

She Went to the Mountain

t

h

r e e

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

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

(St. Luke 1: 39)

In Mary's life as recorded in the Gospel, this was one of her magnificent moments: the Visitation to her cousin Elizabeth who was soon to give birth to John the Baptist.

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

However, what concerns us now is July 2nd, 1961, when a place in the Catholic Church had more than just a feastday or liturgical commemoration.

On July 2nd the little mountain village of San Sebastián de Garabandal would experience a marvelous reoccurrence of Mary's Visitation.

With the gesture of a mother who could not wait any longer — her children being in danger — once again **she went in haste to the mountain**.⁽¹⁾ Why? So that she could live with us and assist us! Just as she had lived and assisted in the town and home of Elizabeth on another occasion.

In this modern Visitation, the footsteps of the Pilgrim Virgin⁽²⁾ were more subtle than in the ancient Visitation; and only angels knew where she was going and that she was coming to see us.

The splendor of the light from the *all beautiful* was to shine brilliantly in the darkness at San Sebastián de Garabandal, where the people could barely earn a living, much less comprehend what an angel would be doing there.

Encounter of Love

It was a festive summer evening, at nightfall.

It was the hour to pray Vespers⁽³⁾ in the secluded convents and monasteries. And as usual the prayer ended with many lips bursting forth in the words that the most holy Voyager from the ancient Visitation had radiated from her inner soul during the exchange of greetings with Elizabeth:

My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, For He has regarded the lowliness of his handmaid. From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, For He Who is mighty has done great things to me. And Holy is His Name. His mercy is from generation to generation. To those who fear Him, He has shown might with His arm. He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And raised up the lowly. (Luke 1: 46-52)

No one was reciting Vespers at that hour in Garabandal, and even if someone would have been reciting them, it would have been impossible for him to comprehend the tremendous significance of the actual thing that was going to happen there. For right at that hour, according to the words of old, in the fullness of time ⁽⁴⁾ she was coming with haste to the *Montaña*.

It was approaching six in the afternoon — the long afternoon of a July that was just beginning as a murmur of expectation and curiosity rippled through the village. Some strolled through the streets, some made a visit to the church; all sought to be as near as possible to the children when the hour would come for ... Who knew what to expect?

After a rosary said at three o'clock, the girls had gone down the road toward Cossío to see if one of Conchita's brothers, whom they were expecting,

^{1.} The province of Santander is commonly called *The Mountain* (*Montaña*) by its inhabitants. This name comes from the time when Burgos was by law and by actuality the *Caput Castellae* (Capital of Castille) in the region of Castille that now corresponds to the province of Santander, which was then called *the Montaña* of Burgos.

^{2.} Under the beautiful title of *The Pilgrim Virgin*, the Virgin Mary is honored on July 2nd at Sahagún (Province of León). The church of this city as well as the beautiful statue of the Virgin are some of the rare remains of an ancient Franciscan convent. On July 2nd the statue is carried in procession, dressed in a robe from the court of the Queen of León, Donna Urraca (1077-1116).

^{3.} This is part of the Divine Office or liturgical prayer of the church; the proper time for its recitation is in the afternoon or early evening.

^{4.} Expression of St. Paul in his epistle to the Galatians: But when the fullness of time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman. (4:4)



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

would be coming. They met a large crowd on the way.

They stopped us, and gave us gifts, boxes of candy, rosaries, caramels, and lots of things.

The driver of a car going up recognized them before they had arrived at Cossío and brought them back to Garabandal.

When we came to the village, a large crowd was waiting.

There were ten or eleven priests, doctors⁽⁵⁾, an abbot, and many cars.

We went to the calleja to recite the rosary.

And before we had arrived there, the Virgin appeared to us with an Angel on each side.

