of salvation: in order that the good may draw nearer to God, and the bad take their amendment of life seriously.
- It will certainly come, and before the Miracle; but no one knows the day or the hour.
- Its time, probably, will be a time of mysterious darkness.
- At that time, there will be no other refuge or relief except prayer.

Conchita's important communication appears not to have been disseminated for a long time, since in the letters and information that I have seen from the first months of 1965, no reference was made to the Warning, which should have occupied everyone's attention.⁽⁴⁾

What did capture the people's attention was the

3. It is no wonder that Conchita, having learned this and coming down from the Pines on New Year's eve, appeared at her aunt Maximina's house, according to the latter's testimony as **«very excited but also very happy»**.

4. Maximina, who was always so prompt to report everything that was happening to her friends the Pifarré family in Barcelona, did not bother to say anything about the Warning until many months later (in a letter on September 9th), and then only because the Pifarrés had asked her about it:

«Concerning what you asked me about the Warning, I believe in it, that it is true; at least I have heard something about it from Conchita . . .»

announcement of the Angel's upcoming visit on June 18th. Many of those who believed in Garabandal began then to make plans and even to reserve rooms. On that same day of January 1st, Maximina wrote to María Herrero de Gallardo:

«I am very, very sorry to have to tell you that the two rooms at my disposition have been promised already to Dr. Ortiz and Fr. Luis Retenaga. I have inquired at the other houses and they told me that, since it is such a long time away, that they couldn't promise a room. The village is going in a bad way. (She is referring to selfishness and interest in monetary gain associated with the coming of the visitors.) Perhaps not as many people will come as they expect. But I think it is most likely that you won't be able to walk through the streets because of the people who will come, since the people want to see apparitions again.»

From these lines, we can imagine what the climate was at the beginning of 1965 in the village that had been so favored during the previous years.

Obviously in such an atmosphere the news and the expectation of the Warning would not easily penetrate. However Conchita continued to think about it, and during the year spoke about it to others, repeating basically what we have learned from Maximina, but adding other details that will be seen in time.

Waiting for the Day

News of Garabandal being the site of amazing phenomena was spreading throughout the world, and new visitors were coming ceaselessly to the secluded little town.

Everyone wanted to know what had happened first hand, through the visionaries themselves. The girls could not always acquiesce to the people's wishes; either because the flood of inquisitive people was at times overwhelming, or because the girls had duties which they could not neglect, or because their parents placed obstacles in the way of the persons who came.

But usually the visionaries tried to please everyone. Obviously they could not put down what they

knew in writing for all. However there was an exception in the case of William A. Nolan, an American from Illinois.

This man made his appearance at Garabandal in March, 1965, and wanted to learn from Conchita everything that had happened. He was not able to converse with her in words, since neither did he know Spanish, nor she, English. At the time the young girl agreed to write to him, something that was hard for her. In order that it would not serve as a precedent, she put as a postscript:

«I'm doing this for this man, as we don't understand each other, and he wants to be informed. I'm doing this for him, but I can't do it for everyone. And he, with an interpreter . . .»

The manuscript was three pages long, and Conchita said nothing new; but it is of interest as a resumé and confirmation of the principal facts. She began:

«On an evening in June of 1961, at San Sebastián de Garabandal, the Archangel St. Michael appeared to four girls, of whom I am one . . . The first time that we saw him, he didn't say anything — until the 1st of July. Before the 1st of July, he carried an inscription underneath his feet, and we didn't understand well what it said . . .»

She continued, a few lines down:

«The Virgin came on July 2nd and she appeared very beautiful to us, with the Child Jesus in her arms and two angels dressed alike, one on each side.

The first thing that she said to us was, *Do you know the meaning of the inscription that the Angel carries?*

And we said no.

It is a message that you have to tell the world on October 18th of this year, 1961.

It is the following . . .

Besides the message, the Virgin told us many more things; she also told us that there would be many contradictions among us . . .

She continued appearing to us like this until 1963, and she told us many very beautiful things, which it would require many days to write all down.

In the past two years we haven't had apparitions;



“a great miracle for the whole world”

but the Most Holy Virgin has spoken to us interiorly, without words, and we understand her very well. These are called *locutions*. I like very much to see the Virgin; but I like even more for her to speak to me interiorly, because she seems to be inside me.

The Virgin has also predicted through my intercession (*through me*), a great miracle for the whole world; it is more important than any other, as the world needs now. For the world now there is the message — for the people to fulfill it, and make others fulfill it . . .»

After the usual descriptions of the Virgin, the Child and the Angel, she added in ending:

«The last time that I saw the Virgin was at the Pines on January 1st. And I will see the Angel on the coming June 18th.»

This document was dated March 22nd, 1965.

Three days later, Loli took an interest in the same man, writing this letter:

«For my good believer in Christ, William A. Nolan,

I thank you very much for your trip to Spain, and for your visit to this village, lost in the mountains, where Our Most Holy Mother has shown herself one more time to demonstrate the love that she feels toward the whole world. As a mother she pardons us everything, if we ask her with faith. Show this letter in your town.

I also tell you this, that in order to avoid the Chastisement, we have to make many sacrifices and penances, to pray the family rosary every day; this is what Our Most Holy Mother requests of us. Also, that we should love one another, as Our Lord loves us. We have to love; the whites must love the blacks; and the blacks, the whites, since we are all brothers . . .»



“We have to make many sacrifices and penances.”

Not a bad letter! Brief and simple, but with material for extended meditation.

These two writings carry a breath of the Divine that acted in Garabandal; but there is also much of the human acting there, even the too human . . .

We know from Plácido Ruiloba, that toward May 11th of that year 1965, uncharitable comments and rumors concerning the bishop were being noised throughout Santander:⁽⁵⁾ that he was being obliged by his superiors to resign . . . that he was thinking of going to North America . . . that at the time it was said that Pajares and Tobalina⁽⁶⁾ were waiting to be rid of him, in order to finish once and for all with the bothersome matter of Garabandal . . .

The atmosphere that had descended on the mountain village was lamentable; it was described by the French witnesses in *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*:

«Dissensions, arguments, criticism, distrust, indiscretions, and insults concerning the Celestial Visitor . . . The more or less disguised waiting for the famous rendezvous . . . *It will be seen what will happen — since for the past two years nothing has been seen.*»

During these days of confusion, especially on May 16th, it began to be known that Conchita had held an important secret since January 1st. Thus it appears, at least in the notes of Dr. Ortiz:

«Plácido went up to Garabandal, and Maximina relayed the conversation that she had with Conchita in which she had been told that a sign (*the Warning*) would come before the miracle.»

The news or announcement, if it was divulged to the village (concerning which I have no information), certainly made no impression. Most everyone's attitude remained the same: doubting, dubious. They shrugged their shoulders: *We will see*

5. Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal had come to Santander as the bishop of the diocese in 1962; because of his age, education and deportment, a fruitful episcopate was expected. Unexpectedly in 1962 he presented his resignation, which the Holy See accepted. He state of health was given as the official reason for the resignation.

Bishop Beitia retired to Bilbao, his native land, and there continued working, especially in collaboration with the press.

6. For many years Fr. Francisco Pajares and Fr. Agustín Tobalina governed the diocese of Santander: the first from his position as a chancery secretary, and the second as vicar general.



Ceferino, the father of Loli

what will happen, if anything is going to happen.

Conchita, on the other hand, showed herself more certain than ever. On May 23rd, the Sunday before the Ascension, Mr. Ruiloba once again was walking through Garabandal. He met Fr. Valentín, who was very worried about some plans attributed to Pajares and Tobalina, and from the priest he learned that Conchita was continuing to repeat that the Angel would definitely return on the date announced: June 18th.

—*But are you really sure?*—that pastor had said to her—*That it is not a lie or something that you imagined?*

—Do you think that the Virgin would lie?

—*No. Of course not.*

—Well, the Virgin told it to me.

Mr. Ruiloba was constantly wavering between belief and disbelief. Every street, almost every corner of the village, had to bring back memories to

him of *things* experienced very personally;⁽⁷⁾ nevertheless, the man could not overcome his vacillation. And on the night of May 25th, Tuesday, being with Ceferino in the latter's house, he began again to bring out the *negative things* that he thought he had seen in the apparitions and in the girls. Ceferino, who in this matter was never far behind, broadly seconded him. And the two were talking in such a way that there came a time when Julia⁽⁸⁾ could not endure it anymore and interrupted the conversation to remind them of some things of a very different character, which neither of the two could deny. Her husband had no other solution than to assent, and even on his own part added some marvelous *signs* that he himself had received; but as if he were ashamed of them, he made Plácido swear never to tell them to anyone.

As with so many others in the village, it seemed

7. This same Plácido mentioned one day to Doctor Ortiz that at the beginning of the apparitions, after an ecstasy, one of the girls spoke of the state of his conscience as though she were reading it. And his wife, Lucita, added that from that time on her husband had changed very much.

8. Ceferino's wife and Loli's mother.

that Ceferino took a strange pleasure in destroying hopes. On June 6th, Pentecost Sunday, when again Ruiloba and his wife came to his house, Ceferino received them with these words, *My friend Plácido, everything is finished. This is nothing but a farce . . . And what Conchita is going around predicting . . . pure lies. I have already pointed it out, as I have always done. I went once again to talk about it to the bishop . . . If the people come here on June 18th, let them. I am going to play billiards.*

His daughter Loli, who was present there, joined in the conversation, with words and attitudes that were almost as ridiculous as those of her father.⁽⁹⁾

And up in those remote mountains, that is the way things were going during those last weeks before the great date.

Conchita had remained alone as the center of everything. And as a result, she was the occasion and the cause of the jealousies that surfaced in some, of the distrust that tormented others, and of the expectation of many others.

And Conchita, on June 13th—the Sunday before the date so awaited and feared—caught cold . . . Right at the wrong time. She awoke on June 14th with a bad case of flu that elevated her temperature to 39 degrees. For three days she was confined to

9. Ceferino's doubts, or his changing from belief to disbelief in what had happened, remained to the end. But finally in his last days he seemed to receive a clear light, which must have comforted him in passing away.

He died on June 4th, 1974 at 56 years of age, about to complete the 13th year from the beginning of those phenomena in which he has been so closely entwined. Two days before his death on June 2nd, a group of pilgrims came to Garabandal with an image of the Virgin of Fatima. They were singing the *Salve* and other songs in the plaza, and Julia opened the doors and windows of the house so the prayers and songs could come in better to the room of her dying husband, at times almost unconscious; then she leaned against the window weeping and praying . . .

When the songs ended, she asked one of the youths from the group to give her a flower from those decorating the image. She went to place the flower on the crucifix that hung over the head of the dying man. Ceferino then came out of his lethargy and began to look from side to side as if he were searching for something, while he said, *The sign! The sign!* Julia brought the crucifix with the flower. He took both with great devotion and remained with the flower in his hand, full of peace and joy, as if the flower had been for him the *proof* that finally was given to him on this matter that had worried him so profoundly . . . Julia, for whom the early death of her husband was a hard blow, now believes in the apparitions more than ever.

bed with chills and fever.

June 17th, Thursday, was the great feast of Corpus Christi, and Garabandal, like so many other ancient towns in Spain, put its best piety and enthusiasm into celebrating the feast.⁽¹⁰⁾ But Conchita could not follow the celebration more than from afar, from her bed of sickness. As the procession passed around her house, she could hear clearly the songs of the crowd accompanying Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, *Most High Lord . . . Let us sing to the greatest of all loves . . . God is here, let us adore Him . . . Heaven and earth, bless the Lord . . .*

In the street next to the house, her mother Aniceta had constructed a small arch of triumph made from branches adorned with flowers; she had also draped a banner on it with the colors of the national flag and an inscription that read, *Long Live Christ the King!* What more could the simple woman do? It was a deeply felt homage that she offered to Our Lord in her own name and that of her children, especially for the daughter who could only accompany the procession in spirit.

The sudden illness of Conchita was the object of the most varied comments. *A good way of preparing an "out" if on Friday nothing happens!* said some. *The things of God in this world never come without some tribulation,* said others. Those who still hoped could do no more than ask with a greater or lesser degree of concern, *Will she be on her feet for the call of the Angel?*

The situation did not look good, since, although the illness had improved much during the day of Corpus Christi, the doctor had prescribed that she remain in bed, or at least not leave the house, for the next six days.

The Gathering Crowd

Throughout June 17th, pilgrims were arriving.

10. They thoroughly swept, cleaned and decorated the streets for the procession of the Blessed Sacrament that would be carried through them. The people of the village assisted en masse at this procession, the most solemn of the year; those who were not able to participate in it knelt at their doors, windows and balconies for the passage of the Lord.



Pilgrims waiting for the apparition

The same was happening during Friday the 18th, well into the evening. Persons from foreign countries were numerous. The *L'Etoile dans la Montagne* mentions: «200 Frenchmen, 10 Americans, 6 Englishmen, 4 Italians, and an occasional representative of the other countries of Europe and America.»

There must have been many priests, but there were only a dozen visible in cassocks.

Vehicles with the most varied license plates inundated the village and its surroundings. Attention was especially drawn, and not only because of their size, to the vehicles of the technical crews for Spanish NO-DO,⁽¹¹⁾ and *Televisión Italiana*. In the latter

11. NO-DO (Noticiero-Documental) was the governmental agency of news pictures. Its importance has diminished with the development of television. The presence of NO-DO at Garabandal was due to the activities of a young woman from Segovia, Paloma Fernández-Pacheco de Larrauri. This woman, who already knew the village well, was there again for June 18th with her sister Fuencisia.

group, the famous actor Carlo Campanini was particularly active.

What was the attitude of the crowd? Fr. Laffineur tells us in *L'Etoile dans la Montagne* as a witness of the scene:

«In general, it was exemplary. Pious, modest, penitent. Almost all those who composed it had received Communion at one of the three Masses⁽¹²⁾ during the morning . . .

