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After Great Hopes Great Disillusions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



“They began—but backwards—the most difficult descent.”

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

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

There were about 50 spectators on that day,

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

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

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

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

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

This statement furnishes material for reflection and comment . . .



“He will see on October 18th.”

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

Something Great Is On Its Way . . .

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

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

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

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

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

Besides, special things were happening . . .

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

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

Response (learned later): A broad and benvolent smile from the Blessed Virgin.

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

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

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

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



“How beautiful is the miracle!”

future miracle that would convince everyone . . .

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Doctor Ortiz noted three details that attracted his attention:

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

6. Antiphon from the first Vespers of the feastday.

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

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



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

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

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

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

looking at him, and continued onwards.

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

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

— *That one, the one in the middle.*

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

— *The girl says that you should sit.*

— *Who? . . . Me?*

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

— *But . . . me?*

— *Yes, you!*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— *I was never concerned about counting them.*

— *Well you should do it.*

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

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

Awaiting the Great Day

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

Nevertheless, the phenomena continued daily.⁽⁹⁾

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

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

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

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

And we saw something like fire in the clouds.

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

When it was over, the Virgin appeared to us.

And we asked her what that thing was.

And she said that she came in it.

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

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

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

that no one was able to take away from her.

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

10. Luke 21: 11, 25.

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

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

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

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

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

beneath the Virgin's feet.

Several people saw this.

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

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

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

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

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



“Fire in the clouds.”



“We saw the Virgin throw down a star.”

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

— *Why did you scream?*

— Because we saw the Virgin throw down a star.

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

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

Father Valentín mentions this phenomena in his notes:

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

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

sarily had to leave the people very impressed.

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

Anticipating the day, people started to come.

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

12. This man describes himself like this:

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

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

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

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



“We came to San Sebastián de Garabandal.”

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

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

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

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

We retired to the house where we had lodging

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Jacinta

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

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

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

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

It seems that took away Máximo's indifference.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We have the following information about this from Father Andreu.

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

— *What are you doing Father?*

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

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

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

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

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

What strange things happen in this village!

Continuing now with Mr. Förschler's description:

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

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

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



Jacinta told the priest he was cured.

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

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

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

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



Loli holds up article to be kissed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— *Father X, what has happened?*

— *Let me alone, let me alone.*

Finally he confessed:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Suspense Begins to Mount

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

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

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

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

One of the most uneasy of those in the village at

20. Juan A. Seco reported:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



“pouring rain throughout the province”

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

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

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

Before the light of dawn could filter through the

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

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

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

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

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



The village. . . October 18, 1961

converted the road upwards into a quagmire.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Waiting for Heaven

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

— Oh! Then you know the message?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Remove from us every stain of error and corruption.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

H Hour

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

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

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



“You can tell the people on the 18th of October.”

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

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

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

And she told it to us.

And it is the following . . .

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Let us hear the witness again:

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

Later the fragile silhouettes of the four girls⁽³⁰⁾

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

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

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

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

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



The four girls revealed the message on October 13th.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

«I distinguished clearly» — said María Her-

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



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

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

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

But first we must be very good.

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

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



A Call to Salvation

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

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

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

God does not communicate with man ordinarily

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



It is necessary to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

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

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

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

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

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



But first we must be very good.

How well this is known.

How well it is forgotten!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Acts 17: 30-31)

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Darkness Descends Upon Many Minds

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

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

No one plays games with the Almighty.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Yes, I know. Do you know too?

— *Certainly. The Virgin told me.*

— When?

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

— Well, tell us who it is.

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

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

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

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

I was astounded, staring at the girl.

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

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

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

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

— Can I be with Conchita?

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

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

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

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

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

— And what did she say?

— *I don't know what I can say.*

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



Conchita knew the priest's secret thoughts.

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

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

As anyone might surmise, I was speechless.

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



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

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

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

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

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

missed something that would have been marvelous to see.

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

Conchita recorded the episode:

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

called the Cuadro, the Virgin appeared to us.

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

And I was very surprised.

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

Returning now to the report of María Herrero:

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

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



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



“No one believes us anymore.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

* * * * *

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

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

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

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

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