One of these was St. Michael. The other we didn't recognize. He was dressed like St. Michael. They appeared to be twins.⁽⁶⁾

St. Michael. Here for the first time the illustrious name is mentioned. And so we now know the identity of the mysterious Angel who visited the children so often during the preceding fourteen

^{5.} Among the doctors that came, there were two from Santander who would be seen often in the course of this history. Juan A. Seco states:

[«]The calleja was full of people praying the rosary; everyone wanted to be present for the ecstasy. At my side was the second director of the society "Saltos del Nansa', Mr. Rocha, who had come up with Doctor Morales and Doctor Piñal from Santander. I recall that Mr. Rocha

told me, This afternoon the visionaries won't come to the cuadro for a vision, giving me to understand that these doctors knew how to end the phenomena. I answered him that in Divine affairs, it is not the doctor who has control.»

^{6.} In progressing forward with Conchita's diary, we will expand on these paragraphs.

days. Today he returns accompanying the Queen; his mission of announcing and preparing the way culminating in her sovereign audience.

Although his name had no special significance for the visionaries, it has great significance for us. Whatever is starting to happen in Garabandal cannot be without the gravest consequences, since God has deigned to use His highest archangel for it.

Catholic doctrine and teaching have always represented St. Michael as the leader of the celestial spirits. He is the instrument God uses for His great works. He is the one who watches from his high place over all the elect — Guardian Angel of the Synagogue in its day, and now Guardian of the Church. It is he who leads, as Prince of the Celestial Army, the great combat against the powers of hell.

In the last book of Sacred Scripture, the final pages of the history of salvation, St. Michael appears as the angel of the last and decisive combat. (Chapters 12 and 20) We might ask ourselves if we are not entering into the final stage of history. The time in which Satan will be permitted to **lead away the nations** is evidently drawing near.

Today formerly Christian nations have either arrogantly apostatized, declaring themselves officially atheistic, or have come to take a policy of ignoring God to suit their own convenience.

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

For some years now, almost since the time of Garabandal, the hierarchy has thought it opportune to stop those *post Missam* prayers. But this does not permit anyone to think he can neglect prayer to the holy Archangel, as if the battle had already been won. The situation in the church today and the signs of the times proclaim rather the opposite.⁽⁷⁾

Yet the great times have hardly begun. Now the Woman (the enemy of the dragon) and the Angel of the Last Combat, according to Chapter XII of the final inspired book, must deploy a truly decisive action in our midst. Careful attention should therefore be given to what they request.

Who was St. Michael's unknown companion in



The statue of St. Michael in the village church.

that first Marian hour at Garabandal? Even the girls themselves did not come to learn who he was. However, we can suppose he was one of the angels of the first rank, since he showed himself so similar in everything to St. Michael that he could be taken for his twin. Perhaps it was St. Gabriel. Who would be more suited than he to accompany Mary, to whose life and destiny he was so closely linked? (Luke I: 19, 26)

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

7. I know that when Conchita was told of the suppression of the prayer to St. Michael at the end of low masses, she exclaimed, How unfortunate! Now when there is such a need!

Many years later Jacinta told me that they did not know that the Angel in the apparitions was the Archangel St. Michael until the Virgin told them on July 2nd.

-And can you tell me who was the other angel accompanying the Virgin?

-St. Gabriel.

59

[—]Are you sure?

It appeared to be the eye of God.⁽⁸⁾

Today some might find the figure of the eye not with the times and too naïve to find in an apparition, like a picture from an old catechism book. But the children from Garabandal were not familiar with catechism books and were not concerned with showing themselves as being with the times. They simply described what they saw. The eye was seen as a sensible sign to inculcate in them and in us the insensible truth, the great truth that so many today want to ignore; that everything is written down . . . that we are going to have to render an account of all our actions. Everything is observed and recorded, ending in final judgment. Today free will controls the situation, but at that time, no one will escape. In the end, the Last Judgment. And complete justice for neither is there any creature invisible in His sight, but all things are naked and open to His eyes. (Heb. 4: 13)⁽⁹⁾

That day we talked much with the Virgin.

And she talked to us. We told her everything . . .

«When the visionaries came to the time of the ecstasy, their faces would change expression completely. They would take a position with their faces looking upward toward the Pines: on the right, María Dolores; in the middle, Conchita and Jacinta; on the left, Mari Cruz. I was at the side of the latter. They all were holding rosaries in their hands, and they began to tell the Virgin the things that they had done. Although they spoke very low, they could be heard perfectly.