Occasionally there could be found a face that was there only to spy on the events and

12. Aniano Fontaneda from Aguilar de Campoo wrote on June 26th to Fr. Ramón:

«I was at Garabandal on the 17th and 18th and I saw your friends and a great number of acquaintances. You missed a great day since everything turned out magnificently. Although Fr. Valentín told me that there would be no Masses in the village unless the priests came with written permission to celebrate Mass, we actually had several Masses, with more than 1,500 Communions. I can say no more than that the Hosts were exhausted on two occasions.»

activities, to gather information to utilize in favor of a cause that he represented or served . . . the emissaries from the Commission of Santander, obviously; members of some foreign agencies also, and even someone representing the ridiculous ex-priest Collin.»⁽¹³⁾

How did the crowd pass the interminable hours of waiting? Certainly with less difficulties and hardships than the congregation that waited on October 18th, 1961. This time there was not such a great gathering and the weather was much better. But opportunities were not lacking to exercise patience, and practice penance. Mr. Poch Soler, the reporter sent by the Barcelonian weekly, *Por que?*, wrote an interesting article:⁽¹⁴⁾

«From Cossío we made the trip on foot, 7 kilometers, always heading upwards, arriving at Garabandal after 2 in the morning of June 18th. Unplanned and spectacular! The monumental task of sheltering hundreds of pilgrims in a small town of no more than 40 houses had already ceased when we arrived. The people were sleeping in the doorways, in the stables, on the porches, in the kitchens, in the middle of the streets . . . In our nocturnal walk through the uneven and rocky streets, we had to step with the greatest attention, avoiding the many people who were sleeping, stretched out on the ground, under the feeble illumination of a dozen light bulbs scattered throughout the village.

One of the two bars or taverns in Garabandal remained open all night, although its small capacity could barely shelter 12 or 15 people. There we settled ourselves down to write. To our one side two English people were sleeping peacefully, slumped over the table on their elbows. On the ground, two French priests were praying the rosary in a hushed voice. Others were drinking beer and later went outside to walk in the streets beneath the clear moon illuminating that night in Garabandal.»

13. We have already spoken about him during his visit to Garabandal on August 22nd, 1963.

14. This article was not published in the weekly paper until April, 1966. Its introduction went like this:

«In writing about this, we have tried at all times to avoid the frivolousness and journalistic lightness that at times we are accustomed to use for other subjects of the street. We have limited ourselves to reporting the facts as we have seen them, transcribing everything that we have heard and all this with the greatest objectivity possible.»

The French correspondent from *Le Monde et La Vie* agreed with this, and said further that well into the night, in scattered sectors of the village, there rose up prayers and devout hymns in Spanish, Latin, and French . . .

As day dawned, the influx of people increased, creating a boisterous commotion in the streets. The French reporter describes it:

«The morning passed rather well. Everyone was using the time the best that he could. They were praying, singing, taking photographs, speaking with the villagers, asking a multitude of questions about the girls and their ecstasies.»



“They were praying.”

Conchita's house naturally was the principal magnet of attraction. Only she was going to be the protagonist of what everyone was awaiting. Only she could name the time and the place. The youthful 16 year old girl was slow in appearing to the crowd because her mother rightly did not let her get up until well into the morning. The reporters were the ones most importune in their desire to see her. Poch Soler wrote in his article:

«Conchita inspired all the press reporters with profound respect. My colleagues from Paris, Portugal, Madrid, the crew from NO-DO were waiting impatiently, but without irritation, for the time when they would be able to speak to her.

You have to have a little patience, her mother told us. Understand that the girl is tired. Yesterday she was sick with a 40 degree temperature. She wants to talk with everyone,



“She let herself be devoured by the crowd.”

embrace everyone. I am the one who doesn't want her to go outside on the street.»

Finally the door opened inch by inch, and in the doorway stood the young girl, pale, heavily bundled up, but with her best smile for everyone. For hours . . .

« . . . she let herself be devoured by the crowd. She smiled, she wrote cards, she allowed herself to be photographed, she responded to the questions thrown at her, she promised to pray for the most diverse intentions, she tried to console the most afflicted, she embraced the children.» (*L'Etoile dans la Montagne*)

Mr. Poch Soler continued:

«At 2 o'clock in the afternoon of June 18th, we managed to speak with Conchita. I confess that this was the most moving moment of my career as a journalist. Never has a person filled me with such respect and confidence at the same time . . .

The interview took place in the kitchen of her home. Present were her mother and her two

brothers, two strong men of the north who protected the place. She held out her hand and apologized for making me wait to get the interview.

—Are you happy? I asked.

—*Very happy, Señor. I feel a great joy.*

—Why?

—*Because today I will see the Angel and that is marvelous.*

—Have you noticed the number of people who have come to Garabandal?

—*I haven't stopped thinking of them!*

—And how do you feel about this enormous crowd?

—*My joy is difficult to put into words . . . How happy Our Lady will be!*

.

—Are you sure you will see the Angel today?



“a marvelous light”

“a message”

—*Very sure.*

—At what time?

—*I cannot say, since I don't know. I don't know the hour, but I have a feeling that it will be rather late.*

.

—What do you feel when the Virgin appears to you?

—*A strong constriction that comes up from my chest to my throat . . . And then there is a marvelous light.*

—What do you think the Angel will say?

—*I surely don't know. Possibly there will be a message. But I don't know; we will see.*

When I went out on the street, the people closed in around me. Everyone wanted to know what Conchita had told me. French, Americans, Portuguese, they all begged me to please give them an answer. It was hard to convince

them that it had been a normal interview, that the visionary hadn't told me anything about the time or the place of the ecstasy.

After 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the concentration of pilgrims around Conchita's house was imposing . . . The troops of the Civil Guard of the 242nd Command were in charge of maintaining order, although it wasn't ever necessary for them to intervene with force.

The French groups and the people from the other nations gave a lesson in faith, devotion, and seriousness, that we would have appreciated in our own Spanish people.¹⁵ At all times the initiative for prayers and petitions arose from them . . .

The climate at times was almost hysterical. Some physically covered Conchita with medals,

15. *L'Etoile dans la Montagne* states:

«Toward nightfall gangs of Spanish boys and girls appeared whose flippancy showed that the devil wanted to be present at the spectacle too.»

scapulars and holy cards, hoping that she would touch them and kiss them. Others made their way toward her to ask for her autograph, to take her photograph. A woman raised a paralytic son in her arms, imploring Conchita to kiss him.»

Among the priests who had come to Garabandal, certainly the one who aroused the most interest was Father Pel . . . «the famous stigmatic, called *the French Padre Pio*,⁽¹⁶⁾ known through all of France for his sanctity and miraculous gifts. Even though 87 years of age, he was circulating around and talking with great agility.»

But the one who showed himself the most active, and who seemed to have the best welcome in Conchita's house, was the Spanish Fr. Luis Luna, who had come from Saragossa. He was privileged to be near the visionary for many hours that day.

Continuing now with the article of Poch Soler:

«The evening advanced, without Conchita announcing the time of the apparition. It became darker. But how sure it is that faith moves mountains! No one gave up or abandoned his post . . .⁽¹⁷⁾ 8 o'clock came, then 9, then 10 at night . . . They were praying without ceasing; supplications and hymns in every language rose up to heaven . . .

. . . until a trembling of emotion seized everyone: At the door of the house a priest⁽¹⁸⁾ came out, and calling for silence, spoke to the crowd.

This is from Conchita: Everyone should go to the Calleja, to what is called the Cuadro, since the ecstasy will be there.»

The frenzy stirred up by these words could not

16. Referring to the Italian Capuchin Padre Pio from Pietrelcina, (*adjacent picture*) famous the world over for his extraordinary apostolate and mystical charisms. Fr. Constant Pel died on March 5th, 1966, convinced about Garabandal. (The reporter errs in calling him a stigmatic.)



17. Conchita stayed at the door of her home, giving herself to the multitude. . . «until night fell, and we didn't know if she had time to eat anything more than a crust of bread. Shivering, she went back into the house; but in order not to let anyone down, she opened her kitchen window and across the iron gate continued to give herself to the crowd.» (*L'Etoile dans la Montagne*)

18. This seems to have been Father Luna from Saragossa.

be described . . . Everyone ran crazily to see if he could get the best place for observation.

Aniano Fontaneda wrote in his letter to Father Ramón:

«Everybody wanted to be the first to get there; they almost ripped my clothes off as they shoved me on all sides. Many were knocked to the ground. I lifted up Mercedes Salisachs⁽¹⁹⁾ and other people who stumbled and fell going up the hill.»

Fr. Luna also described it:

«After having been together with Conchita for several hours—in order to benefit from her company when the expected ecstasy came—at the time of going up to the Cuadro, I found myself bowled over by the rush of the crowd, which carried me along in the turmoil and finally knocked me to the ground. With my back on the ground, the people passed on top of me as they ran upwards. While I was there, in the darkness of the night, two people assisted me, one on each side, and without the least effort on my part, in spite of the weight of my 80 kilos, I found myself on foot. Later I was able to guide myself on the left wall of the Calleja, where the stones are stacked without mortar.»

The dispersal of the crowd left Conchita's house surrounded by an unusual silence. Only three or four persons still remained there at the window of the kitchen, desiring to exchange words with the young girl inside.

—*What are we going to do now, Conchita?*

19. The illustrious writer from Barcelona.

Any sensible person will understand the frenzy with which the throng rushed to seize good positions. This is not meant to commend it; only to make the situation understood.

The reporter Poch Soler showed he sympathized with the crowd in his article:

«The spectacle was not only striking; it instilled fear . . . A woman was dragging her five year old son between her legs; the little boy was crying, but the mother could not give him any attention because she had to find a good position at all costs. A blind American got up on top of the wall, helped by his friends. A man with two bad legs asked me to give him a hand so that he would be able to climb the rocky path. The human drama that brought all these persons to the *Cuadro* overwhelmed us all. Those people had their life conditioned by suffering and their admirable resignation was the greatest miracle of that night at Garabandal.»



“A new star shot up . . .
very brilliant . . .
a golden color . . .”

—Go to the Cuadro, like the rest.

Tryst with an Angel

At the Cuadro, order had been restored in the crowd.

«Almost everyone was praying in a loud voice, in two choruses, the French and the Spanish alternating. What an extraordinary night! There was an unprecedented luminosity with innumerable stars shining as never before. Without a moon, at least for the spectators . . .⁽²⁰⁾

Suddenly everybody lifted up their heads. From the northwest, a new star shot up, brighter than the others. It traced a great circle and returned to its starting point.

Two minutes later, another star, splendid but smaller than the first, appeared straight above Conchita's house, advanced slowly in the sky and suddenly disappeared above the Pines.⁽²¹⁾

20. A correspondent from *Le Monde et la Vie* had the same observation: «From 9 o'clock in the evening a magnificent starry sky covered the heavens.»

21. Juan Alvarez Seco, the Police Chief, also gave his testimony about the two stars that were seen on that night in

Everyone was talking with the person next to him about these extraordinary phenomena, when at the foot of the road, by the light of the starry night and the flashlights, Conchita appeared, protected by a squadron of police guards.⁽²²⁾ The young girl was walking so fast that her guards were out of breath.» (*L'Etoile dans la Montagne*)⁽²³⁾

The press reporter Poch Soler saw the scene like this:

«At a quarter to midnight, Conchita, followed by some priests and seven police guards, went up to the Calleja in a completely normal state. She advanced with her gaze fixed. The flashes from the photographers began to shine on her. A police guard asked her,

—Is it here, Conchita?

—No, Señor, a little higher up.

On coming to the designated spot, the girl plummeted to her knees on the sharp stones of

Garabandal «while I was waiting for Conchita between 11:30 and 11:45 on that June 18th.»

The first star «was seen shining brightly, very brilliant and a golden color; it went from the ground upwards . . . The other, of lesser brightness, moved more horizontally.»

22. The reporter from *Le Monde et la Vie* spoke of six guards; the one from *Por Qué?* mentions seven.

23. The correspondent from *Le Monde et la Vie* also called attention to the rapid pace with which the girl was walking.



“Tears run down her cheeks.”

the road. The ecstasy had begun.

The moment is exciting. Conchita’s eyes are fixed on the sky. She laughs and pronounces some words in a very low voice . . . But immediately she completely changes her expression and tears run down her cheeks.

The photographers and television cameramen are shooting their cameras, and their beams of light shine right into her eyes— wide open— but she doesn’t blink or make the least motion. The ecstasy is absolute.»⁽²⁴⁾

24. There is a good documentary motion picture of this complete ecstasy in the archives of NO-DO in Madrid.



“The ecstasy is absolute.”



“signs of the cross”

The witnesses of the *L'Etoile dans la Montagne* tell of it:

«The ecstasy was similar to those that we had previously observed in the village, in the seer's kitchen or her room. There were signs of the cross made with an indescribable piety and

majesty, a face resplendent with an interior light, an angelic smile and moments of solemn seriousness, whispering with lips open and the silence of a soul that listens, a tear that glistens on the temple and leaves a trail of crystal.»

On his part, the reporter of *Le Monde et la Vie* wrote:

«Conchita was there in front of my eyes, in the center of a circle of flashlights and camera lights focused on her. Her head, which I could see well during almost all the ecstasy, stayed motionless, thrown backwards in the way that so many photographs show. Her face appeared to gleam, extremely beautiful and transparent, arousing everyone's admiration.»

Fr. Luna's testimony is exceptionally valuable :

«I finally found myself on the hill, a little more than two meters from Conchita, who was already in ecstasy and whom I could see and hear perfectly. I was impressed by the more than human beauty of her face, speaking without blinking, under torrents of light projected on her from the cameramen and flashlights.



“moments of solemn seriousness”

No! . . . No! . . . Pardon, pardon!



“Priests? . . . Bishops?”



“Conchita . . . presented the crucifix to be kissed.”

I was overwhelmed on seeing her cry, as up until then, I had never seen this. From her eyes poured out tears that joined in a stream, filling the concavity of her left ear (the only one visible to me at the time), falling on the ground like water from a loose faucet . . .

I heard her speak with a voice that was gasping and breathless: *No! . . . No! . . . Still no! . . . Pardon, pardon!* Later I saw her lift herself up some 70 centimeters with her right hand raised and unsupported, to again fall to her knees on the ground with a chilling crunch.

Later she said, as if repeating it and asking a question, *Priests? . . . Bishops? . . . July 2nd?*⁽²⁵⁾

I saw her cross herself with a majestic slowness . . . And suddenly she put her two hands

25. There were only a few words that could be clearly heard from Conchita during the ecstasy; some people reported some, others reported others; but almost all agreed on these: *«Pardon! Pardon! . . . Still no, still no . . . July 2nd? . . .»*

to her face, trying to protect her eyes from the bright lights. The ecstasy was over.»

There is one missing element in Fr. Luna’s report, which the French reporters give us:

«Conchita had remained immobile some 12 or 13 minutes, in conversation with her mysterious interlocutor. Suddenly, still in ecstasy, she got to her feet, in her right hand holding up a crucifix (that she later said had been touched at the time by the Angel). She fell again on her knees and brought the crucifix to her lips with an extraordinary expression of love. It was at this moment, according to what her mother told me, that one of the police guards, with a changed expression on his face, made the sign of the cross solemnly, as if to say, *I believe*.

