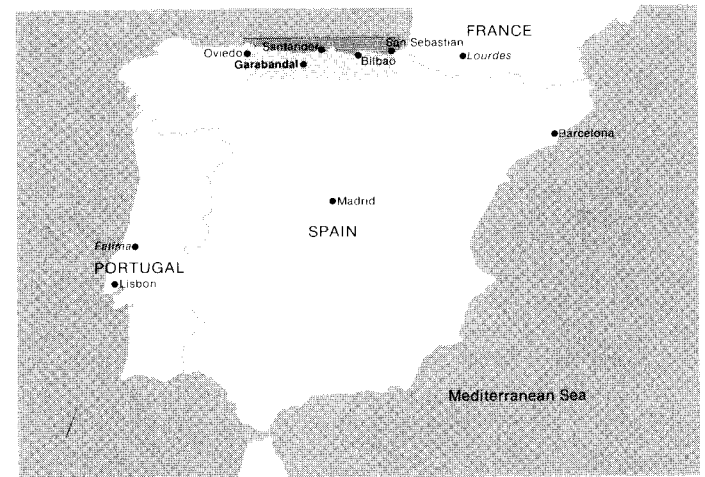
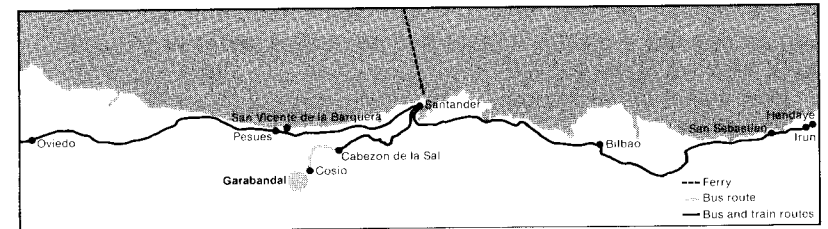




Chapter 1 **From Irun to Garabandal**

Crossing the Spanish border at Irun, the traveler is rather surprised by the very extended harbor of San Sebastian which, at first sight, makes the surroundings rather unattractive. But how delightful when he views the coast leading from San Sebastian to Santander through Bilbao.

This very modern city would nevertheless be of no interest to the pilgrim on his way to a humble village lost in the mountains, beyond Torrelavega. Once he leaves this town, he passes through a number of villages along the Oviedo road which he leaves either at Virgen de la Plata or at Cabezon to follow a steep and winding country road until . . . he reaches Cosio, where the mule's path—now improved since the apparitions—leads to Garabandal.



◀ Conchita with author, Fr. Materne Laffineur, in September, 1963.

Chapter 2

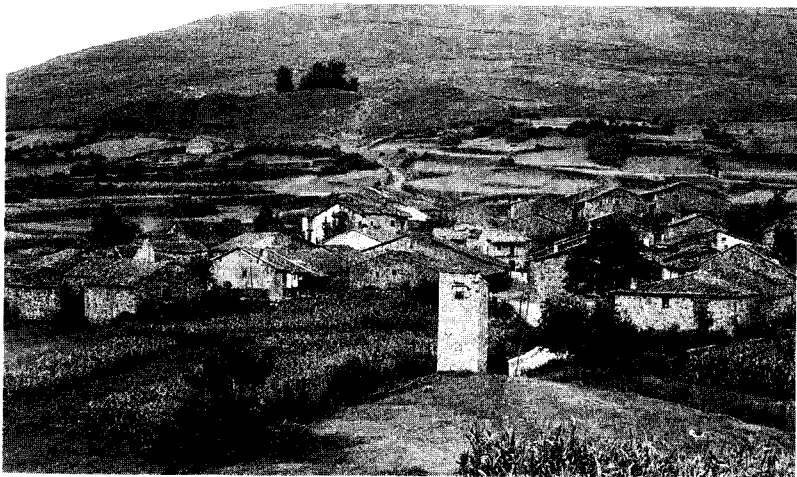
Garabandal Before the Apparitions

Garabandal is a humble little village that lies in the Cantabrian mountains, about 1630 feet up, some 35 miles southwest of Santander. Each day, several of the women set out with their donkeys on the rough path that leads to Cosio in order to get the necessary supplies. It is out of the question for anyone to ride a bicycle, for, according to a road surveyor we met at the village, it is the stoniest spot in all Spain.

The parish priest, Don Valentin, lives in the valley, in Cosio proper. On Sunday evenings, whenever possible, he goes to the village on horseback for a late Mass, preceded by a hurried hearing of the confessions of a few parishioners.

The doctor answers emergency calls on foot, but the peasants, strengthened by a hard life, are not concerned about their health; in fact, they are quite robust.

People and things remain simple and unspoiled. Of course, as in any other village, they may have their own little family quarrels and parish differences. In this extremely poor area, they also face difficult problems of survival, as people feed on corn, potatoes and milk from a small herd of sheep or goats. Those who cannot raise a pig, kill a goat,



San Sebastian de Garabandal, some 80 stone dwellings huddled together at the base of a small mountain.



The poverty of the village was evident.

and we were able to watch the making of sausages, black pudding, and chorizos (Spanish sausages with red peppers).

Young men who do not tend the herds on high pastures, leave the area for work in the cities. The young girls, after finishing school (at about 14 years of age) transport manure or the harvest on the backs of donkeys and climb each day to mountain pastures—which means several hours walk—to bring the midday meal to their fathers or brothers.

As in all rural areas, people get up early and, as is customary in Spain, they retire late at night. The evenings are spent in endless conversations and family life. Spaniards have only a few hours of sleep.

The people are healthy and religious, but with a peculiar touch of the anti-clerical. Every evening, the women, dressed in black, with kerchiefs or mantillas on their heads, go to church to say the rosary. The children run ahead, playing as they go, and a few men join them in church. They pray very rapidly, making little signs of the cross on the forehead, the lips and the chest, "to chase the devil." They do not mind the abundance of prayers, rosaries, litanies, stations of the cross, Paters and Aves, in groups of six, for this or that intention; they go through them all. At the end they say a few invocations in honor of Our Lady who did, in fact, appear on the mountain (*Nuestra Señora bien aparecida en la montaña*); a devotion that goes back to the seventeenth century and was particularly dear to the former Bishop of Santander, who passed away shortly before the apparitions began. Some even wonder whether this saintly old Bishop, very partial to Garabandal, might not have obtained, upon his arrival in heaven, that Our Lady select the mountains of his former diocese as the site of her apparitions.



The village church.

Spanish children, just like any other children, readily boast, tease and argue. They are cheerful, pure of heart and ingenuous; their faults are those common to all children of like ages.

The village has 300 inhabitants. There are two public schools, one for boys and one for girls, with less than 20 children in each. Religious instruction is given at school and supplemented at home. It appears rather rudimentary. One interesting fact: before the apparitions, the children had never heard of Lourdes or Fatima.

The church, rather poor, contains a few statues. St. Michael, dressed as a Roman soldier and crushing the dragon, is typical. The life-size statue of Our Lady next to the main altar, like the one of St. Michael, does not resemble the apparitions the children will describe to us later on.

In this setting, nothing on the eve of June 18, 1961, could foreshadow the strange events that would drastically change the life of this peaceful little village of San Sebastian of Garabandal.

Chapter 3

The Visionaries and Their Families

Let us pause for a moment and become better acquainted with the four children at the time the apparitions began.

The eldest, Conchita, just 12 years old, is a pretty brunette, full of life and zest, and the only daughter of a widow, Aniceta Gonzalez. She has three older brothers: Serafin, Aniceto and Miguel. The family owns a small herd on the mountain, tended by the two younger boys, while the eldest works in the mines in the Province of Leon.

They live in a small house at the very end of the village. The kitchen with its raised open fireplace is poorly furnished. It is there that we were to witness one of the child's most striking ecstasies.

Maria Dolores, called Loli, is the second of six children. Her father Ceferino Mazon is mayor of the village and its real authority in every respect. He keeps a small café which is the men's rendezvous. Loli, quiet, smiling, obedient, helps her mother and will later take full charge of Guadalupe, her baby sister. Loli is also 12 years old.

Jacinta is a charming and lovely little girl. Her parents are among

The four visionaries, reading from left, Conchita Gonzalez, Mari Cruz Gonzalez, Jacinta Gonzalez, and Mari Loli Mazon.



the poorest in the village and their home is particularly humble. Nevertheless, they are always very hospitable. The father, Simon, a hard-working man, is also known for his staunch faith. The mother, Maria Gonzalez, is charming like her daughter. Jacinta, also 12 years old, is shy and retiring. She is the most reserved of the four girls and perhaps the most profound.

The fourth girl, Mari Cruz, although a year younger, is just as tall as her companions. She is less outgoing than the others. Later she will have — at least apparently — the most profound, painful and least frequent ecstasies. After September 12, 1962, her face will show her deep sorrow at no longer seeing the Virgin.

Of average height and weight for their age, the four children are robust mountain girls. The doctors who examined and re-examined them agreed that they have no physical defects.

If we compare them to city children, we must realize that the development of their intellectual capacities is two or three years behind. There are so many things they do not know as yet, because they have never left their native village. Garabandal, of course, has neither television nor movie theatres.

Chapter 4

The Apparition of St. Michael

June 18, 1961, in San Sebastian de Garabandal, was a Sunday just like any other with Mass and Vespers in the crowded little church. There was no unnecessary manual work, of course. Resting in the shade, with the old folk sitting on their doorsteps, the older children smiled at each other as if they had met by chance. Some children in the charge of an older sister, danced together, while still others played hide-and-seek or marbles using little stones.

Then at dusk, four little girls disappeared without being noticed. Where did they go? To pick green apples from a tree growing beside a path leading up to "the pines." They went on a rather innocent plundering expedition. Here they were, laughing happily and digging their teeth into the far-from-ripe fruit on a day in June.

Little girls, silly little girls! Had you no thought of the forbidden fruit tree in the lost Paradise? Yes, of course they had, for suddenly they heard a noise as loud as it was unexpected! They looked up, astonished, gazing to the right and to the left. "It sounded like thunder," they cried. Then Conchita, realizing that their plundering was wrong, added, "What a very naughty thing we have done! The devil is pleased and our guardian angel is very sad."

"Then," they told us, "we started picking up stones from the pathway and throwing them as hard as we could to the left of us, where we thought the devil was." After throwing quite a lot of them they began playing marbles. Then they saw — the Angel! What an extraordinary story! It almost begins like the Bible!

Conchita was the first to see the angel and fell to her knees, strangely pale. She remained in a rapture, her hands together and murmuring, "Ah! Ah!" The others thought she was having a fit, and were frightened. They wanted to go and tell Conchita's mother when suddenly, looking in the same direction, they too caught sight of the angel and in their turn fell to their knees in ecstasy.

However the four of them recovered from the trance quite rapidly and ran off to hide behind the church, deeply moved and trembling in awe, ashamed of their pilfering but indefinably happy about their wonderful vision.

Their first reaction to the apparition is very normal; very frightened at first and most disturbed, with an uncontrollable desire to see the angel again, while at the same time their hearts are torn between admiration, fear and joy.



Statue of St. Michael in the village church of Garabandal.

They were soon to learn that this was St. Michael the Archangel, though (and this is significant), he did not look at all like the familiar statue of the centurion in helmet and armor in their little parish church.

"The Angel came wearing a long blue robe, hanging loose and without a seam. His wings were rosy-hued, large and very beautiful; his little face, neither round nor long. His nose was very beautiful; his eyes black and his skin dark. His hands were very finely shaped with well-trimmed nails, but his feet were not visible. He seemed to be about nine years old. So young, yet he gave an impression of invincible strength."

Such was the heavenly being who appeared to them on the evening of June 18, 1961, a Sunday never to be forgotten.

On the following day the angel did not appear, but they saw him again on June 20. And as at this time the neighbors were not yet taking any notice. Conchita noted in the diary that she began later on, and with exquisite simplicity: "On these two days there was no one else with us. There were just the five of us: the Angel, Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz and myself."

They saw the Angel again on several of the following days and in the presence of an ever-growing number of witnesses. On Saturday, June 24, he appeared with a mysterious sign beneath his feet bearing letters and Roman numerals, which they could not understand.

On June 24, some doctors were there who carried out many experiments during the ecstasies. Completely without sensation, while in rapture, the girls became aware of this only when the ecstasy was over. "It did not hurt us, but the marks remained," said Conchita.

During the next week, there were only three apparitions.

Then on Saturday, July 1, the Angel announced to them that the Blessed Virgin Mary would come the next day, Sunday, under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. They asked him the meaning of the writing on the sign but he replied, "Our Lady will tell you that herself."

Chapter 5

The Apparition of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

At last came the "happiest day of their lives," Sunday, July 2. Our Lady appeared to them at about six o'clock in the evening. Here we cannot do better than copy, literally, from the precious *Diario* (the diary written by Conchita the following year).

"At each side of her there stood an angel. One was St. Michael; we did not know the other but he was dressed in the same way; one would have said that they were twins.

Beside the angel on the right, on a level with Our Lady, we saw a very large eye, which seemed to us to be the Eye of God.

On that day we said a lot to Our Lady and she to us. We told her everything. We told her how we went to the fields for haymaking, that we were sunburnt, and that we had the grass stacked in heaps. She laughed as we were telling her so many things.

We recited the rosary, looking at her at the same time. She recited it with us to teach us how to say it properly.

Just as we finished, she said that she was going away. We told her that she ought to stay just a little longer, for she had spent so little time with us. She laughed and told us she would come again on Monday. When she went away it made us very sad.

After she had gone people came to kiss us and ask us what she had said. Some did not believe in it, in her having come, because we had talked about so many things. But the majority did believe in the Virgin because, they said, she is like a mother whom her daughter has not seen for a long time. In such a case the daughter tells all. With greater reason for us, who had never seen her; and more so because she was our heavenly Mother.

Thus ended Sunday, July 2, a very happy day because we had seen for the first time the Virgin who can always be with us since we love her even without seeing her.

Chapter 6

Description of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Here is the description of the apparition, just as Conchita tries to portray it in her diary:

Our Lady comes wearing a white robe and blue cloak. She has a crown of golden stars. Her feet are not visible. Her hands are slender with a scapular on her right wrist. The scapular is reddish-brown. Her hair is long, wavy and dark brown, parted in the middle. Her face is long, her nose is long and slender and her mouth is delicate and very beautiful; her lips are just a little bit full. Her complexion is quite dark but lighter than the Angel's. Her voice is different from the Angel's and it is a very beautiful voice, very unusual. I cannot explain it. There is no woman who is like Our Lady, either in voice or in any way at all.

Sometimes she carries the Child Jesus in her arms. He is quite tiny, as tiny as a newborn baby. He has a round face and appears to have the same complexion as Our Lady, with a sweet little mouth. His blonde hair is rather long. His hands are very small and He is dressed in a sort of sky-blue tunic. Our Lady seems to be about 18 years old.

Do not be surprised; it is really Our Lady of Mount Carmel who is described. On making inquiries we found that when she appeared to the Carmelite, Simon Stock, in 1251, she was indeed wearing a white robe and blue cloak. It was in comparatively recent times that she was portrayed as wearing the brown habit worn by her sons and daughters of Carmel today. Besides, to make the matter clear, Conchita quite definitely said that the scapular was brown.

Talking about the scapular, the children were surprised to see on one side of it a mountain which they could not understand at all. In fact, it is the custom in Spain to talk of the "Virgin of Carmel," and not, as in France, of "Our Lady of Mount Carmel."

It was only in November, 1962, that we had the pleasure of giving the children the real meaning of this mountain. On that day, too, Conchita described the shape of the scapular worn on Our Lady's wrist; it is more like the maniple worn by the priest at Mass than the ordinary scapular that we know.



Chapter 7

The Message

On July 3, 1961, Our Lady came again as she did also on the fourth when she agreed to explain the enigmatic notice carried by the angel. It contained the first letters of an important message which Our Lady ordered the children to make known, and the date of its announcement which was not to be until the following eighteenth of October (1961). Here is the message:

Many sacrifices must be made and much penance. Visit the Blessed Sacrament often. But above all it is necessary to be very good. If it is not done, a chastisement will come upon us. Already the chalice is filling, and if we do not change, the chastisement will be very great.

Later on, people seeking more details put this question to the children: "For whom was this message given, for you or for the whole world?" They answered, "Oh, for the world, for the whole world!"

From that day on, many things have happened at Garabandal; some of them we shall mention now, others will be told in later chapters. But the children, and Conchita especially, always insist on what they consider as essential: "The most important of all is the Message." All the rest, even the events that can be said to be miraculous, take place for one reason only, and that is to give credit to the Message and to urge people to carry it out.

Chapter 8

The Death of Fr. Luis Andreu

It was only about a month after this that one of the most dramatic events connected with Garabandal took place. It concerns the visit to Garabandal on August 8, 1961, of Fr. Luis Andreu and of his death in Reinosa at four o'clock the next morning.

The following is the written testimony by Rafael Fontaneda Rupli-cado, an eyewitness to the facts.

On August 8, 1961, we went up to San Sebastian de Garabandal with Fr. Luis Maria Andreu, S.J., who was going there for the third time since July 29. Our trip coincided with that of Fr. Royo Marin, a celebrated Spanish Dominican theologian.

Fr. Luis seemed keenly interested in the events of Garabandal and in the little girls, though without showing what he thought of them. He spoke to us about visions in general, of the different types and the importance of being knowledgeable in psychology in order to make a sound judgment.

On August 8, we met Fr. Valentin Marichalar, the parish priest. He had to leave for Torrelavega and so left the keys of the Garabandal church with Fr. Luis, requesting that he serve as parish priest during his absence.

The Padre was very cheerful and joked with me happily, remarking, "There now, I'm parish priest of Garabandal."

The Mass celebrated by the Padre was extraordinarily touching and all the congregation was moved.

During this morning, the girls had an ecstasy. Fr. Luis was near them and as he had done the other times, noted attentively everything they said and did. During this ecstasy the Padre seemed engrossed; those who were nearest to him noticed tears streaming down his cheeks. He was obviously in the presence of something extraordinary.

In speaking of these tears the next day, his brother, Fr. Ramon Andreu S.J., expressed his amazement; he had never known Fr. Luis to be so emotional. He had never seen him cry.

On the evening of the same day, the children, in ecstasy, went up to the pines and came back down at an unheard-of rate. During the time they were at the pines the Padre



Fr. Luis Andreu was regarded as a saintly priest. Inset, while observing the children in ecstasy, he realized that something serious was happening to them.

observed them intensely. We could see that he did not want to miss a single detail of what was going on.

Suddenly a powerful emotion seemed to come over him and he cried out four times in a high pitched voice the word "Milagro!" (Miracle!)

The girls, still in ecstasy, began their descent toward the village. While continuing their dialogue with the Virgin, they said that they were going to the church.

If the climb was a fast one, the descent was at a dizzying pace.

Fr. Royo Marin advised those who were present to run to the church, for he said the children seemed to have wings on their feet.

It was after this descent that Fr. Marin took a stand on the matter, "I am not infallible, but I specialize in such matters, and I state that the children's vision is true. Four different signs indicate to me that there is no reason for doubt."

I went up to him and said, "Father, if it is as serious as you say, why don't you remain here a few more days?" He answered, "It is impossible for me to stay, but this is so clear that it cannot be anything but true."

When everything was over, some came back down from San Sebastian to Cosio on foot while others returned in jeeps. Out of respect we wanted Fr. Luis to ride in a jeep.

He appeared particularly happy and so were all those who shared the jeep with him. Several times, Fr. Luis clearly expressed his elation to me, and his certainty that the children were speaking the truth.

On arriving at Cosio, we took our places in the different automobiles which had brought us and had made up the expedition. Though my brother wanted Fr. Luis to get in with him, the Padre preferred to ride with me, as he had done

when we came. I was sitting in the back seat with my wife Carmen and my eight-year-old daughter, Maria Carmen. Fr. Luis got in next to the driver, José Salceda.

All during the trip, each one commented on what he had seen.

Fr. Luis stated that he had spoken with Fr. Royo Marin and was in agreement with him on all points.

My wife and I, as well as José Salceda, were struck by the deep and intense elation shown by Fr. Luis, as well as by the happiness he manifested. As he spoke, his breathing was quite normal but he would often repeat, "How happy I am! I'm overflowing with happiness! The Virgin gave me such a gift! I do not harbor the slightest doubt about the reality of what has happened to the children! It is the truth!"

And so we conversed until arriving at Puentenansa, where we wished to stop for some refreshments. Fr. Luis would accept only a cold drink.

When we got to Torrelavega, we met the jeep filled with people from Aguilar de Campoo that had brought us from Cosio to Garabandal. Our driver, José Salceda, asked them if they needed help and he and Fr. Luis spoke with them for a few moments.

During the second part of the trip we resumed our conversation and I asked, "Father, would you not like to sleep for a while?" And this is what he did for about an hour.

Upon awakening, shortly before arriving at Reinosa, he told us, "What a sound sleep! How well I feel! I no longer feel tired!"

Nevertheless, the rest of us were all sleepy, as it was already four o'clock in the morning. We stopped near a fountain to have a drink. The trip was then resumed and Fr. Luis began to repeat what he had said previously: "I am full of joy, of happiness! What a gift the Virgin has given me! How fortunate it is to have a Mother in heaven! We need not fear the supernatural life. We must treat the Virgin as the four children do. They are an example to us. I cannot have the slightest doubt about their visions. Why should the Virgin have chosen us? This is the happiest day of my life!"

After saying this, he became silent. I asked him a question to which he did not reply. "Father, what is the matter?" I thought he might be feeling nauseous. He answered, "No, nothing. I just feel drowsy," and bowing his head, he emitted a slight sigh.

As he turned toward him, José Salceda noticed that the Padre's eyes had changed. He cried, "The Padre is very ill!" My wife tried to feel his pulse. "Stop," she said, "He doesn't seem to have any pulse! There is a clinic here." [They were

at Reinosá.]

Thinking that it was nothing more than nausea, I tried to open the door when the car stopped. "There is nothing to worry about, Padre. It will pass. Everything is going to be all right."

My wife insisted, "Let's drive him to the clinic." I said, "Don't be silly," but he was already unconscious.

We stopped a few feet away from the clinic and went up and rang the door bell. The nurse who answered could tell at once that the Padre was dead. My wife said that was impossible, and that something should be done. The nurse gave him an injection while the driver went to seek a priest and a doctor. The latter arrived within ten minutes. It was Dr. D. Vicente Gonzalez who could only confirm the death. Immediately, the parish priest from the neighboring parish administered the last rites.

After the initial shock had passed, we telephoned Fr. Ramon Andreu, his brother, who was preaching the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius to the nuns at Valladolid. A few hours afterwards, Fr. Royo Marin arrived to keep us company and console us; then my brothers and cousins from Aguilar de Campoo came, and by mid-morning Fr. Ramon had arrived.

None of us could stop talking about what had happened. It was a terribly impressive event for us, though in another sense, we had an indescribable feeling of peace and serenity.

The only answer we could give to those who asked, "Of what did the Padre die?" was "He died of joy."

The only sign of his passing was a slight hiccup before replying, "No, I feel drowsy." Though only a fraction of a second had elapsed between normal life and death, his lips continued to smile.

According to his brother, Fr. Ramon Andreu, Fr. Luis had never experienced any pain or cardiac trouble. His only illness was a bout with hay fever every spring. His only medication was pills for his allergy.

On the eighth of August, he had come down from Garabandal by jeep, thus his fatigue could not have been greater than that of the pilgrims who had walked all day at Garabandal, then had spent the night walking back down the three miles to Cosio.

During the preceding year he had been a theology professor. He frequently participated in sports and often went out to the country in the company of other colleagues on holidays.

I returned to Garabandal a few days later. The little girls spoke to me of the Padre's death. The Blessed Virgin had told them that Fr. Luis was seeing her when he said, "Miracle!



He died of joy.

Miracle!" at the pines. In later ecstasies, he spoke to them. They would hear his voice, but not see him.

Fr. Royo Marin's comments on Padre Luis' last words came back to my mind:

"This is the happiest day of my life!" Padre Luis had said. What could have been the meaning of such an affirmation when the happiest day in a priest's life is usually the day of his ordination?

Did these words not seem to be an anticipation of the joy of entering into eternal happiness?

Fr. Marin had said to us. "Truly, the day we arrive into God's arms is the happiest day in a life!"

That day was to arrive for Fr. Luis Andreu on the ninth day of August, 1961, at 4:20 in the morning, on returning from Garabandal. We could measure the peacefulness of his death by observing that our eight-year-old daughter, who had traveled with us, went to bed upon our arrival at Aguilar de Campoo, and then slept alone all night without the slightest fear or nervousness.

My crucifix, that I had pressed to Fr. Luis' lips and which had been kissed beforehand by the vision at Garabandal, I gave in turn to Fr. Ramon Andreu, who thanked me as though he had received the most precious gift.

(signed) Rafael Fontaneda Ruplicado

Chapter 9

Collective Raptures

After her first apparition on July 2, 1961, Our Lady continued her visits, appearing to the children either collectively or to one or the other of them separately.

What, precisely, is the behavior of the children during these ecstasies?

Here is what we ourselves observed in November, 1962, and we are telling it in order to give a clear idea of the type of apparitions which occurred at Garabandal, anticipating other events which will be described later and which took place in the same environment.

Whether the ecstasy be individual or collective, it starts with three interior "calls" to the children. The first sometimes comes a long time beforehand, the second nearer the time and the third is sudden, imperious and sets the children running to the place of their heavenly rendezvous.

When the ecstasies were collective, people tried the experiment, more than once, of keeping the children apart in separate houses, so that they might verify the reality and simultaneousness of these "calls." Indeed, although the children had no watches, or any other way to tell time, they always started out at the same second—moved

The visionaries in ecstasy.



Mari Loli after an ecstatic fall.



After the third call, Jacinta, left, and Mari Cruz run to rendezvous with the Vision.

by the irresistible force—and came together at the same place at exactly the same time!

As soon as they caught sight of Our Lady, wherever they happened to be, even on the sharp stones of the roadbed, they would fall suddenly to their knees with such force that their bones would rattle like old wooden clogs being smashed upon stones. Sometimes, we are told, they fell with such force that they fell flat to the ground. But at all times, onlookers were struck by the dignity and beauty of their pose, which never at any time appeared immodest, unseemly, nervous or convulsive.

From the very beginning, the apparitions were most significant and very numerous. They were also accompanied by amazing events.

One of them, of course, concerns Fr. Luis Andreu, often referred to by the villagers as “the saint” or “the theologian,” and whose important role in these events was just narrated above. Up until the night of August 8, when Fr. Luis saw a preview of the great Miracle to come, the children themselves had not as yet seen a vision of the Miracle.

Conchita, who was the only one to prophesy it, gave us the following details: “It will take place on a Thursday, at 8:30 in the evening. It will be more convincing than the miracle of the sun at Fatima.

“It will not happen on one of Our Lady’s feast days, but on that of a young martyr of the Eucharist. It will not be on the eighteenth of the month, either. It will last about a quarter of an hour and will be visible from all the mountains around Garabandal. The Holy Father will see it from the place where he is at the time (*desde donde este*). Padre Pio shall also see it.

“During this Miracle those who are ill among the onlookers will be cured and the unbelievers among them will be converted.”

Although the learned and holy Jesuit of whom we have spoken died of joy on seeing this Miracle, Conchita replied to all questions, “We ourselves will not die of happiness because we shall receive a special grace that will enable us to bear it.” She added, “This Miracle will be the proof of the tender love of God and Our Lady for the world. And after the Miracle, God will permit a ‘sign’ to remain, to remind us of it.”

It was Conchita alone who announced this great future Miracle, indefatigably and imperturbably, with absolute certainty and serenity. Nothing on this point could disturb her. She even declared, “Whether I am in Garabandal or not, the Miracle will still take place.”

As for the other girls, they said, “It is true, since Conchita has said so.”

It is not surprising that since this Miracle was announced years ago, some people have become excited about it and imaginations have run riot.

Several people thought they had found the future date, but the secret has been well kept and all such predictions are negated in advance.

To the questions which are as indiscreet as they are never ending, the child replies, “Our Lady does not wish me to reveal the date, though I already know it. I may only announce it eight days before it will occur. It will be linked with a very important ecclesiastical event.”

Chapter 10

The Nature of the Apparitions

In the early days of the apparitions the girls were once seen to be making movements that indicated that they were passing an object from one to the other, and they seemed to rock it to and fro.

After the ecstasy they explained that Our Lady had put the Child Jesus into their arms.

Having heard of this from Jacinta’s mother, we questioned Conchita.

“If you held the Child Jesus in your arms, then you will have touched Him?”

“Oh, no, you can never touch Our Lady or the Child.”

“But didn’t you hold Him in your arms?”

“We could not bring our arms close to our breast.”

“Was He heavy?”

“He was weightless.”

“And when you kissed the Blessed Virgin Mary, could you feel the freshness of her face?”

Taking the hand of a woman standing by, Conchita raised it up to the woman’s face, covering but not touching her mouth and eyes. “Try to understand; in this way, you see that you are kissing your hand. Well, it’s just like that; we see that we are kissing her, but we do not touch her. It is indeed Our Lady whom we are kissing, but we do not feel the freshness of her face or anything else.”

“How is that possible?”

“We don’t know. But that’s how it is. If we try to put our hands on Our Lady, we cannot put our hands any further because she is there. Yet we can feel nothing, although she is just in front of our hands!”

On one occasion, however, they wanted to offer the Child some small stones to play with. The stones fell to the ground as, on another occasion, had caramels, given to them by a visitor and which they had tried to give Him. He smiled to thank them, but the caramels were later found on the ground. It is for the theologians to give us an adequate explanation.

Chapter 11

Signs in the Heavens

Here are two other astonishing events recorded by Conchita in her diary:

At the time of the apparitions, Loli and I were coming down from the pines together with many people. Suddenly we saw something mysterious in the clouds. It looked like fire. It was daytime. I saw it, Loli saw it, and many people around us saw it, even people who were not near us, who had remained in the village. When this stopped, the Blessed Virgin appeared to us. We asked her what it was. She told us, "It was in that fire that I came to you."

Another day during the time of the apparitions, there were again the two of us, Loli and I. It was the feast day of Our Lady of the Pillar (Our Lady of Zaragoza). As we were in ecstasy looking at Our Lady, we saw beneath Our Lady's feet a red star with a very long tail. We asked Our Lady what it meant, but she did not answer.

Many people saw this star, too, at the same time.

Before we had read the diary, we did not know of the sign of the "chariot of fire," but witnesses had spoken to us of "the star with a very long tail" which they, too, had seen on the feast of Our Lady of the Pillar.

Chapter 12

Our Lady and Those Who Witnessed the Ecstasies

Almost from the beginning, in 1961, Our Lady began to reveal in different ways her compassionate love for those who witnessed the ecstasies. During the individual ecstasies, she started kissing rosaries, medals, holy pictures, crucifixes and even wedding rings.

She did not kiss all the objects that visitors had asked the children to offer her, but only those that she herself pointed out to the children to hold up to her lips.

The Madonna would herself choose, by pointing to the objects they were pinned to their clothes or that had been placed on the kitchen table in the home of the visionary.

She would then have them returned, often during the ecstasy, to the lucky owners whom the little girls could not even see. Generally the souls of the owners were, at the same time, given great graces of conversion or consolation. But we would like to emphasize this point: The children's actions often had for the owners of these objects a definite meaning which the little girls could not possibly suspect. That remains a precious secret between those who were so favored and their heavenly Mother.

Reliable witness of this is given by an unknown woman who came to Garabandal anxious to know her right vocation. A widow, she was wondering whether it would be better to retire from the world or to live and love Jesus in her present circumstances. By kissing the wedding ring on the widow's hand Our Lady enlightened her about her future and worked a real conversion in her soul.

Another incident: One day someone put a valuable powder compact on the kitchen table in Conchita's house. The little girls and the onlookers wanted to remove it, saying that Our Lady never kissed a profane object. In spite of this the compact remained where it had been placed.

Scarcely was the child caught up in an ecstasy when, neglecting the other pious objects, she offered the compact to Our Lady first. Of course those present began to murmur against such strange behavior. "How can we believe that Our Lady would kiss this object of vanity! No, that is not like her!"

