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**As It Was
in the Beginning**

In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

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And He said, "Let the earth bring forth green foliage and plants that produce seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit on the earth according to its kind, having seed within itself." And it was so done . . . And God saw that it was good.

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

(Genesis 1: 1, 11, 29)

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And the serpent said to the woman, "No you shall not die the death . . . On whatever day you shall eat from it . . ." And the woman saw the tree was good to eat and delightful to behold, with a delicious appearance. And she took the fruit and ate.

(Genesis 3: 4-6)

Thus the Bible tells us about the beginning of things: the commencement of man's history. Appearing on the first and most decisive scene of our destiny: God, the evil spirit, a woman, and the mysterious apple tree. And so were enacted the world's first sin, the Creator's first pardon, the beginning of an existence marked by labor and pain, but not without hope.

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

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

1. There are approximately sixty houses built of stone in the village, and arranged in typical rural style. They are grouped together on top of a narrow plain, irregular in outline, about 2000 feet above sea level, giving the appearance of a wide open Y.

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

A Sunday Like Any Other

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

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

As a ray of hope in the face of all these problems that appeared to have no human solution, within the walls of the Catholic Church in Rome plans were underway, with great anticipation to prepare a new council: Vatican II. It would be convened by John XXIII, *Good Pope John*, as many called him affectionately. Even with his eighty years, this man spoke with inspiration and hope in his heart like the blossoming of flowers in springtime.⁽²⁾ Through his efforts and by his decree, hundreds of eminent scholars set out to sound out the world, seeking to assist it.⁽³⁾ As a result of their search, things like these were soon to be proclaimed to the council assembly:

The upper part of the Y opens toward the south-southwest to a magnificent display of mountain peaks ending on the one side with the Peña Sagra chain (2,016 meters) and on the other side, farther away and more to the south, with the Peña Labra chain (2,010 meters) that overlooks vast sections of the provinces of Palencia and Santander. From here rivers flow toward these bodies of water: the Cantabrian Sea, the Mediterranean (by way of the Ebro River), and the Atlantic Ocean (by way of the Pisuerga River).

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

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

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



Garabandal, the scene of the amazing events

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

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

So the modern world appears at the same time both powerful and weak, capable of the best and the worst, for there is a choice between the road to liberty and that to slavery, toward progress or toward decay, toward love or toward hate. These disorders are related to another disorder, truly fundamental, which finds its roots in the very heart of each man . . . A weak and sinful creature who often does what he does not wish to do and neglects what he ought to do and ought to accomplish.⁽⁴⁾

4. Catechism of Modern Man.

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

Of course the sky in San Sebastián was not always gray, even though it is near to the rainy Cantabrian Mountains; but the life of its inhabitants was certainly gray and monotonous. Always the same cows and stables, the same fields and harvests, with nothing changing except the seasons. Here the people still gathered in the homes and assembled as Christians in the house of God, the main building in the village, linked closely to it. Here the latest news involved everyone: Carmen had a baby, Pili is going to get married, Juan's son is returning from the military, the bells will soon sound the death of Uncle Gervasio.

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

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

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

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

Sunday June 18, 1961

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

Dawn is known only too well by the inhabitants of Garabandal due to the demand of their work as cattle raisers and farmers; so they do not get up early to enjoy the Sunday mornings. Most of them arise later than usual, since the Lord's Day was made for rest.

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

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

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

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

On this evening the young people are organizing a little dance on Caballera Street, although some of them are talking about going down to Cossío or Puente Nansa. (There was no movie theater, television set, or town hall in Garabandal.) Some of the men cluster together to talk; others dispute loudly in the tavern. Some women, many of whom wear the black widow's dress, remain in the church.

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



Conchita González

Others wander down the paths to their homes chatting with one another, or sit down with their neighbors to pass the time on the stone seats next to the house doorways.

The children, as usual, play . . . where they can and how they can. To get away from the calm silence and solitude, most of the boys and girls walk to the square. In this group the games and amusements must not have been very entertaining since one of them—a personable young brunette with braids—to escape the boredom ending the evening that Sunday *like any other*, suddenly got an idea which she swiftly whispered in the ear of the girl next to her . She herself would confess it months later.⁽⁶⁾

Temptation at Dusk

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

Suddenly Mari Cruz⁽⁸⁾ and I thought of going to pick apples.

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

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

Her diary begins like this:

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

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

It happened in the following way . . .

.....

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

.....

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

The idea of picking apples was a real temptation. The apples did not belong either to Mari Cruz or to Conchita; so that this was an actual theft, that is to say, the sin of stealing. During those evening hours, the devil was in action among the inhabitants of Garabandal. He was luring two young adolescent girls to the tree of forbidden fruit—almost as in the beginning of time. We do not know if they, like Eve in the beginning, showed resistance to the tempter's suggestions; if there was any resistance, it had to be very weak.