Then Conchita, without paying the least attention to what was happening around her, without changing in the slightest the immobility of her face or the fixedness of her glance, presented the crucifix to be kissed by three persons from France: an old priest at her side, a father of a

family who had lived in Spain for some time, and a religion teacher from Leon.⁽²⁶⁾

After making the sign of the cross with an extraordinary carefulness, she lowered her head, and smiling, without any sign of fatigue, got up.

With difficulty, the six police guards managed to protect her from the crowd . . . »
(*Le Monde et la Vie*)

The guards' task was difficult. Everyone wanted to see Conchita up close, to touch her if possible, to ask her questions . . . especially when it was heard that she had received a message.

Mr. Aniano Fontaneda, in the letter previously quoted, wrote to Fr. Ramón:

«The crucifix that she gave to kiss in the ecstasy belonged to me. I had left it when I went out of her house on the way to the Cuadro . . . On returning, she was holding up this crucifix for everyone to kiss at the door of her house. She continued until they finished kissing it, then she gave it back to me, and everyone came to ask me for it, since they wanted to kiss it. When I left Conchita's house, I passed Ceferino's tavern with the people from Cataluña, Argentina and Madrid. At every step I had to take out the crucifix, until a lady from Segovia named Fuencisla Fernández-Pacheco took charge of doing it.»

Among the few people who succeeded in getting into Conchita's house after the ecstasy, was the correspondent from *Le Monde et la Vie*. All that he could pry from the visionary about the message that she had received was the vague statement: «*It was very sorrowful.*»

But to find out its exact words, he would have to wait until the following morning.

But not everyone could wait. Such was the case with Mr. Fontaneda:

26. According to the *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*, these three fortunate men were: the previously mentioned Father Pel, Mr. Mazure and Mr. Piqué.

And the matter is doubly surprising, since no one is able to explain how they were able to get close to Conchita at the time, nor how she was able to give them the crucifix to kiss without seeing them and while holding it over the people who were next to them.



“It was very sorrowful.”

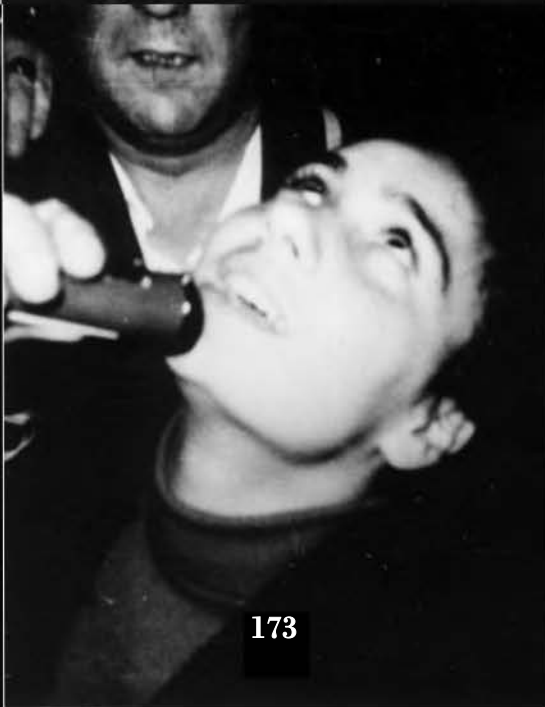
«Conchita was going to give the Angel's message on the following day—Saturday—in the morning after Communion. But I couldn't wait. We left from there at 2 in the morning, without having eaten, with only two Coca-Colas that they had given me at Ceferino's place.»

During the hours of the night, the village was almost completely tranquil and silent. The need for rest and sleep had overtaken everyone. And finally all that remained were the stars in the distant firmament above, as sentinels to continue the watch.

What mysterious designs were being planned for the world?

In those designs, what would come from that June 18th in Garabandal that was just ending?

**Would it leave its mark?
Or would it fall into oblivion?**





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**“You Are in the
Last Warnings”**

The morning of Saturday, June 19th, came quickly. But the streets of the village were slow in showing activity. The waiting and the fatigue of the previous day had worn everyone out.

As the morning slipped past, a crowd of expectant people grew around Conchita's house, hoping to finally learn the message.

The young girl appeared rejuvenated. It was said that the ecstasy of the previous night had brought back all her energy and vitality. Indefatigable and patient, she attended to everyone to the best of her ability. Some wanted to say good bye to her; others, for her to write on photographs and cards, or to kiss some holy article . . . the majority were coming with questions about the message.

But they still had to hold back their impatience.

There were Masses in the parish church. Conchita went to one of them, still fasting. On her way to

and from church, she was besieged by questions.

Finally, at noon, prior to the departure of a busload of people to France, the desired proclamation was made at the door of Conchita's house.

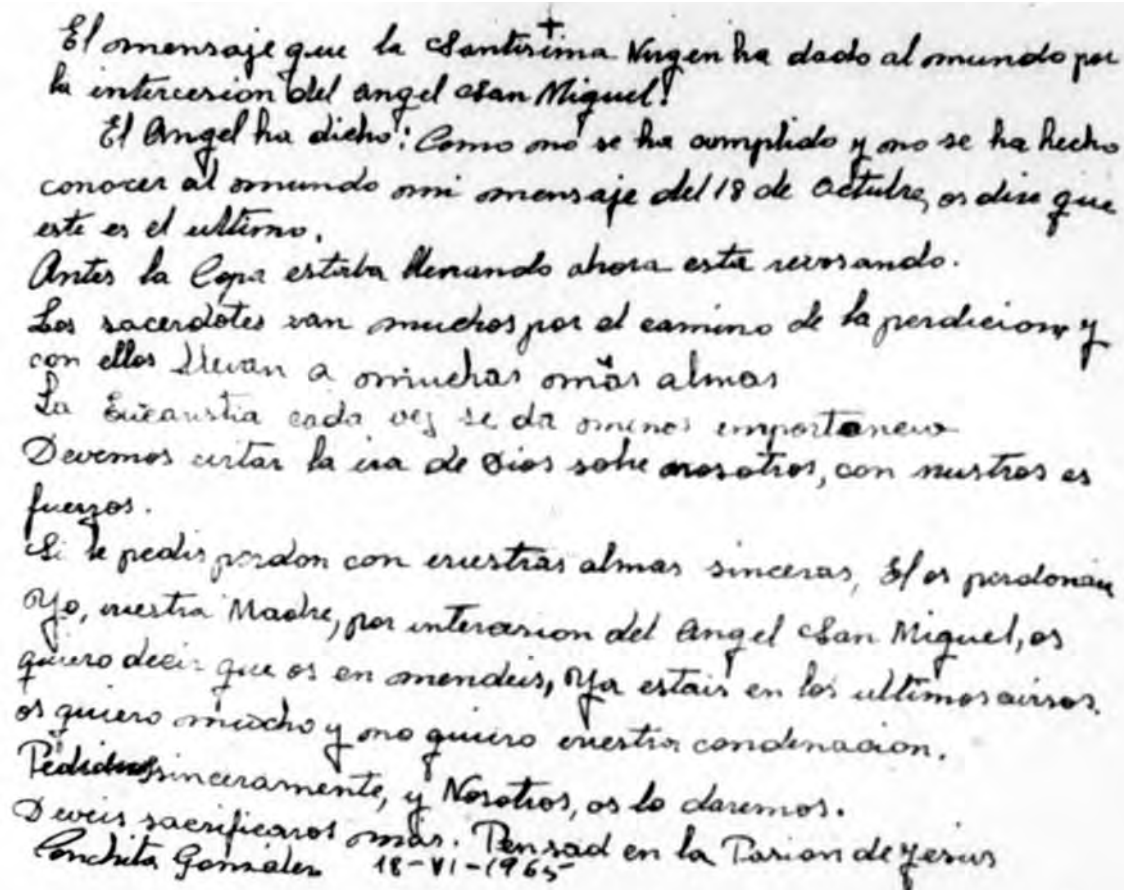
A priest read in a loud voice what Conchita had given him in her own handwriting, even with minor spelling errors and erasures.

The priest was Fr. Luis Luna from Saragossa. He has declared on repeated occasions:

«Conchita gave me the message in writing, and I read it in a loud voice in front of the doorway of her house; I kept it after that as a precious relic.»

It was first read in the original Spanish text, then in French. Another priest continued with an English translation; and apparently it was said after that in Italian too, so that the proclamation of the message left nothing to be desired.

Brief in Words, Extended in Content



El mensaje que la Santísima Virgen ha dado al mundo por la intercesión del ángel San Miguel!

El Ángel ha dicho: Como no se ha cumplido y no se ha hecho conocer al mundo mi mensaje del 18 de Octubre, os digo que este es el último.

Antes la Copa estaba llenando ahora está reborando.

Los sacerdotes van muchos por el camino de la perdición y con ellos llevan a muchas más almas.

La Eucaristía cada vez se da menos importante.

Debemos certar la vía de Dios sobre nosotros, con nuestros esfuerzos.

Si se pedis perdón con vuestras almas sinceras, El os perdonará.

Ojo, nuestra Madre, por intercesión del Ángel San Miguel, os quiero decir que os es en osendeis, Nya estais en los últimos años.

Os quiero mucho y no quiero vuestra condenación.

Pedidnos sinceramente, y Nosotros, os lo daremos.

Deveis sacrificaros más. Pensad en la Pasión de Jesús.

Conchita González 18-VI-(1965)

The message

The message that the Most Holy Virgin has given to the world through the intercession of St. Michael.

The Angel said:

- **As my message of October 18 has not been fulfilled, and has not been made known to the world, I tell you that this is the last.**
- **Before, the cup was filling up; now it is overflowing.**
- **The PRIESTS: Many are on the road to perdition, and with them they are taking many more souls.**
- **The EUCHARIST: It is being given less and less importance.**
- **With your own efforts, you should avoid⁽²⁾ the wrath of the Good God.**
- **If you ask pardon with a sincere heart, He will forgive you.**
- **I, your Mother, through the intercession⁽³⁾ of the Archangel St. Michael, want to tell you to amend your lives.**
- **You are in the last warnings!**
- **I love you very much, and do not want your condemnation.**
- **Ask us sincerely, and We will give you what you ask.**
- **You should sacrifice yourself more.**
- **Think of the passion of Jesus.**

1. Conchita's text is given accurately, but not as she wrote it (one statement after another, without proper separation or punctuation).

2. Almost all the copies that I have seen of the message, even Conchita's manuscripts, give this matter in the first person plural: *We should avoid . . .* This certainly is due to an assimilation on Conchita's part of the Angel's words, and should

rather say: *You should avoid . . .*

In the first writing of the message, as it appears on the photocopy, she corrected the *our efforts*, putting in *your efforts*. An unconscious echo of what she had heard came out.

3. As on other occasions, Conchita confuses *intercession* with *mediation*. Obviously, the proper thing to say here would be *by means of the Angel St. Michael*.

With this text before us, something should be said about its delivery and much more about its content.

In its delivery, it is not easy to separate the words that the Angel actually said from those that belong to Conchita's own vocabulary, which she used in communicating what she learned in the trance. Furthermore, although St. Michael gave the message, he was speaking in the name of the Most Holy Virgin. So words that he personally used (although by delegation) are merged with those that were simple repetitions of the Virgin's words. Her direct speech is especially clear in the last part of the message: «*I, your Mother . . .*»

Obviously, Conchita *put in writing only the most important part* of what she heard in the ecstasy at the Calleja. Almost 15 minutes of conversation could not be covered in half a page of written manuscript. Furthermore, some of the words that were heard during the ecstasy referred to other things than those that appeared in the message.

But looking at the content, which is what is really important, there are three elements that cannot be separated, but are easily distinguished:

- A denunciation of the terrible moral situation in the world.
- A warning of what was being prepared because of this situation.
- An exhortation to correct the situation before it becomes too late.

The Denunciation

—My message of October 18th has not been fulfilled.

—The cup . . . is overflowing.

—The **PRIESTS**: Many are on the road to perdition.

—The **EUCCHARIST**: It is being given less and less importance.

The first message of October 18th, 1961 had passed for the majority, for the vast majority, without concern or glory; that was more than obvious. Even the staunchest enthusiasts of Garabandal were disposed for seeing and experiencing more novel things, especially if they were exciting, than for carrying into practice, the admonition to *make many sacrifices, do much penance . . . visit the Blessed Sacrament . . .*

But the cup was *overflowing* because of other things too.⁽⁴⁾ The unbridled sins of men and nations—especially sins of the flesh—are so plainly patent to everyone that they need no illustrations or examples.

Almost the same could be said about the denunciation that many priests are «*on the road to perdition*», taking many souls with them. The facts are there, beyond discussion. Many have faithlessly abandoned their vows and vocations; others, it would have been better if they had abandoned them, for then they would have caused less harm to the faithful by their unorthodox doctrines concerning dogma, and their immoral opinions concerning moral law.⁽⁵⁾

Here is one of the greatest disasters that could fall upon the Church. Jesus had warned about it, **You are the salt of the earth; if the salt loses its flavor, what can it be salted with? It serves for nothing but to be cast on the ground, to be trampled on by men.** (Matt. 5:13)

But the gravest thing is that the matter is not confined entirely to priests.⁽⁶⁾

4. According to traditional symbolism, the cup represents the *tolerable* level of our sins. If the cup *overflows*, it shows that level has been surpassed.

5. I am not talking about all priests, or even the majority. Those who remain faithful deserve only praise; they do not make as much noise as the others, but they get the work done.

6. Complementing what was said about the bad state of the priesthood, it would be well to place here what Conchita wrote on July 29th, 1967 to a young French priest who asked her what the Virgin wanted from priests:

«The first thing that the Virgin wants from a priest is his own sanctification.

Fulfilling his vows for the love of God.

Leading many souls by example and prayer, for in these times it is difficult to do it any other way.

That the priest be sacrificed out of love for souls in Christ!

That at times he retire in silence to hear the God who speaks to him constantly.

That he meditate frequently on the passion of Jesus, so that his life may be more united to Christ the Priest, and thus invite souls to penance, sacrifice . . .

To speak of Mary, who is the most secure way to lead us to Christ.

And also to speak about and make people believe that if there is a heaven, there is also a hell.

I think that this is what God asks from His priests.»