When the ecstasy was over, Conchita explained, "Our Lady said to me, 'Give that to me for it belongs to my Son.' . . . without making any further explanations."



In ecstasy, looking at Our Lady, Mari Loli places a "kissed" wedding ring on the finger of the rightful owner.

Soon the reason for it became quite clear. During the Spanish Civil War, between 1936 and 1939, this compact had been used to carry consecrated Hosts to give Holy Communion secretly to the prisoners who were condemned to death. It had been used as a ciborium!

Another incident was the conversion of a Protestant industrialist whom we met the following year and who was completely changed after Our Lady had kissed his wedding ring. From Garabandal he went to make a retreat at Loyola. On the third day, while those around him were receiving Holy Communion, he was converted.

Finally, we have recently heard that several friends of Garabandal have met at Burgos for the baptism of a young Jewess, also miraculously converted at Garabandal.

Chapter 13

Human Wisdom Intervenes

On October 18, 1961, in accordance with Our Lady's wish, this Message [see Chapter 7] was proclaimed near the pines which are situated on a bluff overlooking the village.

The Message was not revealed in exactly the manner prescribed by Our Lady; the children and the parish priest were obliged to submit to another person's judgment.¹ Already the adversary was in this place, fighting against heaven.



People assemble at the pines to hear the Message.

1. Our Lady had prescribed that it should be read at 10:30 p. m. But the special commission, consisting of two priests and two doctors appointed by the Bishop of Santander to investigate the apparitions, said that, because of the rain, it would be better to read it at 8:30 or 9:00 p.m. Fortunately the apparitions did not cease on this account.

Chapter 14

Vision of the Chastisement

The Message tells us of a punishment which Our Lady fears may come upon the world. What could this punishment be? Here is what we know about it.

Pepe Diez, the village mason, witnessed the following events which happened not far from his house.

One night in June, 1962, Loli and Jacinta went off together as usual toward the pines.

They signaled to the villagers who were with them to let them go on alone. Pepe Diez remained with the crowd at the foot of the hill.

Suddenly cries of terror pierced the air. The two little girls were coming down the hill, trying to ward off some terrible danger by holding out their hands in front of them.

Conchita, who was ill, was not with them, but the next day she was there with her companions.

The same scene began again for the three little girls. Their cries were even more pitiful and the witnesses were even able to make out the words, "Oh! Let the little children die before it happens! . . . Let people have time to go to confession beforehand!"

A Franciscan priest who was preaching a novena in preparation for the feast of Corpus Christi was among those present and Pepe Diez tells us that he began to lead the people in prayer. As soon as the prayers began the cries diminished and the little girls appeared to be less pained. As soon as the prayers stopped their cries began again even more loudly than before.

The whole village was so deeply impressed by these two ecstasies that, with a few exceptions, (five, we are told) all the inhabitants of Garabandal went to confession and Communion on this feast of Corpus Christi in 1962. Will this terrible punishment which Our Lady fears for the world take place before or after the great future Miracle? Is it inevitable? Conchita has written on a loose leaf sheet of paper, carefully preserved by its owner, "This Miracle to come will take place *before* the Chastisement, and if the world changes its ways the latter will not occur."

What a source of hope these lines would be for us if we had not also learned that in December of 1963, Loli, in a "locution" (interior words without any vision), heard Our Lady complain, "Alas, the world is getting worse."

The continued progress in the spiritual life of these children is proof of the authenticity of the apparitions.

Have they become perfect? No, of course not. Sanctity is at the end of a long road which is traveled stage by stage and with many a detour. Let us note only that the children are making rapid strides along the path of virtue, with an amazing generosity and wonderful fidelity to the graces they have received. Yet they remain children who work and play readily and who have to struggle against their faults from time to time. If they give in to their faults, they mend their ways more quickly and with more strength of purpose than most people.

We must remember, however, that at this time they are only 14 years old and we must not expect them to have the mentality of mature adults. Sometimes, however, their wisdom and generosity seems to surpass many more 'mature' people.

Chapter 15

The Sign of Signs Is Prophesied

In her Message of October 18, 1961, Our Lady asks for frequent “visits” to the Blessed Sacrament. She asked the girls for more than this; she asked for frequent Communion.

Is it because the people of Spain receive Holy Communion less often than those in other Catholic countries, especially in the mountain regions of Cantabria, where some traces of Jansenism still persist? That may be.

In any case, after he had prepared them in proper fashion, St. Michael came ever more frequently to bring Holy Communion to the children, the Host remaining invisible to those present.

Furthermore, as early as July 3, 1962, Conchita announced—with the same assurance with which she predicts what she calls the “great Miracle for the conversion of the world”—that on the following July 18, the Archangel would give her Holy Communion and that this time the Host would be visible on her tongue.

However, July 18, the annual feast day of the village, was a day of dancing at Garabandal. There was a large crowd of people, but not all of the same mind. Some had come for the dancing; others, and far more numerous, had come for the miracle which had been announced. These latter wandered about, disappointed, for the dancing continued far into the night and the miracle had still not taken place.

This miracle that the “spiritual greed” of other people was demanding, was requested by the children of Our Lady and St. Michael many times. “. . . So that they may believe!” is what they repeated.

On June 23, 1962, St. Michael replied to Conchita alone, exactly as follows: “At my intercession and at yours, God will do it . . . so that they may believe. On that day the Host will be visible on your tongue to all present. You will be told the date 15 days in advance.”

That is why, having announced it at Garabandal as early as the third of July, Conchita wrote to her friends on the eighth of the month.

After one o’clock in the morning when the dancers had gone to bed and, with the visitors full of doubts by this time, the astonishing miracle took place.¹

1. Many people, including the authors, were under the impression that the dancing had something to do with the miracle being delayed. However, it was revealed later that without realizing it, Conchita had received Communion earlier that day from a priest who was in the village and therefore could not receive again on the same day. That is why the miracle occurred after midnight, actually on the nineteenth.

Chapter 16

The Miracle of the Forma

Here for the sake of accuracy we shall give fuller evidence of this extraordinary and irrefutable miracle of July 18, 1962. Here is Conchita’s account:

“When ten o’clock in the evening arrived, I had a call. At midnight I had another one, and at two o’clock the Angel appeared to me in a room in my house. My mother, Aniceta, my brother, Aniceto, my uncle, Elias, my cousin, Lucia, and a lady from Aguilar, Maria del Carmen Fontaneda were there. The Angel was with me for a little while and said the same to me as on the other days: ‘Recite the Act of Contrition and think of Whom you are going to receive.’ And I did so. Afterwards he gave me Communion. He told me that I should say the *Alma de Cristo* (Soul of Christ), and should make a thanksgiving, and that I should keep my tongue out with the Sacred Host until the time when he would leave and Our Lady would come, and I did so. When Our Lady came she said to me, ‘¿*Todavía no creon todos?*’ (Do they all still not believe?)”

We have questioned many witnesses about this miracle that we think is so important and that is for us the irrefutable proof of the authenticity of the events and the Message of Garabandal.

The most important of all the witnesses is actually Pepe Diez who was doing some work in Conchita’s home when the apparitions began. His own house at the bottom of the lane where the Angel appeared at the beginning makes an excellent watchtower. He was able to overhear Conchita’s replies when she was talking to the Angel on June 23, 1962, the day when the heavenly visitor announced the miracle of the Host which was to take place in the future.

Thus warned, Pepe wanted to be in the first row of onlookers and he succeeded. Kneeling down a few inches away from Conchita’s face, he held a flashlight which he focused on the child’s mouth as soon as she knelt down.

When he was questioned he took two coins out of his pocket, one about the size of a dime and the other like a quarter. Then he said:

“I saw Conchita put out her tongue. It was clean and spotless. She did not take it in again at all. Suddenly there appeared a ‘white substance’ on her tongue, the size of this small coin. Then this ‘thing’ began to grow in size. It became as big as this larger coin. Then it thickened until it looked like a piece of bread.

As soon as Conchita put out her tongue, I shone the flashlight on her



This frame of motion picture film shows the Host on Conchita's tongue.

mouth and I followed the scene from very close. After about two or three minutes Conchita withdrew her tongue again."

Another witness told us, "On seeing the miracle I experienced such an amazing, wonderful joy that I wouldn't change it for millions of dollars; and this joy came to me not because I had seen 'something white' on Conchita's tongue but because I felt that I was in the presence of the living God."

A third said, "If you put a drop of oil on a blotter, it will spread. Well, I saw this 'thing' spread and spread and spread!"

A fourth said, "I would compare it to a flake of snow. Little at first, I saw it grow larger, wider and thicker."

In our files we have other evidence, as well as films, photographs and written testimony on the miracle of the Host.

It is for the theologians to explain for us the "Host," the "Thing," the "Forma."

To facilitate their obviously difficult task, we can add to all this what Conchita has said and repeated again and again: "The Host given to me by the Angel was *igual* (the same) as other Hosts. It was the same as those the Angel gives us at other times, the same as we receive in church when we go to Holy Communion."

Chapter 17

Garabandal and the Holy Eucharist

The Holy Eucharist is, without a shadow of a doubt, one of the most important preoccupations in the mind of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Garabandal.

In the Message she asks for frequent visits to her Son, present in the Blessed Sacrament. We have already told of the "Sign of Signs" of July 18, 1962, which had been foretold on the third of that month.

Again, if the Angel, both before and after this famous miracle for Conchita, often came to place an invisible Host on the tongues of the four girls, could it be because they were deprived of It, since the parish priest lived so far away, coming to offer Mass at Garabandal only on Sundays and for the few funerals in the village?

Is it not clear enough by now that Our Lady wishes to remind us by the children's frequent, miraculous Communion that the 'center' the 'nucleus,' the 'spring,' the 'fountain' of all spiritual life is most certainly the Eucharist; visited, and above all, actually received? Obviously a number of priests visiting Garabandal in the early days doubted the reality of these *invisible* Communion from the very beginning.

Let us listen to the priests interrogating the children: "The Angel cannot give you Holy Communion. Where would he get the Hosts?"

"From a tabernacle, of course, since an angel cannot consecrate."

"Well, then, which is the greatest, the angel or the priest?"

"The priest has more power than the angel, for only he can say Mass" (only he can consecrate Hosts).

Mari Loli receives invisible Communion from St. Michael.



Chapter 18

Garabandal and the Priesthood

Together with a devotion to the Eucharist, Garabandal teaches a great devotion for the priesthood. Our Lady teaches the girls to pray often for priests. Loli said one day, "I often pray for them, especially for those who wish that they were not priests. I pray that they may at least go on saying Mass."

They have the greatest reverence and affection for all members of the clergy, so much so that they are often reproached for "giving a warmer welcome to priests than to lay people."

In spite of the imprudence and unsettling hostility of certain priests, the children have never been heard to utter the least criticism of them or to show them the least discourtesy. They even make a special point of praying for them, especially for those who cause the children to suffer for reasons unknown to them.

To everyone expressing surprise at this, Loli replies, "When in the presence of an angel and of a priest, I would greet the priest first and it is to the priest that I would bow first of all."

That does not prevent them from being nice little Spanish girls with a liveliness that reminds us of certain answers given by their illustrious compatriot, St. Teresa of Avila!

One theologian, a young priest and a fine one at that, asked Conchita:

"If you think that a priest has more power than an angel, whom would you prefer to see, the angel or me?"

"Oh, the angel of course! He is much better looking than you!"

Another cleric, deciding to put the little girls through one of those psychological "tests", asked Conchita this strange question:

"If your parish priest were neither a man nor a woman but an animal, what kind of animal would you like him to be?"

"A lamb."

"Why?"

"Because he would be like Jesus Who sacrificed Himself for us."

Chapter 19

You Shall Not Be Happy in This World

Since January 28, 1963 (the liturgical feast of St. Sebastian, patron saint of the village), Our Lady's visits to the children have become less frequent. Sometimes they have only heard and not seen her, which proves that the "apparitions" have given place to what theology calls "interior locutions."

But these mysterious conversations generally remain a secret between the girls and their confessors.

An important public apparition was that of December 8, 1963.

On the morning of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, at 5:30 a.m. while it was still dark and cold, Conchita (whose feast day it was) was irresistibly moved by a mysterious interior call, and was found in ecstasy at the closed door of the church. Only her mother had been able to follow her. The ecstasy lasted for about ten minutes. When she came out of it, she was questioned.

"Our Lady congratulated me on the occasion of my feast day. Rather taken aback because she had spoken first, I could only congratulate her in my heart. She said, 'Although you will not be happy on earth, you will be happy in heaven.' Then she revealed some future events to me."

"What are they?"

"I may not reveal them."

Later on a priest asked her:

"Can't you reveal this secret in the confessional?"

"Our Lady did not tell me to, but I'll ask her another time."

Chapter 20

The Apparition of January 1, 1965

From all evidence, the entire year 1964 was, for the visionaries, a period of meditation and personal recollection. For the mountaineers and for the world, alerted by the spread of the Message, these 12 months were a time for reflection and awareness of each one's responsibilities. The earth, it would seem, was given a breathing spell. Then heaven again stretched out a helping hand. This was on December 8, 1964, exactly one year later.

In a letter dated January 12, 1965, Conchita writes to us (the authors):

I like your brochure, "The Mountain Star," very much.

Because Conchita realized the objectivity of the brochure in which the smallest detail was checked and rechecked, these few words will always be a great source of encouragement to us.

In the same letter, Conchita said:

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1964, the Virgin wished me a happy feast, the feast of my baptismal name. [The name Conchita is a diminutive of Mary of the Immaculate Conception.] She told me that on the following June 18, I would see St. Michael the Archangel. And on January 1, 1965, I saw the Virgin at the pines.

Her letter of January 24, 1965, confirmed this:

I do not recall if, in my last letter, I told you that on June 18 I will see St. Michael the Archangel. This is what the Virgin told me in a 'locution' on my feast day, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

As Conchita told us, she did see the Virgin at the pines. We learned that on January 1, 1965, she had been seen by two young village shepherds, Joaquina, 12, and Urbano, 9, who were coming down the mountain with their sheep. Upon further "cross-examination," it was determined this ecstasy must have lasted about two hours. According to reliable testimonies, which we shall later refer to, the Virgin of Carmel spoke at very great length. Today, we shall limit ourselves to what Conchita wrote on February 2, 1965:

The Virgin seemed to be the same age as the first time I saw

her [July 2, 1961], the same age as in the past years, about 18 years old.

She wore her white gown and her sky-blue cloak.

A tremendous light, which does not hurt the eyes, radiated from her body and enveloped her completely.

Except for the one on June 18, [1965], I don't know whether the apparitions will resume, either for me or for the four of us.

The Virgin will give a new Message, because she said the other one [October 18, 1961] was not heeded. The Virgin will therefore give her last Message.

The Virgin does not allow me to tell the nature of the Miracle, although I know it and I also know its date which I can announce only eight days before.

I cannot speak about the nature of the punishment that the Virgin revealed to me, and also to Loli and Jacinta, except this: it will be a result of the *direct intervention of God* which is more dreadful than anything we can imagine. It would be less terrible for little children to die a natural death than to die of this punishment. All Catholics should confess before the punishment; the others should repent of their sins.

This Punishment if it comes—and I do believe it will come—will take place after the Miracle.

We quote two excerpts from letters written after January 1, 1965, to a prominent elderly religious from Spain whose health was much impaired:

"Take good care of yourself," says Conchita, "you must live for the Miracle."

And Mari Loli, relying on Conchita's statement, wrote to the same religious:

"I'd like very much to give you the Message which is soon going to be revealed by St. Michael. But be patient, because the Virgin knows what she is doing and we must wait for it, you and I."

For us, Garabandal is a whole unit which will be judged according to the total phenomena, according to the reactions and the conduct of the visionaries, the testimony of official witnesses, the fulfillment of authentic prophecies, the Miracle to come, etc.

Many details will momentarily or even permanently elude the investigators. The essential, from a scientific point of view, remains the general reconstruction of events. And to be adequate, it must include all important facts. Therefore, we feel that if a fundamental fact is missing from the structure, Garabandal as a whole could collapse.

If, for example, the apparition of St. Michael had not occurred on June 18, 1965, as Conchita had announced for more than six months previously, all the preceding "facts" would have become questionable.

Chapter 21

Our Journey to Garabandal

Such being our conviction, we could not afford to miss the rendezvous. All we had to do was secure the necessary canonical authorization and we were on our way.

In order to greet some friends in San Sebastian City, we did not keep to our regular itinerary. We had to arrive in Santander on Friday evening in order to meet His Excellency Bishop Beitia early the next morning.

The whole Saturday in Santander was spent in attempting to overcome the incredible barriers erected by the Episcopal Curia between the Bishop and ourselves. Without a little "miracle" from St. Michael, we would never have been able to meet His Excellency. We finally had the good fortune of finding ourselves by chance at the foot of the main stairs of the Bishop's palace just as His Excellency was leaving for his episcopal rounds.

His Excellency Bishop Beitia appeared radiant, cordial and paternal. Without the slightest hesitation, with unusual marks of paternal affection and in the presence of three witnesses, he permitted us to go to Garabandal, blessed our mission, and defined its spirit and method: "Yes, go. Act prudently as the subject demands and do not force Divine grace."

These words were the echo of those he pronounced during our important conversation in September, 1963.

On the ninth of June, Conchita wrote to us asking us not to come at this time. We were unaware of this request, however, since we left France on the tenth before her letter arrived. Our arrival in the village was an embarrassment both to Conchita and to us. In addition, Conchita, who thought we had deliberately ignored her wishes, did not speak to us. Rather, she seemed to be avoiding us.

We arrived at Garabandal Sunday, June 13, at 4:00 p.m. As soon as the visionaries saw our car making its last turn on the mountain road they withdrew. When we passed by them on the porch where their little companions were dancing, they forgot to greet us. Our contact with Aniceta, Conchita's mother, and her sister, Maximina, always so courteous, was more surprising still. The people from Madrid and America had rented all available rooms and we had no other alternative than to sleep and cook in our car. We would have considered this a trifle if the faces of the people we talked to had not remained blank; if we had not felt that they had closed their hearts to us.

Therefore we roamed the village like strangers for whom there is no room at the inn.

There were two possible alternatives: leave Garabandal — and we thought of it — or take advantage of the mortifying setback. We felt the latter was by far the better way.

It was better to forget our French sensitiveness and to withdraw from all human affection in Garabandal, and pursue our investigations with an attitude that would assuredly not "force Divine grace." We would have to watch our mood and frame of mind in order not to be influenced against the events which would occur. We could have blinded ourselves to the realities because of our personal deceptions.

Now that it is all over, we believe that God's Providence watched over us in Santander on Saturday, and in Garabandal on Sunday. Everyone shielded us effectively against anything that would have prevented rational thinking in the fulfillment of the task which awaited us on the occasion of June 18.

Let us go back in our story. What happened in Garabandal and around the village during the 21 months prior to June, 1965?

First of all, the village had undergone a slight change. Some land and houses, also some barns, had been bought by Spaniards from outside. Bricklayers bustled about and the construction of two new houses was half completed. Here and there, small living quarters had been provided for visitors. Often they were nothing more than an old white-washed stable. But the cleanliness of the places made one forget the donkey, goat or cow that had given up its abode, except in the evenings when the animals, in keeping with their old memories, came to poke their heads into the half-open doors to greet the new occupants.

Thanks to American generosity, or so it was said, the inside of the church had been completely redecorated, including the gilding so much in favor throughout Spain. Some statues had been removed and they did not hesitate to relegate St. Michael's to the most obscure corner behind the baptismal font. Yes, even the statue of the Archangel of the apparitions, the Archangel who was to return, had not found favor in the eyes of modern iconoclasts.

Of course, the statue did not resemble the vision seen by Conchita and her three companions. But how is it that these humble people, so admirable in 1962, had not as yet realized that such an offhand manner toward the messenger of Our Lady of Carmel was probably the cause of the moral and intellectual ordeal whose entire scope we would be able to measure.

Psychological changes seemed to accompany material changes in the village—peace of heart was only on the surface. Only the old women's wrinkled, faded faces had retained their smile and their former friendly look. Some families were divided through jealousy. The apparitions no longer had a unanimous response.

Hesitant souls were impatient for the famous Miracle, thinking it required too long a wait. These people who for two years had been laden with favors; these men and women who had tirelessly followed the four visionaries in ecstasy; these very people—with the exception of

their silent elders and a few steadfast souls—were unable to recall what they had seen, heard and touched. They were unable to relate the past events with certainty. These people, once more hungry — even insatiable — for miraculous realities, suffered from unconscious spiritual blindness which was once more to astonish the visitor.

If some of their peers, unable to judge them, would raise the question, “What about the apparitions?” they would answer shamelessly, “Well, we don’t know what to say.”

But one thing still baffled these men and women, forcing them to see the light, and that was the objects kissed by Our Lady during the ecstasies.

We recall that at the beginning of the apparitions, Our Lady asked the children to present to her lips some pebbles from the road. Later on, she asked for medals, rosaries, crucifixes, holy cards, wedding rings, etc.

Each home in Garabandal owns one or several of these treasures. If any villagers were asked to part with one of them and to offer it as a souvenir to visitors, you may rest assured that the so-called unbelievers of Garabandal would immediately change the subject.

What was the psychological aspect of the village on the eve of June 18, 1965, the day for St. Michael’s return as prophesied by Conchita? There were dissensions, discussions, criticisms, hesitations, follies, impertinent remarks toward the celestial visitor, all masking an unjustified dependence upon a secret hope of seeing the famous apparition again. In other words, the people were wondering if something would happen at the village because nothing had happened during the past two years.

We relate these things reluctantly, because we dearly love these mountain folk whose hearts are as good as gold. Many were of the same mind as Maria, Jacinta’s mother, who in September, 1963, made a confession which was most surprising to say the least: “For me, when I see an ecstasy, I believe. When it is over, I no longer believe. But I would believe forever if the Miracle happened.”

Her husband, Simon, smiled as he listened. Jacinta, who was present, seemed unhappy and remote. We answered, “Maria, true ecstasies are miracles in themselves. Whoever does not remember them to retain faith in Garabandal will no more believe in the Miracle to come than in the miracle of the Host.”

This is so true that we feel compelled to share with our readers a conversation reported by a Spanish lawyer, a friend of ours, who served as an interpreter during our first visit to the village.

As he was walking alone down the mountain to Cosio, he met a middle aged woman at the turn of the dirt road. She was climbing the hill with her donkey. Both of them stopped a while under the hot sun, seeking in vain a little shady spot, and chatted while mopping their brows.

“How is everything?”

“It’s warm, sir.”

“Of course, but I mean the apparitions.”

“Ah!”

“Yes, what do they say about them in Garabandal?”

“Oh, nothing anymore.”

“What do you mean, ‘nothing’? I was present at some of the ecstasies. What about you?”

“Oh, the ecstasies . . . At the beginning, they were true, but now . . .”

“True in the beginning, but false now?”

“Yes, at the beginning they were true. I’ll prove it to you.”

“I’m listening, Madam.”

“It’s like this. One evening Loli was in ecstasy in Ceferino’s cafe. There was a crowd around the table. On it I saw medals, rosaries, holy cards, crucifixes and wedding rings. The child was taking in turn one or the other of these objects for Our Lady to kiss. I hurried home and returned with my husband’s wedding ring which I slipped onto the table. Fifteen minutes later, Loli took it, presented it to the apparition, crossed the room and put it on my husband’s finger. He was standing alone in the corner. He protested loudly that the child was making an error. Of course, he didn’t know what I had done. I went to him and explained everything. He cried with joy. That day, sir, it was a true ecstasy. The Virgin had really appeared to Loli. Why doesn’t she appear again?”

Chapter 22

St. Michael Returns

On Sunday, June 13, Conchita caught cold. The following day she was confined to her bed with a pulse of 100 and a fever of 101 degrees. She suffered from a nose bleed and was sweating profusely. This condition lasted three days, causing her great discomfort and making her ache all over. During these three days, some said, "Of course, she is cleverly preparing next Friday's fiasco." Others, concerned but still hopeful, asked themselves: "Will she be up in time for the rendezvous with the Angel?" The question was most relevant, as it was a known fact that the doctor had recommended that Conchita should stay indoors for six more days.

Thursday was the feast of Corpus Christi, a holy day of obligation in Spain. The whole village was either gathered in church or singing hymns in solemn procession behind the priest carrying the Blessed Sacrament. Aniceta had erected a triumphal arch whose streamer, in the colors of the Spanish flag, carried the words: "Hail, Christ the King." As for Conchita, she was in bed, praying.

What was going to happen the next day?

The next day, Conchita arose around 11 o'clock, put on a heavy red woolen sweater and appeared on the doorstep.

During the previous night, numerous foreign cars had arrived in the village. There were about 200 Frenchmen, 100 Spaniards from various cities of the peninsula, ten Americans, six Englishmen, four Italians and some representing other European or Western countries. In the crowd were about ten priests in clerical garb, and undoubtedly a few in laymen's clothing.

What was the mood of this crowd? On the whole, it behaved in a remarkable, pious, modest and penitent manner. Most of those present had received Holy Communion at one of the three Masses celebrated that morning. Crowded against Conchita's house or scattered in front of it, around the fountain or on the grass, people were praying, singing hymns or talking among themselves in their own language in a brotherly fashion.

In our interior and almost surly isolation, we took great care to keep our distance, noticing, among other things, a few people who were there for their own purposes. There were emissaries of the commission of Santander, of course, and also members of some foreign police forces.

At twilight, some Spanish boys and girls appeared on the scene and their free and easy manner proved that the devil also wanted to be

present at the spectacle.

From the very start we warned our French friends, "It is quite simple. You have good eyesight and you are intelligent. Watch Conchita and if you look closely, you will certainly be able to judge her."

Humble, her eyes often downcast, gracious, friendly, concealing her extreme fatigue, tireless, Conchita allowed herself to be mobbed even by the most tactless visitors.

She smiled, signed holy cards, permitted herself to be photographed. She answered every question, promised to pray for all intentions requested, consoled the most afflicted and kissed the children.

This went on until dusk and we don't know if she even had time to eat anything other than a piece of bread. Shivering, she went home but let no one in. She opened the kitchen window and through its bars continued to place herself at the disposal of the crowd.

At 11:00 p.m. — and at this point we realized that for the past twelve hours Conchita had literally been the "toy" of the crowd — we were alone, leaning against the stable door near Aniceta's house. Personally, we didn't need the prophecy of December 8, 1964, and its fulfillment on June 18, 1965, to strengthen our faith in the events at Garabandal, but we wished with all our heart that the ecstasy would be visible to all present and be absolutely convincing. Knowing absolutely nothing beforehand, having never asked any question of Conchita concerning the nature of the apparition, having not spoken to her the whole day, we were hoping for an ecstatic march across the village which would enable one and all to see it, to follow it leisurely and judge it.

One of our group was completely absorbed in solitary reflections when sudden silence made him realize that the crowd had disappeared and we were all alone. Then he went to the kitchen window where a few women still remained: "My dear, what should we do now?" "Go to the *cuadro* with the others," we were told. (The *cuadro* was the exact place where St. Michael first appeared on June 18, 1961.)

Everyone had already passed by the last houses of the village and was climbing that steep, rocky lane leading to the pines. The entire village and the late visitors from Santander and the valley had joined the 350 strangers who had arrived during the day. This meant about 700 people were packed like sardines in the ravine or standing in the embanked road. Almost everyone was praying in a loud voice, alternating between French and Spanish.

The night of June 18 was most extraordinary, unusually bright with countless stars twinkling more than ever. There was no moon, at least not that we could see.

Suddenly, everyone looked up. A new star, brighter than the others, appeared from the northwest. It traced a large circle and returned to its point of origin.

Two minutes later, another brilliant star, smaller than the first one, appeared directly above Conchita's house, moved slowly in the sky and disappeared suddenly above the pines.

Everyone was commenting on these unusual phenomena, when Conchita appeared to us in the light of the stars and the torches, shielded by a squad of civilian guards and Spanish police. Contrary to our expectations and our prayerful wish, she was not in ecstasy. She was walking so fast that her guards were breathless.

When she reached us, a friend of ours reports, "I took her by the arm in place of her eldest brother, the devoted Serafin. There were 40 yards to go and we would be at the right spot. At this point Conchita freed herself, took a few steps alone, looked at the ground, lifted up her head and fell in ecstasy, her knees abruptly hitting the sharp stones."

Even today after six months of deep thinking on the subject, this remains a mystery to our friend. Although neither Conchita nor our friend had moved a millimeter, they found themselves next to each other; Conchita kneeling, he standing.

The ecstasy resembled those we had previously heard of in the village, in the kitchen or in the girl's bedroom: Signs of the Cross made with indescribable piety and majesty, a countenance resplendent with interior light, pupils extremely dilated, an angelic smile and most solemn gestures, murmurs from half-open lips and silences of a listening soul, a tear falling slowly on the temple and leaving its crystal mark.

Her earlobes were normal, her forehead cool, without perspiration. Her hair retained its usual flexible texture. In spite of the powerful spotlights that should have blinded her forever, her eyes never blinked. Not for a moment did her eyelids move and when our friend attempted to check on Conchita's weight, his efforts were useless, as she seemed to weigh a ton! On the other hand, a policeman with similar strength attempted to lift Conchita and succeeded. We realized that her feet did not touch the ground; her legs, absolutely stiff, kept the same angle as when she was kneeling. Through carelessness, pushed by the crowd, someone trampled on her foot. Conchita had no reaction whatsoever. Then she slowly raised her right arm and with incredible joy presented her crucifix to the Archangel. After he touched it, Conchita, without hesitation and with great assurance, applied it to the lips of Fr. Pel who stood at our friend's left. Then changing hands twice, Conchita presented the crucifix to Mr. Mazure and Mr. Pique who were at our friend's right, but behind her.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Conchita, in reaching back over her shoulder to allow the two men to kiss the crucifix, had moved her arm over her shoulder in such a way that would defy all natural laws, due both to the angle at which her arm moved, and the distance between her and the men.

Here is another astonishing fact. As stated above, at the beginning of the ecstasy Conchita fell on her knees a few feet from our friend. However, though neither one made the slightest move, they were side by side. Before the ecstasy began, Conchita did not know that Fr. Pel, Mr. Mazure, and Mr. Pique would be there. They had arrived two or three minutes after the ecstasy had begun. Therefore Conchita in her normal state was totally unaware of the presence of these three men.



Conchita in ecstasy, June 18, 1965.

However in her normal state she knew perfectly well that our friend was there because he was the one who had supported her left arm until they had reached the cuadro. We ask the adversaries of Garabandal to explain how it is that these three newcomers were the only ones to kiss the crucifix touched by St. Michael while our friend, who stood between them, separating Fr. Pel from the other two gentlemen, had to be satisfied with seeing the crucifix passing in front of him?

Things could not have happened this way if Conchita had not been in another world.

Shortly afterward, Conchita, still in a state of ecstasy, stood up, her eyes fixed on the vision.

At this point, we were thrilled! Our prayers were answered! Conchita would go up to the pines. This would provide the opportunity for everybody—and not just for those whose close circle had nearly smothered her—to see her, to follow her, to touch her; in other words, to possess her.

Alas, she only took a few steps, just enough to reach the point of departure of the ecstasy and fell again abruptly on her knees on the stones. There followed two more minutes of celestial colloquy and she arose very relaxed and smiling; all was over. No, not all. Alert as ever, she shielded her eyes with her hands; the flash bulbs were blinding her.

This is what we saw with our own eyes on June 18 at the *cuadro*. Starting around 11:40 p.m., the apparition, which involved two stages, lasted 12 or 13 minutes in all.

What did we hear? The joy of those who were able to see the ecstasy in this impossible ravine; the disappointment of others and the dissatisfaction of a few. "It is unbelievable," they said, "These people are savages. They nearly crushed us. Ah, if we had known!"

Then little by little, deceptions vanished and peace and calm again reigned. People were informed that St. Michael had indeed given the Virgin's Message and that Conchita would make it public the next day after the community Mass. Everyone went home.

As for the stars, they remained in their marvelous sky.