"It appeared to be the eye of God"

At one time María Dolores showed her teeth; later it was learned that the Virgin had mentioned that they were very pretty. After this, Conchita opened her mouth and twisted her lips in an unusual way; later it was learned that she wanted to show the Virgin a tooth that was decaying. At another time, the Virgin must have asked them about Father Valentín, since they said that, *He* was plain-looking, but very good. Father Valentín himself heard this as did others who were close. I myself heard them speak to the Virgin about the police guards and petition for their benefit because they protect us from the crowd and prevent them from hurting us.

With the greatest confidence they also asked the Virgin to hand her crown down to them; and she must have yielded to their desires, since we could all observe their gestures in taking in their hands something that was coming from above them, and then passing it from one to the other. Conchita dared even more. She asked the Virgin to give her one of the stars in her crown in order to put it on her head in a manner that all present might see it, and so believe the truth of the apparitions. It appeared that the Virgin answered, They will believe.» (Testimony of Don Juan Alvarez Seco)

^{8.} According to Police Chief Juan A. Seco, «the four visionaries, on beginning the ecstasy, shouted out together, *The Virgin!*»

A little while later, Conchita was heard to say, **«Oh! What** an eye!»

This mysterious eye must have been marked out by an especially striking light. According to the same witness, the girls appeared for the first time with tears in their eyes, showing more rigidity than before, and were very pale, *«with a face of wax.» «The one who cried the most was Mari Cruz, whom a doctor grabbed by the lower jaw in order to twist her face so that she would not stare so fixedly. He was not able to accomplish this in spite of the force that he applied. I heard a crack and I feared that he had done more harm to the girl.»* (See picture on page 53.)

^{9.} In the Apocalypse, (1: 14) the Lord is shown with eyes **like a burning flame**, indicating His penetrating Divine Knowledge, which is aware of everything, even the most hidden.

And so these simple children of the earth were thus in intimate converse, full of familiarity, with the Queen of Heaven. For she who is a Queen is also a Mother. Mother above all! Not just a mother, but **THE MOTHER**. It is She who bears in herself all the right of maternity without limitation or restriction.

We can picture these simple children of the earth in their expressions, their gestures, their plain peasant clothes. But how can we conceive the appearance of the Mother and Queen from Heaven?

No One Could Be Like You

Some lines from Conchita's diary aid us in forming an idea of her appearance:

The Virgin comes in a white cloak, a blue mantel, a crown of little golden stars.

The feet are not seen; the hands are open and there is a scapular on the right one; the scapular is brown.⁽¹¹⁾

Her hair is long, a dark chestnut brown color, wavy, parted in the middle;

The face somewhat elongated;

The nose also somewhat long, and fine;

The mouth, very beautiful with lips a little full;

The color of her face tan, much lighter than that of the angel, different.

The voice, very beautiful, a voice very unusual.

I don't know how to explain it.

There is no other woman who resembles the Virgin, either in the voice, or in anything. Sometimes she carries the Baby in her arms.

He is very small, like a newborn baby, with a round face the same color as the Virgin's.

He has a very small mouth, and hair slightly long.

He is dressed in something like a blue tunic.

Taking into account the poor expression of a young girl from a very secluded village, the resulting description is astonishing. The vision must have been really marvelous for her to be able to expand so much in trying to describe it. With all this, it can be understood that human language is not made for realities that are so much above our experiences and happenings here below.

I don't know how to explain it. There is no other woman who resembles the Virgin, either in the voice, or in anything.

11. Rather than being like the small scapulars currently worn, the scapular held by the Virgin resembled the maniple that the priest formerly carried on his arm during the celebration of the Mass. I say formerly because presently the maniple has been discarded in the new liturgy. The girls saw that a mountain was painted on one side of the scapular. At the time they did not understand the reason, but they would learn later. In Spain, an expression used is Virgen del Carmen which is an abbreviation for Our Lady of Mount Carmel, one of the most ancient titles in Catholic Marian devotion and one which ties Mary closely to her native land, the land of our Saviour, and to the mysterious destinies of its people.