During the transmission of the message, Conchita was definitely heard speaking about *bishops* too . . . and even *cardinals*! The testimonies cannot be denied. Fr. Luna was asked about his impression when —near to Conchita in ecstasy— he clearly heard her say with tremendous astonishment: *«Bishops! Bishops too? . . .»*⁽⁷⁾ Several other persons testified to the same. And under my gaze, I have a letter from the old professor of moral law at the Pontifical University in Comillas, Fr. Lucio Rodrigo, S.J.,⁽⁸⁾ written to Fr. Ramón, dated November 13th, 1965. He says in it:

«On Thursday, fifteen days ago, the pastor from Barro brought Aniceta and Conchita to me, to whom I gave communion in the infirmary chapel. We spoke for a long time together, and afterwards I spoke alone with Conchita. She confirmed to me categorically that in the June 18th message, the Angel explicitly mentioned bishops and cardinals. But influenced by truly supernatural and inspired prudence, she was silent about them (in her text of the message) since ‘they were included with the priests.’»⁽⁹⁾

Those who have studied the church and know its history will be immunized against a gasp of amazement such as Conchita had on the night of the ecstasy. They will know that bishops are the keystones in the structure of the Church; but they will also know, that besides innumerable good shepherds who fulfill their duties to God and their people, there are also hirelings, who frequently are responsible for the worst tribulations that can afflict the flock of Christ.

At Rome on December 5th, 1971, Paul VI made public an apostolic exhortation to all the bishops, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the closing of

7. For a young girl from the mountains, as Conchita was at that time, it was almost inconceivable for even a priest to be bad— much less a bishop! For the inhabitants of the primitive villages, the faraway *Reverend Bishop* had the halo of unquestionable sanctity, far above common human frailty.

8. This saintly priest was obliged by his superiors to keep silent about Garabandal. When insistently asked, he was not reticent in revealing in private his opinion completely favorable to the *events* considered as a whole.

9. It is undeniable that the Angel said in his message that *«Many priests, many bishops and many cardinals are on the road to perdition.»* If later it was not put literally like this in the written text, it was due to Conchita believing it more prudent, given the circumstances, to ease the impact of that tremendous denunciation . . . For in considering everything, *«they were included with the priests.»*



Conchita told Fr. Rodrigo (saying Mass) about “bishops and cardinals.”

Vatican II. The pope employed a forceful and demanding tone, rather unaccustomed to him, that showed his concern that not all the bishops were fulfilling their duty:

Many of the faithful feel themselves disturbed in their faith by an accumulation of ambiguities, uncertainties, and doubts in essential matters . . . While little by little silence is covering the fundamental mysteries of Christianity, we see a tendency to construct a Christianity derived from psychological and sociological data, a Christianity separated from the uninterrupted tradition that goes back to the faith of the apostles. And we see a tendency to exalt a Christian life deprived of religious elements . . . And from our own selves, just as in the days of St. Paul, shall rise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:30)

The successor of St. Peter was speaking at the time to bishops.

Closely linked with bishops and priests is the magnificent mystery of the Eucharist. What is the situation in Its regard? The message makes it clear: there is a progressive veiling, a growing lessening of Its importance. The results of this can be predicted. If the Eucharist is the mystery of the close presence of Jesus among us, the more Its existence is obscured and clouded, the less importance It will have in our lives. And so we will be drawn farther away from Him, farther away from His love, and closer to darkness.

That this was already happening in broad sectors of the Church, and was tending to spread through the entire Church, Conchita could not have known through natural means on that June 18th. The crisis of doctrine concerning the worship of the *Mysterium Fidei* that had broken out in other lands was still far from being felt in Spanish Christianity; and certainly not in those surroundings that the young girl knew.⁽¹⁰⁾

Months later appeared the first solemn and official call to attention: the encyclical of Paul VI, *given in Rome, from St. Peter's, on the feastday of Pope Pius X, September 3rd, 1965, in the third year of our pontificate*. In his encyclical, *Mysterium Fidei*, the Pope stated the reasons that led him to publish it:

There are not lacking, venerable brothers, reasons for grave solicitude and anxiety. The awareness of our apostolic duty does not permit us to be silent . . . We know that among the persons who speak or write on this very holy mystery, there are those who spread opinions about the subject of private Masses, the dogma of transubstantiation and of Eucharistic devotion that trouble the

10. During the days on which the message was proclaimed from the heights of Garabandal, I arrived at a region in France where I immediately discovered things that I would not have suspected from Spain . . .

In Paris several months later, the message given in the apparitions *at the village of Garabandal in Spain* came into my hands. I was then surprised by the clearness with which it seriously pointed out the four most dangerous things that were revolutionizing the Catholic Church:

- The crisis of the priesthood
- The doctrinal and liturgical deviations concerning the Eucharist.
- The progressive loss of every notion of penitential and ascetic life.
- The setting aside of everything that required personal patience, submission, sacrifice, and humiliation for Christ.

At the time, these things could hardly have occurred to a child in Spain; and much less, to one who had no more perspective than that of a little village lost in the Cantabrian Mountains.

souls of the faithful. They cause a great confusion of ideas, touching the truths of the faith.

The encyclical did not succeed in correcting the evil. Almost three years later, on May 8th, 1968, the same Paul VI saw himself obliged to explain his proposal to assist at the International Eucharistic Congress which was going to be celebrated in Bogotá, Colombia in August:

It is not the external solemnity that draws us here, although it has its highest value . . . It is the affirmation of the Eucharistic Mystery that draws us; an affirmation that wishes to consolidate strongly and express in an unequivocal form the faith of all the Catholic Church . . . An actual confirmation of the Eucharistic doctrine in the face of the ineptitude, the ambiguity, and the errors from which a part of our generation suffer with regard to the Mystery of our altars.

What was almost unforeseeable in Garabandal in 1965 is now visible to all: the disrespect—if not outright disdain—that many priests hold for the forms of devotion that Catholic piety has built around the Eucharist through the centuries. Now comes the placing of the sanctuaries and tabernacles at the side of the churches; the arrangement of churches more as a center of reunion than as a place to meet with the Lord Jesus present among us; the tearing down of the altar rails; the Communion made carelessly and without thanksgiving; the progressive elimination of Benediction, Nocturnal Adoration, Forty Hours Devotions, and processions of the Blessed Sacrament.

As an illustration of this, in 1968 I was waiting at a train station, speaking with a man who had begun his theological studies in a diocesan seminary. We had a friendly conversation and among the things that I heard in the conversation, this stuck especially in my mind: *The other day several seminarians were talking about what each wanted to do in his church as soon as he was in charge of a parish. One of them, after saying what he thought about statues, the arrangement of altars, the placement of pulpits, etc., ended like this, "I haven't decided yet what to do with the tabernacle . . . Although perhaps, when my time comes, that won't be a problem, since it will have disappeared."* The seminarian was certainly speaking ironically, but this illustrates the truth of the statement: **The Eucharist: It is being given less and less importance.**

Warning of Disaster

—I tell you that this is the last message.

—You are in the last warnings!

I do not know if the first of these two statements should be taken in its absolute sense, or if it has only a relative meaning.

Understanding it in its absolute way, it would affirm categorically that there will be no more *communications* from heaven until the great hour comes; we are already sufficiently warned. In which case, we would have to reject as not authentic the many messages which have been proliferating during recent years in many sites of “apparitions?” by numerous “visionaries?” of all types.

But if the statement is taken in its relative sense, then it only alerts us that there will be no more messages at Garabandal.

The same could be said with regard to the second statement, that we are *in the last warnings*.

Which of the two interpretations is the correct one? I honestly do not know.

What is very definite is that Garabandal has warned us in an unequivocal way about the imminence of a very grave, decisive period that I do not hesitate to classify as *eschatological*. As we are not paying attention to this last announcement-admonition for amendment, a tremendous flood of God’s justice will inexorably fall on mankind. Moral decay and apostasy are reaching their limits.

Call to Repentance

—You should avoid the wrath of the Good God.

—I want to tell you to amend your lives.

—You should sacrifice yourself more.

—Think of the Passion of Jesus.

We provoke the wrath of God upon ourselves by our own rebellion, our own disobedience, our own self-will. All evil consists in trying to follow our own ways, instead of seeking the ways of God.

Our ways are very easy to follow; it suffices to allow ourselves to be led. But ours are ways of sin—and not only the *sin of the world* that so many new books now propose—and they lead us to destruction. On the other hand, the ways of God, how difficult they can be at times! His are the ways of triumph and salvation; but they can only be traveled through effort and sacrifice: two things that our weakened nature abhors.

The world—men prone to serve the flesh—inclines to ease and not to combat, to pleasure and not to service, to leisure and not to work, to the good life and not to good living. This manner of living—spread throughout the Church—is inflicting mortal wounds.

Pseudo-prophets, with their distorted nuances ranting about *renewal and liberation*, are attempting to discredit the ascetic and penitential way of life, as though asceticism were not an evangelical sign, but the despised remnant of a naïve and misled monastic spirituality unworthy of esteem. Self sacrifice? Self denial? Self renunciation? How absurd! Neither the clergy nor the laity want any of this. Anti-asceticism is the order of the day.

But for whom did Jesus say, *If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross?* (Mt. 16:24) Certainly this is not for those who never mention Him except to speak about self-determination, self-fulfillment, self-advancement . . .

Thus many things explain themselves. How could a person like this accept the message of June 18th that insistently requests things that they themselves are trying at all costs to renounce?

—**You should sacrifice yourself more.**

—**Think of the Passion of Jesus.**

The Passion of Jesus! They are not interested in this. They are only interested in talking of things more to the liking of the *man of today*.

For them the only things that matter are actions and words favorable to their self-expression and lifestyle, which is far removed from, **He made Himself obedient to death, the death of the cross!**⁽¹¹⁾

The Aftermath of June 18th

The huge crowd that had come to Garabandal from afar, left the village for the most part consoled and inspired. They had assisted at another manifestation from God: one more sign that we are not alone in the troubles of our world and our time. The majority of them would have endorsed the final lines with which the reporter from the *Le Monde et la Vie* concluded his article: «**Toward 4 o'clock on the afternoon of June 19th, we left the village to head for Santander, exhausted, but at the same time, fulfilled.**»

The reaction was neither as unequivocal nor as favorable among the people of the village and neighboring towns. Their attitude was reflected in the remarks they made.

Father Laffineur, perhaps fortuitously, had kept himself at a discreet distance during those eventful days. Finally, with the departure of the crowds, he was able to walk freely through the village. Soon he ran into the stonemason Pepe Díez, a witness of the first rank for many of the happenings.

11. How much some would like to efface one of the principal declarations of the Gospel: **Enter by the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who enter that way. How small the gate and narrow the way that leads to life! And few there are who find it.** (Matt. 7:13-14)

—*How is it going, Pepe? What do the people say now?*

—*This time, it's for real. Everyone seems to be believing again.*

But the enthusiasm was not so general, and there were exceptions.

Dr. Ortiz' wife Paquina, and her sister, Eloísa, took advantage of their stay in the village to make several interviews with Mari Cruz' mother, Pilar. On June 18th, the night before the event, they found her upset:

Look—she said to them almost in tears—Now everyone slanders us. There are papers going around saying that we are the ones who go to church the least. What they say about me isn't important; but what they say about Mari Cruz . . . And her father . . .



Pilar, the mother of Mari Cruz

On the following afternoon, in the midst of everyone's anticipation of what was to happen, she seemed calmer and even happy.

But when the two women from Santander went to say goodbye to her on Sunday, June 20th, they found her in a very different mood.

She was writing, and on seeing them, hurriedly put the writing paper away.

—*I don't write to anyone except my sister.*

—Please continue then, we don't want to interrupt you.

—*No, you aren't interrupting me. Come in . . . Today I gave Mari Cruz a lesson. I gave her a good scolding. Because she's stupid. Since, instead of giving an explanation when they say something to her, she keeps quiet . . .*

(Then she changed the conversation). *What a stupid thing Conchita did yesterday! I could do that myself, if I wanted to . . . That's all a lie. What I should do is go tell the bishop about the whole thing.*⁽¹²⁾

—That seems good. He's the one that all of these things should be told to, not the others.

—*I would have gone already, if I had a car waiting for me, rich people in my house, and a lot of money to spend! Yes, then, I'd have the means to travel.*

—If it's for that, my car is at your service. I will take you to the bishop. Or, if you prefer, there is Plácido, who will certainly take you too.

—*Look, he's the only good person who comes here. I'm going to tell you something.* (She became agitated). *If you didn't come, and no one else came, this thing would have ended.*

—We haven't taken part in this for nothing. We have come to pray . . . And if we've spoken with the girls, we've been satisfied with whatever they wished to tell us . . .

12. Pilar was not long in finding an occasion to tell this to the bishop . . .

When many days later, on June 24th, Father Laffineur and his companions stopped in Santander to present their respects to the bishop and pass through the Commission, they learned that Mari Cruz and her mother had also been through there, and had been interviewed extensively by the canon Odriozola. He had taken them to the bishops' place . . . and in his presence, as a concrete demonstration that everything about Garabandal had been false, *Mari Cruz started herself making an "ecstasy."* The affair had to be shocking, so that after a minute the bishop interrupted the *trance*, saying with disgust: *That's enough!*

—*Listen to me. If you didn't come, they would not have a reason to do these things, and all this would have been ended. Since you want to make something out of nothing . . . My daughter is sincere and tells the truth.*

—Well, Pilar, when this began, no one came here. We didn't even know the village existed. Then why did they make this up? To fool people?

—*Oh! I don't know. But in the beginning, my daughter told the truth. I believe she now does too, since she is honest.*

—In the beginning, Mari Cruz told the truth and now does too, since she is honest. In the beginning, she said that she saw; now, she says that she never saw . . . Where is the truth?

—*I don't know. But my daughter was honest before, and is now too . . . Only if the Miracle would come!*

Many enlightening thoughts occurred to me in reading this dialogue; but I think that they would have occurred to the reader too.

It was on a group of priests near Puente Nansa that the events of June 18th had their greatest impact. Fr. Laffineur wrote about it in *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*:

«**On the evening of June 18th, we were invited to a conference planned for the following day at Puente Nansa. An engineer, who represented himself as a member of the Commission of Santander, wanted a meeting attended by himself, the local priests, and us. We confided this to the pastor of Garabandal, Fr. Valentín Marichalar, who ultimately opposed it.**

Perhaps we involuntarily lost a valuable occasion to inform ourselves. This engineer and the circle of listeners that we would have met were determined enemies of the apparitions. The ancient Romans were right in their maxim, *It is useful to be taught by one's enemies.*»

What was the result of this meeting at Puente Nansa? According to the author just mentioned, the meeting was initially brought to order because the priests of the area thought that the statement, **The priests: many are on the way to perdition . . .** applied to them personally. Later they broadened



"Mari Cruz told the truth."

their interpretation, declaring heatedly that it referred to all priests; and finally they traveled to Santander to present a very irate protest to the bishop.

Actually, I do not understand such a nervous reaction on the part of those priests. Unless, in their case, they were convinced that the message had a basis . . .