Chapter 23

The Last Message

On the morning of June 19, Conchita's house was again invaded. As we noted in 1962, the ecstasy of the previous day had restored her vigor and health and added beauty and modesty to her countenance. Untiringly she said good-bye to everybody, autographed holy cards and photographs, kissed tenderly and respectfully all objects presented to her. Then without breakfast we went to the church where everybody received Holy Communion. Finally around 1:00 p.m. on the doorstep of the little house, someone read in Spanish and in French the text of the Message Conchita had given in her own handwriting:

The Message

The Message that the Holy Virgin has given to the world through the intercession of St. Michael. The Angel said:

Because my Message of October 18 [1961] has not been complied with and little has been done to make it known to the world, I tell you that this is the last one.

Before the Chalice was filling; now it is overflowing. [The Chalice of Divine wrath]

Many priests¹ are on the road to perdition and they are taking many souls with them.

To the Eucharist, there is given less and less importance.

We must make every effort to avoid Divine wrath which is pressing on us.

If you ask Him for His forgiveness with a sincere soul, He will forgive you.

It is I, your Mother, who through the intercession and mediation of St. Michael, want to say that you must amend your lives. You are already in the last warnings.

I love you very much and do not want your condemnation.

Pray to Us [God and Our Lady] sincerely and We shall give it to you [what you ask Us]. You must make more sacrifices.

Meditate on the Passion of Jesus.

Conchita Gonzalez

June 18, 1965

1. In Conchita's original version of the Message, she wrote: "Many cardinals, many bishops and many priests . . ." However, in subsequent copies she wrote only "many priests." When asked why, she explained that they (cardinals and bishops) were all priests.

Three little notations from Conchita herself:

The priests are, in varying degrees, the fathers of souls. A great number of priests, by following those referred to in the Message, are in danger of perdition.

The Message is explicit; it does not refer to all priests, nor to a few, but to many.

St. Michael intercedes for us with God and Our Lady. Moreover, he is their intermediary to speak to us, to protect and to help us in every way. The Blessed Virgin requested that a chapel be built in Garabandal, not in her honor, but in honor of St. Michael the Archangel.

Of course, Conchita, who lives in her small village, is personally unaware of the present doctrinal errors concerning the Eucharist, the hurriedly made thanksgivings, the decrease in Benedictions of the Blessed Sacrament, in day and night adorations, in Forty Hours devotions, in public processions.

But what she learned immediately was the reaction of the priests in the Puentenansa area, which includes Garabandal. The first day they said, "It concerns us." The next day, their reaction was stronger: "It concerns all the priests." We were told that on the third and fourth day they went to express their displeasure at the Bishop's residence in Santander.

But the furor erupting concerning that part of the Message concerning "many priests" is of less importance to us than our conversation in Conchita's kitchen with her brother, Serafin, and two villagers.

On the lips, and in the hearts and souls of these three laymen, there was nothing but humility and kindness toward the clergy to whom Our Lady of Carmel was alluding. They remarked, "It is the father who educates his family. Our priests are our fathers. If some have defects or commit certain faults, it is because they are human, too. May they set the example and we shall be better Christians."

In order to calm their fears aroused by this Message to the clergy, we answered:

"At the beginning of Mass, the priest proclaims: 'Brethren, I confess to you my sins.' And the faithful answer: 'Father, we confess to you our own.' The conclusion is: we are all sinners. Moreover, the priests teach us the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. We all know that only the publican was forgiven. Therefore, all is simple and easy; let each one according to his public confession at the beginning of Mass repeat the humble prayer of the publican, the repentant sinner of the Gospel.

We fail to understand how someone could take offense at this Message rather than lovingly thank our Heavenly Mother."

Among children of the same family, among parents and children, the only conceivable and valid attitude toward the Message is the one expressed briefly in Conchita's kitchen, a little bluntly but truthfully.

Chapter 24

The Warning

Having received all necessary ecclesiastical permissions, with some time on his hands, and less pressed than others, our priest friend remained three days in the village and had no other contact with Conchita other than to assure her that he was still there. He stayed discreetly in the background in favor of the June 18 visitors, to provide more opportunities to new friends of Garabandal, particularly Fr. Luna of Zaragoza and the famous Italian actor, Carlo Campanini, who were deeply involved.

This provided him with a most beautiful opportunity to pursue his investigation elsewhere—with our friend, Pepe Diez, for example, who confirmed his previous historic statement concerning the miracle of the Host.

What a loyal, energetic and intelligent witness, that one! As we asked him if he had appeared before the commission of Santander, he answered, "Never." When we wondered about this strange attitude and incredulity on the part of the commission, he explained their attitude: "Because the truth does not suit them." We were to learn even more astonishing things later.

It was now the fourth anniversary of the apparitions. Yes, everything had started four years ago, on June 18, 1961. The commission had already published three notices and the last one, in October, 1962, affirmed that the events were of a natural order. And yet during these years, it never had the time to summon either the visionaries, their families or even the parish priest. This is inconceivable for the French people and those who know the history of Lourdes, Fatima or Beauregard. Yes, inconceivable, but alas true, very true.

However, the ecstasy of the preceding Friday had become a determining factor for the people of the village. Pepe Diez, the bricklayer, the workman who mingled with the little people, and who always kept his ears open, noted: "Now that it has happened, everyone believes again."

The three days spent apart from Conchita were by no means a loss of time for our friend since they provided him with the opportunity to review his investigative notes.

Moreover he had a long conversation with the parents of Mari Cruz: Escolastico, her father, and Pilar, her mother. He learned from the eldest member of the village that Escolastico's father and mother had lived good Christian lives. As for Pilar, she is a stranger to us; she comes from Pas; she is a "Pasiega."

An extraordinary thing happened which we relate only because we are dealing with the apparitions. One night Loli's mother, Julia, was taken seriously ill. Ceferino, very upset, came to knock at our priest-friend's door. After the priest administered the Last Rites she nearly died in his arms.

At this moment when truth appears in all its clarity, we learned that during the previous days Julia had spontaneously offered the sacrifice of her life for the "acknowledgment" of the apparitions.

Never in his 40 years of priestly life had our friend witnessed such a heroic act of sacrifice. Humble and smiling Julia, habitually patient and silent, will always remain for us the heroic witness of the absolute authenticity of the apparitions of Garabandal.

When it was determined that Julia was out of danger, we were able to go back to Aniceta and spend a long time with her in her little kitchen, so much so that we found her completely relaxed and smiling.

"Well, Aniceta, the six and a half months of anxiety are over?"

"It's not too soon."

"Is the prophecy of December 8, 1964, well realized?"

"Yes, finally."

"Are you now at peace?"

"Yes, thank God."

Now it was Aniceta's turn to ask questions:

"Did you doubt the coming of the Angel?"

"No, not for a minute."

"Why not?"

"Because, since 1962, we have believed in Garabandal."

"And if nothing had happened?"

"Jacinta told us a long time ago: 'Conchita never lies.'"

"Yes, but the Miracle is yet to come."

"So what?"

"I can't believe it. It's beyond me."

"Aniceta, don't start that again. Everything is linked in the events of Garabandal. The past guarantees the future."

"May God hear you."

"Aniceta, it's all understood. The Virgin said so, and she, above all, never lies."

At this point in the conversation, Conchita, alert and happy, invited us to her room: "I have presents for you; take them."

It was a copy in her own handwriting of the Message which we didn't know thoroughly as yet, and another document, also in her own handwriting, concerning the Warning.

We were going to question her on the latter but she didn't give us a chance. She said, "A long time ago the Virgin told me many, many things. But she didn't tell me to reveal or not to reveal them. Often I don't know what to do; I don't know what to reveal."

"Here, in writing, is the Warning that was given to me during the apparition of January 1, 1965, while I was alone at the pines."

The Warning that the Virgin will send us . . . is like a punishment to bring the good closer to God and to warn others [either to amend or face punishment].

I cannot reveal of what the Warning consists. The Virgin did not tell me to reveal it [Conchita doesn't write, "The Virgin did not allow me"] or to say anything else. (In this respect, I have nothing to reveal.)¹

God wishes that through this Warning, we make amends and commit fewer sins against Him.²

Since we asked Conchita if this Warning would cause death, she wrote the following, as a note:

"If we die from it, it will not be from the Warning itself, but as a result of the emotion felt in seeing and feeling the Warning."

The Message of June 18 is not only the last one given, but, in the words of St. Michael, according to Conchita, it is also the last one that the Virgin will give. We should not expect any other. We are indeed in the era of the last warnings before the end of time. Conchita will note later on, "*before the end of an era*," she emphasizes, "*which is not the end of the world*."

Then, among these last warnings, special importance should be given to the one we have just read. It will occur before the Miracle and be a spiritual preparation for it.

According to the doctrine of the Fifth Lateran Council and Pope Leo X (1512), the Holy Father is the only judge of revelations of this kind (prophecies).

At the same time, may we point out for those who need it that it is no longer necessary to await the Miracle in order to finally believe in Garabandal. May they simply look forward to the Warning.

1. "The Warning is something supernatural and will not be explained by science. It will be seen and felt. For those who do not know Christ (non-Christians), they will believe that it is a warning from God."
—Conchita, October 20, 1968.

2. "The Warning will be a correction of the conscience of the world."
—Conchita, October 20, 1968.

Chapter 25

Hesitant Minds

Nine days before the apparition of St. Michael, Conchita sent us the following letter which is disclosed to the public for the first time. We did not read it until June 30, because it arrived on June 13 after we had already left to witness the ecstasy prophesied six and a half months earlier. It bears a Puentenansa postmark and is dated June 9, 1965:

Ave Maria.

I have now decided to write to you what I think about June 18.

I believe it is better that not many people come to Garabandal on June 18, for the following reasons:

First of all, the coming of the Angel is of concern only to me, not to the people who will be there.

It is possible that the people—almost all of them—will leave very disillusioned. Something evil could result from it, because many people expect some kind of miracle to happen. And this will not be the case.

When the time comes for the Miracle, it is then they should come. But fewer people will come then, because they will say: 'On June 18, what happened was less than nothing, so it will be the same thing on the day of the Miracle.' And it is far more advisable that they come on the day of the Miracle rather than on June 18, 1965.

I fear very much that something will happen on June 18. I think it is rather risky.

It is up to you to discourage people from coming so as to avoid promoting such an environment.¹

Three points must be kept in mind about this letter:

1. "The Angel will come on June 18 for me alone."
2. "The important thing is the Miracle to come . . ." Therefore, it is on that day that great crowds must come. If some people were disappointed on June 18 because they had expected to see a miracle, while only an ecstasy similar to many others took place, they risk imagining that the Miracle will also disappoint them. They may fear that nothing

will happen on the day of the Miracle which, actually, will be the essential thing.

3. "If people come on June 18, I fear an indescribable something that could be rather harmful."

Conchita need not have worried. Everyone there was very level-headed. None of the visitors present in Garabandal on that day ever expected a miracle. But several had envisioned that the ecstasy would be similar to previous public ones: that everyone would be able to see Conchita in one of her ecstatic walks, for example.

The fact that the apparition occurred at the *cuadro*, the very spot where St. Michael appeared the first time in the ravine leading to the pines, enabled only a few people to see Conchita in ecstasy. And this—momentarily, it is true—disappointed those who were not near her. We say "momentarily" because everyone understood quickly that it was not possible to see more.

1. If we are not mistaken, someone had gone to Conchita's house and warned her against "environment promoters." This vocabulary is not Conchita's and this young girl could not have learned it by herself.

Chapter 26

After the Visit of the Angel

The end of our stay at Garabandal was most gratifying. After a week and a half it became evident that everyone had forgiven us for coming, in spite of Conchita's letter that we were to find upon our return to France.

It is amazing how everyone willingly accepted that the Archangel "favored the French people" and had Conchita presenting her crucifix to kiss only to three Frenchmen. The people of the town remarked: "After all, you (Frenchmen) were the most numerous and the most pious." And they added, "We were so privileged in the past, it is only fair that you have your turn." But what they didn't say—because they were unaware of it—was, "After all, St. Michael is the special protector of France."

Because we did not forget it, we had given Fr. Valentin the large sum of money collected in France for the building of a chapel in honor of St. Michael, in Garabandal.

One morning, as we gathered at the entrance to the church, Loli came to us and, taking us by the arm, called us to the side and confided in us. She had that beautiful smile which reminded us of her ecstasies in her kitchen and her Communion with the Host invisible on the tongue.

"You may be sure, very sure," she said, "that I saw Our Lady and St. Michael. Do not be concerned about the *fracasos*, no matter what they are."

Charming Loli, so outgoing with cordiality! We didn't expect that much. The situation was very clear to us concerning these *fracasos*, as they say in Spanish slang; i.e., the troubles faced by the community with regard to the apparitions. We knew about the first one which we had witnessed in March, 1963, and we also knew what resulted from it during the first months of 1965.

No one missed the rendezvous, not even Jacinta, usually so reserved. More than once we saw her only from a distance, and if we had not known her thoroughly, we would have been tempted to think she was trying to avoid us. We had to be very skillful in order to get a picture of her and yet she would not agree to it unless she was surrounded by her companions. In this particular instance, she came to us stealthily to offer a small statue of Our Lady of Lourdes which had been kissed by Our Lady of Garabandal.

Pilar, the mother of Mari Cruz, had forgiven us for mentioning in our writings that her husband rarely went to Mass. We had a long conversation with him in her presence and we came to understand that his

poor health could explain many things.

As for Mari Cruz, so easily and so often aloof, she had agreed to allow herself to be photographed with a smile, and of her own accord had autographed a picture of the Little Flower of Lisieux. And it was not a picture chosen at random. It represented our little saint leaning against the cross, holding a lily in her right hand. The text was the main words of the offering to the merciful love of Jesus.

While strolling in the village, we met a few older women and one of them confided with great emotion that she was the first one to know about the apparitions. Indeed, her house was the nearest to the *cuadro* and from it she had only to lift up her eyes to see the famous apple tree.

We thank Valentina, the eldest of the women, who, upon our arrival on Sunday, had assured us that we would not sleep in our car, but at her house, on a good soft mattress filled with the same quality wool which she was drying on her balcony.

We met Ceferino and Julia, Simon and Maria; also Aurelia. We do not want to forget Eloisa, the Filipino, our good and devoted interpreter. We had yet to see Conchita, her mother and her brothers; Serafin, the oldest, stern but smiling; and Aniceto and Miguel, the two younger ones, friendly and silently devoted.

We said good-bye as if our coming had been without shadow. Everyone had forgotten the letter posted at Puentenansa on June 9.

Conchita absolutely relaxed, ran upstairs and came down saying, "This is my gift to you; here are rosaries for the three of you."

Calling one of us aside, on the threshold, she said, "Here is a letter for the Bishop. I entrust it to you. Would you kindly give it to him personally?"

"And what about a letter for Rome that we would address directly and surely?"

"I do not have another one for the time being."

At Cosio, Fr. Valentin was waiting for us. He knew that we had to stop at the Bishop's house and he had some business at Santander; we took him along with us.

During the trip (about 56 miles) everyone was unusually silent and even solemn. The conversation was in slow, hushed tones. June 18 was the subject uppermost in our minds; as well as the four years that had elapsed between the first and last apparition of St. Michael, and the present reaction of the priests of the area.

"Fr. Valentin, they told us at the village that you have never testified before the commission."

"That's right."

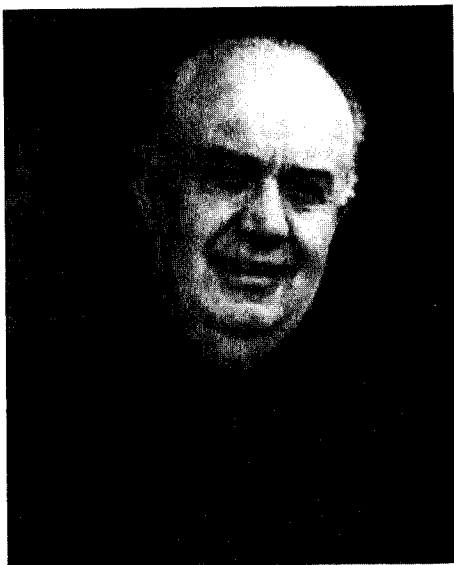
"What do you mean, 'that's right'?"

"It is absolutely right."

"But you are the pastor of Garabandal, aren't you?"

"They ignore it."

"You have known the children and their families inside out for a long time; you are their confessor, their spiritual director."



Fr. Valentin Marichalar, pastor of Garabandal during the time of the events.

"I am telling you that they ignore it."

"But after all, you are everything in Garabandal!"

"For you, maybe I am everything up there, but to the commission, I am nothing. I do not exist."

"You are coming with us to the Bishop's house, aren't you?"

"No, because, as I told you, I do not exist."

Chapter 27

Before the Commission

We were to meet the commission on June 24, 1965. To be exact, after having spoken with the Bishop's 75-year-old secretary, who on June 9 did not trouble to conceal his hostility for Garabandal, one of us was to spend four hours with the clerk of the commission.

The latter did not tell us that he had just interrogated Mari Cruz and her mother Pilar, but we knew this from another source. After affably and courteously inviting us to lunch, he started his interrogation, which was what he had in mind from the start. Without preamble and without any warning as to his intentions, he took out three large sheets of paper containing 35 handwritten questions. The questioning began during the hor d'oeuvres.

We couldn't help but compare the present setting to that of the official diocesan commissions which investigated past apparitions (now recognized by the Church) with court, chairman, assessors, attorney at law and notary, or clerk. We could still hear the complaints of the venerable clerk writing notes for three long hours as was his assignment. In this particular instance, the Santander clerk assumed the role of the entire court.

There was no opening prayer to the Holy Spirit and the "witness" was not required to take an oath.

In view of the importance of the subject under discussion, we debated whether we should decline to go on with the comedy and suffer the consequences or to cooperate with this scandalous caricature of canonical court.

On the other hand it presented us with such a wonderful opportunity since the clerk is the mainspring of the commission. The 35 questions would afford us an opportunity to know him and to form a just opinion of him and upon all those at Santander who are all-powerful in the investigation of Garabandal.

"I am at your disposal, Mr. Clerk."

Here are the reflections of our traveling companion:

"The interrogation was not made in French, my mother tongue, but in Spanish, and lasted four hours.

"I kept all my personal notes and I remember very well the questions and particularly my answers. Of course, these notes are the exclusive property of the Church. Moreover, I respect the priestly character of this man-Friday clerk. But I have no other alternative than to speak the truth. In view particularly of the fact that the clerk has the courage of

his convictions, that he defends them through every possible means, ranging from harshness to insinuations. *'Amicus, mihi, Plato'*. . . he would say.

"During the four hours, I often wondered whether I was considered as a witness or as a defendant; as a young military recruit or a decorated soldier; as an apprentice or as a qualified workman; as being honest in the things of God or a mere charlatan.

"For four hours, without any right, and in accordance with the requirements involved in the questioning, the clerk played successively the role of the procurator, the assessor and the chairman in this 'restaurant-court'.

"I have seen him 'working' on the witness, or defendant, trying to draw from him some information liable to be detrimental to Garabandal. If he sensed that he was dealing with a pro-Garabandalist, he would at the most opportune time endeavor to extort a contradictory statement. If the 'witness' — realizing that the questions were 'slanted' and illegal in every respect — would refuse to sign the Minutes, the clerk himself would not hesitate to write the name, in capital letters, of the one he attempted to trap.

"Yes, these are the true facts. I bear witness to it publicly. This astonishing clerk wrote my name because I refused to sign; because I refused to sign what I considered to be an incredible contempt of all scientific loyalty, a scandalous challenge to all canonical laws."

The clerk and other members of the Santander commission never believed in Garbandal from the beginning of the apparitions. Why?

Evidently—and this was noticeable from their attitude toward the children, their families, Fr. Valentin, Pepe Diez—because in the first place they disregarded every truly scientific method in this matter.

Also because, at the end of July, 1961, their attitude toward Conchita was similar to the one assumed by Cauchon and his followers toward Joan of Arc in the cemetery of St. Ouen.

How could they, for the past four years, use every possible means to oppose human reasoning and canonical law?

This is their business. It is ours to expose their conduct. The above statement will enable all souls who were confused by the commission to understand the cause of their confusion.

Chapter 28

A Bishop

On June 24, at 11:00 a.m., Don Eugenio Beitia Aldazabal, Bishop of Santander, received us in his office at his residence.

First of all, he carefully read the letter we gave him on behalf of Conchita and our conversation opened in a cordial and friendly manner. He made no mention of the June 18 events, of which he was well aware. We did not allow ourselves to refer to it except to thank him for the confidence he placed in us and to ask him a favor.

"Your Excellency, the French people understand your prudence very well. Unfortunately, the restrictions contained in the October, 1962, statement make Garabandal a virtual prison. Also they give the world the impression that we are afraid to see the truth. We would welcome any control of our conduct, but leave the door open; allow us to go to the village without special permission."

"I wish I could do that. But ten days ago, I received a letter from the Holy Office asking me to make no further statement. Through courtesy I must remain silent."

"Your Excellency, we are sorry that you resigned. We sincerely regret it."

"Well, I do not care for honors. Moreover, I am a very sick man and at the point of losing my sight. I no longer feel able physically to carry out the duties of this vast diocese. For the past two years, I have made known the state of my health to the Holy See. On two or three occasions during the Council sessions, I reiterated my request. I thank the Holy Father for having finally complied."

No one could have spoken with greater simplicity, humility and detachment. We were in the presence of a great Bishop of the Catholic Church. He would leave the See of Santander on August 16, the eve of the installation of his successor.

We are convinced now that in this affair, the personal attitude of Bishop Beitia was correct.

By the time he arrived at Santander three years ago the commission set up by Bishop Doroteo Fernandez, the provisional apostolic administrator of the diocese, was already established. He reaffirmed the task of this commission. But at the same time, he allowed the creation of an unofficial and secret commission, whose members were favorable to Garabandal.

He acted very tactfully toward the public commission which was completely unaware that its sealed reports, placed on the Bishop's

desk, remained in his personal file. They didn't have the slightest idea of the Bishop's esteem because their reports were neither answered nor acknowledged.

We have the deepest admiration for this Bishop, so conscious of his personal responsibilities and professing a high respect and esteem for the unique grace of the episcopal consecration.

Indeed, even if Bishop Beitia had himself designated the official commission, he knew very well that it could act only in a consultative capacity; that it had no part in the "charisms" of the successors of the apostles. He alone received from God mission and grace to judge things. Therefore, to enlighten this judgment, prudence and wisdom demanded that he know the pros and cons in the matter of apparitions. Apart from the avowed adversaries who formed the official commission, he owed it to God, to the Church and to himself to listen also to the consultative voices of the unofficial commission.

This he did without anyone's knowledge in order not to offend some or flatter others.

This provides us with another reason to state publicly that he was a grand bishop. And he remains as such because of his unparalleled intelligence and the national responsibility he kept after his retirement.

More than once, the dean of the faculty of Canon Law, who conferred on him the Doctorate degree, used to say to his friends; "Bishop Beitia was the most brilliant student in our university." The Spanish Episcopal Conference designated him chairman of the press activities in Spain. And we know that he made a very great impression in America during a recent world meeting.

Such is, and always will be, the image of Bishop Don Eugenio Beitia Aldazabal, the bishop of the apparitions in Garabandal.

Chapter 29

Conchita Announces Her Departure

San Sebastian de Garabandal
August 18, 1965

This short letter will make you aware of my great joy. My mother allows me to enter the convent.

For me, it is a great thing to offer myself totally to Christ at the early age of 16, and for life.

I am so unworthy that I cannot understand that Jesus Christ calls me to Him.

I have no doubt as to my vocation, and I am confident that everything will turn out right so that I will be able to enter the convent.

Pray for me, that I be very good and that I persevere.

Here is my wish: to love God very much, and by His will, to love the world.

Therefore I offer myself completely to God to love Him with all my strength, and at the same time, to do something good for the world.

Pray that it becomes a reality; that everything turns out right, and quickly, so that I may enter as soon as possible the convent of the Discalced Carmelite Missionaries.

Ask that people pray for me. I will do the same for everyone. My mother and my brothers greet you and I ask your prayers for them.

With the affection of one who remembers you in her poor prayers.

Conchita Gonzalez

A few words of this letter appear to us as being inspired. She writes: "Here is my wish: to love God very much, and by His will, to love the world." This teenager solves the problem of the "presence of the Church in the world."

Such is the seal of Conchita on the Garabandal events. We shall see later why she could not realize her formal wish to enter the convent at the set date.

Chapter 30

Conversation at Torrelavega

In the presence of witnesses, on September 8, 1965, we asked 45 written questions of Conchita and her mother, Aniceta. Here are a few of her answers, the remainder being kept for future reference.

“Yes, I have written the date of the Miracle to His Excellency the Bishop.¹

“I have had a ‘locution’ with the Blessed Virgin on July 2. I shall write to tell you what was said. And I have had another one on July 18. I shall write that one down, also.

“I am thinking of entering the convent, and my companions also. We have thought of this since the first days of the apparitions.²

“This has not been suggested to us by any priest.” (Aniceta confirms this statement.)

Conchita continues:

“The Holy Father, the Pope of Rome, will see the Miracle from wherever he will be and Padre Pio will see it also.³

“Yes, the Council will be extraordinarily successful.

“After his Holiness Pope Paul VI, there will be only two more popes before the end of the present period, which is not the end of the world. The Blessed Virgin told me this but I don’t know what it means.

“I know absolutely nothing of the date the Council ends, the eventual difficulties, the eventuality of an anti-pope or the many types of catastrophes which were mentioned concerning Fatima.

“I am entering the Discalced Carmelite Missionaries at Pamplona. I wish to go to Africa because the kind of life the nuns lead pleases me and I am fond of black people.

“My departure from Garabandal will not hinder the announcement

1. This letter, sent by mail, never reached the desk of Bishop Eugenio Beitia.

2. We would not venture any question to Conchita on this subject, other than that implied by the following answer.

3. “The prophecy concerning Padre Pio remains the same.” (Padre Pio died on September 23, 1968.) —*Conchita, October 20, 1968.*

The following was also learned: Conchita did not elaborate further on the prophecy but we feel that this was not necessary in the light of the evidence that was shown. Conchita has in her possession a veil that covered the face of Padre Pio after his death while he lay in the coffin. The veil remained over the face of Padre Pio for several hours prior to the covering of the coffin by a glass cover to prevent the faithful from touching him directly. It is felt that the fact that Conchita has the veil, that must have been most precious to the monastery at San Giovanni Rotondo, gives evidence of the closeness of Padre Pio to the events of Garabandal. Conchita does not have to speak any further on the prophecy since the veil itself speaks clearly enough.

of the Miracle. I will inform my superior of the date, and, if necessary, I will also inform my spiritual director.

“Besides, the Blessed Virgin has the necessary means for us to know this date, even if my spiritual director or my superior did not mention it.

“I am entering the convent at the end of this month of September, at Pamplona.”

Aniceta cuts in:

“She is very young . . . but God who gave her to me could well take her back.”

Conchita continues, smiling:

“Mother, if I were to marry, I would also be leaving. With this difference. I would be leaving with a man, whereas now I will leave with God.”

We persisted:

“Why leave so young for the convent, Conchita?” The adolescent smiled again. Then her answers continued. She mentions a German group who has made rather fanciful declarations; for example, that the Holy Father would personally announce the date of the Miracle.

“The Germans are wrong. I never said that the Holy Father would announce the date of the Miracle.”

Aniceta apologizes for them:

“These Germans do not understand Spanish well.”

Conchita continues to answer several questions.

“After the Miracle, a chapel will be built in honor of St. Michael. I would prefer it if we didn’t do as they did at Lourdes where I went on May 18, 1963. I would prefer poverty and simplicity.

“It is very difficult for the village to remain poor and simple as at the time of the apparitions, but I wish it.

“The greatest danger to the village of Garabandal is pride.

“The principal virtue in Christian life is humility. A soul who is not very humble cannot love Jesus, cannot have total confidence in Him.

“When I wrote the letter of August 16, concerning my departure for the convent, with these words, ‘to love Jesus and by meditation on Christ do good to the world,’ I meant this: ‘Jesus gives His love to the soul, and the soul loves others through this love.’

“Yes, Mari Cruz has seen the Virgin. Her recantation is due to a mysterious operation of the devil. She will reaffirm the reality of her ecstasies after the Miracle.”

She was asked:

“What will happen in Garabandal when Loli, Jacinta and Conchita have gone? Only Mari Cruz will remain in the village repeating to strangers that the apparitions are false.”

Conchita’s eyes widen in astonishment; she had never considered this problem. She remains silent.

Last question:

“When all three of you have left, will no one go up to Garabandal?”

“On the contrary! It is then that it will become necessary to go up; then people will come only for the Blessed Virgin.”

Chapter 31

Dialogue in the Tent

On September 10, 1965, a French family, the parents and their eight children, set up a tent a few feet away from Conchita's home.

That day, only the mother, [Mrs. X] and the two youngest children remained in the tent.

To be gracious, Conchita entered the tent with the ever-devoted interpreter, Eloisa Deguia. Here is the text of the dialogue:

Conchita: "You are fortunate to have set up your tent on this spot [behind the fountain], this is where the Virgin appeared to Mari Cruz.

"Mari Cruz asked the Virgin for a sign, to perform a miracle, so the crowd might believe. Then, a star came and perched itself at the feet of the Virgin, and everyone could see it."

(This was prior to the "Forma" miracle of July 18, 1962.)

Mrs. X: "Conchita, my little sick child whom I recommended to your prayers on the 18th of June, is not cured. Is it because my merits are not sufficient to obtain this grace?"

Conchita: "We do not have more or less merit. We are more or less loved. He who never heard of God does not have less merit than we have; but he is less loved."

Mrs. X: "Just the same, the Blessed Virgin chose well, in choosing you!"

Conchita: "When the Blessed Virgin appears to me, her glance does not rest, does not fix on me. It circles the mountains, it embraces the whole world, and her face smiles to the universe. She doesn't come for me."

Mrs. X: "The painting in the hall off your bedroom represents the Virgin. It is a nice one. Does it resemble your vision?"

Conchita: "No! Compared with reality, it is nothing. This type of beauty cannot be reproduced."

Conchita questions in turn: "Are you acquainted with Fatima?"

Mrs. X: "A little. I've heard of the miracle of the sun."

Conchita: "The miracle of Fatima is nothing in comparison with the one which will take place here. It will be much, much greater."

At this moment, the interpreter whispered to Mrs. X, "I think we will see the Virgin herself!"

Conchita, having heard, answered immediately:

"No, no, it's not that!"

On another occasion, she was more specific. "If we saw the Virgin, it would be an apparition, and not a miracle."

After that, raising her arms and spreading them, Conchita added:

"It will be much greater, much more powerful than at Fatima. Persons present will be so affected that no one will leave here doubting.

"The whole world should be present for the Miracle, for then surely there would be no punishment, since all would believe."

Mrs. X: "Will all the sick that are present be cured?"

Conchita: "No, not all, nor a few. The Virgin did not say *todos*, nor *unos*. She said *los* [the sick] will be cured."

On her own, Conchita continued:

"The Virgin laughs and smiles a great deal. She is not frightening."

Mrs. X: "So she is very kind! Kind like a mother?"

Conchita: "No, more than a mother. She is good like a friend, because we can tell her everything that passes through our heads. She understands, and helps us. She laughed and even played with us. She even let Loli have her crown to play with. Loli put the crown on her head, but was afraid of being burned by the stars. With a mother, we are not so free, nor as confiding as with the Virgin. We do not tell our mother about our mistakes nor reveal our faults!"

Mrs. X: "We are taking you to France with us. We shall show you St. Bernadette at Nevers. Her body—her real body, incorrupt—is in a shrine. We see her dressed as a nun, and people come to pray before her. It would be nice for you to see this shrine."

"Oh! when we have seen the Virgin, nothing else can compare."

The interpreter murmured to Mrs. X in French:

"Well, when she is dead, she will also be put in a shrine and people will come and pray to her."

Conchita, extremely intelligent, and now used to hearing our language spoken, had guessed. She burst out laughing and pointed her index finger to her forehead as if to say: aren't you a little crazy?

After that, her face became more and more serious and she seemed recollected in thought:

"If it be God's will, if it would make people pray more, I would let it be so. But to me, that is not the important thing, it is but a small matter."