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

And we answered, *Over there . . .*

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

Once there,⁽⁹⁾ we started to pick the apples.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Jacinta and Loli

could find us.

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

Shut up, I told her, The school teacher's wife will hear you, and will tell

11. Aniceta González, whom we have already mentioned, was an old-fashioned Christian who brought up her children very strictly. Her first offspring were boys: Serafin, who knew the hard toil of the coal mines at Santa Lucía (León); Aniceto, nicknamed *Cetuco*, who would die at an early age in 1965; and Miguel. It was natural that Aniceta concentrated her care

my mother.⁽¹¹⁾

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

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

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

on the youngest of them all, her only daughter! And that she would try to protect her from harm because of her Christian faith and her obligation as a mother.

be together.⁽¹²⁾

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

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

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

Hearing this, we burst out laughing.

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

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

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

I finally had the chance to question Jacinta:

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

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

13. Francisco Gómez, who was partially lame.

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

15. The land containing the garden where the apple tree



Mari Cruz

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

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

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

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

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

In the Still of the Evening

(Ad auram post meridiem)

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

On that mysterious late Sunday afternoon our young girls had just heard something, and not without fear. (Could it have been the sound of God's special passage to mankind at Garabandal?)

The sun was setting over the horizon. In Spain it was 8:30 in the evening.⁽¹⁷⁾

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

Oh, what a shame.

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

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

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

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

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

In the language of a young village girl, poor in

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

17. Conchita notes the time in her diary.

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



“a very beautiful figure appeared to me”

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

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

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

And they exclaimed together: Oh, an Angel!

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

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

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

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

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

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

And she said: *Is that true?*

We: *Yes, Yes . . .*

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

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

This portrait of the young girls appeals to me. Needing to express their indescribable feelings, they would find refuge behind the walls of the church in order to pour out their tears. A mysterious instinct in the Christian soul had brought them there. They could not explain what had just happened, but they sensed subconsciously that it

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

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

was something very great. Perhaps they also had premonitions that this could be the start of something still greater. Where else could they find refuge and protection, if not in the place that especially keeps the presence of God? Is that not also the best place to pray to Her who is His mother and their own, always so ready to help her poor children? But before going inside to pray, they had to pour out their tears on the walls outside.

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

There was no one there at the time to mount

the church tower to signal the hour by ringing the bells; but with the tears of the children, which were not sorrowful ones, a mystery would begin to sound out from Garabandal that would find a great echo in innumerable hearts.

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

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

They ran off to tell the school-mistress.⁽²¹⁾

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

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

The villiage church



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

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



The schoolmistress

—Yes, Señora.

—Could this be your imagination?

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

Then the schoolmistress told us, *Let us go pray a Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in thanksgiving.*⁽²²⁾

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

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

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

At Day's End

(*Te lucis ante terminum*)

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

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

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

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

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

(*Te lucis ante terminum.*)

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

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

according to Your great mercy . . .

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

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

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

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

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

And on that day it was dark when I arrived.

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

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

And I leaned against the wall, very sad.

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

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

The acid response of Aniceta could be expected:

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

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

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

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

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



Aniceta

Mari Cruz, and was taken down on a tape recorder in the kitchen of her home—without her knowing it—on the afternoon of July 25th, 1964:

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

—But what happened to Mari Cruz?

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

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

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

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

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

—Nothing.

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

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

—Yes, we really saw him.

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

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

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

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



Conchita in front of her home

came completely transformed. Even the voice had changed, and this struck me greatly. It was like another voice, a very soft voice. And she smiled with a gentleness in her face.»



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

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

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

—Mama, they whispered.

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

—We are late because Loli has seen an angel.

—An angel? Not a devil? You ought to be ashamed of yourself! Get going, eat your dinner



Loli's mother, Julia

and get to bed. I'm tired. Don't bother me.

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

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

—Child! *What's happened to you?*

—Grandmother, I've seen an Angel.

—What? You've seen an Angel? Are you all right? Come on now!

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

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

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

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

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That was at 9:30 at night.

Later that night we didn't speak any more about it.

It was an ordinary night, just like any other.

Conchita states this in her diary, but we can be sure that for the four girls of Garabandal that night could not be an **ordinary night, just like**

any other. It might have been that in the external aspects of eating, bedtime, etc., but within the hearts of the four girls, that night had to be quite different, stirring up their feelings and desires. They could still remember the beautiful vision of the *calleja*, and it filled them with such joy. But with it there was mixed the anxiety of many unanswered questions—these two above all:

Would he return?

What did he want from us?

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

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

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

We didn't discuss the thing anymore that night. When I was alone, I couldn't stop thinking of what had happened in the Calleja.»

The four girls at the site of the first apparition



A subsequent ecstasy