The Fourth "No" from the Bishop

Perhaps the feverishly antagonistic reaction from that group of priests pushed the Commission at Santander to publish a new «Nota» on the matter of Garabandal. Bishop Beitia Aldazábal, who was no longer titular bishop of the diocese, but who continued at its head as Apostolic Administrator, honored this «Nota» with his approval and signature, although there are reasons to doubt that he personally was in full accord with what was officially declared. The «Nota» was dated July 8th, and inserted into the *Boletín Oficial del Obispado* of that month:

«Our pastoral duty obliges us to write this Nota . . .

The Bishopric of Santander has received extensive documentation during these years on everything that has happened there. It has not closed its file on this matter. It always gratefully receives all the evidence for judgment that is submitted to it.

There have been three official Notas that have appeared up to this moment, trying to orientate the judgment of the faithful. This Nota will be the fourth, and its conclusion: the same as that of the preceding Notas.

The Commission that studied the credentials of these matters has not found reasons to modify the judgment already pronounced, declaring that there is no evidence of a supernatural character in the phenomena of which it made a careful examination . . .»

As an illustration of the «*extensive documentation*»

received and of the «*careful examination*» made, we cite here an extract—up to now, never responded to by the chancery—from Fr. Laffineur in the book, *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*:

«This is the fourth anniversary of the apparitions. Yes, four years earlier, on June 18th, 1961, everything began . . .

But in four years the Commission has never had the time to bring before them either the visionaries, or their families, or even the pastor of the parish (and for our part we might add: nor any of the witnesses who might have shown themselves favorable to the supernatural character of the phenomena). Inconceivable, the French would say, and all those who know the history of Lourdes and Fatima. Yes, inconceivable, but true. More than true, unfortunately!

The Commission was content with emissaries, some of whom we know; and we know all the harm that they caused in the little village, left to itself in the middle of events that were infinitely beyond it.»

Fr. Laffineur and his French companions had a good occasion to see how the Commission of Santander carried on its work—by their personal experience on the morning of June 24th, six days after the message, during their return trip from Garabandal . . . Anyone wishing to know the remarkable and astounding experiences they had with the Commission, can read them in the *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*.⁽¹³⁾

But let us return to the bishop's «Nota».

13. On May 1st, 1969, Father Laffineur gave a conference at Lisieux, France and in it he reminisced about his meeting on June 24th with the one who had been the secretary, lawyer, judge, and everything else in the Commission:

«All my responses were interrupted beforehand, giving a feeling that there could be nothing else than what was unfavorable to Garabandal . . . And listen to this. When I had finished my statements (which took place in a restaurant! The ultimate scandal in canon matters!) he said to me, *Sign it.*

I answered, *I won't sign this thing.*

Then I saw what none of you could have imagined: with his own handwriting, at the bottom of what had been written, he calmly put my first and last name in large capitals . . . How can this be called canon law? When some of my friends from Germany passed through Santander sometime later, he assured them that I had given a deposition in front of the Commission *against Garabandal*, and that the deposition was *signed by me.*»



“We have not found any reason for ecclesiastical censure.”

«Nevertheless, we state here that we have not found any reason for ecclesiastical censure with regard to condemning either the doctrine or the spiritual recommendations that have been promulgated in this affair, in so far as they are directed to faithful Christians. Rather they contain exhortations to prayer and sacrifice, to Eucharistic devotion, to devotion to Our Lady in traditional praiseworthy forms, to the holy fear of God offended by our sins.

They simply repeat ordinary Church doctrine in these matters.

We accept the good faith and religious fervor of the people who go to San Sebastián de Garabandal, and who merit the deepest respect; and we wish to call upon that same religious fervor so that they, relying fully on the hierarchy of the Church and its magisterium, comply with the closest exactness to our repeatedly published recommendations.»

It can be assumed that these paragraphs were the *personal* part of Bishop Beitia; perhaps the sole part of the whole «Nota» that was composed by him. But there are serious indications that he, in the middle of his confusion with regard to Garabandal, personally came to be closer to its acceptance than its rejection . . . And so? Mysteries of God. Or, perhaps, simply mysteries of man.

During the days in which the fourth «Nota» was composed—the second and last «Nota» from Bishop Beitia—his bewilderment on this matter had to be increased by the abrupt change taking place in Father Luis López Retenaga.

From the end of 1962, that priest, mentioned so many times in our story, had been confronting the bishop of Santander as the most convinced and qualified defender of the authenticity of the Garabandal events. But, suddenly, inexplicably—or perhaps it was too explainable, as some might say—he made a complete about-face, changing his enthusiastic defense not just into doubt, but into an outright opinion that all *the events* could well be considered the result of diabolical intervention. Something of what happened to Father Retenaga can be read in *Star on the Mountain*: «**A priest stopped believing in Garabandal.**» (His name is not given).

Upsetting? But not too much. Garabandal was continuing to be, more and more fiercely, a **sign of contradiction**. But was that not the same thing that had been prophesied for Jesus Himself? (Luke 2:34)

Here on earth, we remain suspended between light and darkness.

Only a fool would pretend that the affairs of God have the $2+2=4$ clarity that we like to see in the affairs of men!



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Farewell in the
Rain

During the ecstasy on June 18th, among the few words that Conchita was heard to say were these: «*July 2nd . . .*»

What was predicted for this date? We do not know; or at least, I do not know.

We do know that on July 2nd, the fourth anniversary of the Virgin's first apparition, she condescended to visit the young visionary. She came by way of a *locution*.

Conchita had another locution on the 18th of the month, which was the village feastday and the third anniversary of the *Miracle of the Host*.

It might have been thought at the time that the events would hold their usual course; that everything was going to continue as before.

But the most astute observers soon could not avoid the impression that June 18th had come as a finale or end, to public manifestations at least, of all that had taken place at Garabandal.

The events would not be repeated. The seers had changed. The circumstances had changed too.

And the girls no longer had a reason to remain in the village, waiting for interventions from heaven. It was time for them to think of their futures, to try to arrange their later lives.

The most singular things that they had experienced would remain only in their memories—confused, at times—leaving them with the obligation of showing a conduct shining before God and man.

* * *

As if his departure were also necessary for the new phase that was to be experienced by Garabandal, on August 16th Bishop Beitia left Santander forever. The feast of the Assumption with its liturgical celebrations, its bouquets of flowers placed at the foot of the Virgin's statue as it is carried in front of the cathedral, was his last day in the diocese that he had headed for three years. Two days later, on August 17th, Bishop Vicente Puchol Montís was installed as his successor.

With the new bishop, many felt a great euphoria. He was young, with a late vocation,⁽¹⁾ extremely personable. Others could not avoid feeling wary

and uneasy. The Spanish Church had already begun to experience in a dramatic way the confusion of mentalities and ideologies that would burst out later in violent confrontations. Although the new bishop appeared to be opposing the *innovators*, it was said of him that he was the initiator, if not the author of the complete change — some spoke of an *actual revolution* — that was happening in the diocesan seminaries.

With regard to Garabandal, the future did not augur well with the new bishop. As soon as his nomination was known, a priest in Madrid, a former student at Comillas, notified Father Lucio Rodrigo:

«Walk cautiously. I know Vicente Puchol, and I know that he is against Garabandal. He is a declared enemy of the apparitions . . .»

* * *

Although the one thing that had nothing to do with the other, on the day after Bishop Puchol's installation, Conchita wrote to Fr. Laffineur, to communicate her *great joy*:

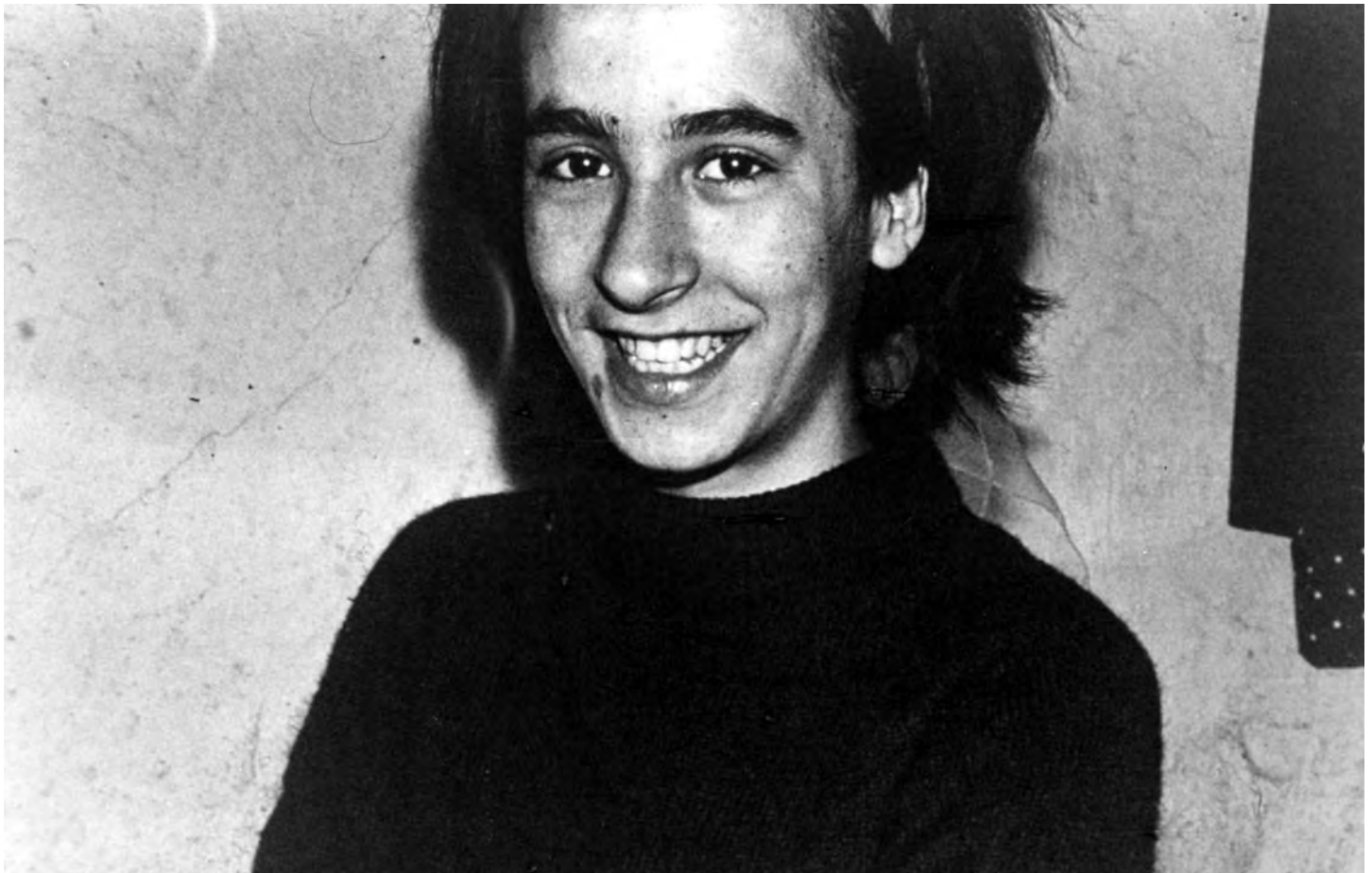
«My mother has allowed me to enter into the convent. For me, it is a great thing to be able to consecrate myself completely to Christ like this — from my 16th year — for the rest of my life . . . Pray for me, so that I will be able to go as soon as possible to the Missionary Sisters of the Discalced Carmelites.»

Thinking perhaps that Conchita's departure was imminent, Fr. Laffineur arranged another trip to Spain, to obtain certain clarifications from her. The meeting took place in Torrelavega (Santander) on September 8th, the feast of the Nativity of Mary.

With Fr. Laffineur were some travel companions who served as witnesses; at Conchita's side, as usual, was her mother Aniceta. Fr. Laffineur submitted 45 questions to the young girl and carefully recorded her answers. Part of these have been published in the *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*; the

1. A late vocation refers to those who did not begin study for the priesthood in early youth.

After the bloody Spanish Civil War, in the fervor of the Catholic reconstruction that followed, there were many of these late vocations. They came to be overestimated, as if from them could be expected much more than from the others. Time has gone by and in the face of the end results the special esteem for those vocations has declined.



“Her denials today are due to the mysterious work of the devil.”

rest have been reserved for the future.

These are the most interesting of the ones that have been published:

—*«Yes, I wrote the date of the Miracle to the bishop. (It seems that this letter never came into the hands of Bishop Beitia.)*

—*I had a locution on July 2nd. I already explained it to you by letter. And I had another on the 18th of the same month; I gave that in writing too.*

—*My companions and I thought about the convent from the first days of the apparitions. No priest put it into our minds.*

—*The Pope will see the Miracle, wherever he is; Padre Pio will see it too.*

—*Yes, the Council will have an extraordinary outcome.*

—*After Paul VI, there remain only two popes.*

Following that, the ‘end of times,’ which is not the same as the ‘end of the world.’ I do not understand this well, but the Virgin told it to me like this.

—*My leaving Garabandal is no obstacle to announcing the date of the Miracle. I’ll be able to tell the date to my superior, and if necessary, also to my spiritual director . . .*

—*After the miracle, a chapel will be built in honor of St. Michael the Archangel.⁽²⁾ I would prefer that it would not be done as at Lourdes, which I got to know in May of 1963; I would like it to be more simple and unadorned.*

—*The greatest danger for the village of Garabandal is pride.*

—*Mari Cruz certainly saw the Virgin. Her denials today are due to the mysterious work of the devil. After the Miracle, she will reaffirm the truth of her ecstasies.*

2. Obviously this has nothing to do with the chapel built by some people below the Pines in September of 1967.

—*The best time to go to Garabandal will be when the four of us have left the village; then it will be solely for the Virgin.*»

* * *

Two days after this meeting in Torrelavega, on September 10th, there was another meeting in Garabandal itself. It occurred under the awning of a tent that a French family had pitched a few steps from Conchita's house. Conchita went to visit a woman there with the two smallest of her eight children.

—*«You are fortunate to set up your tent here; it was right here that Mari Cruz had an apparition with the Virgin.»*⁽³⁾

—You are certainly the fortunate one in having been specially chosen by her.

—*When the Virgin appeared to me, her look didn't stay fixed on me; it roved from one side to the other, over the mountains, taking in the whole world, and her face seemed to smile at all the universe. She didn't come for me.*

—You have a large picture of the Virgin in your house. It's very beautiful. Does it resemble your vision?

—*Oh no! That's nothing. It's less than wax to the real thing. There's no way of copying the Virgin's beauty . . . You know about Fatima?*

—Only a little. I have heard talk about the miracle of the sun.