Chapter 32

Testimony Given by Children

The opportunity was too good to pass up. After we noted the dialogue which had taken place in the tent of Mrs. X, now returned to France, we gathered around the family table in the presence of the father and mother, five of their boys and one of their girls, and we questioned them.

We can't resist giving here their spontaneous answers; we thus have the testimony of young people about one of their own age group.

Renaud, age 16, said:

"I came into the tent when Conchita was saying, 'We don't have more or less merit, we are more or less loved.' I couldn't help exclaiming. 'It's always the same. There are still teacher's pets in your heaven. It just isn't fair.' She burst out laughing heartily."

Daniel, age 7, said:

"She loaned me her donkey and I fell off. Luckily, I fell away from the stones, in the grass near Conchita's feet."

Michel, 14 years old:

"And you?"

"Me? Nothing."

The others:

"Yes, yes, go on and tell it, we won't laugh at you. Tell it, tell it!"

Michel: "Well she played a trick on me! She said, 'Go on up to the pines and you will see the Virgin.'"

"You're joking!" I answered.

"No, no, go on. She is waiting for you," said Conchita.

"And so?"

"I went. But I saw nothing. I came back down furious."

"And are you still furious?"

"No, now I laugh."

"And you resent her?"

"Oh no, I like this Conchita."

"You are right. You'll understand later on."

The others:

"But he already understands."

"How, why?"

"Go on, Michel, keep on right to the end."

Michel hesitates, sniffs and puts his elbows on the table.

"Well then, here goes. She looked at me smilingly, then murmured, 'You will become a priest.'"

"Oh, that."

"Yes, oh that. It isn't funny. I hadn't even thought of it. I'm in a fine fix now."

Philippe, 15 years of age:

"Don't worry, Michel. We will see about it when the time comes."

Guy, 13 years old, with the most nervous manner of all the boys, interrupted:

"What a character this Conchita is!"

And in a chorus:

"Oh yes, she is a character, Conchita; a good character, but genuine!"

"Easy, boys, easy."

"It's just that she didn't go about doing things gently. She was very gay, simple, open, and a great tease with us. She wouldn't hesitate to tussle good-naturedly with us. We used to say to her, 'You're a misplaced boy.' She would answer, 'You are but misplaced girls.' We worked at the haying with her and we certainly played rough. We would throw hay at her and she would try to make us eat some; just as we did to begin with."

The boys are still excited over it; we can't hear a word of what we're saying.

"Quiet, children, quiet!"

The eldest who is 16 glanced at us, and concluded with these remarks:

"With all that, she is perfectly straightforward, no trouble there. Impeccable Conchita. She went up with us to the fields, but older boys were not allowed to go with her. If all the girls were like her, there wouldn't be any temptation."

During the conversation with her brothers, their little sister had gotten up on the table.

"Now it's your turn, Françoise."

"I also played with her in the grass. But mostly Conchita kept me by her side, holding my hand."

"She spoke?"

"No, she would smile at me."

"No souvenirs?"

"Yes, a picture. I will go and get it."

We have the picture before us. On the face of it is our Therese of Lisieux (Teresita as they call her in Spain) dressed for her First Communion, May 8, 1884. These lines in French were printed on the card:

*Oh, but I loved Jesus in the Host
Who came in the morn of my life
To be betrothed to my rapt soul!
Oh, how I opened with joy,
My heart!*

On the reverse side, in Spanish:

For Françoise, as a souvenir and mark of affection from she who wishes that you love her always through Jesus and Mary. One question: Who loves Their Hearts more, you or I? You pray for me. I will pray for you.

Conchita Gonzalez

Conclusion:

We then turn to the 40 year-old father of the family who had been listening attentively to the testimony of his wife and six children. He summed it up thus:

“Garabandal! A corner of paradise! Fortunately, there are two Conchita’s: my wife’s and my children’s. They complement one another admirably.”

Chapter 33

Some Americans Question Conchita

What we have just read, and other equally important texts which are to follow, are evidence of the haste with which Conchita wanted to reveal in part what was on her mind before her departure from Garabandal.

She wants to leave us what concerns us at present.

Here, given rather loosely, are her answers to questions put to her in an interview with some Americans on September 14, 1965. These answers were put down in her own handwriting and countersigned by the witnesses who were present.

“The Warning is something coming directly from God. The entire world will see it, regardless of where one might be.

“It will be like the revelation of our sins. Believers as well as unbelievers will see and feel it.

“The Miracle will last about 15 minutes. The Virgin said so. It will occur about 8:30 in the evening, the hour at which the Angel appeared to us the first time. It is the same angel as the one we saw, before seeing the Virgin.

“The Warning should purify us for the Miracle [a correction of conscience]. It is also like a catastrophe. It will make us think of the dead, in the sense that we would truly prefer to be dead rather than have to experience this Warning.

“Our Lady said that the sick present in the village or on the mountains around the village itself will be cured on the day of the Miracle.

“She did not say ‘all’ or ‘a few’. She said ‘the sick’.

“It will be therefore necessary to go up to the village of Garabandal and not remain, for example, at Cosio.

“The Punishment, if we do not change, will be horrible, as we deserve. We have seen it [Loli, Jacinta, and I], but we can’t tell of what it consists, because I do not have the Virgin’s permission. When I saw it, I felt terrified, even though I saw the Blessed Virgin at the same time. [Even though she saw the indescribable beauty and goodness of the Virgin at the same moment she saw the Punishment.]

“She prayed the rosary very slowly, while facing us, as if she wanted us to pray in that manner. She said the ‘Hail Mary’ to teach us to say it well.

“The Virgin mentioned this to me in one conversation:

‘The body of Fr. Luis will remain intact as on the day of his burial.’”

This referred to Fr. Luis Andreu, the Jesuit who died of joy after having seen the Virgin and a preview of the Miracle.

(Fr. Luis Andreu’s mother, who has three other Jesuit sons, one in Spain, one in Venezuela and one in Taiwan, is now a professed nun of the Visitation Order. When we visited her recently she said: “As he [Fr. Luis] lay on his bed at the Reinos clinic, my son appeared to be merely sleeping. A drop of ruby red blood was on his lips. I shuddered, asking myself if he would not be put in his coffin alive.”)

In the course of the same interrogation, Conchita explained that Jesus would perform miracles with objects kissed by the Virgin during the ecstasies: “Those who possessed these objects and used them with

Mari Loli holds up a rosary for the Virgin to kiss.



faith and courage would pass their purgatory on this earth. This purgatory will correspond to the one they would go through after death because the sufferings they will endure on this earth will enable them to avoid purgatory in the hereafter.”

“The Blessed Virgin told me nothing concerning the perfume of flowers which, they say, emanates sometimes from objects she has kissed, but she said that the objects she has kissed would accomplish wonders and miracles.”

Concerning the great Miracle to come, Conchita specified:

“If I am in a convent, the Virgin will tell me how to announce the Miracle eight days in advance; it is up to her to arrange everything.”

Conchita also said that the Virgin did not teach them in advance the verses which they sang; for instance, the unknown poetic stanzas sung by the three visionaries at night in front of the house of sleeping Mari Cruz. She helped them to “pull out of themselves” several little poems at the moment they were singing them.

These children, then, were not repeating a lesson. They were seemingly “inspired” at the same moment, in the same manner, all three of them at the same time.

“The Warning will be recognized and accepted by the world as a sign coming directly from God. Because of this, I think that it’s impossible for the world to be so hardened as not to change.

“The “sign” will remain forever at the pines. On the day of the Miracle it will be possible to see it, to photograph and televise it. But it will be impossible to feel it. It will appear as a thing not of this world, but originating from God.

“Concerning the Church, her Son and the popes, in 1962 the Virgin said that there would be but two more popes after His Holiness Paul VI. But this does not signify that the world will end with these two popes.”

Seventeenth question:

“Many who believe in Garabandal wish (but are hesitant in view of authority) to do all they can to spread the Message of our very holy Mother. What have you to tell them?”

“That is very well for the Virgin. She would like us to work at spreading the Message. And it is what the Virgin wishes. But she wants us to obey the Church, and this will bring greater glory to God. She will allow time for the Message to be spread with the permission of the Church.”

Last question:

“Did the Virgin tell you if one of the visionaries would die young?”

Answer: “It is something that people speak about, but the Virgin did not say so.”

Chapter 34 Conchita's Mission

The essential mission of the visionaries of Garabandal is to be among us, the "witnesses" of St. Michael and Our Lady of Mount Carmel. We have seen that Conchita, for her part, never disappoints. Furthermore, she now seems in a hurry to inform us quickly and completely.

At the same time, this adolescent who answers few if any of the letters she receives, has exercised a prodigious apostolate through holy



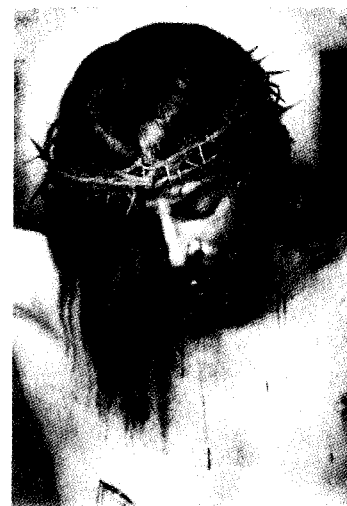
cards. She has dedicated thousands.

Since 1962 we have examined this work thoroughly.

The few phrases that she wrote hastily on these pictures corresponded to the secret state of mind of the interested person. Sometimes these words constituted a veritable prophecy. Other times, they were an evangelical lesson, of which the receiver was in urgent need. Very often it seemed to us that on these countless occasions, Conchita was inspired without knowing it. It resembled what she had said previously about the little songs: "It just came out of us, with the aid of the Virgin."

We have even noticed on a series of pictures, inscriptions which tell of her own spiritual doctrine:

Who is Jesus? Jesus is someone who let Himself be nailed to the cross to redeem us sinners. Besides, He left us His mother as mother to the sinners we are.



Para José Lomangino
El dolor es la puerta por
donde Dios entra en mis fu-
erzas, es una hoguera pa-
ra purificar el alma.

En unión de oraciones

Conchita González

Aty felices Pascuas año 66

Front and back of a holy card bearing message from Conchita for Joey Lomangino.

Let us meditate and think that though we put Jesus inside ourselves, while He is within us—wretches that we are—we dare to sin against Him. What nothings we are and yet at what cost? Because we are the children of Mary who is mother to all of us, even the sinners.

Sometimes Conchita is crushed by the realization of her spiritual poverty. Then the Virgin summons her, "Ola! (hello) What are you up to?"

The Blessed Mother reproaches Conchita for taking refuge in self-pity and adds, "You must approach me with complete confidence."

We listen again while Conchita tells us:

"She presents herself to us, [Jacinta, Loli, Mari Cruz and Conchita] not for our own benefit, nor for the village, nor for Spain, but for the entire world. Because of that, let us spread her Message throughout the universe. It is our mother, Mary, who warned us many times already that if we didn't change, her Son would punish us, but we turn a deaf ear. It is not the sorrows and sufferings of the Punishment which should grieve us, but we should grieve that we are the cause of the Punishment through our numerous sins against Jesus and Mary."

Chapter 35

Mari Loli

It would be a mistake to conclude that Conchita alone sums up Garabandal. She is hurt when a gift is made to her alone. She does not permit us to think only of her, as she is infinitely tactful with regard to her companions. She esteems and loves them profoundly. She has tender feelings particularly where Mari Cruz is concerned. These feelings are also returned to her by the other three.



Despite the occasional tensions which might exist between their families, all four children always find the means of comforting one another when going to or coming from church. They play together on Sunday afternoons; they walk together the way adolescents do, arm in arm among the younger girls; or they stand around and watch their little friends dance under the awning in the village.

How often Conchita asked Our Lady to appear to the others as often as to herself, to give them the same mission, not singling Conchita out for the role.

One day, when she felt crushed under the weight of her inner trials, she even said to the Virgin, "Mother, why only me? Why not share with the others?"

We have no knowledge of the extent to which these requests, these prayers of the eldest of the visionaries, have been or will be granted. But we have come to know the other three sufficiently well to be able to speak about them favorably.

Maria Dolores or Mary of Sorrows, was 16 on May 1, 1965. She is

shorter and heavier than Conchita with sparkling, laughing eyes in a pleasantly attractive face. Her thick, shiny hair falls on a pair of solid shoulders.

In the first year of the apparitions, she was apparently the most favored of Our Lady of Carmel. At the time, she would repeat to the vision, "Bring me to heaven with you right now."

Since that time she has been kept busy with the work and worry of the large family of which she happens to be the eldest girl. At the same time she is the diligent cook and busy waitress of the small village cafe. To sit or pause is out of the question in this house, as her father Ceferino sees all, hears all. He is from a large family of 12 children and always on the alert. When the subject of his daughter and apparitions comes up, he begins by scrutinizing the visiting stranger, without being too obvious about it. He will deny his gullibility before anyone and is determined not to have anyone "put one over" on him, not even his Loli who must toe the mark.

Loli, who always appears to be in a good mood, even if she feels like weeping, prompted someone to write recently, after spending a week in close contact with her, "One can sense an ardent inner life. She is the mystic of the group."

In order to realize this, one must draw her away from her time-consuming tasks and accompany her up and down the road to Cosio. Every other day she goes to Cosio for supplies, accompanied by one of her dearest companions, the family donkey, who carries the goods on his back. The round trip is about eight miles.

Free at last to be herself in the midst of her mountains, Loli effortlessly reveals the secrets hidden behind the purity of her smile, her constant joviality, unchanging good humor, and the hidden bit of mischief lurking at the bottom of her nature.

On September 30, 1965, she left for a nun's boarding school in the province of Zaragoza, repeating to herself the Virgin's inner revelation, which had surprised her shortly before: "If I no longer show myself to you, Loli, it is because the moment for you to suffer has begun."

Internal suffering she has known. Her mother is the only one to guess. Only a very pious mother's sensitivity will perceive unspoken misery.

Some of her interior suffering is caused by the spiritual struggle of this 13-year-old child, distressed by intellectual contradictions as subtle as they are dangerous. Unknown to Ceferino, Loli has witnessed the numerous discussions between her father and visiting students. She heard every argument, every consideration which should have systematically destroyed all certainty about the Garabandal events. She saw, heard and measured the disastrous effects of these debates on the mind of her father, whom she respects and loves dearly.

Silently, like her mother, she has suffered beyond description, never imagining that this is how it would be when one is named Mary of Sorrows.

Chapter 36

Jacinta

It is said that when Loli left, she soaked two handkerchiefs with her tears. We don't know whether Jacinta, who accompanied her the same morning cried also. Surely the separation from her family and village tore at her heartstrings. She had never been away from home before.

Jacinta turned 16 on April 22, 1965, and she had asked for admission to the Discalced Carmelite convent, one of those austere cloisters with



double grating, similar to the one Therese of Lisieux belonged to. A regular community vote had admitted her, and there she would find a refuge. But ahead of her—as it was in Loli's case, and as we shall see later on concerning Conchita—there developed a sophisticated wisdom, far different from the villagers' customary practical judgment.

Despite her attraction for Carmel, she was to go first to a boarding school run by the Sisters of Charity, in the province of Zaragoza. This solution probably received the immediate approval of her mother, Maria, ever kind and devoted as are all mothers of large families.

Her father, Simon, a man of firm and unshakeable faith with an ingrained simplicity, had reacted, to our astonishment, in exactly the same way.

To remain permanently at a boarding school or elsewhere in voluntary retirement, in a spirit of atonement, discretion and self-effacement seems a surprising choice for this least mentioned of the four visionaries. And yet what interior fervor behind Jacinta's silence!

Many commented on her serene expression during Mass, while saying grace or assisting at night prayers. A French boy her own age, usually grudging with compliments to girls, remarked to his mother on observing Jacinta going to the fountain: "*Mon Dieu*, she is beautiful, she could be taken for the Virgin herself."

Yes, she is beautiful. But no sooner did we see her, than she was gone. To succeed in talking with her, one would have to be a girl of her own background with a mind similar to her own.

She did, however, confide in an Andalusian lady who had gone up to Garabandal on June 18, 1965. On the day following the apparition of St. Michael, she made the following disclosures:

As they both chatted pleasantly the lady asked her, "Jacinta, are you happy about Conchita's trance?"

"Very."

"Where were you yesterday afternoon?"

"In front of Conchita's house."

"What were you doing?"

"I answered the prayers and sang like everyone else."

"Did you expect to have a trance also?"

"No."

"Do you expect to take part in the next trance on July 2?"

"I would like to."

"Do you believe in Conchita?"

"What Conchita says is true."

Then in confidence to the same person Jacinta continued:

"Sometimes, I dream that the other three are in a trance and I am left out. It hurts me very much. But one day Conchita said to me, 'I was dreaming that you were in a trance, Jacinta.' And this gave me great joy."

On September 5, 1965, Jacinta was interviewed by a knowledgeable older man, who knew Garabandal to his fingertips. Here is part of that interview:

Jacinta: Conchita said last Sunday, that when the time comes, she would write to her mother from the convent where she was going, of the date of the Miracle.

Mr. X: Are you also going to the convent?

Jacinta: Yes.

Mr. X: Now that you have such a nice new house, are you not sorry to leave?

Jacinta: Since I wish to become a nun, it's because the world means nothing to me.

Mr. X: Do you not regret leaving your little village?

Jacinta: No. Have I not seen more than enough of it? In 1961, we [all four] used to say that we would leave for the convent."¹

1. "We will be nuns." Such was the answer the four visionaries thought they had to give to Our Lady in 1961.

Mr. X: Do your parents, Maria and Simon, believe in the apparitions?

Jacinta: Whenever I was in a trance state, my mother would say, "Yes, it's the Virgin." When I was not in a trance state, she would say, "No."

Mr. X: Did the Virgin ever mislead you?

Jacinta: No! How could the Virgin be misleading?

Mr. X: But what about the Miracle?

Jacinta: It is very certain that the Miracle will happen.

Mr. X: What do you think of those people who do not believe in the apparitions?

Jacinta: No one is obliged to believe!

Mr. X: And of those to whom proof has been given and who do not believe?

Jacinta: The Virgin gave them proof to see what their faith would amount to.

Mr. X: What does Fr. Valentin, the parish priest of Cosio and your own parish priest, say now?

Jacinta: When he heard that we would be leaving for the convent, he was very pleased.

Mr. X: What is your most vivid memory of the apparitions?

Jacinta: In the beginning . . . when they began, I didn't know the mysteries of the rosary, nor the litanies . . . and I still don't know how I learned them.

Mr. X: Didn't they teach them to you in school?

Jacinta: No, no, sir, I didn't know them . . . When Señora Serafina (the teacher) said the beads, she would say the mysteries and litanies to herself. It was bit by bit every day, on seeing the Virgin that I learned them, but I don't know how.

Retraction of Mari Cruz at Santander

What follows is the second part of the interview Jacinta had with the same man. We consider it to be highly important in helping to understand Mari Cruz' present attitude.

Jacinta reveals herself steadfast, willing and able to cross swords and strike in the right place.

The answers Mari Cruz gave are evidence, as Conchita said long before, that she is not speaking on her own; what she is saying does not come from within herself.

Mr. X: Have you spoken with Mari Cruz since she simulated a trance before His Grace, the Bishop, after which she was interrogated by Canon Odriozola, clerk of the Santander commission?

Jacinta: When we spoke of that, we were both in front of Generasa, a woman from the village. She was present during our conversation. I asked Mari Cruz, "What did you dare to do before His Grace, the Bishop?" She didn't answer me but attacked immediately, "I am firm and unshakeable. If you were too, you would imitate me. Firm and unshakeable I remain, yes."

"Tell me, is it true that you simulated a trance but at the same time

you denied having seen the Virgin? How is that possible?"

"Yes, I simulated a trance."

So I continued, "Mari Cruz, you claim you were lying when you were claiming you had seen the Virgin, but at that time you went to Communion every day. Now that you deny having seen the Virgin, you pretend to be telling the truth, but you no longer go to Communion. Why, Mari Cruz?"

"It's all the same to me . . . Jacinta, do you believe you are better than I am today?"

"No, no, on the contrary. By putting things at their best, I am worse than you are."

At this moment, Mari Cruz showed that the interview annoyed her. Nevertheless, I continued,

"Why are you getting so nervous?"

She became annoyed, then furious, "Because you believe you alone have seen the Virgin . . . because you believe that I did not see her . . . because it infuriates me when things are said that are not true."

Then she added, "All that is due to the atmosphere in the village. Yes, Padre Odriozola explained it to me at Santander; it's the atmosphere of the village that is the cause of . . ."

Mari Cruz did not finish her sentence. She wanted to say, but did not dare, that Padre Odriozola attributed the apparitions to the atmosphere in the village. So I tried to change the subject. It does not please Mari Cruz to have her personal attitudes discussed. But do not believe, sir, because of this, that Mari Cruz is bad. No, no, Mari Cruz is good. She does not speak by herself, on her own initiative.

Here we find ourselves once more in sight of the truth.

Mari Cruz will accept having Jacinta think that she, Mari Cruz, has not seen the Virgin. Furthermore, she asserts that at Santander she was made to understand the apparitions were the result of the atmosphere created in the village by the natives and the visitors.

Here we come to the rescue of Mari Cruz's memory, as her nervousness was responsible for an important omission. Had she related everything which had taken place at Santander on June 24, 1965, she should have admitted two of her answers, of which we guarantee the absolute authenticity:

"When I simulated a trance, at the Bishop's house, His Grace told me, after a minute, 'That is sufficient.'"

"When I was spoken to about the nature of trances, I answered, 'When they were genuine, we saw nothing and heard nothing of what was going on around us. When they were false, we saw and heard everything.'"

Chapter 37

Mari Cruz

She became 15 years old on June 21, 1965. We celebrated her birthday on the day following the last apparition of St. Michael at Garabandal.

Loli was present but even her warm smile could not completely cheer up Mari Cruz, this adolescent, who bears, as well as she is able, a heavy and mysterious cross.

We have nothing to conceal one way or another concerning



Garabandal. One must take it as a whole, with its bright moments and passing shadows.

It is not our role to penetrate God's secret ways with regard to Mari Cruz's aching shoulders. But without hesitation, we can tell what we know of the matter, with all due affection and compassion.

In November of 1962, Mari Cruz no longer had trances. During that time she followed her three companions, led as usual through the village for hours at a time, by their vision. She went along on these walks, her face pale, her expression modest and attentive. She prayed and sang along with the crowd which tirelessly followed the other three girls. Mari Cruz harbored no jealousy nor doubted the reality of what was happening. Sometimes there would be a flicker of regret over losing past joys but she remained hopeful that they could return. Mari Cruz was to wait many times for the Virgin's return.

In March, 1963, we were in the kitchen of a local grocery store along with a friend, a Spanish lawyer. By chance, Mari Cruz came in, and

leaning against the door frame, looked at us rather sadly.

She was 13 years old then. Her face was pale and drooping, her brow clouded as though possessed by another self. She said, "No, I did not see the Virgin."

As she stood there motionless, her monotonous tones seemed to come from another world.

The lawyer spoke to her for a half hour in her own dialect. She would not give any explanation and it was impossible to draw anything more from her. She kept repeating in the same tone, in the same far-off manner, "No, I have not seen the Virgin."

She left then without further word or goodbye, which was unusual in the friendly village of Garabandal.

Our friend concluded, "We have just seen a ghost. That was not Mari Cruz who spoke to us."

In September, 1963, four persons from Seville spent their vacations at Garabandal. All the warmth and liveliness peculiar to Andalusians settled in that Cantabrian mountain!

Mari Cruz's negative reaction astounded them, because they had in their possession a highly important document which contained evidence contradicting her negative attitude.

This document, as follows, is a summary of a conversation that one of these women, Josephina, had had with the child at 9:30 on the morning of September 6, 1962, on the balcony of her house.

"Mari Cruz, how old is the Virgin?"

"About 18 years old."

"Is she always alone when you see her?"

"No, one day, I saw her with her Little One."

"How old is the Little One?"

"Nine or ten months old."

Then Mari Cruz told how the apparitions began:

"We wanted to go and 'pinch' a few apples; then we thought that our guardian angel could see these apples. It was then that St. Michael presented himself to us."

"Did the angel speak a great deal during the different apparitions?"

"Yes, a great deal."

"What sort of clothing does the Virgin wear?"

"A white dress covering her feet and a blue mantle."

"What color are her eyes?"

"They are black. Her hair is long, chestnut brown in color. It hangs down on her back and has a center part."

"Do you have to pray for the world?"

"Yes, it is very evil."

"Did the Virgin speak very much?"

"Yes, very much."

"What does she tell you?"

"I can't speak about it."

This conversation has been carefully noted and kept by Josephina.

The word “carefully” must be noted, because this happened six days before Mari Cruz’s last apparition.

In September, 1963, one of Josephina Maria Pepa’s friends wanted to get to the bottom of the matter. She returned to see Mari Cruz who, by now, was denying having seen the Virgin.

“Mari Cruz, we were here last year during the same period and you were still having ecstasies. It was on September 12, 1962, was it not, that you saw the last apparition?”

“Yes, that was the last, the one on September 12, 1962.”

June 23, 1965

The last witnesses of the ecstasy of St. Michael’s June 18, 1965, apparition were leaving Garabandal.

Among them were some nurses from Seville, good-natured and fraternally inclined. They were as devoted to the family of Mari Cruz as to the others.

Maria Pepa easily became the confidant of the troubled adolescent. This is what she wrote about the interviews:

At the beginning, when I would question her during a conversation about her trances, Mari Cruz would only shrug her shoulders as an answer.

On the road to the pines, we paused near the apple tree and I asked her how they had picked the famous apples. I had never heard the story told by any of the other seers. She gave me all the details, showing how they had gone about jumping over the wall to reach the tree.

I encouraged her to have confidence in the Virgin and not to feel afraid because she had denied having had her trances. I told her that at her age, fear can cause hesitation and indecision. I even went so far as to reveal to her a problem concerning certain scruples of mine about a private matter in which I had been involved. Mutual confidence between us was re-established.

“Mari Cruz, how many times have you seen the Virgin?”

Her shoulders shrug.

“My little one, this is the way children answer when they haven’t learned to talk yet.”

“My little nephew who is a year and a half, does as you do.”

Mari Cruz began to laugh and answered:

“Yes, I saw the Virgin.”

“How many times? One? . . . Many times?”

Relaxed, she laughed and answered, “Many times.”

From then on the roles were reversed; Mari Cruz asked the questions:

“Have you seen me in a trance, Maria Pepa?”

“Yes.”

This answer pleased her deeply. She continued showing

interest in the trance Conchita had experienced on June 18.

She asked:

“Did she please you?”

“Of course.”

“Why?”

I explained how I felt, Conchita’s joy and all the rest. Then Mari Cruz left, weeping.

I tried to find out the reason for her tears, but she went down the road without saying another word.

Who is Mari Cruz? She is Mary of the Cross. What is her testimony? It is a painful mystery, yet a necessary part of the conflicts which are breaking this young girl’s heart.

Her passion, or her compassion, will end on the day of the Miracle, as Conchita, her best friend, has said.

Chapter 38

Conchita's Cross

Strangely enough, at first sight, Conchita seems unaffected by any hostility concerning the apparitions themselves. She pays no attention to criticism, its place of origin, or the lies which might affect her.

She lives in a world unlike that of her detractors. She feels no concern over their attitudes, but remains pleasant to all, becoming more humble, pious, obedient and modest than ever.

Does she suffer? Yes, we would say beyond expression, if we ourselves were being subjected to her inward and outward pressures. Evidence shows that she is going through what Catholic theology knows very well; purification of the soul's sensitivity. There is no other explanation for what she terms her "spiritual misery":

"I am so bad, and have so many defects and these defects are the greatest," is what she states at present.

Her detractors cannot comprehend such a statement, and use such spoken thoughts to attack her. They are dumbfounded by a spiritual reality which is beyond them.

Should any of them go once again to Garabandal, they could then hear Conchita explain to someone questioning her on this important point: "To those who have seen the Virgin, defects and imperfections are much more serious than to other people."

It is certain that the realization of what she calls her "inner misery" is very painful to her.

Still, one is led to wonder why she should welcome such wretchedness as a good thing.

She seems to be engaged, though still very young, on the same spiritual path as St. Teresa of Avila, whose motto of "suffer or die" is very well known.

That is why she already knows the secret that so many saints have revealed to us; that suffering which is accepted for love becomes a loved suffering, not for itself, but because it conforms to the Divine Will.

Conchita is happy to suffer because she is living out the spirit of sacrifice of the Message. Loving the crosses she bears for the sake of the Crucified One, she was heard to say to Jesus in a thanksgiving prayer, these astonishing words: "I live without suffering."

Here is the amazing document she signed, which was delivered to us by the priest who gave her Communion on that day, in 1963:

As I was thanking God, I asked Him for graces. I asked Him to let me bear the cross, because I live without suffering,

except the suffering of not having a cross.

Jesus answered me:

"Yes, I will give it to you."

Very moved, I questioned further.

"What purpose will the Miracle serve? To convert many people?"

He answered me:

"To convert the whole world."

"Will Russia be converted?"

"It will be converted too and thus all will love Our Hearts."

"Will the chastisement come after?"

He did not answer that.

"Why do you enter my poor meritless heart?"

"I do not come for you; I come for all."

"After the Miracle, I'm afraid that they will say that only I saw the Virgin."

"By your sacrifices and great wishes, it is you who will intercede for Me to perform the Miracle."

I said to Him:

Is it not better for the four of us to intercede, or that none of us should serve at this intercession?"

"No."

"Shall I go to heaven?"

"You will love a great deal, and you will pray to Our Hearts."

"When will you give me your cross?"

He did not answer.

"What shall I be?"

He did not answer that question. But He told me, "Wherever you are, or in whatever situation you will be, you will have much to suffer."

I continued:

"Shall I die soon?"

"You must remain on earth to help people."

"I'm not much. I can't help very much."

"Through your prayers and sufferings, you will help the world."

"When we go to Heaven, are we dead."

"One never dies."

(I thought that we didn't go to Heaven before resurrecting.) I asked him if St. Peter was at the gate of Heaven to receive us. He told me no. When I was in this conversation with God, I felt that I was no longer on earth.

Jesus also told me that today there are many who love His Heart.

He spoke to me about priests. He told me that there was

much need to pray for them, for them to become saintly, to accomplish their duty well, and make others better.

He ended with these words:

“That to those who do not know Me, they make Me known, and to those who know Me, but do not love Me, they make Me loved.

Conchita Gonzalez

Conchita also said, “on previous occasions the Virgin made me understand that the greatest Cross was the one which was borne by Her Son Who was God.

In speaking in this way, she made me understand that we must imitate Jesus in suffering for Him and for the good of souls.”

These are awesome words. Whatever her life, wherever she may be, Conchita Gonzalez will suffer much. Jesus did not answer her question about anything immediate nor about her own vocation.

Here we are in the months of October and November, 1965. Despite her formal decision to enter the convent at the same time as Loli and Jacinta, she is still in Garabandal. This causes much comment about her, especially on the Franco-Spanish border in towns from San Sebastian to Biarritz to Bayonne. The latter spreads fanciful rumors such as: “Conchita thinks only of fashion; it’s all gone to her head. That will be the end of her going to the convent.”

But then, what were the girl’s feelings at this period?

Let us read a letter which she wrote to us, at the beginning of October:

I thank you very much for your prayers on my behalf. I really need them. In fact, as you may well understand, wherever the Virgin is, there the devil will try to be also. So continue to pray for me. Thank you. Pray for me to enter the convent very soon.

She came back to the same subject in her following letter:

Pray to the Virgin for me, so that I may enter the convent as soon as possible.

A third appeal for help followed a few days later at the beginning of November:

Pray for me, as I need it greatly. Pray especially for me to enter this month, to prepare myself to become a bride of Christ. I cannot believe that I will be such a high ranking person as a bride of Christ. Pray for me to remain very, very faithful to Him. Now, my mother doesn’t tell me when I may enter the convent.

Finally, what she believes is a last resort.

When you write to me, tell my mother in your letter that she must let me go to the convent as soon as possible. Thank you. Adieu.

The form of trial that Conchita doesn’t want, though she had asked for it from Jesus, and had not received the expected answer, was this: a demonic presence at Garabandal is the cause of her remaining at her mother’s house in spite of herself.

Such was the cross of Conchita Gonzalez, in the last months of 1965.

Chapter 39

Obedience to the Church

Conchita was only 16 and a half years old in July, 1965. There is no point in trying to obtain information from this girl that she evidently doesn't possess.

What interests us for the moment is her state of mind as "witness" in relation to the Authority by whom she will be judged. More precisely, we have what she herself has written on the subject. We extract this from an interrogation of which we have spoken previously.

The following question was put to her:

"Many of the persons who believe in Garabandal have the strong desire, while considering the question of obedience to the Church, to do all they possibly can to spread the Message of our Holy Mother. What can you tell them about this?"

She answered:

"It is very acceptable to the Virgin that we should spread the Message and do as she wishes. But she wishes us to obey the Church, and this obedience will bring more glory to God. She will grant enough time for the Message to spread with the Church's permission."

Following is a communique from the Holy Office:

From the See of the Holy Office,
July 28, 1965.

To His Excellency Don Eugenio Beitia Aldazabal,
Apostolic Administrator of Santander.

Your Excellency,

Your letter of the seventh of this month has duly reached this Supreme Sacred Congregation, and Your Excellency informed the Holy Office on the subject of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary which, from what has been said, have taken place at the village of San Sebastian of Garabandal.

From the documentation that you submitted, it would seem sufficiently clear how prudently you have acted in this matter.

Now I pray Your Excellency to follow this matter with a vigilant outlook in its future development. Should something new develop, please communicate it to the Holy Office.

Profiting by this occasion, I offer you the expression of

my deep respect, and repeat to myself to be, of Your Excellency, the very devoted,

Father Raimundo Verardo, Commissioner,
August 9, 1965
Eugenio, Bishop, A.A.
Let this letter be published.

This communique means everything it says but nothing more. It is the sentence of a sovereign tribunal. If need be, and if it is deemed proper, the Holy Office will make further declarations later on. For the time being, it suffices.

Much has been said these past years about the Holy Office. Although its role is an absolute necessity, its nature has surely been misunderstood. It is the supreme tribunal of Catholic doctrine, the guardian of religious orthodoxy. It is also the protector of legitimate freedom within the Church.

Let us make no mistake. Without the Holy Office, the basic teachings of Catholicism could be thwarted even by a parish priest.

Do these lines surprise you? Think along these lines and remember the lessons of your experience. When a colonel is not a competent commander, all of his subordinates, from the battalion commander down to the last corporal, assume an authority which is not theirs and so the simple soldier has to suffer for it.

On the subject of Garabandal, we formally declare, in absolute loyalty: "We are struggling to prove the supernatural elements of the visions. We are the fraternal adversaries, we admit, not of the Bishop of Santander, but of the commission's methods as he found them, on taking his episcopal seat.

"Though opposed to this commission, we nevertheless submit with mind and heart beforehand — yes, with mind and heart — to the decisions of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office of which His Eminence Cardinal Ottaviani is Secretary and his Holiness Pope Paul VI the Prefect."

Is there anything reprehensible about the events at Garabandal?

Is there anything in the words the visionaries attribute to the Virgin which could be contrary to Christian doctrine?

Let us go back to the Note of July 8, 1965, from the Bishop of Santander:

We have found no motive for ecclesiastical censure, neither in the doctrine, nor in the spiritual recommendations disclosed on this occasion and addressed to the Christian faithful. Furthermore, this doctrine and these recommendations contain an exhortation to prayer and sacrifices, to devotion toward the Blessed Sacrament, to the cult of Our Lady along traditional, commendable lines, to a holy fear of God offended by our sins. It merely reminded us of the usual Church doctrine in this matter.



On May 15, 1983, a group from Japan visited Garabandal.

In these conditions, we of the laity do not see what harm the diffusion of the Message of Our Lady of Garabandal could be to our souls.

What harm can we do in proclaiming the urgency for conversion of the world? Why can't our priests go freely to Garabandal and why could they not be authorized to remind us of the perils involved in not obeying the Message? Why should San Sebastian of Garabandal be a cursed place, an object of ecclesiastical hostility? There are many sanctuaries, Pellevoisin and Ile Bouchard, to name but two, where it is supposed that the Virgin must have appeared, without the Church ever having made any pronouncement on the basis of the matter. The Church merely permitted the erection of a chapel. Priests go there to pray and Christians are free to gather there. Why could it not be the same at Garabandal? Yes, why?¹

1. The situation regarding visits to Garabandal has changed considerably since this book was first written. In 1967, Canon Laws 1399 and 2318 that dealt with private revelation, were abrogated, thereby permitting Catholics to visit sites of alleged apparitions provided there was no threat to the Faith or Morals. Today, individuals and groups in large numbers from different parts of the world go to Garabandal to visit the places that they believe were sanctified by the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Chapter 40

The Ways of Providence

"My ways are not your ways," God said.

What ways does God want? What ways will God permit? Let us respect the King's secret.

Is Conchita captive? Yes and no. Yes, because she has been prevented from entering the convent since September 29, 1965. No, since Our Lady of Carmel consoles her because she couldn't leave as she wanted to.

In a letter from Conchita, she told us:

I had a communication from the Virgin, and she told me:
 "Come to the pines on the thirteenth of November [1965].
 Bring me many religious objects. I will kiss them and you
 will distribute them. Through them, my Son will accomplish
 wonders for those who will use them in faith and confidence."

The letter from Conchita continued:

In union of prayers to plead with God for the world, and
 especially our brothers who still do not know Christ, and do
 not have His divine support.

The preceding texts were brought back from Spain to one of the editors of our international group. The "postman," among other things, is also the printer [in French] of this book. He had just returned from Garabandal with his wife and three children.

He had gone there sometime previously with his family. They had left without having any knowledge of Spanish and without any contacts in the village. Their only assets in their adventure were their faith and simplicity. Nothing discouraged them, not being bogged down in the mud, the climb on foot, or the risky descent at night in the downpours.

However, later on they felt rewarded when they met two interpreters by chance, in the kitchen of Conchita's home. Aniceta and Conchita made them feel welcome, the latter kissing the mother and children. As for our printer, he was given a picture with this dedication: "In union of prayer to pray to God, for all our brothers who still do not know God and can't enjoy faith."

The dedication seems especially appropriate for a printer who has worked devotedly in the service of all our publications. He came away with the following impressions along with his wife, who made these remarks:



Conchita at age 15, poses with some of her little friends on the portico of the church at Garabandal.

“Conchita loves children. She adores the smaller ones and spoils them. She seems to pray for the older ones while they are there. She gave the impression that she could see something that we could not. She heaped attentions on us in every way, and yet in her presence, we felt intimidated.”

“Then why did you undertake such a trip?” she was asked.

“Because on June 18 in Garabandal, where we were, Our Lady of Carmel cured our seven-year-old boy.”

Chapter 41

A French Doctor

The following letter which was dated August, 1965, gives a good explanation of the actual atmosphere of Garabandal:

“You have asked me for an account of what I saw and thought at San Sebastian of Garabandal; so it is with pleasure that I go about the task, and at the same time authorize the publication of my testimony, if you wish to do so.

So that you may better understand my social and professional position, I state that I am a pediatrician, age 52, and that I have eight children, and am a grandfather twice over.

When we left for Garabandal on July 12, 1965, with two of my daughters and the fiance of one of them, my wife and I had no intention of going on a pilgrimage or invoking the Blessed Virgin under another name. We both wear the Mount Carmel scapular.

On June 13 a colleague had given me an account of what he had learned about the apparitions of which, up until then, I had not been aware.

On that day, one of my sons was killed in an automobile accident with a friend of his, and another friend was left with irreparable injuries and frightful wounds. The possibilities of a cure and conversion (our two daughters are married into families who have little or no faith) had attracted us, my wife and I; but we especially wanted to look over the site in order to act as eventual guides.

We left with two rather vague and incomplete addresses, those of Fr. Luis Retenaga for whom we had to search a fairly long time in Renteria, and that of Dr. Ortiz at Santander. We were happy over the kindness of these two men who were truly inconvenienced because they had not received the letters we had written the previous week.

Through unforeseen circumstances, we had left by ordinary means of transportation, without any itinerary or reservations, and suddenly found ourselves in Cosio on the night of July 15, and without planning it, we spent July 16 at Garabandal.

Contrary to what we had read in the newspapers (*Sud-Ouest de Bordeaux, le Figaro and le Monde de Paris.*) we had trouble getting something to eat in Garabandal. We had

a day of involuntary fasting (bread, chocolate, bananas,) all of poor quality. We could see that these poor, good people were selling to us through kindness and not seeking a clientele.

Nowhere did we see any article, souvenir, photograph or pious object of any kind shown for sale, even though we wandered about the small area throughout the day while waiting until it was time for the rosary and evening service. No one offered us anything to buy.

There were no visible signs except for some minor vandalism sustained by one or two pine trees. Everything seemed very ordinary, humble and poverty-stricken.

A Spanish priest, who spoke French well, promised to introduce us to the visionaries (we did not have this in mind when we came) and this promise was what made us remain until evening service.

We were pleased to see the modest condition and simplicity of Jacinta and Loli, the kindness and generosity of Conchita.

Don Luis Retenaga had told me that one or two physicians appointed by the Bishop of Santander had called these children hysterical, and victims of hallucinations and imagination caused by the great poverty and isolation of an out-of-the-way village, far from the city.

We pediatricians sometimes have to deal with young girls (and young boys) whom we call "pithiatiques."¹ And we take satisfaction detecting them within the first few seconds of contact. Their appearance and their gaze reveal to us their condition.

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

Truly, the sincerity of Conchita's welcome, after what she has had to endure for the past several years, is almost miraculous.

We may add that even if the numerous ecstasies had

been simulated and even more so if they had resulted from natural nervous phenomena, it would be a greater miracle that these girls have remained unchanged!

That night, as I have said, we had gone to attend evening services and the rosary. The visionaries were a few minutes late. There was an empty place beside my daughter in the pew, which Loli came and occupied. I was able to observe her during the recitation of the beads and nudged my wife. The quality of her prayer was admirable.

With her gaze fixed above the altar, her lips scarcely moving, she was indifferent to everything around her, as though she could see something. She was not in a trance state, although the memory of her vision of Mary was doubtless intense enough to give her this expression.

To finish, I would like to reveal a personal impression that I brought back from Garabandal and which it pleases me to recall and which is like breathing the perfume from a flower which has been given to me.

The evening service had seemed to me very lengthy. Night had almost fallen and I was apprehensive about going back down to Cosio. My wife mentioned that her flashlight was about ready to burn out.

I was waiting for my wife, who was talking to a priest in the vestry and was taking a long time to come out. I happened to be right in the path of Conchita as she was coming out of the church. She recognized me, since we had spent half an hour at her home in the afternoon speaking with her. She gave me a level look and favored me with a smile which I remember with pleasure. I had already seen that smile and that look, and found them to be the opposite of anything wanton.

Without any pretention, I can say that I am not unhand-some and I was thinking that only one possessing genuine purity and authentic saintliness could smile at a man in such a way.

Had she been playing a role, or simply been a pupil from some "holy" school, she would have kept her gaze directed chastely to the tips of her shoes.

These are the impressions of modesty that I brought back from Garabandal.

May I add that I admire the insight of the interpreter of the Message of June 18? Should someone tell me it was Conchita's invention, I shall know what to answer.

For the past several years, my wife and I have been upset by the biased opinions of certain priests. I have become hostile with regard to their doctrine, to their tendency toward belief in immanence, to a sort of neo-Protestantism,

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

hiding the light of the Church Triumphant under a bushel. We were amazed at the exactness of the diagnosis which we had formulated ourselves, though less clearly: that less and less importance is given to the Blessed Sacrament, and that we 'think' but little about the Passion of Jesus.

Doctor Apostolides,
Chief of Pediatric Services,
Hospital Center, Troyes, (Aube)

Chapter 42

Final Rendezvous at the Pines

Aniceta could prevent her daughter from entering the convent on September 29, 1965, at the time of Loli and Jacinta's departure.

She could not — she would not have wanted to, anyway — forbid her to go to the pines, where Our Lady of Carmel had set a final rendezvous for November 13, 1965.

It was a Saturday, as announced by the Virgin two weeks earlier. It was on the feast day of an extraordinary lay brother, Diego, born at Saint Nicholas del Puerto in Andalusia around 1400. This saint had fully lived up to his idol, St. Francis of Assisi.

Miracles flourished about him and during periods of contemplation he received such deep insight on faith that theologians were happy to gather some of the written scraps.

What anniversary could better suit Our Lady's purpose than that of this humble monk who died in New Castille, with his gaze directed to the cross.

Another coincidence: The Virgin who had wished to have the numerous objects which she had kissed distributed throughout the world, had shortly before inspired a French layman, on a pilgrimage to Lourdes, to send 100 prayer beads and four rosaries to Conchita!

Here is the translation of the five pages of her notebook where Conchita relates her encounter with Our Lady:

I awaited the arrival of this day, Saturday, November 13, with great eagerness to receive those who had planted in me the seeds of God's happiness: the Virgin Mary and her Son, the very little Child Jesus, whom she carried in her arms.

It was raining but evidently that didn't matter to me in going up to the pines. I had many prayer beads with me, which had been offered to me shortly before as gifts to be distributed. As the Virgin had asked me, I was bringing them for her to kiss.

I was alone as I walked up to the pines. Thinking to myself, overcome with great remorse for my faults, I resolved that from now on, I would not fall into these ways. It was because I felt ashamed to present myself before the Mother of God without removing the defects from my soul. I was ashamed of the way I would feel after having been seen by those who see my defects. They are very big. They

are the greatest.

On arriving at the pines I began taking out the prayer beads that I carried with me. As I was busy taking them from the parcel, I heard a very soft voice, evidently that of the Virgin. In fact she is easily distinguished from all other women. Her voice called me by name.

I answered her, "What do you wish?"

And I saw her with the little Infant Jesus in her arms. She was coming, clad as usual, and smiling.

I had chewing gum in my mouth. But after seeing her, I stopped chewing it. I slipped it in back of a tooth. But the Virgin was wise. She knew that I had it in my mouth and said: "Conchita, why don't you remove your chewing gum and offer it as a sacrifice for the glory of my Son?"

Shamefaced, I took it out, and threw it on the ground.

Afterwards, she said to me, "Do you remember what I told you on your feast day, December 8, 1963? That you would suffer very much on earth? Well, I am repeating it. Have confidence in Us. You will offer everything to Our Hearts, for the welfare of your brothers. And so, We will help you and you will feel that We are near you."

And I said to her, "But I am unworthy, oh, Our Lady, of so many graces granted by you. And you come to me again today to lift my little cross, that I am carrying now."

She answered me, "Conchita, I do not come for you only. I come for all my children, hoping to draw them closer to Our Hearts."

She added, "Give me all that you have brought with you that I may kiss them." And I gave them to her.

I carried a crucifix with me. She kissed it and told me, "Slip it through the hands of the little Jesus." I did so. He didn't say anything.

I said to Him, "I will take this crucifix to the convent." He didn't answer me.¹

After having kissed everything I offered her, the Virgin said, "By means of the kiss which I gave to these objects, my Son will accomplish wonders. Distribute them to others."

"I will do so."

After that she asked me to present the requests for other people, the petitions they had entrusted me with. I presented them to her.

She continued, "Tell me, Conchita, tell me things concerning my children. I hold them all under my mantle."

I answered her, "We are not all gathered under your mantle. It could not cover us all, it is very little."

She smiled, "Conchita, Conchita, do you know why I did not come myself on the eighteenth of June, to give you the Message destined for the world? Because it grieved me to tell it to you myself. But I must tell you for your own good, if you carry it out and for the glory of God. I love you very much and desire your salvation. I desire to see you all reunited here in Heaven around the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Conchita, you will comply, will you not?"

I said to her, "If I saw you always, yes. But, without this favor, I am very wicked."

"Do everything you can for your part and we will help you. We will also help Our girls Loli, Jacinta, and Mari Cruz."

This apparition lasted a very short time.

She told me also, "This is the last time that you will see me here. But I will always be with you and with all of my children."

She added, "Conchita, you must visit my Son in the tabernacle more often. Why do you let laziness prevent you from visiting my Son more? He awaits you night and day."

I made a request of the Virgin. "Oh, I am so happy when I see you both. Why do you not bring me away with you now?"

She answered me, "Remember what I told you on your feast day. In presenting yourself before God, you must show your hands filled with deeds you did for your brothers and for the glory of God. Now, however, your hands are empty."

As I mentioned before, it was raining a great deal. The Virgin and the Baby Jesus did not get wet in any way. When I no longer saw Them, I was wet.

That's all. The happy time that I spent with my best friend, my Mother from heaven, and with the little Jesus is all over. I no longer see them, but I still feel them. Once again they have spread peace and joy in my heart with a great desire to conquer my faults and to love with all my strength, the Hearts of Jesus and Mary who love us so much.

1. Once again, we note, Heaven gives no precise indication to Conchita concerning her vocation. There is never any answer to her decision to become a nun.

Chapter 43

Loli Writes to an American

William A. Nolan, one of our friends from the U.S.A., sends us a photocopy of a letter which Loli wrote to him on March 25, 1965.

For my new and excellent friend in Christ.

I thank you very much for your trip to Spain and your visit to this village of San Sebastian of Garabandal, province of Santander. In this village situated in the middle of the mountains, our very holy Mother once more appeared to show the affection she has for the entire world. As a mother, she forgives us everything, if we ask her with faith.

She shows this 'letter' in her village.

I would also say to all of you that to avoid the Chastisement, we must make many sacrifices; the family must say the rosary together every day.

This is what our very holy Mother asks us. She asks also that we love one another as Our Lord loves us.

White people should love black people and black people should love white people, for we are all brothers.

I will say adieu in Christ and in Mary, our very holy Mother.

Maria Dolores Mazon Gonzalez

1. Loli refers to the apparitions and their content as if they were a letter of the Virgin in which she instructs her people.

Chapter 44

Conchita's Last Details

On December 10, 1965, Conchita wrote:

Before the last apparition at the pines on November 13, 1965, the Blessed Virgin had said, "Jesus does not send you the Chastisement to discourage you, but to help you and to rebuke you for not paying attention to Him. He will send you the Warning to purify you and to prepare you for the Miracle. In this Miracle, He clearly proves the love He has for you as well as His desire for you to carry out the Message."

The Warning will be seen, will happen everywhere and to everyone. It is like a punishment, like a chastisement. We shall see how we have acted in committing sin. I think, [I, Conchita] that we who hope will derive great benefit from it for our sanctification.

On January 10, 1966, one of Conchita's confidants made the following incredible remark:

"Yesterday I spoke with Conchita.

She knows perfectly well the exact date on which the Miracle is to take place at Garabandal. At present she is authorized to convey it only to the Holy Father. She will do it in a very few days, on the occasion of a personal visit."

The date she doesn't know is that of the Warning . . . although she knows the nature of it, she is aware of what it will consist.

We must take note of this: two different events are predicted by Conchita: the Warning and the Miracle.

Conchita does not know the date of the Warning.

The purpose of the Warning is to open the eyes of all those who follow the movement of Garabandal. In fact, the fulfillment of this prophecy will have, as a consequence, the presence of a great number of people at Garabandal on the day of the Miracle. Concerning the date of the Warning, we know only that it will occur before the Miracle.

Therefore, Conchita does not know the exact date of the Warning but she knows perfectly well that of the Miracle.

The Miracle will be very, very spectacular. There will remain a permanent sign of it at the pines. This sign will resemble a pillar formed from some unknown substance which will be visible to the naked eye and could be photographed and filmed. But it will be impossible to feel;

there will be no sense of feeling when touching it.

Conchita gives this definition of it: "It will be something which will resemble a 'pillar of smoke'."¹

At the beginning of March, 1966, Conchita had sent a special message to us through a reliable intermediary:

Conchita asked me to write to you to urge you to continue spreading the Message, and do so more urgently than in the past.

She asked me to write and assure you of the coming Warning and the Miracle which will follow.

She told me, "The Warning is like something very frightening which will happen in the sky."

Do not forget this message that Conchita entrusted me to convey to you. Let the Garabandalists continue to propagate and spread the Message.

The Virgin will reward them, she assured me.

A few months before, Conchita had stressed, "Spread the Message. If it is welcomed, rejoice. If it is not well received, do not argue the matter, pass on to others, go elsewhere."

1. "The sign is something that you will be able to see but that you cannot touch. It can also be likened to rays of sunlight." —Conchita, October 20, 1968.

Conchita went on to explain that it will not be rays of sunlight or a pillar of smoke but that the resemblance is in the metaphorical sense that a pillar of smoke or rays of sunlight can be seen but not touched.

Chapter 45

Conchita Writes to Friends of Garabandal

Dear Friends:

I send you my most affectionate greetings, and promise you my poor prayers in union with Jesus in the tabernacle and with the Blessed Virgin. May our desire to love God and His Mother (who is also our own) grow unceasingly along with our desire to conquer our defects. I am asking for your prayers for me and my friends because we have great need of them. Pray that we may be very humble, and that we give to Jesus what he wants of us. Pray that we may succeed to become nuns some day with the purpose of serving God and helping our brothers who are in need. Such is our wish, but we are very weak and need help.

On the first of January, 1965, [apparition at the pines] the Blessed Virgin told me that we Catholic Christians do not think about the other world, of heaven or of hell, and that we should think of them. In that way our lives would thus be united with Christ. We should think more about the Passion of Jesus, and meditate more about it. We must do that and not only do it, but inspire others to do it.

We shall then feel "closer to God's glorious portals" and would then joyously accept our crosses for the love of God.

With great affection for all, and in union of prayers.

Conchita Gonzalez,
December 11, 1965

Chapter 46

Journey to Italy

In spite of precautions that had been taken since August of 1965, many people found out that Conchita and her mother, Aniceta, had gone to Santander to pick up their passports.

As soon as the word got around, everyone began to speculate on the matter. It didn't take long for the shrewdest to guess that shortly both would be leaving for Italy, which was exactly the case. Before relating details of this trip, it is necessary to point out certain facts. We have alluded to them previously but now, to be thorough, it is necessary to be more explicit.

On September 8, 1965, at Torrelavega, Conchita and her mother had formally announced her departure for the convent of the Discalced Carmelite Missionaries at Pamplona, scheduled for September 29, on the feast of St. Michael. The same day, Loli and Jacinta were to leave Garabandal for the province of Zaragoza where they were expected by the Sisters of Charity.

Why should it be precisely on September 29? Because Conchita and her mother had reason to believe that their trip to Italy would be made before September 14, the date of the last session of the Council.

As events turned out otherwise, the two women had to endure several agonizing months from the time of St. Michael's feast until February 7, 1966.

Fearing the worst for themselves, certain opponents of Garabandal tried everything they could to prevent Conchita from being received in Rome. Others of lesser importance joined in with the group of detractors which we mentioned earlier, to slander the young girl. "Her head has been turned; she wears short skirts; her head is filled with radio; the religious vocation is all off; Garabandal is finished."

During that time, Conchita felt the presence of the devil around her and had to endure inner spiritual suffering known only to those more contemplative souls. She wrote of her secret distress to priests in whom she had confidence, imploring them to obtain permission from her mother to leave for Pamplona immediately.

It seems that, though she was used to leaving everything up to the Virgin, she had not immediately understood the importance of the trip to Italy. Unless she had thought in her own mind—very reasonably so—that if the journey had to take place some day, it might as well be made from Pamplona as from Garabandal.

But Aniceta was on guard. And Aniceta's will is of iron. She had been

convinced of the necessity and the imminence of the visit to Rome, and no one on earth could make her give in.

All the prayers, all the pleadings of her daughter were in vain. So were the letters that tried to make her give in to Conchita.

There is more to this. The little mountain girl closeted herself with her secret. This explains her behavior toward visitors: her unshakeable steadfastness, her shyness, her apparently inexplicable silences, her mental reservations toward the indiscreet of all types and nationalities who came to her house, her own home, and tortured her for four months.

In God's plan, there is always a day of reckoning.

Those of us who knew why Conchita was not at Pamplona did as Aniceta did; we kept silent. Today we can speak before the world of the perfidious conduct of the adversaries of Garabandal. Never at any moment, in any way, did Conchita or her mother become deflated as it pleased some to scandalously report.

They simply had to wait with the secret they had to keep until Providence decided.

Just about the time everyone thought that the two women were in Pamplona, the exemplary older son, Serafin, looked after the house—effectively fielding all indiscreet questions—while Conchita, Aniceta and Fr. Luna were boarding a plane in Barcelona. It was January 12, 1966.

Of this trip, we know only what we have been permitted to know. Unless God chooses at some future date to reveal it, we may never know what Conchita revealed in confidence, or the secrets which the supreme authorities have imposed on her.

In Rome, Conchita was first welcomed at the Holy Office. Ushered in alone, evidently she was heard and interrogated for two and one half hours. Her questioners treated her with all the kindness that her humility, simplicity and honesty warranted.

It is quite certain that all the friends of Garabandal wanted Conchita to take this trip. Particularly interested were the theologians, whose interest in this cause arose from the conviction that upon this providential plan depends the salvation of souls and the lives of humanity.

In their eyes it was highly important that the first visit Conchita made would be to the supreme tribunal of the Holy Office, thus adhering to the correct canonical procedure prescribed by the Church. They believed the girl should make her first appearance before the authority with legitimate jurisdiction in matters of prophetic revelation.

This correct procedure was followed from the moment of Conchita's arrival and is striking proof of the supernatural wisdom and scientific integrity of the authorities in Rome, and is a source of immeasurable comfort to all of God's people.

As had been recommended to her, among other things, Conchita prayed at length in two Roman churches. She also prayed at the Coliseum and in one of the catacombs. She wrote souvenir postcards to

her friends back home. We translate the one which we happen to have here because its message is intended for each of us.

Rome, January 14, 1966

For the Virgin's group of Garabandal,

My mother greets you from Rome where I have remembered all of you very specially in union with the Lord. A kiss for all. May we always keep the Message and Our Lord God in our heart.

Conchita Gonzalez

Having attended to devotional duties, they motored on to San Giovanni Rotondo to visit Padre Pio.

When they consulted the saintly monk's personal physician, he had discouraging news. "The Padre is too tired. He absolutely needs to rest. This visit will have to be postponed until later."

Less than an hour after they heard this disappointing news, the Padre surprised them all by upsetting the customary visiting schedule and received our friends at a time when no one is ever welcomed.

Conchita, her mother, and their companions entered a private parlor next to the big church's choir loft. Joy and serenity characterized the meeting. Conchita knelt beside the happy Padre, who gave her a paternal blessing. They spoke amicably for a long time and, we were told later by the Italian interpreter who assisted them, they seemed to be bathed in celestial light. The interpreter, a Franciscan, compared the interview to the reported conversations between St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare.

After Padre Pio's extraordinary welcome, our travelers were enthusiastic about the success of Conchita's mission to Rome. These providential meetings had taken place at a time when they were least expected.

How Conchita reacted to the words the Holy Father addressed to her is her secret, although her Roman friends know that she treasures the Holy Father's greeting.

The Pope, on the occasion of the public audience at the Apostolic Palace on January 19, 1966, paused before Conchita to bless her with the words, "I bless you, and with me all the Church blesses you." (*Ti benedico, e con te ti benedice tutta la Chiesa.*) According to the Roman witnesses, Conchita's faithful companions, "The look on the face of His Holiness was sublime."

Some minutes later in St. Peter's Square, a Roman automobile sped off toward the airport. They made it on time: the plane was waiting to carry Conchita and her happiness through the skies.

The next day, on the twentieth of January, eight days after their departure for Barcelona, the three travelers, having first visited Geneva, landed in Madrid.

Aniceta finally had found peace, her task was accomplished.

As for Conchita, the first stage of her life was completely and perfectly ended; she was now free to undertake the next stage, that of keeping her promise of September 8, 1965, to enter the convent.

Chapter 47

To a Boy's Chaplain

San Sebastian of Garabandal

Ave Maria!

1/31/66

Reverend Father:

I am sending you these lines through one of your boys, to tell you that on the seventh of February I am going to Pamplona, to the Angelical College of the convent.

Pray for me often because I'm quite certain that the devil is always beside me. Don't forget to pray for me and ask God to show me the way very clearly. In fact, what I want is to accomplish His holy will and give Him great glory.

I wonder what glory I can give to Him in all my wretchedness?

The trip to Rome was very good. It could not have been better. (*Mejor viaje ne cabe.*) But I was forbidden to say anything about what happened over there. So it is necessary to obey. God will act. Everyone was very nice.

Your boys have been as good as on previous occasions. It is a pleasure to watch them praying, saying the beads and singing hymns to the Virgin.

I send my greetings to all the others. I will remember them in my poor prayers. My mother and brothers also send their greetings, they think of you a great deal.

In union of prayer,
Conchita Gonzalez

Chapter 48

The Angelical College at Pamplona

How did Conchita know about the Discalced Carmelite Missionaries? We don't know. But we recall her brightened face and her joy when, on September 8, 1965, she explained to us her decision to enter this congregation:

"Yes, I am entering there on September 19, because I like that kind of life, because I like black people, and because I wish to go to Africa."

On the eighth or ninth of January, 1966, on arriving secretly in Barcelona, Conchita had stopped at Pamplona. Before going through the door she said to her mother with an enchanting smile, "Mother, this is my own home."

Aniceta had said to us on the preceding September 8 with all her sincerity, "God gave her to me, He could take her back again." Yet this woman, widowed for more than ten years, has but one daughter, the youngest of her four children who happens to be the likable Conchita.

On hearing Conchita speak of her future dwelling in this manner, Aniceta felt her heart wrench, and she burst into tears.

On her return from Rome to Garabandal on January 21, Conchita hurried preparations for her departure. She visited the venerable monk who had always been her spiritual confidant, her own chaplain. She went to confession to him and received Communion from his hands. She met with another monk who had always been her best friend, in whom she had the fullest confidence.

In the village she went back over the path to the apparitions. In spite of the graciousness she shows everyone, she withdrew in the solitude of her own soul for a long time, at the pines, at the cemetery where her father rests, and in her beloved church.

On February 5, she graciously received the journalist to whom Germany owes thanks for knowing all the truth about Garabandal. It was his third trip to the village. He telephoned us last week from Fulda: "I found a new Conchita. Her trip to Rome has made her a person of stature, of depth and formidable power. You couldn't imagine what she has become."

We do not have to imagine anything. What follows suffices for us who know her well from "the inside."

On the morning of February 7, 1966, an automobile left Garabandal. It was occupied by four persons. Another one was waiting in the valley. Goodbyes were said at Cabezon de la Sal, and the two automobiles drove on toward Pamplona.

What were Conchita's last remarks to her mother, to Sanchez-Ventura and to Fr. Luna, three of her four traveling companions? We shall know about them later on. These were the last words she spoke before entering the convent in greeting her best friend, who evidently was there also, "Father, you go in first, I am happy to receive you in my house."

At Pamplona, she is still not a postulant in the canonical sense of the word. She has become one of the students of the "Angelical College" of the Discalced Carmelite Missionaries. Most of the pupils have a religious vocation and are peacefully preparing for it with a view to taking the final step. Like her companions, Conchita will have summer vacations which she will spend in Garabandal.

What are her thoughts today behind the walls of this convent, this daughter of the sun, wind and freedom of the Cantabrian mountains?

At least this, which are her own words:

"The Superior at Pamplona does not believe in the apparition. I'm very pleased about this. This way, no one will try to pamper me.

We are happy that she chose to go to Pamplona, one of the Spanish towns closest to our borders, and one where heroism always flowered.

Conchita always was partial toward the French. She did not forget that on June 18, 1965, St. Michael had chosen them personally. We know that she keeps us in her heart and that even the Pyrenees cannot cut us off from her.

Chapter 49

Conchita's Theology

“This is what I have to say, myself, on my own:

There is no point in our believing in the apparitions if we do not heed the Message; in other words, if we do not accomplish what our Holy Mother the Church bids us. As we all know, the Blessed Virgin said here what she said at Lourdes and at Fatima. She has said nothing new. The Miracle will come so that we may heed the Message. Its purpose will also be to confirm the apparitions of Garabandal. But, if we heed the Message, believing in the apparitions is of no importance. Let us realize that to believe in the apparitions is a grace which requires that we give more to God, because it is a grace which He grants us, He, Our Lord God.