—*The miracle of Fatima is nothing in comparison with what will happen here. This will be much, much greater.*

Then the interpreter, Eloísa Deguía, whispered to the French woman: "Perhaps the Virgin herself will be seen in person." Conchita, overhearing this, replied vigorously:

—*No, no! It won't be that . . . If it were that, then it would be an apparition, not a miracle.*

Lifting up her arms and spreading them out, Conchita continued:

3. We have already spoken about this rather notable apparition in chapter VIII of Part One.



"The miracle of Fatima is nothing in comparison to what will happen here."

—*The Miracle here will be much greater, more tremendous than Fatima. It will cause such an impression that none of those who see it will be able to leave with doubts. It would be well if all the world were here, since that way there surely would be no chastisement, since everyone would believe.*

—Will all the sick who come be cured?

—*The Virgin didn't tell me "all" or "some," but: "The sick will be cured."*

The Virgin smiled, she smiled very much. She didn't inspire fear!

—Then she is very kind. Kind like a mother.

—*No, much more than a mother! She is kind like one who, besides being a mother, is a best friend, for we could tell her everything that came to our minds. And she understood us and helped us.*

She laughed and even played with us. One

A black and white photograph of a young boy with dark, wavy hair, looking upwards and to the right. He is wearing a light-colored collared shirt. The background is a blurred crowd of people, suggesting a public event or performance. In the top right corner, there is a black rectangular box containing the text "the flaming stars" in white. In the bottom center, there is a black rectangular box containing the number "190" in white.

“the flaming stars”



“a revelation of our sins”

day, she even handed down her crown to Loli, so that Loli could amuse herself by putting it on her head, although Loli was afraid of burning herself on the flaming stars.

With a mother one doesn't feel so free and confident as with the Most Holy Virgin. No one confesses his own faults to his mother, nor does he reveal his secret defects.»⁽⁴⁾

* * *

Four days later, on September 14th, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, there was another meeting with new statements and clarifications about the things that had been hanging in the air at Garabandal. It was said that the young visionary, before her departure for the convent—which she thought very near—was more fluent than ever in answering the questions that interested everyone. This time, her questioners were Americans. They had given their questions in writing, and in writing Conchita gave them these answers. We have an

4. Conchita speaks from her own situation. In Aniceta she had a very strict and demanding mother, although one full of solicitude for the welfare of her daughter.

accurate copy of this, but we are only reproducing the points of major interest, because many of the others have already been sufficiently repeated:

«—The Warning, will it be a visible thing, a personal thing, or both at the same time?

—*It is something that comes directly from God, and will be visible throughout the world, in every place that exists.*

—Will it reveal his own sins to every person in the world, including persons of other religions and even atheists?

—*Yes, the Warning will be like a revelation of our sins. Believers and non-believers alike will see and experience it, whatever religion they are.*

—Will the Warning cause people to remember the dead?

—*The Warning will come to purify us for the Miracle, and it is like a catastrophe which will be felt in our conscience. It will make us remember the dead in the sense that we will*



“a tremendous terror”

prefer to be among the dead, rather than endure the Warning.⁽⁵⁾

spite of seeing the Virgin at the same time in all her beauty and indescribable goodness!



—Please tell us what you can about the Chastisement, and what will be felt when it is seen.

—The Chastisement, if we do not change, will be horrible. Loli, Jacinta and I have seen it; but I’m not able to say in what it consists, since I don’t have permission from the Virgin. When I saw it, I felt a tremendous terror, in

● That, on the contrary, she doesn’t know anything about the Miracle that Conchita is predicting because the Virgin never told her that it was going to come. Whenever she inquired about it like the other girls, the Virgin either didn’t answer or only said: *«They will believe, they will believe.»*

The little bit I was able to draw out from her about the Warning coincided with what was already known from Conchita: that it was going to be worldwide, that it would oblige us to face our consciences, that it would be terribly impressive!

More recently I have come upon proof that the Virgin told Loli about the Warning. It appears that this came very early in the *revelations* received at Garabandal, although the girls receiving them (this is my impression) were slow in understanding the importance and special characteristics of the supernatural phenomena that were predicted.

Mrs. Sagrario Aguirre from Oveido informed me by letter in 1978:

«Before the Warning was talked about, actually more than a year before Conchita predicted such a thing for the world, Loli told me one day, One night you will be struck with something tremendous. (I can’t say for sure that she said ‘night’, but I was certainly left with the impression that it would be at night.) During the night on that day, and also the following night, I couldn’t sleep, waiting in terror. . . But talking with Loli again, she told me, Do you think it’s going to be for you alone? No, it’s going to be for the whole world. And she made me keep it secret . . . And she added that, the Virgin had told this to Jacinta and her from the beginning of the apparitions.

5. For a long time Conchita was the only visionary who talked about the Warning. This had caused it to be believed that she was the only one who had received *communications* concerning this important thing. (This had led me to hold the *Warning* as having the least guarantee among the future events that were predicted at Garabandal.)

But on being able to speak with Jacinta in Santander on November 10th, 1973, I discovered that the Warning has a broader foundation. In the presence of several persons, Jacinta affirmed with complete clearness:

● That the Virgin had spoken to her too, and more than once, about the Warning that would come before the Chastisement.

● That she knows of what it consists, although she does not know the date; if she does not say anything about what it is going to be, it is because the Virgin has commanded her to keep it secret.



“Jesus will perform miracles with these articles.”

—When you prayed the rosary with Our Lady, did she teach you how to pray it?

—*In the beginning, the Virgin prayed the rosary ahead of us very slowly, as she wanted us to pray it. Because of this, she herself recited the Hail Mary too, so that we would learn how.*

—Is it true that the body of Fr. Luis Andreu will be disinterred on the same day as the Miracle, and will be found incorrupt?

—*The Virgin told me in a locution: “The body of Fr. Luis Andreu will be found incorrupt, just as he was buried”.*

(We have already described in another chapter that Conchita wrote to Fr. Ramón Andreu, assuring him that the day after the Miracle they would find the body of his brother just as it was when he was buried.)

—What value will the articles kissed by the Most Holy Virgin during the apparitions have, before and after the miracle?

—*The Virgin told me: “Jesus will perform miracles with these articles. Those that wear them with faith and confidence will have their purgatory on earth.”⁽⁶⁾*

(This means that they will have the suffering here that they would otherwise have to endure in the next world after their death.)

—Did the Most Holy Virgin tell you anything about the perfume of flowers that sometimes emanates from the articles kissed by her?

—*No, I never heard anything about that. She did say that they will work miracles and prodigies.*

—Did the Virgin teach you any songs?

6. No one can enter into heaven without being purified, or said in another way, without expiating the debt due for sin. That is the reason for purgatory. To suffer in this world for the debt that we owe for our sins is much better than to suffer in the next; since here, at the same time as *making satisfaction*, we also *obtain merit*. On the contrary, all that it is possible to do in purgatory is to make satisfaction for sins.

—No. *The Virgin helped us make up some songs.*

(By this is meant that the Virgin did not teach them in advance the verses that they sang. Rather she aided them in saying small poems at the time when they sang them. They were apparently inspired and all three were able to sing at the same time, with the same words, and with the same tune.)

—Did the Most Holy Virgin or Jesus say anything about the conversion of Russia?

—*In a locution with Jesus, the only one that I have had with Him up to the present, He told me that Russia would be converted.*

—Could you explain the ‘sign’ that will remain at the Pines after the Miracle?

—*It is a ‘sign’ that will remain forever. It will be able to be photographed, televised, seen; but it will not be able to be touched. It will be evident that it isn’t a thing of this world, but of God.*



“a sign that will remain forever”

—Many believers in Garabandal want to work for the spread of the Virgin’s messages. But they are concerned because of the obedience that they owe to their bishops . . . What do you have to say about this?

—*That’s very pleasing to the Virgin. She likes that very much. She desires us to work at spreading her message. But also she wants us to obey the Church, so as to give more glory to*



“She wants us to obey the Church.”

God. And she will give time for the message to be spread, with the permission of the Church.

* * *

With these statements, Conchita thought she was performing her last services for the cause of Our Lady of Garabandal prior to her entrance into religious life, where she would have to keep silent and remain in seclusion.

She was impatiently looking forward to this time. But at the same time it seems she felt an instinct of foreboding for the future.

Two days after the meeting with the Americans, she wrote to Fr. José Ramón de la Riva.

She deliberately used for her letter a piece of paper on which the message of June 18th was photocopied, and she wrote:

«San Sebastián de Garabandal 9-16-1965

Dear Father José Ramón,

Just a few lines to tell you that I found out that you were here a few days ago. That made me feel bad since I wanted to speak with you for a few minutes, if not longer . . .

You know that within a few weeks, or perhaps a few days, I’ll enter the convent. I want to

enter soon in order to do —or try to do— what the Virgin wants.

I don't know if I have a true vocation. I think I do, although I have some doubts. The Virgin didn't tell me to enter.»

These last lines are revealing. They show that there is something deeply troubling Conchita. She does not know God's plans for her. Up to now, during the ecstasies and locutions when she had asked personal questions about her future, she had so many times been left unanswered, or else had been answered in words that clearly evaded the question.

And the day would come on which she would clearly feel herself not chosen by Jesus to form part of what the Church considers His *spouses*. This would be for her a cause of great suffering and a perilous spiritual crisis.

But as summer ended in 1965, she was counting on leaving immediately for the convent at Pamplona to begin her religious life. The day of departure had even been set: September 29th, the feast of St. Michael, the Archangel. Could she have chosen a better date?

But that day came, and Conchita had to stay in

Garabandal while, with tearful eyes, she saw her friends and companions, Loli and Jacinta, leave for Saragossa on September 30th.

Fr. Luna had arranged everything so that the two girls could enter free of charge as boarders in the college of the Charity Sisters of St. Ann in the Aragon town of Borja.

Jacinta and Loli were 16 years old at the time, in the flush of youth. They had never lived outside of San Sebastián de Garabandal, and the parting from the village on that day, even with their eyes on the future, must have been nostalgic. While saying goodbye before leaving, Loli soaked two handkerchiefs with her tears.

Understandable sorrow! Beside the pain of separation, could it have been due also to the ending of the most unforgettable period of her life?

Perhaps she was beset also with the premonition that her way would soon turn into a most narrow and difficult one.

Almost on the night before leaving, she had a locution, and heard from the Virgin: **«Loli, if in the future I do not appear to you again, it is that your hour of suffering has come.»**



“your hour of suffering has come.”

Actually both young girls, Loli and Jacinta, suffered considerably in the school at Borja. I know this expressly from Jacinta's admission that she kept a painful remembrance of the school year there. All the blame could not be put on the religious teachers. According to Fr. Luna, the principal cause of their unfortunate troubles were certain *Garabandalistas* of the first rank, who could not resign themselves to the girls being outside of their presence and control.

Jacinta probably cried less than Loli at the time of farewell. Not because she was less sensitive, but because she had a different character, less prone for expansion.

Before Fr. Luna could arrange for her to stay at school, Jacinta was talking about entering into a convent of cloistered Carmelites. Fr. Luna himself requested her admission to the Carmelite convent at Saragossa; and the community, by a secret vote, accepted the request. Why then, didn't she go?⁽⁷⁾

Perhaps the one who was most pleased by this change was her mother, María; it seemed that she would lose her daughter much less this way. Not surprising. Nothing is more difficult than complete generosity toward God.

On that September 30th, 1965, as Jacinta and Loli went down toward Cossío, the dispersal of Garabandal began. As they turned the bend in the road to cast a last look at their village, their minds could not fathom all the things that they were leaving behind.

* * *

Still in the village, keeping her suffering to herself, was the one who had looked forward with such longing to September 29th, the day set for her leaving to be a novice in the Discalced Carmelite Missionaries: Conchita.

7. It appears that the decision that stopped Jacinta from entering into the Carmelite convent came from her father Simón. The good man was categorically opposed at the final hour, believing that it was a barbarous thing for his 16 year old daughter—who had never left her house or had the least experience with the world and life—to forever commit herself like this in something so difficult.

Actually Jacinta was not sure of her vocation. During the time of the ecstasies, whenever she had talked about, or asked about his particular thing, the Virgin had never given her a definite answer.

Her mother, who had given her consent originally, later changed her mind, refusing to allow her daughter to leave before . . . Before what?

It had been mentioned to Aniceta about the possibility and feasibility of Conchita going to Rome, to be interviewed by the highest hierarchy of the Church, and to see perhaps, if it were possible, the Holy Father himself. And Aniceta came to the conclusion that this had to be done before anything else, and the sooner the better; therefore, before the girl shut herself in the convent. In August, it had seemed a simple matter to finish the trip before the middle of September; and thinking along that line, she gave her consent to Conchita to leave for the convent on the feast of St. Michael. But complications delayed things.

Fr. Laffineur wrote:

«On September 8th at Torrelavega, Conchita announced to me her departure for the convent of the missionary sisters of the Discalced Carmelites at Pamplona. The departure should have taken place on the 29th of that month. During the same period Loli and Jacinta were to leave for the province of Saragossa to stay with the Sisters of Charity.»

Why was the end of September chosen? Because Conchita and her mother had good reason to believe that their voyage to Italy would have taken place well before the date fixed for the inauguration of the Council's last session, that is to say, before September 14th. But complications developed and after September 29th the two of them had to pass some extremely difficult months.»

Why did complications arise? Fr. Luna undertook *against wind and sea*, as a true man from Aragon, to bring Conchita to Rome, in accordance with Cardinal Ottaviani who then was still the head of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office. But the chancery at Santander, as soon as it learned of the project, deployed all its connections in Rome and outside of Rome to crush the matter. The chancery must have been afraid of something.

Let us see how Fr. Luna himself recounts this in the introduction of a book he wrote about another site of apparitions:

«In September we got our passports in order. However . . .

Toward the end of August, I offered my services to the new Bishop of Santander, Bishop Puchol, so as to put him in direct contact with the girls. He told me that he didn't consider it necessary, or even wise, to know them.⁽⁸⁾ He assured me that he was already well informed, and he confided to me his plan: to put a young priest⁽⁹⁾ in charge of the village and "*the girls should remain there.*"

8. Why would Bishop Puchol need to know the girls and thoroughly study the matter if he were fully set on the *progressivist* theory that apparitions and revelations are superfluous for the Church?

Shortly after his «Nota» of Sunday March 18th, 1967 (which was given the maximum publicity, even television exposure), by which he thought to definitely bury Garabandal, Bishop Puchol went up to the village to see if he could effectively and smoothly liquidate it.