We must pray a great deal for our brothers who still do not know God. I believe that is the wish of the Blessed Virgin.

We must also pray for those who receive graces from God or the Blessed Virgin, and who do not thank Them.”

Conchita Gonzalez
December, 1965

Chapter 50

The Blood of Mankind

Whether it involves the miracle of the Forma, the Miracle to come, or the eventual Chastisement, among other things, it can easily be seen that the deep worry and constant preoccupation of the visionaries is the salvation of souls, all the souls of the world, be they believers or non-believers, Christians or those unaware of the Gospel.

Garabandal is primarily, above all else, mediation and spiritual redemption.

But it is also the worry and preoccupation of the human race that the world should not be struck by divine wrath. Day and night, the eventual Chastisement of humanity haunts the minds of the four girls from Garabandal.

The apparitions of Fatima are recognized by the Church. Two popes, now deceased, both saintly, have spoken about them in particular.

First was the inspired Pope Pius XII who consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady of the Rosary in October of 1942.

Then, if we study the outlines of operations during the last war, we will realize that immediately after this consecration the military situation was reversed.

Beginning with El Alamein, observe the Americans landing in North Africa and ending up at Reims on the eighth of May, 1945, on the feast of St. Michael.

Through Mary, Mother of mankind, and through the rosary, Pope Pius XII, the Pope so outrageously attacked and misunderstood, saved the world in his time, just as in another day, saintly Pius V did at Lépanto.

The good Pope John offered his pectoral cross at Fatima, the cross which had rested on his heart which was as large as humanity and as profound as that of Jesus.

His Holiness Pope Paul VI, in proclaiming Mary Mother of the Church, on the occasion of his closing oration at the third session of the Council, did not hesitate to offer the Golden Rose to the Fatima Society.

What then is Fatima?

It is primarily the salvation of souls, to be sure: “If you do not become converted . . .” But it is also the fear of death for mankind, concern about bloodshed: “Chastisement will strike humanity . . .”

Certainly, victory seemed in the offing since the Consecration of 1942, but what a price had to be paid!

Fifty million were killed on land, on sea, and in the air, from one end of the earth to the other, including the horrible atomic massacre in Japan.

After that, Korea, Indochina, Algeria and Vietnam, and it still goes on. Who is to blame for this great slaughter?

Let us not be afraid to say it: it was those who worked against the Message of Fatima; those who did not propagate it as they should; those who did not do everything they could to warn the world of the threatening perils, to help in every way to escape those perils or at least lessen them.

"If my requests are obeyed," said the Virgin in 1917, "the world will know peace."

Why has no one heeded the requests of Our Lady of Fatima? The reasons are that many Christians did not know of them or were scornful; because many people who were responsible did not make them known, worked against or ignored them.

For us, Garabandal is the continuation and amplification of Fatima. If we scorn the warnings of Garabandal as we scorned those of Fatima, we will be responsible for the numerous deaths resulting from the predicted Chastisement.

Don't you want people to believe in Garabandal?

Don't you want people to be converted by accomplishing the Messages of the Virgin?

Let us not make the same mistake all over again.

Let us recall here the words of Pope Pius XI offering his life at the beginning of World War II. To avert it, he announced over the air: "Yes, I give my life for peace. Now, life is the greatest of all the natural assets."

We love all men with a love that is sincere, deep and faultless. We profess that they must be helped, fed, led to social advancement, comforted and if necessary, that we die for them. But we also profess that, of all human assets, the greatest object of our preoccupation is their lives.

While we want their souls sanctified and saved, we must endeavor to save lives by averting the Chastisement.

Chapter 51

More Concerning the Great Miracle

Along the way we have met many prudent people. They tell us: "Take care, take care, to not compromise yourselves needlessly." On the other hand, since August of 1965, we know more than others what is said in the Santander circles with reference to the nature of the Miracle, of the impossibility or childishness concerning the latter.

All this leaves us indifferent; we smile at undisguised ridicule as well as at well-meaning timidity.

We are not afraid to defend our strenuous work of the past four years or the book which offers part of our documentation to the public.

Before closing the matter, we wish to speak once more of the great Miracle to come.

Its nature? We have never been so indiscreet as to question Conchita on the underlying nature of the Miracle, and providence has rewarded us for it. As she had been told in our presence: "Padre Luis Andreu died of joy at having seen it, on the night of August 8, 1961."

We ventured to remark, "Oh, shall we also die on the night of that great day?"

The answer came in a flash. "No, God will give us the necessary strength to bear the vision."

Since then, it has always seemed evident that if the coming Miracle were to be but a preternatural stellar phenomenon in the sky of Garabandal, the question of dying of joy from it could not reasonably be considered, even though it will be, as Conchita has repeated a hundred times, incomparably greater than the miracle of the sun at Fatima on the thirteenth of October, 1917.

The date? Let us commit ourselves further. In September of 1963, Conchita was dining with us at the house next door to her own. As she seemed to be enjoying the dessert, we were teasing her about the spirit of penance recommended by the first Message. She laughed heartily. Suddenly, she was silent and withdrawn. Her face then brightened up and with her hands almost joined together began:

"The Miracle will take place on the feast of a young martyr of the Eucharist. It was a boy who was carrying Holy Communion to persecuted Christians. His playmates, on seeing him go by, tried to force him to join in their games. When he refused, they stoned him to death and ran away. A Christian soldier who was passing by carried his body away."

"But that's St. Tarcisius!," one of the assistants couldn't help exclaiming



The pines at Garabandal where the great prophesied Miracle will take place.

in a loud voice. Conchita did not react and took more cake as though she had not heard anything.

After her departure, we were discussing the matter among ourselves. The oldest member of the group came to this conclusion: "My impression is that Conchita saw the spectacle during one of her trances, and it seems to me that the Blessed Virgin did not mention the name of the martyr of whom she just spoke. In my opinion, she does not know the name."

On this subject of the "young" martyr of the Eucharist, we have been advised many times to maintain the greatest reserve. "Speak of a martyr of the Eucharist, in general, but do not stress the youth."

Even supposing for one minute that on the subject of Garabandal we could trust human caution, this would be asking us to betray our mission. We are witnesses of facts and we testify to what we have seen, heard and touched.

On this occasion, as in others, only one thing matters to us, the words and gestures of Conchita.

We can do nothing about it. If this young Christian, whose martyrdom Conchita described, was the St. Tarcisius of authentic history, the Miracle would take place on the feast day of St. Tarcisius.

We are aware that in speaking in this manner, we are multiplying the difficulties on the subject of the date of the Miracle. Conchita stated to us: "It will not be on a feast day of the Virgin." She also said to one of her companions: "On that day, Mass could be celebrated in black," which means: it will not be a "double feast day" according to the language

of the Roman rite, before the last liturgical reform. Now, in the Roman martyrology, that of our occidental cities, the feast of St. Tarcisius is celebrated on August 15, feast of the Assumption of Our Lady.

The whole question comes back to finding out the exact date of the death of the "young" martyr, if he really is, as we have noted, the authentic historical one.

In the Catholic Church, the feast of a saint is usually celebrated on the day of his or her death.

It is the *dies natalis*, the birth in Heaven.

Did St. Tarcisius die on the fifteenth of August, as our martyrology states?

Let the historians furnish the answer. It is their mission and duty. We have full confidence in them, since by definition, they are loyal and competent.

What are we to infer as to the date and nature of the great Miracle? Primarily, what Conchita insisted that we write in the beginning of March, 1966: "Be certain that the Warning will happen and that the Miracle will follow."

Then, to quote a remark from our friend and collaborator, Dr. Apostolides: "It would not be a prophecy if we knew ahead of time its exact meaning, and if we could guess the right date of its happening."

Since the nature and date of the Miracle are prophetic, let us wait with minds at ease, without trying to tear away the veil which momentarily hides them from our view.

We cannot forget that the Miracle itself is directly related to the Message, and that it will be the sign of signs, consecrating the authenticity of the Message which all must accomplish immediately and spread throughout the universe as well.

Chapter 52

One Last Word from Mari Loli February 7, 1966

I had a locution from the Blessed Virgin. She told me that I would have to suffer a great deal in this world, that I would be subject to a great many trials, and that would be the cause of most of my suffering.

I asked her to tell me if I would become a nun; she did not answer me.¹

She told me that she was very pleased that I was here at this boarding school.

I asked her if she would return to “speak” with me; she did not reply.

I asked her to give proof of the apparitions to my father so that he would believe in them. She told me that he would believe “very soon,” and that everyone else would believe also.

She told me that she was very pleased with my sacrifices, but that I must become better each day and do more penance in all things; that I should recite the rosary every day as I have been doing, a devotion which pleases her very much; that she loves us all very much, and that she wants us all to be very good so that we may all be reunited with her in heavenly glory.

Mari Loli Mazon

[Written at a boarding school run by the Sisters of Charity, Zaragoza Province]

1. Loli, as well, did not receive an answer concerning her vocation.

Chapter 53

Our Book in Italy

Conchita's first trip to Italy was evidently the natural culmination of the first stage of the Garabandal events. It was obviously too important an event for us to miss. So, humbly and conscientiously, we followed in her footsteps, and as one can note in previous chapters, with the help of providence, we were able to meet with the most informed and reliable Italian witnesses, those who were her intermediaries and interpreters on the various occasions.

We are not personally acquainted with Rome. To be even more exact, we know little or nothing of the profound spirit, the religious or mystical soul of modern Rome. Yet its spiritual past is so extraordinary that everyone should have an inkling of the supernatural realities of today.

It is soil bathed with the blood of Peter and Paul, land of innumerable Coliseum martyrs, of catacombs, the Circus Maximus, land of confessors, and virgins, land of men and women, of all ages, who, during the course of centuries, generation after generation, have died, sanctifying the city and the cities of the universe, as pure water from the heights render fertile the valleys and the plains.

It is the Vatican basilica where minds are enlightened and hearts fortified by all the holy popes from the first to the last who have been buried there.

Rome? It is the prodigious, incomparable Catholic reliquary of the entire world.

Because of this past, under its immediate and able influence, the Rome of today, the secret spiritual Rome, is still and ever a burning center of hidden saintliness.

That center had made Conchita feel welcome, miraculously facilitating her mission. We also were well received, and the first drafts of our book examined. It was understood that before it could be presented to the public, it should be shown to the proper persons for correction if need be.

We were helped providentially and efficiently. In the meantime, we had made the pilgrimage to San Giovanni Rotondo.

There, we made the acquaintance of Padre Pio, in the same parlor, we believe, as the one where he had received Conchita and her companions.

Before witnesses, we presented him with our book in the name of the editorial staff. We wished to pay him our respects and leave the book with him. He gazed fixedly at the cover, with a picture of Conchita's enraptured face, with “the pines” of the apparitions on the

horizon. Then, without hesitating another second, without even looking at the pages of the book, he opened it as though by chance to page 54, indicating with his finger the Message of June 18, 1965. When he saw that we understood what he meant, he closed it, blessed it and then instead of keeping it, returned it to us.

Thus our book made the required trip to Italy. Now that we know how it was received, our task seems complete.

Chapter 54

The Young Seminarist's Prayer

During the apparitions, adults and children followed the visionaries. One day Conchita, in ecstasy, stopped before her first cousin, little Pepe Luis, aged 7, and told him, "You will become a priest."

Three years later, Pepe Luis, who had entered a pre-seminary in the month of October, was spending his first vacation at home at Christmas 1964. While he was playing out of doors, Conchita found a little notebook of his. She wrote these words in it: "The prayer of the little seminarist."

My God, I want to be a priest, to convert sinners, Lord, with your help. In fact, I know that without your help nothing can be accomplished.

Lord, may I be a holy priest who imitates You even now; may I progress in saintliness by loving and serving You faithfully.

As of now I ask You to forgive my sins. I also ask You to forgive the world.

I promise, with Your help, to become better.

Lord, You hold me now. Do with me what You wish. I accept all, provided that You accomplish Your will in me.

Your son who loves You truly and prays to You, put him in Your heart and never let him out.

I want to be a saintly priest! Oh Mary, protect me!

Pepe Luis

We have seen previously that Garabandal is Eucharistic and priestly. Those who would doubt this in 1966 could re-read this prayer which Conchita wrote as an adolescent of 15 for a little boy who was only 10.

Chapter 55

Unusual Events

For several years now many unusual events have come about attributed to the intervention of Our Lady of Carmel of Garabandal; in the United States, in Spain, in Belgium and elsewhere. The most remarkable appear to us as being those of Antwerp, Germany, Neuers, and California. We had written a chapter on this subject, destined for publication in this book. On thinking the matter over, it seemed too premature to publish it. In these cases it is necessary to apply the prudence and wisdom of the Medical Bureau of Lourdes and canonical decisions. We shall therefore wait again through all the time it requires.

However, we do not hesitate to give comfort to our readers on the effectiveness of confident prayer to the Virgin of Garabandal, by using the objects kissed by her.

A young girl, Miss Menchu Mendiola, was cured in August, 1966, in a most miraculous manner, of an incurable sickness while on her deathbed. She lives at No. 44 of the F. Palazuelos Street in Santander. The whole town was in a commotion. If the medical examinations confirmed this last-minute news, we would have to bless Heaven and thank Our Lady for her merciful passage in this episcopal city.

At the moment of re-editing this book, we received from Madame Mendiola personally, the mother of the happy Menchu, the following lines:

“My daughter continues to be perfectly well, as the tests made on her a month ago were very satisfactory.”

This letter of November 11, 1966, from Madame Mendiola had been preceded by authenticated reports concerning another “miracle.”

This one also happened in Santander, and curiously enough in the same hospital of Valdecilla, where Menchu was cured.

Here is a summary of the account:

On September 18, 1966, at 6:00 p.m., a little boy Alberto Gulierrez Orena became deaf, dumb and blind as a result of a serious automobile accident. He was cured instantly at the precise moment that one of our medals offered by Conchita was being placed around his neck. At the moment this gesture of faith was completed, a prayer was said to Our Lady of Mount Carmel of Garabandal.

The prayer to Our Lady of Carmel was: “Cure him, this very instant, to prove that you really appeared in Garabandal.” Today, at the hospital in Valdecilla, the staff refers to little Alberto as “Our little Lazarus.”

Is it not now evident that everything is possible at Santander?

Chapter 56

Locution of Conchita with Our Lord February 13, 1966

On Sunday, February 13, as I was starting my act of thanksgiving after Communion, I received, suddenly, a great joy and an even greater sadness, as well as a disappointment. I heard Christ's voice saying to me:

“Conchita, you came here to college to prepare yourself to become My bride, and you say it is to follow Me. Don't you say, Conchita, that you want to do My will? Well now, it is yours you want to accomplish. Will it be so all your life? I want you in the world, to stay in it to face the numerous difficulties you will find because of Me. All this, I want for your sanctification and offering for the salvation of the world. You must speak of Mary to the world. Remember that in June you asked Me if you would become a nun and I answered: ‘You will find a cross and sufferings everywhere.’ I repeat again, Conchita, did you ever feel that I was calling you to be My bride? No, and it is because I did not call you.”

Then I asked Him: “How do we feel when you are calling us to religious life?”

He said to me, “Don't concern yourself, you will never feel it.”

I said to Him, “So, you don't love me, Jesus?” and He answered me: “Conchita, is it you asking Me that? Who redeemed you? Do My will and you will find My love. Examine yourself well, think more of your neighbor, and do not fear temptations. If you are loyal to My love, you will conquer the numerous temptations awaiting you. Understand intelligently and spiritually what I am telling you. Do not close the eyes of your soul or let yourself be deceived by anyone. Show love, humility and simplicity. Never think what you are doing is great, but rather that it is what you have to do, must do, not especially to win heaven, but to save the world and thus accomplish My Divine Will. Let everyone know that each well-prepared soul, each soul well-disposed to listen to Me, will know My will. I emphasize, Conchita, that you will have much to suffer, from now until the Miracle, for there are few who believe you. Your own family will believe that you have deceived them. All this I want, as I said before, for your sanctification and so that the world will heed the Message. I want you to know that the rest of your life will be a continuous suffering. Do not waver; in suffering you will find Me, and also Mary whom you love so much.”

Then I asked Him if Rome would believe. He did not answer me. Then He said to me: “Don't worry whether they believe or not. I will



Conchita with Fr. Laffineur in 1962.

do everything, but I will also give you suffering. I am near to those who suffer for Me.”

Conchita Gonzalez
February 13, 1966

Chapter 57

Talk Given by Fr. Laffineur on September 15, 1967, Fribourg, Switzerland

Nothing that has been written so far has ever been contradicted. The book remains. The essential points are there already; that is to say, the exact summary of events which took place in Garabandal between June 19, 1961, and February 7, 1966. They are unassailable, and have not been refuted to this day. This is the reality (I repeat: reality) presented to the judgment of human reason illuminated by faith and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

One can say, and it should be said, that the real problem was resolved with the departure of Conchita for Pamplona on February 7, 1966. By this date we had all the relevant data concerning the most important question; that is, the subject matter regarding the development of the apparitions, according to the testimony of qualified witnesses. Yes, with the prophecies of the Warning, of the Miracle, of the Sign which will remain, and of the conditional future Chastisement, Garabandal definitely belongs to history.

We knew the essential things as well as many details of what happened at the moment these phenomena were taking place. One was able to acknowledge the supernatural nature of the events at Garabandal.

We must insist on this point; and since the month of March, 1963, our conviction has been strengthened. Moreover, since then we could confidently repeat and write the following: “If the seers were to come to us and say: ‘We have not seen either the Blessed Virgin or the Angel . . .’ we should reply without hesitation: ‘Children, your personal judgment no longer interests us; what matters to us is the fact that the witnesses, and we are of their number, have seen, heard, and touched, etc. You have neither the grace nor the mission of enlightening us on your own case. It is something which is superior to you.’”

That month of March, 1963, was nearly three and a half years before the happening which we are now about to relate. We shall therefore terminate these preliminary statements by repeating, “One should read, re-read, and thoroughly digest *L’Etoile dans la Montagne (Star on the Mountain)* and remember all that is written therein.”

Duress in Garabandal

Conchita left for Pamplona on February 7, 1966. It was her birthday

and she was 17 years old.

At that time the village had already become the prison that we had predicted it would become.

Consecrated on August 15, 1965, Monsignor Vicente Puchol Montis was enthroned as Bishop of Santander on the seventeenth of the same month. Before the year came to an end, changes had taken place in his mountain diocese. Fr. Valentin Marichalar, the parish priest of Cosio and Garabandal at the time of the apparitions, found himself confined to the exercise of his ministry in Cosio only and was forbidden to go up to Garabandal, to whose needs he had ministered for almost 10 years. He was succeeded there by a young priest of 25, who took up residence in the village itself. The mission of this priest was clear-cut: put an end to the whole affair. He made no secret of this, because he even goes so far as to say to visitors: "Even if the Miracle were to take place, it will prove nothing regarding that in which you are interested."

Later on, he was to go even further . . .

Intelligent and energetic, and with the sole duty of caring for this small community of 280 docile souls living in a village consisting of 70 houses leaning one against the other — which could just as easily be looked after by an elderly and less active priest — he dedicated himself cleverly and unscrupulously to manipulating the visionaries, their families and the whole village.

And he has succeeded, up to the present, at any rate, in winning over the village families through his attention to the school children and by providing distractions and amusements for the adolescents similar to those available in cities.

He himself organizes dances that last until four o'clock in the morning, and dispenses the faithful from the Sunday obligation of rest from work on the condition that they participate in the construction of premises to be used as a "television club."

Thanks to all these extra activities, the intimidation exercised in the village is less apparent. The children, the adolescents, and many of the women are won over by this young parish priest. The men, or at least the majority of them, observe all these things and keep silence.

Something was to take place in this village, until that time a village of dignified and well-mannered country folk, which all the world should know about . . . On June 26, 1967, four children between the ages of seven and twelve years were making fun of four visitors who were praying at the pines. There was a blind man among their number, but even to him they showed no consideration. It was the American, Joey Lomangino. And to make the apostolate of their parish priest even more obvious, they went so far as to throw dung at the tree on which the Blessed Virgin had most frequently appeared to the four visionaries. It was at the foot of this tree that Conchita had made a simple little altar out of a few rough stones. Yes, this is unfortunately true; we learned of this sacrilege the following morning. And something even worse was attempted in the *calleja* (the stony pathway which leads up

to the pines.) Fortunately they soiled the wrong slab of stone, and it was not the one upon which Conchita had knelt on June 18, 1961, and on June 18, 1965.

In this outrageously profaned prison of Garabandal, the visionaries tried to defend themselves as best they could. And every time they did, which was often, whether two or three of the girls were together, or one of them alone, they came face to face with the young parish priest.

Duress In Pamplona

There were problems in Garabandal, as we have seen, and for Conchita, especially, in Pamplona. We knew this already. The Superior of the college in Pamplona to which Conchita went did not believe in the apparitions. Conchita was glad to know this and said: "It is better so, because I shall not be favored in any way." Poor Conchita! She was not aware that we had written: "The young girl entered her house of suffering on February 7, 1966." We had also written: "We ourselves could not have suspected what was going to happen there." Please read her letters, and her insistence on going to this convent will be apparent to you. Her mother told us that from her childhood, since she was five years old, she had always wanted to enter the religious life. At last she arrived at the door; very soon her desire to give herself completely to God would be realized, and she would become a Discalced Carmelite Missionary and would eventually be able to work among the blacks of Africa—her greatest wish. Her face shone with happiness and was supernaturally transfigured, as we had seen it on the previous September 8 in Torrelavega when she talked to us of her plans.

Well, six days after she entered, on February 13, Jesus spoke to her. This was the interior locution, mentioned in Chapter 56 but not commented on until now, because an interior locution cannot be verified as can an ecstasy.

But now we will speak of it, because it is at the root of Conchita's spiritual drama and because we have absolute and definite proof that she believed and continues to believe in it. The locution was long and had profound implications. Here are some extracts which are relevant at this point: "Did you not say, Conchita that you wish to fulfill My Will for you? Well, at the moment you are fulfilling your own will. Is it going to be so all your life? . . . Have I ever said to you that I shall call you to be a religious? No. I have not called you . . ."

What a drama at the crossroads of life; at that very age when one chooses what one's future life is to be! And a year after this locution Conchita was still upset, disoriented in the secret depths of her soul, so much so that she told someone that after the Miracle to come she would become a cloistered Carmelite.

At this college, later on, she wept when she was present at a clothing ceremony of the Order, knowing that she would never receive the habit of the Discalced Carmelite Missionaries. And at this very moment she began to have doubts about the Real Presence in the Holy

Eucharist. She confided to a friend: "I have the feeling that I have chains round my legs, as though I were being prevented from approaching the altar rail." During her Easter holidays it took all the wisdom and doctrinal assuredness of her mother, Aniceta, to alleviate her troubled soul in this regard.

Let us see how events now gather momentum. Easter of 1966 was on April 10, so between February 7 and that date, two months had elapsed. In these two months, providence had led Conchita from the happiness of her entry into college at Pamplona to the renunciation of her total gift of herself and to the intellectual suffering of her doubts about the Eucharist. During these two months, (nine weeks, to be precise) her heart and her mind had been nailed to the Cross. But all this was but her preparation for the trial of trials.

During these same Easter holidays, at the beginning of April, she met Loli, her confidante, once again . . . and also the young parish priest of Garabandal. Loli, to whom the Blessed Virgin had said in an interior locution while she was at school in Zaragoza: "You will have doubts about your apparitions." Loli, who since the month of February had been very distressed, had confided her doubts to those around her. She often spoke about them to the parish priest in the sacristy and in her own home, without realizing that she was playing into his hands. After talking to Loli, what could Conchita do but confide, as her friend had done, in the young priest who was moreover, the only confessor in the village.

Conchita returned to Pamplona, about the twentieth of April. She was there, in all, for about six months, just the time necessary for the development of her third drama.

At the beginning of this, the third term of the school year, a three-day retreat took place, a routine occurrence in schools of this kind. The retreat was given, not by the school chaplain, but by a 35-year-old priest of the town. And he, like the Mother Superior, did not believe in the apparitions.

It was at this precise moment that Conchita—experiencing the unhappiness caused by the locution of February 13, and her doubts regarding the Eucharist which were assailing her once more, and also upset by Loli's confidences and the interviews she had had with her parish priest—began to doubt her apparitions herself.

Trustingly, seeing in him the priesthood for whom she had so much respect and affection, she opened her heart to this unknown preacher. Afterwards she went into the confessional . . .

The answer he gave was: "If you do not promise to tell the village and those who visit the village that you have deceived them, I shall not give you absolution."

Conchita was forbidden to speak of her doubts to her family, to any of her friends or even to her companions at the time of the apparitions. When she returned to Garabandal, after she left the college she received three or four letters reminding her of her promise and reminding

her that she was absolved only in conscience while she kept her promise. Try to imagine, if you can, the distressing spiritual situation in which she found herself at being forbidden to speak of her doubts to her mother, to her brothers, to priests who were favorable to Garabandal; and at not having any adviser or consoler other than the parish priest who was at that time 26 years old.

Duress in Garabandal

And he—and there can be no doubt about this—was to give secret support to the orders which came from his colleague in Pamplona. "Yes, Conchita, he is right and you must swear on the Bible that you have lied."

We know all the foregoing as a fact, and we accept total responsibility in making it known. We can even add something further . . . In the middle of July, 1966, we went up to Garabandal, knowing absolutely nothing of what had happened since the previous February 7. We were charged with the delivery of a message to Conchita from Rome. It was very short, just a few words: "You should choose an 'old' confessor, that is to say, a priest of mature years and with much experience. There should be no coercion, but rather a spiritual direction which is wisdom itself."

When Conchita received the message she opened her eyes wide, looked at us in silence, and wept.

At that time, of course, we did not understand those tears; but today they throw light upon the past and enlighten the future.

In Conchita's locution of February 13, Jesus had in fact insisted: "Don't you say, Conchita, that you want to do My will? Well now, it is yours you want to accomplish. Will it be so all your life?" Later on He added: "Understand intelligently and spiritually what I am telling you. Do not close the eyes of your soul or let yourself be deceived by anyone."

August 15, 1966—10:00 a.m.

To a person who asked her about Loli, whose spiritual state at that moment was known to her, Conchita replied, "Loli has doubts." "And you, Conchita?" asked her questioner. "Inside me, I don't doubt, but here (she put a finger on her forehead) I also have doubts." Thus for the first time, and only to this one questioner aside from the two young priests we have mentioned, the young girl revealed her terrible secret. Her questioner, out of tact, let the matter rest there, and they parted immediately. Later on, the same day, witnesses told us, "At four o'clock this afternoon Conchita appeared to be quite serene and was her usual smiling self."

August 15, 1966—5:00 p.m.

Listen to the same witnesses: "Only one hour later, when she and Loli were taking leave of the parish priest, there was anguish on Conchita's face. She appeared nervous and troubled and said to us as she passed,

"Say a prayer for me, I need it badly."

What had happened? The following is what happened—and nobody knew about it until several months had elapsed.

There had been a conversation, at the end of which Conchita, to free her conscience from the weight of her confession in Pamplona (the absolution of which had been made conditional) and following the recent counsels of the young parish priest of Garabandal, had chosen to undergo a trial of fire; a meeting with Bishop Puchol Montis, on which occasion she was finally to uphold the promise which had been sacrilegiously extracted from her by force—by reason of her good faith.

And here we must repeat once again; neither her mother, Aniceta, her brothers Serafin and Miguel, nor the friends of Garabandal—in fact, nobody at all—knew anything of this, especially of her momentous decision.

Duress in Pamplona—August 28, 1966

Accompanied by her mother, Conchita returned to Pamplona with her secret. As on the previous February 7, Aniceta gave the Mother Superior strict instructions that nobody was to be allowed to see her daughter without Aniceta's own authorization. Poor Aniceta! She knew nothing, she was even unaware of the existence of the preacher who had given the retreat at the school, and therefore could not suspect what was soon going to happen, in spite of her instructions.

August 30, 1966

Five and one-half months after the locution of February 13, accompanied by his Vicar General, (a priest of Pamplona) by one of his secretaries and, as if by coincidence, by the parish priest of Garabandal, Bishop Puchol Montis arrived at the door of the school. The Bishop was outside the boundaries of his own diocese; and furthermore he was unable to produce Aniceta's authorization when asked by the Mother Superior. "It is not necessary," he said. "But Conchita is a minor, Your Excellency! She cannot be questioned on her own, alone," replied the Mother Superior. "That is of little importance," he replied. So the door of the college opened, Aniceta's specific instructions were completely disregarded and the interview began. It was to last seven hours.

We shall summarize the affair very briefly, taking, as always, as far as we are concerned, the position least favorable to us.

"Your Excellency, I don't remember now having seen the Virgin, but the Diary (my 54-page diary in which I told everything) is the truth." And the young girl recited this diary from memory, without any mistakes.

"Your Excellency, I have not seen the Virgin, but the Message is true, the Miracle of the Host is true, the great Miracle will happen . . ."

During the course of this interminable interrogation, interrupted only for the midday meal, the Bishop's eyes were more than once filled with tears.

Finally, pointing to a ring Conchita was wearing on her finger, he asked her, "And that ring, Conchita?"

"The Virgin kissed it, Your Excellency."

"Give it to me."

"But (a little challengingly) why? . . . if I haven't seen her?"

"I will kiss it anyway, who knows!"

This was what was immediately made known in Santander and elsewhere as the "denials" of Conchita. Wouldn't it have been more accurate to say that these were the "contradictions" of Conchita in her hour of torment.

Between a denial and a contradiction there is, in fact, an essential difference. Above all, as we shall explain later on, it is necessary to take into account what happened between February 7 and this August 30 (we have just outlined the summary), the questionable conduct of the authorities, the silence which they were to impose on Conchita and the other girls several days later as of this August 30, the visible intervention of the devil, the foibles of the seers and their families, the shortcomings of certain friends of Garabandal, the prophecy of the Blessed Virgin herself during a rapture of the four girls in 1961, and the mysterious designs of Divine Providence. Divine Providence spoke clearly in the locution which ended with this little dialogue: "I asked Jesus if Rome would believe. He did not answer me. Then He said to me, 'Don't worry whether they believe you or not. I will do everything; but I will also give you suffering. I am near to those who suffer for Me.' We shall return to this later on.

Duress in Santander and Garabandal—September 5, 1966

During the night someone knocked on the door of the little grocer's shop in the village. The parish priest who lodges there came down in his pajamas.

"All right, I'm coming," he answered the mysterious caller.

A quarter of an hour later two motorcycles went down the valley. This time it had to do with the organizing of some visits to the Bishop of Santander.

The following morning Loli and her father, Ceferino, Jacinta and her mother, Maria, went down to Cosio. A car from the Bishopric was waiting for them. The parish priest of Garabandal accompanied them. At his age one does not tire easily.

On their arrival in Santander their interrogators explained to the seers the standard formula regarding the events of Garabandal. The vision was explained as "a dream," the call as "an excitability" and so on as regards all the rest. The victory would supposedly be quite easy seeing that the two of them, especially Loli, were talking in the same way as Conchita was in Pamplona.

A person who saw them all when they got back to Cosio told us, "Ceferino was looking somewhat ashamed at what had happened." Loli blushed. Jacinta had her arms crossed in front of her, kept her

eyes on the ground and appeared to be dumb. Maria made herself scarce. The parish priest, on the other hand, was looking at the four members of his flock with an air of triumph. He had won the contest (or at least so it seemed to him).

September 7, 1966

Around six o'clock in the evening Aniceta came down from the pastures. She showed us the summons from Santander for that day.

"I didn't go."

"Why not?"

"The day before yesterday Ceferino and Maria were summoned with their daughters. Today Pilar has gone down with Mari Cruz. They should treat me as they do the others; they should not have called me alone, but with Conchita."

"You are right; you have done well to stay at home."

"Yes. Tomorrow I am going, as I do every year on Our Lady's birthday, to the traditional pilgrimage to the *Virgen de la Luz*. . . 10 hours of walking there and back."

September 10, 1966

A letter from Conchita arrived in the village.

"Mama, I was interrogated here for seven hours by the Bishop on August 30."

Aniceta did not believe her eyes. Her anger was enough to make the mountains tremble. She hired a taxi with Serafin, her eldest son, and went to the college in Pamplona.

"Reverend Mother, did I not forbid all visits to Conchita without my formal authorization?"

"Could I oppose a Bishop?"

"You have betrayed the promise you gave me; I shall take my daughter home with me at once."

It was for this reason and no other that Conchita left this college run by the Discalced Carmelite Missionaries in Pamplona where, in our opinion, she should never have gone in the first place.

The chains of her second prison had finally been broken. And thanks to Bishop Puchol who, without knowing it and surely without wishing it, had fulfilled the Will of Jesus expressed in the locution of February 13 to Conchita . . . In seven months the matter was all over.

Mid-September to mid-October, 1966

We will summarize briefly. The four girls went down again, in turn, to Santander. Ridiculously and certainly uselessly, Aniceta was threatened with canonical sanctions if she did not obey this time. Along with a lady who was a friend of hers she accompanied Conchita, who said to them as they were entering the Bishop's house:

"I will tell the Bishop the date of the Miracle."

They were received by the Bishop . . . and the parish priest of Garabandal: "Conchita, sign your recantation." Conchita signed.

And what was the text? "I did not see the Virgin." But the reservations which constituted the "contradictions," namely; "But the Diary is true, the Message is true, the Miracle will happen, and a sign will be left at the pines, etc." did not figure in the document she signed.

"Aniceta, sign also, please."

"I saw what I saw, I am not signing."

When they were outside, the lady who was accompanying them asked:

"And the date of the Miracle that you said you were going to tell those gentlemen?"

"I couldn't remember it when I was standing in front of the Bishop."

"And now?"

"Yes, I remember it."

"Shall we go in again?"

"No"

"But since you didn't see the Blessed Virgin, tell us the date. It's not important anymore."

"No, only eight days before the Miracle, as the Virgin made me promise."

Let us not forget the other visionaries. Jacinta has also signed. So has Loli. So has Mari Cruz.

Jacinta, in front of the Bishop, said to her mother, Maria,

"You sign too, Mama."

"Yes I will sign, if you can fall into ecstasy here, now."

"But Mama, you know that that's impossible!"

"Then I'm not signing."

In Garabandal, Loli remains silent, at least in front of us. Why? Because, like the others, she had strict orders from Santander, especially if she meets that priest from Nevers who, as Bishop Puchol was to say publicly in a televised press conference on March 17, "had committed the crime of declaring himself an 'enthusiastic advocate of Garabandal'. He is the number one enemy . . ."

Loli also remains silent because she is strictly supervised by her family, and by her parish priest. Except in Balmori, where we met her alone, she can never be with us on her own. And yet, even without words, she makes her deepest thoughts known to us. In our presence her face lights up; a smile illuminates it; she thanks us with her eyes; she knows that her doubts do not weaken our absolute certainty. In front of her family, who has never let us be alone with her, Loli thanks us in silence for not abandoning her.

It was not long ago that she took us by the arm, near the church, as she had done on June 18, 1965, in order to tell us again: "You know that of course I have seen the Blessed Virgin. Do not doubt it!"

Did Ceferino sign, like his daughter, Loli? We shall know one day. In any case, at the end of June 1967, he appeared to have aged by 10

years and he seemed to be bearing a very heavy cross. Six weeks later, on reading the report of Brigadier Juan Alvarez Seco, his reflections and his attitude seemed to be a confession.

Mari Cruz, for her part, had to sign with both hands, so to speak. She went to such lengths that it seemed to have gone to her head: "We hurt ourselves very much when we fell on our knees, but we managed to hide it." Does she know that this lie drew a round denial from Conchita, who wrote to us immediately?

Did Pilar sign? It would be logical if she did, seeing her past attitude, but as she now seems to be less triumphant than before, who knows?

This is the summary of what happened between February 7 and October 14, 1966, a period of eight months.

We are deceiving nobody because, faithful to our method, we once more repeat that we have chosen the position least favorable to us. The proof? We have stated the fact of the words: "I did not see the Virgin." And also what Conchita also said: "I have forgotten if I saw her." We don't accept only "a loss of memory" (this is quite certain); we also accept the denial. With the reservations of "but . . . but . . ." which prove that Conchita has not denied but rather that she put before the Bishop the "contradictions" of her state of mind.

God grant that Santander, on sending their report to Rome on October 16, 1966, has not imitated those who judged Joan of Arc in the cemetery at St. Ouen.

Not only has Santander imposed absolute silence on the visionaries and their families, but it has offered to find Conchita, and the others too, no doubt, a new boarding school, all fees paid. In this manner they will have her safely out of the way. In addition to this the vigilance of the parish priest has been reinforced by more exacting orders; perfectly logical and justified, they say, because the seers have denied everything.

All the visitors who go to the village know the mocking smile of the parish priest and his childish arguments against the reality of the events. What they do not know, unless they are Spaniards, is the incredible reverence that the young boys and girls of these mountain districts have for a bishop. It is a certain kind of terror of the clergy that can be created by a young Spanish priest.

Here are two examples: Since October 16, 1966, Santander has announced that the whole affair is finished. All Garabandal was aware of this, and they knew that the Bishop's note (subsequently published March 1967) was going to be made public, resolving the case once and for all. They were told to expect a visit from the Bishop. When it became known that he was going to visit the village on April 9, 1967, everybody trembled and said: "This is it . . . he's going to come and excommunicate us!"

The tragic death of Bishop Puchol on the feast day of St. Michael of Monte Gargano the following May 8 certainly relieved their anxieties a little. (Bishop Puchol died in an auto accident 30 miles north of Madrid on May 8, 1967.) But what fetters still remain over the seers, their

families, and over the whole of this small village! One proof is that at the beginning of August, 1967, Jacinta refused to allow a drawing to be made of her, or to give her autograph. "No," she said, "they have forbidden me to allow this."

Intellectual Childishness

We have prophesied some of the pressures and duress. We could, of course, proceed illuminated by the light of Conchita and resolve the whole affair in two minutes by the words she said to us personally: "Child's play? No, because we can't begin it again."

This reply is, undoubtedly, quite conclusive and we take it as such. But it gives us too easy a victory and everybody knows that we don't like to have a victory without risks and without working for it.

We shall explain then, and prove, forgetting that Conchita with her few words has solved the question conclusively. In this way we do more honor to human intelligence, involved in this affair on a worldwide scale; more honor to the Catholic Church (which should not be confused with Santander and which should not be accused of having stopped where Santander has stopped).

Regarding the philosophy and theology practiced by Santander at that time, they seemed to be convinced of two things: 1) apparitions in the sense indicated belong to another age—to that of the naiveté of a Catholicism of the past; 2) certainty in the face of events of this kind can only be assured through evidence.

That the "evidence" belongs to the visionaries alone we have shown in previous chapters. The witnesses, whether from Santander or elsewhere, have been given only signs, motives for believing. Just as Jesus taught, when He said: "If you do not believe in My words, at least believe in My works . . ." Our book relates the "works" of Garabandal. The photographs, etc., confirm them.

Bishop Puchol publicly denied the possibility of the supernatural nature of the events in his Note on March 17, in which he wrote what he was later to repeat to journalists, on the radio and on television, regarding the Magisterium of the Church. Obviously he was totally unaware of the existence of Lourdes, of Beauraing or of Fatima, not to mention other apparitions.

As well as honesty and exactitude in doctrine, common sense must also be added. We are even tempted to write that common sense precedes both of them.

We have seen what went on in Conchita's soul between February 7 and October 14, 1966: her anxiety and perturbation before and after the interior locution of February 13; the diabolical temptations regarding the Holy Eucharist; the drama—the third in two months—of her doubts about her apparitions. And we have seen the net woven by the preacher of Pamplona and the young parish priest of Garabandal.

All these things bring us face to face with a superhuman tragedy, the victims being Conchita and her companions. And therefore when the

hour of clarification comes—and it is fast approaching—the thing which will give the most scandal is the intellectual childishness of the adversaries. Before the whole world they are dishonoring human intelligence, and are trampling underfoot the simple common-sense of the Catholic people.

In 1966 when 17-year-old girls, hounded like rabbits, don't know which side to take, they have the audacity to attribute this to a state of psychosis for which they, and they alone, are responsible. In so doing they seek to confirm their own judgment and proclaim it to the whole world. Having scorned the events in Garabandal when they were taking place, with the development proper to them, they are now taking advantage of the upset state of mind of these girls in order to draw conclusions favorable to their own judgment.

They are even rejecting a five year old prophecy according to which *"a day will come in which the seers will contradict themselves; in which members of their families will not behave as they should in regard to the apparitions; in which they will even deny having seen the Blessed Virgin—thereby creating a confusion concerning Garabandal similar to the confusion which will reign in the Church."*

They have read in Conchita's Diary that she asked forgiveness of the Virgin for having allowed herself to be deceived by them. That was as long ago as the end of July, 1961, in Santander.

And they have read in the same Diary that at the beginning of 1963, because of a crisis of conscience which unfolded itself in our presence, the girls saw clearly that their doubts had not reached the depths of their souls, but rather that the devil had worked on their senses, their imagination, their memory and that it was in these that they had experienced their doubts. This was, in fact, written by Conchita herself: "We have in a certain sense allowed ourselves to be dominated by Satan."

According to these adversaries there was nothing to be done, all was useless; Garabandal no longer existed, no celestial personage came down to the village.

Their blindness was such that they do not surmise that the devil had obscured the light of the preceding years among the visionaries and that they themselves had played a part in it.

A Rude Awakening

The Santander commission has not shown themselves to be judges of integrity; they have not accepted full declarations; they have accepted only that which aided their own designs; they have suppressed all Conchita's "buts" . . . "but the Diary is true . . . but the Message is true . . . but the Miracle will happen . . ." etc. They have given the name of "denials" to what were no more than contradictions.

And above all, because they based themselves solely on the state of soul of the girls during the period from August 30 to October 14, 1966, they have laid themselves open to all kinds of surprises. How? Because

it only needs a change in these states for them to find themselves obliged, of necessity, to modify their conclusions. And this is precisely what has happened; they have already changed and very much so, even before the Note of March 17, 1967.

Yes, even before they passed judgment their conclusions were already invalid.

On January 1, 1967, only two and a half months after October 14, 1966, Conchita composed the wonderful prayer which can be found in her Diary. Here are a few lines:

"Lord I beseech You for those who are spreading the Message,
For those who are not fulfilling the Message,
For those who do not want to know anything about the Message,
Lord, I pray that Your Message might be made ever more widely known."

So, is Conchita confirming the existence of the Message? Yes or no?

At the end of February, 1967, we showed both Conchita and Loli two different pictures which claimed to represent Our Lady of Garabandal. The two girls were 135 miles apart but both made a complete and definite criticism of the pictures, pointing out various details and saying, "But no, not like that . . . our vision was like this . . ."

Do you see the contradiction? "No celestial personage had been in the village," but "the Virgin that we saw is quite different from the picture you are showing us."

About the same time there was a rumor in Spain and elsewhere that the Miracle would take place on the following April 13, which would be the feast day of St. Hermenegild and would fall on a Thursday. It was believed possible because St. Hermenegild was a martyr of the Holy Eucharist and was a native of Spain.

But Conchita's reply when questioned about it was: "To guess at dates regarding the Miracle shows a lack of faith in the Blessed Virgin. As she told me, I shall announce it eight days beforehand."

. . . "There have been no apparitions . . ." But the Miracle has been prophesied and will take place.

Easter Holidays, 1967

In Fatima, Conchita met her dear friend, Joey Lomangino, the blind American who is the great apostle of Garabandal in the United States. A companion of Joey's, a well known Fatima apostle from America, asked Conchita:

"Conchita, the Virgin promised you in two of your ecstasies that Joey would be cured. Will he regain his sight on the day of the great Miracle?" She replied unhesitatingly, "Yes."

Doubt of having seen the Virgin? . . . but on two occasions, on the basis of two ecstasies, she has even prophesied the cure of a blind man,

on a certain date.

The following conversation took place on the same date or thereabouts: Taking advantage of an opportunity, and in order to see her reaction, somebody said to Conchita with a certain irony: "But isn't it you yourself who fabricated the whole affair?" Her reply came as quick as lightning: "No."

"Then it was from God, something altogether above and beyond you?"

"Yes."

"You realize that the Virgin appeared to you, and you believe it?"

"Yes."

And Conchita proceeded to relate things quite normally, as though she had never had any doubts at all.

Yes, since April, 1967, only six months after October 14 and no more than a few weeks after the Note of March 17, 1967, Conchita was relating things in a normal fashion, as though she had never had any doubts.

A Last Comment

We could, and we should, add still more things. Noting their dates we shall have a thread of inflexible testimonies, but this is for later on. Today [in 1967] we only announce them in order to console our hearers and our readers . . . Conchita's answer to the *Gaceta Ilustrada* in May; our meeting in her house in the village with Joey Lomangino on June 26; the little picture painted under Conchita's guidance in May/June; Jacinta at the pines with our friend Bernardo in July; Conchita, Loli and Jacinta among the visitors at the pines and elsewhere . . . the visionaries are living in a new world, their confidence restored.

We shall end with two conclusions:

First of all is Conchita's, of course. It dates from the end of March, 1967, when she heard of the Note of the seventeenth.

" . . . If the Bishop has acted in good faith, God will take this into consideration. But as regards his Note, I think this: those who already believe in Garabandal will believe more from now on . . . and by reason of this more visitors will come to the village in the future."

Divine Providence, as always, does all things well.

Lastly, our own conclusion: The common sense of the people of God can never be mocked with impunity.

He who permits himself to judge a person when that one is in the "dark night" of the soul is obliged, in advance, to condemn himself when light comes to that soul again. In this case, whoever he is, he is like a weathervane on our rooftops — always at the mercy of the four winds.

Fribourg
September 15, 1967

Chapter 58

Conference in Canada

Such is our conference in Switzerland that we wrote while traveling on the roads of that small country. We are completing it with another conference that we wrote on the roads of Canada.

June 26, 1967

Our great friend, Joey Lomangino, the blind American, writes to us, through his secretary: "I will be in Garabandal until June 28." Immediately we decide, if he can cross the Atlantic we can travel 625 miles to join him and Conchita on vacation in her village.

On the afternoon of June 26, we found Serafin, Aniceta's eldest son, alone in the kitchen. We talked together for two informative hours. This handsome man in his thirties, displayed the quiet wisdom of the perfect mountaineer. In his humble way he made several profound statements concerning the apparitions of the visionaries.

We especially remember this one:

"In my opinion, the Miracle will take place when confusion in the Church will be even greater." This reflection of Serafin, which impressed us so much, cannot be understood by the reader unless it is considered as historic fact, which is absolutely incontestable. Not only will it demonstrate the deep thought of Conchita's eldest brother, but it will prove that the doubts of the visionaries were predicted by the Virgin of Carmel and themselves, five years in advance.

It was in 1961, at the time of the absolute certitude and inexpressible joy of the children, concerning their apparitions . . . As they emerged from a trance, all four were questioned as usual.

"This time what did the Virgin tell you?"

They looked at each other as if for consultation.

"Well, tell us."

"We don't understand too well."

"Tell us just the same."

"The Virgin said: 'A time will come when all four of you will contradict yourselves about the apparitions; when your families will not behave well about them; when even you will doubt the apparitions, even deny them.'"

"Is that all?"

"No." She added, "Thus you will establish among you the same confusion that now exists in the Church."

A priest was present and he vigorously protested, "It's not the Virgin appearing. In fact, there is no confusion in the Church. It is the devil talking."

Because of their respect for the clergy, the people dispersed in silence, since they could not answer him. They did not know that Our Lady spoke the truth. The actual confusion in the Church, the confusion in this year 1967, which is now so noticeable in the Christian people, already existed in 1961 — and probably even earlier — among the theologians and their listeners.

In the silence and solitude of his stable on the pastureland of Garabandal, Serafin, the very wise mountaineer has been clearly aware of this situation for a long time.

On the night of June 26, 1967, the family is all present. We are sitting at the family table, Conchita facing us, Joey Lomangino at our right. The face of the young seer is resplendent with Christian beauty.

We were glancing at her when Joey touched us with his elbow, his hand on a book which Conchita had just dedicated to him.

We read: "In fond remembrance and in union of prayers, so God will make use of these apparitions for the salvation of souls."

Remembering May 1967

Many visitors to Garabandal could show the same quotation given to them on papers, pictures and books which they had presented to her to autograph. As to what she wrote for us at Burgos, in May 1967, it is: "At Santander I said I didn't see the Virgin. I should have said I doubt that I have seen the Virgin. Yes, I signed what I said but did not swear to it. By the grace of God may our apparitions contribute to the salvation of souls and prevent humanity from being struck by the Chastisement."

Conchita! Conchita! So! In spite of the misguided priest in Pamplona and the young parish priest, repeating, "You must swear on the Bible that you deceived the village and the world," you did not swear, you did not take an oath.

Listen to us attentively.

First, you should write and sign, and declare, "I doubt that I have seen the Virgin," and not what you wrote and signed: "I did not see the Virgin."

You should state your evidence more clearly, and add all the "buts," all the known restrictions: "but the Miracle of the Host is true," "but all the messages are true," "but the Miracle will come," and the rest. You should do this, because this is what you told your interrogators at Santander.

Again, listen well to this, for you could not know it. You could not understand it. When, after years of inquest, we were called to give evidence to the Canonical Commission who were to study the apparitions at Beauraing, 35 years ago, we faced a real Canonical Commission, organized and proceeding according to canonical laws. It consisted of a president, his assessors, a lawyer, and a notary. They were the same priests, named by the Bishop of the diocese where the apparitions occurred, and confirmed in the dignity of their mission.

At Santander, from April 30 to October 14, 1967, you, Conchita, and the others, did not appear before an official commission, but in front of

priests and a bishop who for the occasion improvised themselves as your judges.

Before answering questions at Beauraing we took the oath with our hands on the Bible. You, Conchita, just confirmed that you did not take an oath.

Conchita, the whole world must know — for these two reasons alone, though there are many more — that not only your interrogation, but that of your companions, was not, and is not canonically valid, and neither is your deposition. Everything must be dismissed and begun anew. Another tribunal must take over, as we say in civil law.

Above all, it proves clearly that the defenders of Garabandal not only have the right but are also obliged in conscience to continue their battle.

This also proves the eminent wisdom of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which ended its note of March 10, 1967, with these words, clear for everyone: "As for us, we abstain."

July 1967

Conchita is on vacation, and the French pilgrims take advantage of the opportunity to go up to the village. We can follow the four visionaries, day by day, each of our friends having sent us their testimonies. We are summing up.

The first week Conchita and Jacinta are withdrawn. They are asked for autographs, to pose for photographs. They hesitate, and we are surprised. They answer. "We do not have permission."

Permission from whom? From Santander? From the pastor of Garabandal? We will know later.

It suffices for now, to ascertain that the religious intimidation still remains more than a year after the abominable actions of the occasional confessor at Pamplona.

Nevertheless, at the end of the same month, for a French priest passing through, Conchita undertook to write a whole page in Spanish. When it was translated for him, he brought back to us what could be called the picture of a priest, drawn by the young visionary. It is a touching picture which, seen with the prayer of the young seminarian, Pepe Luis, would enable a retreat master to bring his audience the evangelical vision, the state and apostleship of the priesthood.

Here is the copy:

What the Virgin wants of the priest:

First, his own sanctification; that he fulfill his vows for love of God; pursue, win many souls by example and prayer, because in our time it is difficult to do it otherwise. May he be saintly, loving souls through Christ. To seclude himself, once in a while, in silence so he may listen to God, who continually speaks to him.

To meditate often on the Passion of Jesus, so his life can be in greater union with Christ, the Priest. Thus, he will

inspire souls to do penance, to sacrifice. He will help them carry the cross better, which Christ asks us all to carry.

To speak of Mary, who is sure to carry us to Christ.

Also speak to souls and make them believe, that since there is Heaven there is also a Hell.

I believe this is what Heaven wants of her priests.

Conchita Gonzalez

July 29, 1967

As a point of fact, not only were the visionaries forbidden to give autographs or to be photographed, they were also forbidden to return to the *cuadro*, especially to the pines.

Conchita told a Spanish speaking French nun, "Mother, I haven't returned for a year."

And the French, unwittingly, will be the occasion of the liberation of Conchita and Jacinta. Let's give them here the homage they deserve. As venerable and dear Padre Rodrigo, Spanish Jesuit, willingly repeats: "The Virgin appeared in Spain, but it's the French who received and welcomed her."

Everyone also knows that at the time of the last apparition of St. Michael on June 18, 1965, three pilgrims from France were the only ones granted the privilege of kissing Conchita's crucifix.

It was fitting that their return to Garabandal in 1967, in spite of the parish priest's supervision, recreated the atmosphere of freedom which the visionaries needed.

One of the Frenchmen had the privilege to be accompanied by Jacinta to the *cuadro*, where she showed him the exact spot of the Angel's first apparition. Shortly after, other Frenchmen were praying at the pines. All of a sudden, light footsteps claimed their attention. They turned around; Conchita was smiling at them. They finished the rosary, and then Conchita talked to them of the apparitions at the pines, pointing out the tree where Our Lady of Mount Carmel appeared most frequently. However, like Jacinta at the *cuadro*, she stopped suddenly, and confessed, "I do not have permission to say more."

Then it was Jacinta who led friends to the rock above which, first with Loli, then with Loli and Conchita, she witnessed the "terrible vision" of the Chastisement during the Corpus Christi Novena in 1962.

As for Loli, she was staying home. Not that she wasn't tempted to accompany the pilgrims but her father, Ceferino, prevented her from going out because the pastor of the village regularly visited his little cafe and because her mother, Julia, feared the pastor as much as her husband feared him.

The French (them again!) were reserving an unusual surprise for those overwrought parents.

One morning one of them brought a weekly paper which he had found at a merchant's in Cabezón de la Sal. It referred to an article two months old. The journalist had met Alvarez Seco, the Commandant of the armed police of Puentenansa on which Garabandal depends.

It was he, at the time of the apparitions, who was at the village every day, alone or with his men. We know him very well, for he witnessed one of Conchita's ecstasies with us, in Conchita's kitchen.

In the article in this weekly paper, he was telling briefly what he had seen hundreds of times, and proclaimed his fervent faith. For him, the supernatural nature of the facts was evident. Our French friend casually placed this document on the table in the little cafe. Ceferino noticed it and looked through it. Little by little, the look on his face changed, and we saw affirmative nods of his head. Deeply moved, he retired to his kitchen. There, face in his hands, tears came to his eyes. The past filed through his memory; he must have remembered the notes he had given us in days gone past, that little notebook, in which he had written in his own hand all the ecstasies of the month of August, 1962.

Very dear, grieving Ceferino, sturdy as an oak, who saved the pines by ridding them of caterpillars, once consented to surrender at Santander, and also, again, in the presence of a young priest only 26 years old.

We have dozens of testimonies such as Ceferino's in our files concerning the months of August and September. They point out that the visionaries were regaining their freedom of behavior and their understanding.

October 30, 1967

On this day a Spanish woman was at Loli's. The conversation was especially cordial. Suddenly the young girl got up, went upstairs and came back with her big missal in her hands.

"Señora, I'm giving it to you. Take it."

When the visitor refused, Loli insisted.

"Yes, take it. But there is a condition; that you will disperse the pages throughout the entire world. This way the Virgin's kiss will reach the whole universe."

"Loli, I don't understand too well. I know that Our Lady kissed your missal, at least the cover."

"When Our Lady kissed my missal, she not only kissed the cover, but every page; yes, each page. Here, look at these two pages of the Canon. They are my favorite because they represent Jesus crucified and the angels receiving His blood in a chalice. These pages I give to the young girl accompanying you . . ."

"Loli, Loli . . ."

" . . . On the condition that all the pages carry the Virgin's kiss to all humanity."

November, 1967

We could not miss the anniversary of the last apparition at the pines. We were escorted by a French friend to whom Conchita had offered the rosary kissed by Our Lady of Mount Carmel on that solemn occasion, November 13, 1965. Before and after this pilgrimage of love, we saw Conchita at Burgos for three days. We were four witnesses from

France, plus an artist well known in Spain. There are so many things we should relate!

Let's sum up the artist's remarks.

"Look at these sketches I've just finished at Conchita's direction.

"The first, the Virgin alone.

"The second, the Virgin and the Infant Jesus.

"The third, the Virgin, the Eye of God, and the twin angels.

"The fourth, the Archangel St. Michael, alone.

"Hundreds of times Conchita corrected my work, making me retouch this or that. Don't worry; she hasn't forgotten one single detail of the apparitions."

Our Pretentious Ignorance

If we all reflected deeply, we would blush at our ridiculous pretensions. We ourselves, not being authentic visionaries, have the incredible naivete to impose on those who are, our very inadequate logic. How? By pretending that the "real" visionaries must carry to their death, always and everywhere, the evidence of their visions. But we know nothing of this realism, which is beyond us, and because of this ignorance we cannot establish laws to govern the "preternatural." We cannot establish those laws by our own personal knowledge, of a world that escapes us.

In order to talk wisely about it and benefit by it, we must refer to authentic confidences of uncontested visionaries in the history of the New Testament. They are legion; from the Virgin of the Annunciation to the children of Fatima, from the shepherds at Bethlehem to St. Teresa of Avila.

Let's examine three recent cases: Melanie of La Salette, St. Bernadette of Lourdes, Lucy of Fatima.

At Dion, at the road of Mars-on-Allier at Paray-le-Monial, Melanie had lived a few years under the protection and guidance of Fr. Combes, pastor of the region. Usually Father would receive, orally or written, the answers to questions he would put to her. There came a day when Melanie let the good but imperious interrogator wait longer than he wished to and he was surprised, indeed impatient about it. This is an interesting passage of the conversation:

"Reverend Father, when I sat down at my table to write, my mind became cloudy, my memory disordered, confused. I couldn't see anything, remember anything."

St. Bernadette, a year preceding her death, is in her convent of St. Gildard, at Nevers. At this moment, she is almost consumed by holiness. A French Bishop, who later became a Cardinal, interrogated her:

"Sister Marie Bernard, about your apparitions . . .?"

"Ah! Your Grace, I don't like to go back to it. What if I had been mistaken?"

"What happened over there?"

"In a great light . . . the Lady in a white robe . . . blue sash . . . roses

on her feet . . ."

The French specialist on Fatima, the most competent and universally esteemed on the subject of Fatima, was telling us in our home this year:

"Don't be surprised by the momentary obscurities of the children of Garabandal, the faltering of their minds, of their memories."

"Why?"

"It was the same with Lucy. She, too, was doubtful of her apparitions for a time."

The conclusion is obvious in the face of these three particular cases which enlighten us on the logic of a world which is not ours. And in that world, the minds and memories of the true visionaries belong to God, and to Him alone.

To be astonished by this would be as ridiculous as to think that authentic apparitions emerge not from Divine pleasure, but from the free determination of His human creatures. Listen to the echo of Conchita's reflection made to us at Burgos, and mentioned in another chapter: "No, Garabandal is not child's play because we cannot begin over again!"

November 13, at Garabandal

In the village an American is visiting for the second time. The first time we thought he believed in the apparitions. We were mistaken, for he wrote us later from Palestine that there was nothing to them. Back from the Orient, we met him again at Garabandal in June 1967, at which time he was still searching for the truth.

On November 13, 1967, he seemed to have found it.

In any case, he was very enthusiastic when he was telling us, that day in Conchita's home, what he called his three miracles.

He said, "Mari Cruz gave me a piece of one of her rosaries kissed by the Virgin during the apparitions. Here it is. I detached a few links from the chain, right here. I sent them to the United States to a woman suffering from cancer for whom all hope had been abandoned by her doctors, who were giving her but 15 days to live. She placed these precious links on herself, prayed to Our Lady of Mount Carmel of Garabandal, and was suddenly cured."

"You have the documents?"

"Not yet, but it is not difficult to verify the truth of such a cure."

"Your conclusion?"

"I like to believe that the Blessed Mother remembers Mari Cruz too."

November 14, at Burgos

Since November 11 we have spent many hours with Conchita. This time her mother was present, relaxed and happy. The artist was there also with four Frenchmen, one of whom is a priest friend of ours. We

asked Conchita, first for messages for the last one (the priest), and for the proponents of the Message, for each person present, and for a few absentees.

While everyone was chatting, through the noise of a very animated conversation, Conchita placed herself in the center of our group. Ten minutes later her task was finished, and we read. The writing is more a "scribbling" for she did as soldiers do in trenches; she wrote on her knees.

But what treasures! They are more and better than at the time of the ecstasies. She looked into consciences, she enlightened the clergy, she explained the apostolate of the Garabandalists, she determined the Christianity of teaching and how to educate children.

Having providentially found the copy among our papers, we are most happy to publish it.

1. To a priest interested in Garabandal:

"Dear Father, I wish you great happiness while you sacrifice to work for Mary, and I, in my poor prayers, will intercede that you may never become discouraged in the work of the Virgin. She'll help you while you work with good will. Pray for us [the four girls] so we'll not close the eyes of our souls. Pray and ask that we may accept God's will, that we may forget ourselves and think more of others. Nothing more, Father. May the Virgin triumph at Garabandal so everyone will be crowned with graces, so everyone will glorify God, and love Him above everything else.

Conchita Gonzalez

2. To priests and lay people of sub-centers, to secretaries, officers, lectures and propagators:

Give thanks to God for having been chosen to help the Virgin to 'carry' souls to God. Pray much for priests, who are the salt of the earth and the 'well loved' of Christ.

I pray much for all of you so you will give to the Father and Mother [God and Mary] what they are asking of you.

We are in the last warnings. Why 'bargain' with the Lord? Pray for us. Ask that we may be humble.

With much affection,

Conchita

3. To a lady who had explained to Conchita that we must offer doubts on faith and the darkness of the soul for the unbelievers:

This holy picture in gratitude for your conversation, which helps me to struggle against doubts of faith. I embrace you.

Your very grateful,
Conchita

4. To a soul desiring a deep and true spiritual life:

I unite myself to you, to the true Love who is Christ, and to

Truth who is Himself. May the Virgin enlighten you and help you to serve Him in all things.

Conchita

5. To teachers:

I ask God that you may be shepherds of your pupils.

6. To a sick woman:

I have learned of your infirmity. To those He loves, the Lord sends a gift of suffering.

With Conchita's affection.

7. To another priest:

I will write you a long letter, day after tomorrow. For tonight, this holy picture. God will not abandon you, neither in sufferings, nor in joy.

Conchita

Camillas, November 1967

The previous day at Garabandal, we had talked for two hours with Jacinta, her mother, Maria, and her father, Simon, in their home. With the greatest mutual confidence we recalled all the past, our former conversations, doubts of the visionaries and the Miracle to come.

Leaning on the fireplace in the kitchen, Jacinta had never looked more beautiful.

However it was Rev. Fr. Rodrigo, S.J. of the Pontifical University of Camillas who resumed this conversation on Garabandal.

"After two years of silence," he said, "Jacinta paid me a visit here at my home. We talked for three hours."

Without betraying any confidences Father resumed this conversation. Then, joining his thumb and index finger and raising his hand very high in a gesture which suggested a man who is about to drop a precious object on the living room carpet, he said:

"Jacinta? She's a little angel, from before the Fall, whom the Virgin let fall on our poor earth to console and comfort it."

Chapter 59

A Cure in the United States

We are publishing the following testimony because it is accompanied by a duly signed and notarized document. However we would be remiss in our duty if we did not confirm that, quite often, the mail which we receive on the subject is absolutely amazing. The letters might be from France, where these cases are most numerous, or from Austria, America, Germany, in fact from everywhere.

In New York, those who are interested in the subject have told us eagerly of the incredible favors that they have obtained, and have signed their depositions in our presence.

This has been an extremely moving experience for us because these cures have been the occasion of profound conversions, and occasionally entire families have been converted.

It would seem that Our Lady of Garabandal is interested especially in persons stricken with cancer.

When she does not obtain the cure which is requested, God will often ease the suffering of the afflicted, or will stop the pain entirely. In terminal cases, we have seen that she helps even those whose death seems certain.

All the reports mention the use of religious objects which have been either kissed or touched by the Virgin during an apparition.