He was eminently educated and eloquent. It was a Sunday and the entire village attended his Mass. It was expected that his sermon would clarify the matters that were preoccupying everyone. But the bishop avoided the main subject, and all had the impression that he had limited himself to *talking about the Gospel*. Nevertheless Aniceta, who was very attentive and watchful not to miss anything, caught this, which later she confided to me as absolutely sure: The bishop at one time during his speech, lowering his voice in an off-hand remark, came out with this: *We know that after what Jesus Christ brought, there can be no more apparitions or revelations.*

A gross imbecility, much repeated today, which gives us an idea of the bishop's poor theological background. It is obvious that this is not in communion with the Supreme Magisterium which has told us: "From heaven Christ always looks with great affection at His spouse (*the Church*) exiled in this world, and when He sees it in danger, either through Himself, or through the means of His angels, or through the intercession of the one whom we call *Help of the Christians*, or through other intercessors, takes it away from the tempest waves . . . and consoles it with that peace which surpasses all knowledge."

(*Enc. Mystici Corporis Christi*, 1943)

9. The priest assigned was Father José Olano, who had recently finished his seminary studies. Thus a novice priest was sent to Garabandal, a man almost without experience, as if nothing were happening there, and as if it were simply a parish without special problems.

But if the new priest came without proper pastoral experience; he came well provided with *instructions*. It did not take long for the effects of the instructions to show themselves.

It seems that the bishop's viewpoint was this: The problem of Garabandal would resolve itself if the girls and the villagers were indoctrinated (*brain-washed*), and the visitors were treated with a firm hand. The new priest came with this program.

A remark might be made about the way he said goodbye to his parishioners from the valley of Polaciones before going to Garabandal. A man from the town who was present at his farewell Mass on that Sunday noted the things that were said and the remarks made by Fr. José Olano in his sermon. After the Mass, Father's friends from the place joked with him about the *stories about Garabandal that were going to end soon.*

I answered that it seemed an excellent idea to send a well-chosen priest; but with regard to the girls, neither he nor I had authority to determine whether or not they were to stay. Aniceta had already authorized the admission of her daughter at Pamplona, and the parents of Loli and Jacinta had also consented for them to leave for Borja.

—*In writing?*

—*Yes, Your Excellency. Yes, in writing. I have signed authorizations.*

I have always kept my principle of respecting the hierarchy, but also I have required respect in return. I have conscientiously been courteous before whoever represents God; but not weak.

On that same day, I said to Bishop Vicente: *I don't want to do things behind your back. For that reason I offered to bring the girls to you. Today I'm going to tell you a secret: A person of high station is working in Rome for the girls to be received by the Pope.* The bishop smiled broadly, as if dubious . . . We were alone, seated in a room on the first floor of the seminary at Santander. I then took two telegrams out of my briefcase, and unfolded them for him to see.

—*Are you from Aragon?*

—*From Saragossa, Your Excellency!*

The news got out and the departure was delayed . . . until, in the middle of December, I received a telephone call from Santander, announcing the arrival of a person from Rome with a letter from Cardinal Ottaviani that read: *With the permission of the bishop, or without it, bring the girls.*

I asked the person who spoke to me to take the letter to be read secretly and personally by the bishop. But he lacked the patience and enthusiasm not to be overcome by the defenses at the bishop's door! And my envoy didn't have sufficient rank; the copy of the letter remained in the hands of the vicar general.⁽¹⁰⁾ On my

10. Bishop Puchol had brought with him to Santander, as his vicar general, a priest from Navarra, also a late vocation and a man rather arbitrary in his actions: Bishop Javier Azagra. Later he was auxiliary bishop of Cartagena-Murcia.



“Conchita felt the devil present around her.”

return from Rome in the winter of 1966, when I was with the bishop, he assured me that he hadn't received it. I think he was sincere.»

At this time we might make some comments about the chancery officials at Santander who so often called for *the submission owed to the hierarchy* in order to strangle Garabandal, but who went to such efforts so that the cause would not come directly to the hierarchy, to which they should be as submissive as we.

From this can be more easily understood what Fr. Laffineur wrote:

«Certain adversaries of Garabandal, fearing the worst for themselves, made it impossible for Conchita to be received at Rome. Others, in a less high position, profited by the new situation to calumniate Conchita: *The balloon has burst. Conchita wears short skirts and listens to the radio; the vocation is gone. Garabandal is finished.*



“secret suffering”

During this time, Conchita felt the devil present around her. She was subject to interior sufferings which only the most contemplative souls know. She wrote about her secret sufferings to priests whom she trusted, and prayed to obtain permission from her mother to leave for Pamplona immediately.

Apparently the young girl, although accustomed to submitting everything to the Virgin, had not immediately understood the importance of her trip to Italy. Or else she could have thought, logically, that if this trip would take place one day, it could begin just as well from Pamplona as from Garabandal.

But Aniceta was watching. And Aniceta has a will of steel. She was convinced of the necessity and imminence of the visit to Rome and no person in the world could make her yield . . .»

(*L'Etoile dans la Montagne*)



“will of steel”

So Conchita was not to be separated from her side until she had completed her mission at Rome.

But this mission would not be accomplished until the winter of the following year, 1966. And then the final period would be placed on the long and wondrous story that had begun on June 18th, 1961 at Garabandal.

* * *

On October 30th—the last Saturday of the month of the rosary—in that painful autumn of 1965, Conchita had another encounter from above. She had gone to church to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament,⁽¹¹⁾ and soon she felt a communication from the Virgin inside her, which not only consoled her in what she was suffering by not being able to go to the convent, but also notified her of a future meeting.

11. «I found Conchita very happy. In our conversation she mentioned that during the final days of October, when she was making her usual visit in the church to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, she had a locution in which the Virgin told her that *she should go up to the Pines on November 13th and should bring her religious articles that she had . . .*» (Letter of Dr. Ortiz to Fr. Ramón Andreu, dated December 13th, 1965.)



“Go to the Pines, and there you will see me.”

At the time Conchita wrote several letters; one of these was to a Mexican priest, Father Gustavo Morelos, dated November 8th:

«Dear Father Morelos:

You see, without receiving your reply, I'm writing you again. And it is to say that I received a locution from the Virgin and she told me: *On Saturday, November 13th, go to the Pines, and there you will see me. And bring many religious articles to me, and I will kiss them all, so that you can distribute them. My son will perform prodigies by means of them.*

Pray very much for me, so that I may soon enter the convent and be good. In union of prayer.»

The prediction was fulfilled.

The description of what occurred would be better left to Conchita herself:⁽¹²⁾

«It was a special apparition to kiss religious objects, later to distribute them, since they have a great importance.

I had a great desire for Saturday, November 13th, to come so I could see again the ones who had sown in me the happiness of God: The Virgin and the Infant Jesus.

It was raining; but it didn't matter to me that I was going up to the Pines in the rain.»

Describing this, here is what Dr. Ortiz wrote Fr. Ramón in a letter on December 13th:

«On our last trip to Garabandal, Sunday, December 5th, I was able to learn that Conchita actually had an ecstasy at the Pines on November 13th. As an interesting fact, I have to say that, although Olguita (*her neighbor*) was in her company, she later left her out of curiosity to go see an accident that had happened to a truck in La Jaraiz. This accident was the main attraction for the village.⁽¹³⁾ On that Saturday, when it was raining the most, Conchita left the people in her kitchen and went up alone to the Pines.»

Continuing with the report of the visionary:

«I brought many rosaries that had recently been given to me⁽¹⁴⁾ to distribute. As the Virgin had told me, I brought them for her to kiss.

Going up alone to the Pines—very sorry for my faults—I was saying to myself that in the future I would not fall into them, since I was ashamed to present myself like this before the Mother of God, whom my faults make suffer so much. And I believe that mine are the greatest, since I have seen her.

12. We are accurately giving the text that seems the best, and which differs only in very small matters from others that were also written by Conchita.

13. Apparently at that time in Garabandal a truck accident attracted more attention, by its unusualness, than the girl's ecstasy.

14. We know of one man from France on a pilgrimage in Lourdes who got the idea, or inspiration, to send Conchita 100 rosaries of five decades and four of 15. The package arrived in time for November 13th.



“a special apparition to kiss religious objects”



“a very sweet voice—clearly the Virgin’s!”

When I came to the Pines, I started taking out the rosaries that I was carrying. And while I was taking them out, I heard a very sweet voice — clearly the Virgin’s! — easily distinguished from all others, calling me by my name. And I answered: *What?*

And then I saw her with the Infant Jesus in her arms. She came dressed as usual and was smiling broadly.

And I said to her, *I have come to bring the rosaries so that you can kiss them.*

And she said to me, *I see that.*

I had a Chiclet in my mouth, although I did not chew it after I saw her, but stuck it against my cheek.

And she told me, *Conchita, why don’t you give up your Chiclet and offer it as a sacrifice for the glory of my Son?*⁽¹⁵⁾

Ashamed, I took it out of my mouth and threw it on the ground.

Then she said to me, *Do you remember what I told you on your feastday, that you would suffer much on the earth. Well, I am telling it to you again. But have confidence in us and offer everything to our hearts for the good of your brothers; that way you will feel us near to you.*

15. The Virgin obviously did not condemn the use of the Chiclet as a fault. She simply invited Conchita—so devoted to her— to fulfill in this way *the making of small sacrifices.*



“I come for all my children.”

And I said to her, *Oh, Our Mother, how unworthy I am of so many graces that you’ve given me! And still you come to me today, to lighten the little cross that I have now.*

—*Conchita, I do not come only for you. I come for all my children, with the desire of bringing them to our hearts.*

Give me all the things that you have brought so that I may kiss them.

And I gave them to her. I was also carrying a crucifix with me, and she kissed it and said to me, *Put it in the hands of the Child Jesus.* And so I did. He didn’t say anything to me.

I spoke to the Virgin, *I will carry this cross with me to the convent,* but she didn’t say anything to me either.

After kissing everything, she said to me, *By the kiss that I have put on these articles, my Son will use them to perform prodigies. Distribute them.* And I thought about doing this.



"Tell me about my children!"

After that, she asked me to tell her the petitions that other people had given to me; and I did this.

She continued: *Tell me, Conchita. Tell me about my children! I hold them all under my mantle.*

And I said to her: *It's very small, it won't hold all of them.* And she smiled.

—*Conchita, do you know why I did not come personally on June 18th to give the message for the world? Because it hurt me to say those things. But they had to be said, for your own good; and if you accomplish the message, it will be for the glory of God. I love you very much, and desire your salvation, to reunite you here in heaven around the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. You, Conchita, will you respond to us?*

—If I were always seeing you, then it would be yes. But if not, I don't know, since I'm very bad.

—*Do all that you can on your part; and we will help you, and also my daughters, Loli, Jacinta and Mari Cruz.*



"always with you, and with all my children."

It seemed that she was with me a very short time. She told me also:

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

She also said to me:

Conchita, you should visit my Son in the tabernacle more. Why do you let yourself be carried away by slothfulness so as not to visit Him? He is there, waiting for you day and night.

As I have said before, it was raining very much, and the Virgin and the Child Jesus didn't get wet. When I was seeing them, I didn't know that it was raining; but afterwards, when I didn't see them, I was soaking wet.

I also said to the Virgin: *Oh, how happy I am when I see you. Why don't you take me with you now?*

—*Remember what I told you on your feast-day: When presenting yourself before God, you have to show your hands full of works done by you for your brothers and for the glory of God. Now, your hands are empty.*

Nothing more. The joyous time had passed in which I was with my best friend and Mother in

heaven, and with the Child Jesus. I have stopped seeing Them, but I haven't stopped feeling Them.

Again They have left in my soul a peace, a joy and a desire to conquer my faults and to love Them with all my strength!

Formerly, the Virgin told me that Jesus wasn't sending the Chastisement to torment us, but to help us, and reprimand us for not paying attention. He is sending us the Warning to purify us before the Miracle, in which He will clearly show the love that He holds for us. Because of this He wants us to accomplish the message.»

* * *

That was the episode of Saturday, November 13th, 1965 at Garabandal. The final chapter in an unparalleled story, which is still too recent to be evaluated with sufficient perspective.

We are coming to the ending, and endings are tinged with sadness.

As she said to Conchita, «*This is the last time you will see me here*», the Virgin's voice had an ineffable sweetness.

What had begun four years previously with a blast of thunder on a sunlit day in June was coming to an end now, without fanfare, on a dismal overcast day in November.

«It was raining . . . I went up alone . . . And the Virgin said to me . . .»

There would be no more meetings at the scene where so many had taken place.

Yes, it was all over. Farewell in the rain. Why do wonderful things pass so swiftly?

When Conchita returned to herself and lifted her knees off the damp ground, when she became aware that she was alone beneath the Pines in the rain, she herself could not say if the drops of water running down her cheeks were raindrops that the clouds were weeping for an unhappy world, or tears that she was crying because she would never again see the one she had seen so often.

Certainly the girl was in no hurry to go down from the Pines after the vision was over. Her state

of mind would not allow it. She had to remain there a while, alone with her feelings.

Sadly and poignantly, she arranged and put back all the rosaries distinguished by Our Lady's kiss. Then she took a few slow, sad steps toward the crest of the ledge on which the nine solitary pine trees have their roots, and near the cliff edge she paused. There, partially hidden in the mist and rain was the unforgettable panorama: the mountainpeaks, the steep slopes, the winding valleys, the woods and meadows with their lonely cabins; and nearer, at her feet, the village: her village of San Sebastián de Garabandal. Her village, which during those unforgettable years, seemed to have been the Virgin's village! Here Her merciful and smiling footsteps had passed; Here she had visited her poor and humble houses, her winding streets, her innumerable streetcorners, her church that knew her so intimately, her cemetery, that gathered all for the last rest.

How the Virgin had immersed herself in that village. As a Mother, for whom nothing about her children lacked interest. «*She was interested in everything*»—Conchita remembered with tears in her eyes—«*even in our cows.*»

Well could it be said that this was the most beautiful story of mankind since the time of Christ: the second life of the Blessed Virgin on earth; and words alone cannot adequately thank her for it.

After the farewell in the rain, *all this* has passed into history.

But of *all this*, now history, there forever remains something ineffably new and eternal here, that those will find who come with faith, and from which they can draw strength to uphold the highest hopes and the greatest love.

*This is the last time
you will see me here.*

*But I will be always with you,
And with all my children.*

Of all the words said at Garabandal, these are the last and the best.



EPILOGUE

Finally coming to the end of this long endeavor, I feel a mixture of joy and liberation. Joy, in thinking that I have done a good work. Liberation, in not having the pressure to finish this work quickly.

After great effort and innumerable hours of work, revising papers and putting in order the mountains of information, it seems that I have succeeded in reconstructing the events and the climate of Garabandal during the *apparitions*, so that I can offer its first history to persons of good will.