The religious object used is almost always a medal.

76 Norman Road
Brockton, Massachusetts 02402
November 30, 1966

Ave Maria

His Eminence Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani, Prefect
Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Vatican City—Through the Virgin Mother may the Lord
grant us salvation and peace.

In obedience and submission to the hierarchy, the following account is placed unconditionally in the hands of the proper ecclesiastical authority, and I declare before the world that I accept their final decision, in advance, whatever it may be.

Attached is the testimony written by the doctor of a lady who was cured by a rosary kissed by Our Lady of Mount Carmel of Garabandal.

Francis Emmet Smith, M. D.
418 WASHINGTON ST.
BRIGHTON, MASS. 02136
TELEPHONE 786-6216

November 1, 1966

Mrs. Eleanor Dekes
110 Bigelow Street
Brighton, Massachusetts

Re: Mrs. Clementine Cedrone
110 Bigelow Street
Brighton, Massachusetts

Dear Mrs. Dekes,

Your mother, Mrs. Clementine Cedrone, who has been diabetic for nine years, was admitted to St. Elizabeth's Hospital on November 27, 1965 because of osteomyelitis of the right foot. X-rays showed destructive changes involving the proximal aspect of the proximal phalanx of the middle toe as well as the proximal head of the third metatarsal. Although it is regarded as quite normal and usual procedure to amputate the limb above the knee under these conditions, Dr. Joseph Mullane decided not to perform this operation for two reasons:

1. Your mother would not accept an amputation.
2. He felt that your mother might as well walk on it until the infection spread.

He was unwilling to do any local removal of bone because healing is not expected to occur at her age with the amount of hardening of the arteries which she has.

I had several doctors take a look at her films, including Drs. Marks, Kellett, and Bailey at the Deaconess Medical Building in Boston. It was the opinion of everyone that no healing could be expected to occur. Your mother was given 20 million units of penicillin per day until January 11, 1966, when she went into acute pulmonary failure. This was treated in the usual fashion. She recovered and was discharged. Subsequent X-rays showed that the bones on the right foot were healing.

On September 28, 1966, it was evident that the osteomyelitis had completely healed. Drs. Marks, Kellett, and Bailey had seen films in March of 1966. The conclusion was that she had healed osteomyelitis of the right third metatarsal.

It is my conclusion that your mother has been very fortunate to be, at this time, walking on two legs. It had been the judgment of many who saw her and her X-ray films, that she should have had an amputation last November.

Sincerely Yours,

Francis E. Smith, M.D.
Francis E. Smith, M.D.

FES/jac

Subscribed and sworn before me this 21ST of
December 1966

Benjamin A. Bennett Notary
My Commission Expires 9/28/73

The daughter and I touched the woman's foot with the kissed rosary and, as sick as she was, I asked her to pray as many rosaries as she felt she could.

The woman knew nothing about the reported apparitions that have been taking place since 1961 in the little village of San Sebastian de Garabandal, Spain. She had simply been told that the rosary had been kissed by our Blessed Mother. I left the kissed rosary with her until the next night when I returned to the hospital to get it.

In the meantime, we had asked many people to pray that she would not have to have her leg amputated. We begged Our Lady of Mount Carmel of Garabandal to put her under her mantle and to give all of us the grace to accept with love, the holy will of God—all for His honor and glory.

May the Virgin Mary, with her loving Child, in the company of St. Joseph and St. Michael the Archangel, bless all of mankind and the entire world.

Asking for your special prayers and blessings.

Maria Carmela Saraco

Chapter 60

Mystical Rose— An American Visit to Garabandal

Plans for our pilgrimage to the shrines of Our Lord and Our Lady were started almost one year before the actual date of departure, which was on September 9, 1965. On that day 20 American pilgrims left Kennedy International Airport for Lisbon.

In the early days of the planning of the pilgrimage, some thought had been given to our going to Garabandal, since we had heard of the reported apparitions of Our Lady there. However, because of the difficulty of getting there and the long distance that it would take us out of our way, we decided not to go. In June, however, because of the reported apparition of St. Michael and the great interest this caused throughout the world, we gave more thought to going. The decision to go was made and much of our original itinerary had to be re-routed and several places left out.

On September 15, 1965, we left Madrid to go to Santander and stay overnight before our journey to Garabandal on the next day. Here I wish to state that we went with the full knowledge that the Church had not made any official pronouncement on these reported apparitions and thus we went as an act of Faith and Love to honor Jesus and Mary and to offer the sacrifice of this journey for the salvation of souls. Before we left the United States a letter was sent to the then Bishop of Santander explaining our purpose and leaving in his hands the decision as to our going. Since we did not receive an answer from the Bishop and thus did not have a refusal to our going, the journey was made by private individuals not representing any organization or group.

We arrived at the small town at the foot of the mountain about 11:30 a.m. From this town of Cosio we proceeded to take our people up the mountain by car. Because we had 20 people, it took about two hours and four trips of the car to get them to Garabandal.

I was in the first car. When I arrived, my first thought was to contact Miss Eloise Deguia who had made many of the necessary arrangements for our group. A young boy from the village led me up the hill to the pines where Eloise was, along with Mr. Joey Lomangino and his mother from Long Island, New York, and several other people. Eloise greeted me and, after a short explanation about the pines and where it is said that Our Lady has appeared, we proceeded down the hill to see to my people who were sitting in the inn owned by the man who is mayor of Garabandal and father of Mari Loli.

By this time it was close to 1:00 p.m. After seeing that the people were taken care of, I went with Eloise to the home of Conchita. She had just returned from working on her family's farm. When I arrived at Conchita's home she was speaking with some people who had come to visit her. The people were a German couple. The husband was a professor of science and told me that he only believed in things that he could see—proof. "Here," he said, "I have seen such proof." I observed Conchita while she talked to this couple—she appeared most at ease and most friendly and warm in her manner. About this time several others of our group came to the house and soon Conchita was being asked to pose for pictures. All through this time she remained most at ease, most submissive to the requests and above all, carried them all out with a spirit of humility. During the time the pictures were being taken, one of the people who had been staying in Garabandal noticed that Jacinta was walking down the road away from the village on her way to work in the fields. They called to her. She, however, gave a definite appearance of wanting to go on and not return. Some prevailed on Conchita to call Jacinta. This she did and Jacinta came back as Conchita asked. She allowed her picture to be taken with Conchita but gave the appearance of wishing not to be given attention. Soon after the pictures were taken and those present were engaged in conversation, Jacinta slipped away to work.

As it was time for Conchita and her family to eat, we left to return to the inn with our people and to welcome the last of our group to Garabandal. After they arrived it was decided that we would go up to the pines with Miss Deguia. As we started up the hill, we began to say the rosary. At several places Miss Deguia showed the people the spots where Our Lady had appeared to the children. As we proceeded up the hill the slope became very steep and some of our people were unable to climb the rest of the way to the pines. For those of us who could, we knelt at the pines to say the last decade of the rosary. When the rosary was finished the people began to gather some of the pine needles, bark from the pines and a few roots from the ground. To the surprise of all, these objects gave off the fragrance of roses — not pines. Many of these items still give off the same fragrance even after our return to the United States.

After coming back down from the pines Miss Deguia began to take the people to various homes in the village where they would stay the night. We later learned that some of these Garabandal villagers slept in the stables that night to make room for our people. The kindness of these people is hard to put into words.

After the people had been shown where they were to stay for the night, they were instructed to meet at the home of Conchita to say the rosary with her. She was to return from her work on the farm at about 5:30 p.m. The plan was to say the rosary in the field in front of her home. When Conchita was told of this plan she said she did not wish to say it there but up at the pines. She wished this for two reasons: 1) To

say the rosary in the field in front of her home would be too much show; and 2) She stated that Our Lady said we must make sacrifices.

Because of the steep slope up to the pines and since our people were not all able to make the first journey up to them, Conchita was asked if she would consider not going so far. She agreed to go to the spot about half way to the pines where St. Michael had appeared on June 18 of that year.

Before we left to say the rosary, I presented to Conchita, for her veneration, a statue of the Pilgrim Virgin which I had brought from Fatima. I held the box containing the statue as she kissed its feet. To my surprise, I experienced the fragrance of roses. This lasted only a short time but the fragrance was very strong. Shortly after this we started up the hill to say the rosary.

When we reached the spot, Conchita knelt down to begin the rosary. Conchita used my father's rosary since he asked her to do so. Throughout the rosary, Conchita kept her eyes closed and never moved although she was kneeling on small stones. When she got back up after the rosary, these small stones remained imbedded in her knees for some time. She said the rosary at a normal moderate rate, with much reverence. Her voice was soft and almost seemed to have a musical quality about it.

After the rosary the people asked Conchita to pose for some pictures and to sign the backs of religious cards or other such items. Throughout this she remained calm, obliging and humble. I remember looking at her during this time and feeling sorry for her because of the inconvenience she was often put through by well-meaning people. At one point, she looked up at me and I shook my head and smiled as much as to say your burden is heavy. She smiled back and one could almost read the answer—this I must do; this is part of my cross.

Upon my return with the others to the village, many of our people came to me and asked if I had received the same fragrance of roses as they had during the time they were going up the hill with Conchita and during the recitation of the rosary or at the pines the first time. They wondered what it meant. I told them that I had only received the fragrance when Conchita kissed the statue. As to what it meant, I could only say I felt it indicated the presence of God and Our Lady. When I returned home I mentioned the fragrance to a priest, seeking the meaning. He said to me, "Bob, isn't one of Our Lady's titles Mystical Rose?" Most of my people had received the fragrance but not all at the same time. This gave us the indication that the fragrance was something that was given to individuals at various times but not the group as a whole, therefore, it could not have been a general fragrance in the air or all would have received it together.

About 7:30 p.m. that evening we went to the church to say the rosary with the people of Garabandal as is their custom. A young boy led the rosary. Conchita was in the church but knelt with the other people of the village and said the rosary along with them. I do not remember

seeing the other girls in the church but think they were there. The next day the wife of one of the men in our group, Mrs. Fortin, told me that her husband had been kneeling toward the front of the church during the rosary and received the fragrance of roses very strongly. None of the other members of our group received it in the church.

It might be noted here that when our people went to the shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar at Zaragoza, Spain, they identified the fragrance that emanates from the pillar as the same as that experienced in Garabandal. I, as the leader of the group, knew of the fragrance at the pillar but I did not wish to put the power of suggestion into the minds of my people and therefore did not tell them before they venerated the pillar upon which that image of Our Lady stands (given to St. James, the patron of Spain, by Our Lady as tradition tells us). I wanted to see if they found any similarity in the two fragrances. After they venerated it, they all identified it as the same fragrance. I can remember seeing one of our members go over to another altar and kneel down after having kissed the pillar. Seeing that she seemed a bit shaken, I went over to her and asked, "Dorothy, are you all right?" "I will be all right in a few moments but I just experienced the same fragrance here as I did at Garabandal."

Now to return to our day at Garabandal. After leaving the Church, our group went back to the inn owned by the father of Mari Loli. There our people ate their supper. The supper for all 20 was cooked by Mari Loli. She, however, did not come out of the kitchen to serve the people; this her father did.

We must make here a comment on the generosity shown by Mari Loli's father. The food he served was plentiful and good. Someone had asked for cheese during supper. He had only one large piece of cheese which he cut up and served to the whole group—not just to one person. I cannot remember the cost of the supper—only that it was very little.

When people gave me the money to pay for the meal they included a tip as is their custom. When I gave him the money, he counted it. Seeing that I had given him more than he had asked, he gave the surplus amount back to me. I then returned it to him and told him it was just a little tip and thank you from the group for his wonderful service.

Later that evening when our people had gone to the homes where they were to stay for the night, my parents and I went to the home of Conchita. There, together with Joey Lomangino and his mother, Miss Deguia, and Clyde Wright from Brooklyn, New York, we spoke with Conchita and her mother for about two hours. She wrote out a few short notes to several priest friends of mine and we talked about the apparitions and happenings of Garabandal in a general way. I asked Conchita if there was anything I should be doing to spread a rosary devotion I promote that I was not doing presently. She smiled at this question and said she did not know of anything more I should be doing. Then she added, "Just continue to do all your work for the love of Jesus and Mary." I was impressed by this answer, not because it gave

me anything new to do but because it was simple and she did not try to give an elaborate answer but went straight to the needed motive for all works of God.

I, as a trained social worker, deal with people every day in my work and have been trained to pick out signs of abnormality in the personality and character of those with whom I come in contact. I must state that I was impressed with the normality of Conchita in every way. She seemed at ease with people, gracious, and most of the time, smiling. This is in the face of requests of an endless stream of visitors to Garabandal which should tax the physical and emotional strength of a person to near breaking point.

The next morning our people began to leave the village at 5:00 a.m. by car. The last group left at 8:30 a.m. During the early morning hours when it was dark, the people who stayed in the various homes were brought to the village plaza by those with whom they stayed. The people of Garabandal carried candles to light the way for them and remained with them until they left. Truly these are a gracious and a charitable people.

Chapter 61

Prophecy for an American

In the United States lives one who has become a part of the prophecy of Garabandal. The prophecy is closely associated with the great Miracle of which Conchita has so often spoken.

The story of this man, whose name is Joey Lomangino of Lindenhurst, Long Island, New York, would be too long to relate here in this chapter. It will suffice to say that Joey lost his eyesight some 21 years ago because of an accident. Since that time, by the grace of God, he has come step by step closer to Him through the guidance of Mary, the Mother of God.



Joey Lomangino.

In 1963, Joey was visiting the famed stigmatized priest, Padre Pio. During one of their conversations Joey asked Padre Pio for guidance. He had heard of the reported apparitions of Our Lady at Garabandal in Spain. He questioned Padre Pio as to whether he should make the visit or bypass the village. Padre Pio told him, "Go, Joey, but be prudent." Joey went as Padre Pio advised and was prudent.

Joey's visits to Garabandal through the past years have brought a close friendship between him and the girls, but in particular with Conchita. And it was from Conchita that prophecy made its voice known concerning him. Let us quote directly from two notes written by Conchita to Joey; the first, March 19, 1964, the feast of St. Joseph.

For Joey Lomangino:

The Virgin has told me: "Tell Joey that on the day of the Miracle he will see. At first he will see the Miracle that my Son, through my intercession, will perform and then he will see forever." Words of the Virgin.

Joey, much happiness for today—your saint's day—St. Joseph.

Conchita Gonzalez

Later Conchita again reaffirmed this prophecy to Joey but also added admonitions to him about the use of his "new eyes." This term, "new eyes," also plays a part in the prophecy. Notice that Conchita uses the words "see" and "new eyes," not eyesight, as we might expect. Why? We feel that the reason for this is that Joey's eyes over the years have atrophied — so in a very real sense he needs "new eyes" to see. Conchita could not be aware of this as all those who meet Joey are not, but Our Lady is.

And now we come to the second reference. As you read it, keep in mind the prophecy is for him as is the admonition, but in the admonition we, who do see, can also take from it words for ourselves.

For Joey Lomangino:

May your new eyes be for the greater glory of God and the good of many souls.

God gives them to you because He loves you and wishes that you use them for His glory. You ought to pray for those who do not know God that they may love Him and for those who know Him that they may love Him and make reparation to Him.

Pray for me.

Conchita Gonzalez
October 9, 1965

Chapter 62

The Untiring Maternal Compassion

Garabandal has the same spiritual tones of the other great Marian apparitions recognized by the Church.

Once more, Our Lady has returned to earth because she is a mother, not merely for the visionaries nor for a few chosen souls, but for the entire world—this world which is getting more evil, as Loli told us!

At San Sebastian, the Virgin did not shed any tears; those she shed at La Salette and at Syracuse seem to have been in vain. But she chose four innocent little girls—who will never be happy again on earth—four little mediators, to bear with Jesus the cross of redemption.

Certainly, through these children, all generous souls are called upon to share in a certain manner the Virgin's concern for the world!

One day, in one of her trances, Conchita was reciting the rosary when, inspired by the Virgin, she recited: "Holy Mary, Mother of God *and our mother*, pray for us, etc."

Mary, Mother of God, Mother of Jesus, lived from the manger to Calvary with her Son, for her Son.

She knew the prophecies and Simon had informed her about the sword of sorrow which would one day pierce her heart.

Thus, all of the time during the life of Jesus, Mary lived with both a serenity of soul and an anguished heart.

Is it not so with every mother who lives with a child who is suffering and is powerless to prevent it?

The compassion of Mary for her Son is something so profoundly touching that one must be as sorrowful a mother as she to understand her.

More than elsewhere, the tragic soul of the Spanish seems to have penetrated this mystery. In Spain, statues of the Virgin can be seen, clad in black, and the Virgin crowned with her seven swords, holds within her hands a handkerchief in which to shed her tears!

For whom does she weep?

"Mary," says the Gospel, in speaking of the birth of Jesus, "brought forth her firstborn Son at Bethlehem."

In fact, her maternity did not stop with Jesus, since, at the Cross, she became the mother of all of sinful mankind.

After being a sorrowing mother at the foot of the Cross, she remains the distressed mother who fears to lose the children that Jesus gave to her at Calvary.

More than at any other period in history, she now sees the de-Christianization of whole nations.

She had shown to the children of Fatima so many souls falling into hell. So few men and women have heeded her! Could we not understand why she beseeched the world at Garabandal to listen to her Message, so as to avoid the Chastisement she fears for it?

There could still have been time in 1917, after hearing Lucy, Francisco and Jacinta, the little children of Fatima, to avert the dangers of communism that Our Lady announced at the hour it was born! Unfortunately, the warnings of Fatima never crossed the borders of Portugal before 1942! What has been done since, now that the same communist threat assails us from everywhere?

With Our Lady of Carmel of Garabandal and the Visionaries

One day at Garabandal, the children were astonished by the attitude of the Virgin, and Mari Loli asked her, "Are you, too, praying?" They had not yet understood that after having praised the Virgin full of grace, our Hail Mary's asked her to "pray for us sinners." It seems to be part of human nature to take no notice of spiritual realities.

Our Lady does not wish to obtain graces from her Son or Our Father in heaven, unless we pray with her!

She knows that a terrible Chastisement could strike down her children on earth if they do not change. Through the many, many apparitions in the past, we have learned that she is trying to "restrain her Son's arm."

She has been taking almost desperate efforts to warn us, to ask us to prevent souls from incurring everlasting punishment, to save our bodies from chastisement! She pleads with us to pray with her for the world!

It could remind us of Moses up on the mountain, interceding for his people, holding in his raised arms the fate of the battle being fought down on the plains. Whenever he paused for an instant, thus interrupting his intercession, the tide of battle would turn against his army. Two men had to support his arms in a raised position till victory was final.

In the same way, Our Mother in heaven remains before God's throne. She asks that all faithful souls, little children and those like them, sustain her prayer, and pray with her, to win the battle against Satan, which Jesus wishes so much to grant her.

Our Father in heaven wants us to be insistent! It is the eternal struggle of Jacob and the angel. It is God's glory, as that of Mary and our own, when we shall be victors in that mysterious struggle in which He wants to see His mercy win over His justice.

It is therefore necessary that the "spiritual battle" of the mediation of the children of the Virgin be fought not solely by the four young girls of Garabandal. We must join with the visionaries in prayer and sacrifice.

A Spanish Doctor

Following the letter we received from Dr. Apostolides, we now give the translation of a well-documented medical report which was sent to us by Dr. Celestino Ortiz Perez of Santander, pediatrician, specializing in child psychology.

I think that it would be in order to add the medical information to the theological, concerning the children of Garabandal, before passing the judgment the problem calls for.

This study is based on my own direct personal observation on those days dating from August 15 to 25, September 13, October 5 to 24, November 23, December 24, of 1961; January 23, February 18, March 13, May 5, June 16, July 18, August 23, September 5 to 21, October 1, and November 4 to 25 of 1962.

Actual child psychiatry is an active psychiatry whose fundamental basis is experimental child psychology, so that a knowledge of this psychology is absolutely indispensable to us.

Family history:

I know of no cases of psychological trouble in their families.

As an odd fact, I noted that in October 1961, Maria Dolores (Loli) and Conchita had whooping cough—they had fits of coughing during their ecstasies—and that the disease which was mild, lasted about a month.

Present state:

Since the beginning, these children have shown that their general condition is the very best. They have grown and developed normally, showing through their remarks a normal psychology.

Age:

Conchita, Loli and Jacinta were 13 and Mari Cruz 12.

Their intellectual development corresponds to that of eight-year-old children in our cities.

They passed through the (Hickder Garden Hetzer) phase which precedes adolescence without the slightest disorder.

We have not been able to notice any tendency to be impertinent toward their elders, nor a propensity to disobedience, etc.

Jacinta and Conchita arrived at adolescence at the beginning of the winter in 1961, without showing any observable change in behavior or in their trances.

Previous social behavior in their milieu:

Their behavior was and has remained irreproachable, like that of children who receive Holy Communion each time there is a Mass in the village.

Actually two of them received Communion while in a state of trance, from the hands of the Angel—only when there was no Mass—by observing all the rules of preparation and thanksgiving.

From the point of view of their psychology, it should be noted that they did not form the usual coterie of friends before the events. Another detail to note is that they did not always agree to play marbles with the other visionaries on coming out of school.

In school, their behavior was no different from that of the other children, with the exception of Maria Dolores who was remarked on for her goodness.

Their behavior with their families, their obedience toward their parents and superiors improved after the apparitions began.

Character:

One outstanding trait in the four children is their good naturedness; they have remained as they were, gay and mischievous.

However, in reactive psychopathy of childhood there are always changes of feeling, instinct, will and character.

Psychological reactions with these girls are perfectly normal.

Maria Dolores and Conchita are very communicative, whereas Jacinta and Mari Cruz are more reserved. They have all remained very timid, as little village girls tend to be, although they have become more sociable from meeting with the strangers who have invaded their mountain.

In all of them may be noted their particular smile which is a special sign of goodness, the smile that has caught the attention of all those who have had occasion to talk with them.

Their natural good manners should be pointed out and especially their goodwill which they have shown on many occasions, even toward their worst detractors.

Their humility is exemplary.

Intellectual development:

Their intellectual quotient is slightly higher than other children of their age and circumstance, though their intelligence has not been developed.

This is especially true of Conchita who is superior to the others.

The lack of intellectual development in these mountain children is due to the insufficient number of years they spent in school, though they attended classes regularly.

The children cannot be blamed in any way for this backwardness. The climatological conditions and other contributing factors create many a hiatus during their school year. They are not responsible for this.

Their religious education is due partly to the parish priest of Cosio and partly to the school or to their families. It has nothing to do with mysticism.

Behavior during sleep:

After being present and having studied the matter many times, I can assert that these children showed no signs of disturbance in the rhythm nor in the depth of their slumber.

Now, changes in this matter are precisely a premonitory characteristic sign which accompanies psychic disturbances in children.

Reflexes:

Motor reflexes, together with the sensitive and psychic reflexes in all four of the girls, all appeared to me perfectly normal.

Even during their trances, the greater part of their motor reflexes remained normal.

Their pupils remained normal sized and their pupillary reflexes did not change.

Immediately after the trances, there was no trace of motor hyperexcitability, either sensitive or psychic. On the contrary, all that can be observed to be completely normal.

Description of their trance state:

This always begins very abruptly.

They fall on their knees wherever they are. It would be nearer the description to say that they “drop” because they fall down with the whole weight of their bodies.

From the start they show great tranquility. Their eyes remain open, and their pupils stare upwards, without any blinking or trembling, their heads hyperextended, with an expression of infinite sweetness on their faces.

Their bodies remain rigid, without any spasm, trembling, or perspiration. Their pulse rate is faster in the beginning, but promptly becomes normal again. As for the rhythm of their breathing, it remains constantly normal.

At the moment they enter into their trance state they present Peiper’s reflex—an attitude of hyperextension of the

nape of the neck—especially Conchita, which consists of holding her head back in response to a sudden brilliant beam of light.

That which compels attention, considering the great number of trances they have experienced, is that they have not developed a conditioned reflex; that each time their pupils received a flash of light, they have not gone into a trance. Now, they have been photographed with flash bulbs many times, often with high precision cameras and 1000 watt bulbs and there was not an instance where they went into a trance.

As for the rigidity they show, it is very different from lethargical contraction, as well as cataleptic tonicity.

In fact, despite this muscular rigidity, their articulations remain completely flexible and normal.

In this state, as they begin their trance walk, they show a special characteristic: their feet seem to do some sort of dance.

With their gaze fixed upward, their heads thrown backward, hyperextended, they advance over the most irregular terrain, or the most abrupt places; they can move forward or backward without ever faltering in their steps.

If they did fall at times, it seemed as though they had done it purposely without ever showing the slightest hurt.

They have walked barefoot for hours without any sign of erythema [redness] on the soles of their feet.

They maintain a dialogue mostly in low tones with the image they perceive. They rarely raise their voices so that they can be heard by those attending. It becomes necessary then to use a tape recorder.

They recite the rosary and sing hymns at the top of their voices.

Their reciting of the Ave Maria is incomparably beautiful. The length of the prayer is not the same with each girl, (20, 23, 24 or 25 seconds) which proves that there is no existing telepathic influence between them.

In this state, they give proof that they are beyond the explanations of medical science and all natural laws.

They show no reaction to pain, pinpricks, etc.

Once out of their trances, however, they react immediately. It usually ends after a Sign of the Cross and they smile in an exquisitely natural manner.

They have then returned to their normal state, without showing any sign of mental or physical fatigue, despite the length of the trances which, at times, lasted four hours.

All this is contrary to what happens in hysterical, hypnotic, or telepathic states.

There follows after this, several pages of a scientific nature by Dr. Ortiz on hysteria, hypnotism, catalepsy and nervous disorders in children.

The author clearly shows the differences which exist between states of psychic illnesses and the trances of the Garabandal children.

As our book was intended as a means of cursory information, and Dr. Ortiz having given information which is very technical and scientific, we will go directly to the conclusions of him who was, by far—from a medical standpoint—the most regular and thorough of all the qualified observers of the happenings at Garabandal:

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

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

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

4. In child psychology, normal as well as pathological, I can find no explanation which could present as natural events, phenomena which, according to our present knowledge, escape all natural reality.

Our conceit falls apart when we are faced with this kind of dilemma which God bestows on us in order to point out our own medical limitations.

All attempts to try to rationalize phenomena which are beyond the rational, are in themselves irrational and absurd.

Doctor Celestino Ortiz Perez
Pediatrican, Isabel II, 3-1^o
Santander, October 1962

Chapter 65
**With the Clairvoyants
 in the Trance State**

We have previously seen what Conchita says concerning the apparitions, compared to the doctrine and commandments of our Holy Mother the Church, about the Message and the achievement of the Message. We believe as she does and as she says concerning the matter. Her conclusions of what happened in Garabandal are very close to our own.

However, we feel that the reader would like to take a closer look at what went on in some of the past ecstasies of the visionaries. We believe that apart from the personality and mission of each of them, the experience must have been about the same for each one, as the tape recorder tells us what happened to Conchita on December 8, 1962.

This then is a faithful transcription of the words from a tape recording of which there are copies, some of them not very good fidelity, circulating around the world. This tape evidently gives only Conchita's questions, answers and speech. The numerous dashes indicate the words that the tape recorder missed, that is, the words, the silences, the affirmative or negative signs, the smiles or remarks of the Blessed Virgin. This should be enough to show anyone the "intimacy" of the visionaries of Garabandal during their trances. It is an example of what we called, in a previous chapter, the "contents" of the apparitions.

Conchita's conversation with the Blessed Virgin,
 while in ecstasy, December 8, 1962

Yes, our Mother Mary, all of those who are here know that today is your feast day — but you must have celebrated it up there!

Oh, yes! they all hear you, yes, they hear you, yes, they are recording you [on tape] yes . . .

Listen, when you come here, you will come like that? Please say so . . .

And now, since you are Mother of all, you will give a present to each one, will you not? . . .

We will give one to you . . .

Listen, please make it so . . .

About the Miracle, I no longer speak to you about it since I know everything, eh? . . . I have such a longing for the day

to arrive to be able to announce it . . . they want to know the day . . .

Listen . . . [incomprehensible phrase] . . .

Oh, listen: do you know who came today? The little fat man.¹ . . . that one did not ask me to bring you greetings, no

... .

Oh, Mother, but you are Immaculate! . . .

Listen, today, someone brought me a little baby, a very wee one, who does not at all resemble the one you bring today . . .

But, but, how long is it since the Baby came . . . your Baby? . . . And He has not grown at all, at all; He is exactly as He was before . . .

Where was He? . . . Where was He? Where is the Baby when He doesn't come down? In heaven? Or in a cradle? . . . Where is He? . . .

Oh! . . . You can be here and there at the same time! . . . Oh yes!

Listen, they say that it will not happen, because they do not want to believe me . . . Eh, why is it so? . . .

Oh, listen, listen, what can I tell the people . . . those who do not believe? . . . who talk and wonder if we should believe . . .

Anyway, as we, we know it already . . . that . . .

How much time will it take for the Miracle to come after the people will know about it? A week will be enough? . . . Oh! could I tell that? . . . and no . . . Oh! . . .

They are taking your voice too . . . No, the tape recorder was not here at my house, it was not here, oh no, it was not at my place . . . it did not belong to this man. It belonged to the one who is called . . . [This concerns the tape recorder owned by Dr. Gasca.]

He doesn't have wings, does He? Let me see . . .

When will I be able to enter the convent, because they would be willing to admit me now, but my mother will not let me go yet . . . Listen to what certain people say, that they will not want to have me there . . . I will, won't I? Yes?

... .

You tell me yes . . . but not yet . . . and the Baby says nothing.²

1. It refers to Mr. Placido Ruiloba, of Santander, "the man with the tape recorder."

² What is Jesus' will concerning Conchita's definitive vocation?

What do you call Him, Jesus? . . . the Infant, what name do you give Him too? Do you know what people here call Him, the Baby . . . The Infant Jesus.

And you? We call you the Virgin, the Mother of God, they give you many names.

When will people be able to see you? One does not know when? . . .

While we were in church praying today, afterwards, this Frenchman who had been at my house began to cry out, "Mary, our Mother!" and you, you did not answer . . .

You are laughing, Blessed, yes you love me, you love me . . . Listen, everyone loves you very much . . . Oh, they are calling you also. Listen, listen, people tell me . . .

Do you sometimes have snow up there is heaven? . . . Cold such as we have? Like when it snows or something like that? Because snow falls from up there . . . Oh, why is it so cold here then . . . Eh! it is not cold up there?

Listen, all those people who came today, came to see if you would perform the Miracle today, and I believe that. . .

They should all have wished you a good feast day, is it not so?

. . . You should know that they were all pressed close together to hear you . . . they have been there a long time.

Well, listen: it's all the same to me if they hear what I say, because they can hear you as well . . . just as they hear me, they can hear you too . . . just as . . . because your voice is clear . . .

Besides, listen, listen! Do you know why they cannot hear? Because, listen, when I began to see the Virgin, when I began to see you, they were not there [at the beginning of the ecstasy] and they all went out from over there, out of the kitchen . . . well, if they have the tape recorder from the table, no one brought it along . . . ah? . . . Besides, it doesn't matter to me if they do hear me . . .

Listen, do you remember last year when you said to me: "Happy Birthday!" I didn't dare wish you yours, but this year, yes, oh but yes . . . "Happy Birthday!"

You are leaving already? Wait another little while longer . . . Oh, wait! . . .

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If you really want to know what happened at Garabandal, this book is a must. A rare look behind the scenes. Chock-full of eye witness accounts not found in any other book. One of the real classics. 59 photographs.

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O Children Listen to Me by Robert François.

Shows how the teachings of the Church came alive and were acted out at Garabandal. Many marvelous episodes from the events.

Miracle at Garabandal by Harry Daley.

Includes detailed accounts of the apparitions by Conchita herself, young Conchita's *Diary*, prophecy of the crisis in the Church, the great prophecies, and the Padre Pio "connection" (*real*, not a pious fable).

Diario de Conchita de Garabandal (Conchita's Diary) in Spanish.

Mi Történt Garabandalban? (What Happened at Garabandal?) in Hungarian.

Our Blessed Mother is Visiting Us by Fr. Roman Hoppe. in Polish

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