* * *

The *history* of Garabandal, as it concerns the seers and those around them, has not been, nor is it now, completely *angelic* like Lourdes and Fatima.

Because of this, I find Garabandal to be more in measure with the History of Salvation, more in line with the Church itself, where the most beautiful and exalted interventions of God have been continually intermixed with lamentable and repeated human miseries, with the results that we know.

The full picture of Garabandal is disconcerting: on the one hand it offers abundant proofs so that many might find *its truth*, and on the other hand, it leaves motives for others to remain in their doubt and disbelief.

I believe in the supernatural authenticity of Garabandal, taken as a whole. But not everything offers the same guarantee of truth.

A descending scale of credibility can be noticed:

1) *The facts*—the phenomena that were definite facts and could be proven and were proven from observation by irrefragable witnesses.

2) *The joint statements*—the statements or declarations in which the visionaries agreed.

3) *The individual statements*—the statements or predictions due to one visionary alone.

In the last case, it is necessary to proceed with great caution and discretion; since, unfortunately, not all—or even a single one—of the seers have

shown themselves to be completely trustworthy.

* * *

It was seen that on Saturday, November 13th, 1965, the course of the phenomena closed at Garabandal. From that date, nothing has occurred.

But here a question comes up: *Since November 13th, has Garabandal completely ended?*

Or does it remain only temporarily interrupted?

My personal impression is that a simple intermission is taking place, since the evidence shows that Garabandal had not concluded. An interlude has come, as in a dramatic play, that for some purpose leaves things abruptly interrupted, suspended . . .

Garabandal is an event of enormous proportion, which is unfolding in three stages:

● The first stage, with a personal and local imprint: the time of marvels and astounding communications; the time already experienced, which ended on November 13th.

● A second stage, of intermission, with matters suspended: a period of pruning and purification. This is what we are experiencing now, with its disillusion, expectations, falling away.

● A third stage, which we await, that will bring to light many things and fulfill the great prophecies of universal reach: the Warning, the Miracle, the Chastisement.

* * *

It seems beyond doubt that what really happened at Garabandal, what we should see across the vast maze of detail, is a very careful intervention by God to aid us in these difficult hours for the Church and the world.

With such a purpose, God has placed in front of us:

● A new *Marian Epiphany*.

● A call for greater *devotion to the Eucharist*.

- A prediction of approaching *eschatological times*.

Why the first? Because it could well be that Mary is our last recourse for salvation . . . In Garabandal, she has manifested herself to us—she has given herself—above all, as *Our Mother*.

Why the second? Because the reality of the actual presence of the Lord among us is the last thing that we can allow to be neglected in the Church. And this is precisely what has started to happen, and what is continuing to happen.

Why the third? Because the last times can be already at the door. We should not be oblivious or forgetful of what we repeat in the Credo: *And He will come again in glory*, since without the inflaming emotions of hope, religion will not keep burning in the hearts of men.

* * *

Yes, we cannot put the final conclusion out of our minds.

“The biblical writings revolve around a theological drama that unfolds throughout history and reflects the plan of salvation from a God Who constantly seeks out mankind to transform it. From

1. One last detail in this history that appears to be unending . . . Recently residing in the United States, Loli had been living the meaning of the locution of 1965 *«In the future, if I do not appear to you again, it is that your hour has come to suffer.»* In October of 1977 she had a few happy vacation days during a brief stay in Spain in her home country of Santander. María Herrero de Gallardo spent some time with her and wrote me on the 30th of that October:

«The other day, while taking food to Loli that she liked very much and hadn't tasted for years, she told me very interesting things: about the Pope . . . about Adam (that we didn't descend from a monkey, or by evolution, or from any other animal, but from a perfect man, Adam). She told us about a *dream* that she had recently: the devil, horrible, trying to conquer the world . . . As Loli cried out, calling to St. Michael, he appeared dressed as a warrior, not as the girl had seen him in Garabandal. He waved a great sword and began battle against Satan . . . In connection with this, she told us how the devil, during the apparitions, had twice burned part of the scapulars that they were wearing . . .»

What believer in God could doubt the reality of the devil and his world of darkness? And he is now laboring as never before; not just for parital victory, but to dominate completely this world in which God has so loved us, his human creatures.

It is the great hour for the leader of the celestial army. (Apoc. 12:7-8) *Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle . . .*

the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of the Apocalypse can be seen the silent struggle by forces fighting for the hearts of men. Man, wrongly exercising his free will and trying to assert his autonomy, chooses to live separated from God. Besides this, the power of evil seems to dominate humanity, seeking to draw it from its natural orbit: the God of Creation, Who directs the world and the march of history.”

(M. García Cordero, *Biblical Dilemmas*)

Eschatology is the word used to refer to the final act in the great drama of our salvation.

And it might be asked if Garabandal does not have an eschatological purpose.

There are many things in it that put before us the *last times* and alert us to them:

- The presence and prominent activity of the Archangel St. Michael, who appears in the Apocalypse as the Angel of the last combat.⁽¹⁾

- The firm declaration in the message of June 18th, 1965: *You are in the last warnings*.

- The trilogy of the Warning—the Miracle—the Chastisement, whose characteristics do not permit them to be inserted as ordinary pages in the works of God.

- The repeated, extremely compromising affirmation that *there remain only three Popes*, and then *the end of the times*.

Possibly, Garabandal has come to repeat to us, Christians of these last times, what the Christians of the early times said for greeting and encouragement: *Maran Atha! The Lord returns!*

We await.

And as the hour draws near for the realization of Garabandal, let us repeat without ceasing what is said on the feast of Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace:

On our knees, let us adore
Christ the Savior
Who wants all good things
to come to us **through Mary.**

Hay que hacer muchos sacrificios mucha penitencia y hay que visitar mucho al Santisimo pero antes tenemos que ser muy buenos y si no lo hacemos nos vendra un castigo. Ya se esta llenando la copa y sino cambiamos nos vendra un castigo muy grande.

Conchita Gonzalez

Marie Valour Mason
Jacinta Gonzalez Gonzalez
Maria Cruz Gonzalez



First Message

October 18, 1961



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

It is necessary to visit
the Blessed Sacrament
very much.

But first we must be very good.

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



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

The Virgin told us:
That we do not expect the Chastisement;
That without expecting it, it will come;
Since the world has not changed.
And she has already told us twice;
And we do not pay attention to her,
Since the world is getting worse.
And it should change very much.
And it has not changed at all.
Prepare yourself. Confess,
Because the Chastisement will come soon.
And the world continues the same . . .
I tell you this:
That the world continues the same.
How unfortunate that it does not change!
Soon will come a very great Chastisement,
If it does not change.

María Dolores Mazón
Jacinta González

The Virgin has told us:

That the world continues the same, that it has not changed at all;

That few will see God; so few they are, that it is causing the Virgin great sorrow.

How unfortunate that the world does not change!

The Virgin has told us that the Chastisement is coming.

As the world is not changing, the cup is filling up.

How sorrowful is the Virgin, although she does not allow us to see it.

Since the Virgin loves us so much, she suffers alone, since she is so good.

Everyone be good, so that the Virgin will be happy!

She has told us that those who are good should pray for those who are evil.

Yes, we should pray to God for the world, for those who do not know Him.

Be good, be very good.

María Dolores Mazón, 13 years

Jacinta González, 13 years

El mensaje que la Santísima Virgen ha dado al mundo por la intercesión del ángel San Miguel!

El Ángel ha dicho: Como uno se ha cumplido y uno se ha hecho conocer al mundo mi mensaje del 18 de Octubre, os dice que este es el último.

Antes la Copa estaba llenando ahora está revesando.

Los sacerdotes van muchos por el camino de la perdición y con ellos llevan a muchas más almas

La Eucaristía cada vez se da menos importante

Debemos evitar la ira de Dios sobre nosotros, con nuestros esfuerzos.

Si le pedis perdón con vuestras almas sinceras, Él os perdonará

Oya, nuestra Madre, por intercesión del Ángel San Miguel, os

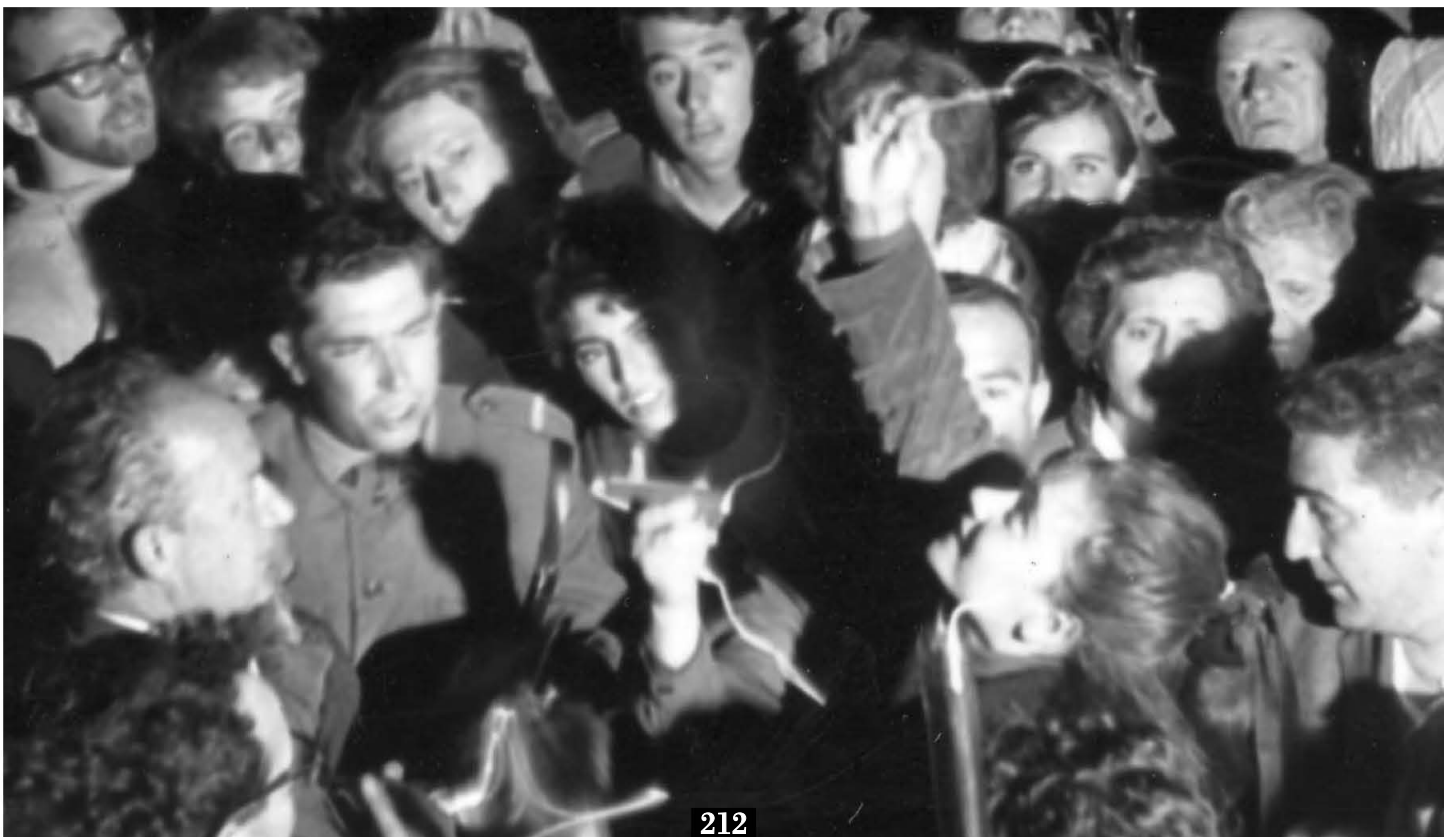
quiero decir que os enseñéis, Oya estais en los últimos años.

os quiero mucho y no quiero vuestra condenación.

Pedidlo sinceramente, y Nosotros, os lo daremos.

Deveis sacrificaros más. Pensad en la Pasión de Jesús

Conchita González 18-VI-1965



Second Message

June 18, 1965

The message that the Most Holy Virgin has given to the world through the intercession of the Angel St. Michael.

The Angel said:

- As my message of October 18 has not been fulfilled, and has not been made known to the world, I tell you that this is the last.
- Before, the cup was filling up; now it is overflowing.
- The PRIESTS: Many are on the road to perdition, and with them they are taking many more souls.
- The EUCHARIST: It is being given less and less importance.
- With your own efforts, you should avoid the wrath of the Good God.
- If you ask pardon with a sincere heart, He will forgive you.
- I, your Mother, through the intercession of the Archangel St. Michael, want to tell you to amend your lives.
- You are in the last warnings!
- I love you very much and do not want your condemnation.
- Ask us sincerely, and we will give what you ask.
- You should sacrifice yourself more.
- Think of the passion of Jesus.

Conchita González June 18, 1965



Star of Gold

Three volumes back, this book began with pictures of the 70,000 people who saw the miracle of the sun at the last apparition in Fatima. It was the apparition in which Saint Joseph appeared in red, the sign of love, holding the Child Jesus and blessing the world, as depicted on the book's cover.

The 5,000 spectators present for the last message at Garabandal saw something in the sky too, but not related to the Virgin. She was not there, as she later told Conchita. And in the heavens, the Virgin's symbol—the moon—could not be seen.

What the people did see was a star that rose up from Conchita's house and disappeared over the Pines. And following this, they saw another star, *gold in color, more brilliant than the first* shoot up, trace a wide circle and return to its starting point, remaining as the other star disappeared.

What was the significance of the two stars? The one that rose up from Conchita's house obviously pertained to St. Michael who was appearing to Conchita. And the other golden star that remained?

If the greater brilliance of the second star indicated the presence of someone greater than St. Michael, then it marked the presence of the only one whom God made greater: St. Joseph. Was St. Joseph present again at the last message as Loli said he was at the first?

As almost all the disciples and apostles fall away from Garabandal according to the Virgin's prophecy . . . as its enemies seek to bury it . . . let the few who will stay at the foot of the Pines keep their eyes fixed in hope on the Star of Gold that remained, and know that there will be a resurrection, and a magnificent ending for Garabandal. For God has made the magnificent ending the trademark of Saint Joseph.

This book remains unfinished, entrusted into St. Joseph's hands. One day he will compose its great final chapter, entitled *The Miracle*. He will replace these last pages with pictures of the Miracle like the ones with which the book began. He will fashion for Garabandal a magnificent ending.

The Miracle is for the future; now God sends us the Star of Gold.

Walter Timothy Co 1972