It should be added that Mount Carmel, historically the site of awesome works of God, has been for many centuries — at least since St. John of the Cross — the symbol in the Church of the height of perfection to which every really Christian soul is called. The *ascent* cannot be easy, being the great enterprise of life; but what is found on the summit is worth the effort: *All that rests on that mount is the honor and the glory of God.*

It appears very significant and of tremendous meaning, that the Virgin has desired to appear at Garabandal as Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

The fact that the girls could not conceive of a Virgin of Carmel clothed in white and blue corroborates the authenticity of their vision. The statue that they saw at the church, and the various religious pictures that they had seen presented the Virgin of Carmel robed completely differently. If they described her as they have in spite of what they were accustomed to seeing, it is because that was the way they saw her.

And now comes the best thing. On July 16th, 1251, in the first apparition of the Virgin of Mount Carmel to St. Simon Stock, General of the Carmelites, she was dressed with a white tunic and a blue cloak, as at Garabandal!

^{10.} Verse from a hymn to the Virgin of the Piedras Albas area, a parish of Cabezuela in the valley of Jerte, province of Caceres.



"Sometimes she carries the Baby in her arms."

You have your reasons, child. Everything has to be explained in language proper to it. The words of this earth cannot adequately explain the things of heaven. Because of this, one is forced by necessity to have recourse to clumsy negatives.

After her visions in the grotto at Lourdes, people asked Bernadette, Your Lady of the Grotto, is she like Fulanita or Menganita? Bernadette was not able to contain herself, and answered with unusual forcefulness, Please, there is no comparison possible.

Later the great sculptor Fabish finished his statue of the apparition in Carraran marble, and hoped to get from Bernadette an enthusiastic remark like the exclamation, *That's her!* He was only able to obtain this kind of concession, *Your statue is very beautiful*, *Mr. Sculptor, but it's not she. No. There is as much difference between this and what I saw as there is between heaven and earth.*

The children of Garabandal, as at Lourdes, could talk about the appearance of her hair, the color of her clothes, the position of her hands; but they could never describe to us the complete *grace* of her person, the charm of her smile, the radiation of light in her appearance, the celestial melody in her voice, the splendor of her goodness, her loveliness, her purity, her love, all those things that make her seem divinely transfigured. A singular creature in whom nature and grace have united to give the absolute maximum, making her an unsurpassable miracle of perfection!

No wonder that she is considered the figure of Paradise, and that the hours with her appeared to the visionaries as fleeting minutes, and that the place where the apparitions occurred most frequently would be called **a little bit of heaven.**

This has been told to me about Loli. Sometime after the things we are relating, she was taken by friends to look out for the first time at the sea near Comillas.⁽¹²⁾ That magnificent panorama ought to have impressed her. Someone must have said to

^{12.} They brought her there to see Father Lucio Rodrigo, a Jesuit whom we will discuss later on; he was professor of moral theology at the famous pontifical university of that coastal village, relatively near to Garabandal.



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

her, What do you think? Isn't this marvelous?

I see that it is, answered the girl. But after having seen the Virgin!

In order to better picture the meeting of the children of Garabandal with the Queen and Mother of Heaven, I would like to place here what Conchita said a long time later to Isabel de Daganzo, a painter from Santander now living in Barcelona. The woman herself gave me this testimony, validating it with her signature.

«This is a resumé of my conversation about the apparitions of Garabandal with Conchita in Burgos⁽¹³⁾ from the 7th to the 15th of November, 1967. With her help, and that of the most Holy Virgin, I wanted to put on canvas something that would depict well those celestial scenes. I showed her, among various sketches, one of Our Lady of Garabandal. (She had assisted me in making this one, first at the village and later at Pamplona.) From this came the picture that is venerated today in St. Michael's chapel at Garabandal, and from which so many holy cards in color have been reproduced that have circulated over the entire world.

Your Virgin is good, Conchita told me, only you should make the tunic more graceful. There were no clouds, only light. At times she smiled so much that her teeth could be seen. Her hair was more wavy. The flowers on her robe were embroidered in white. The scapular was one single piece and somewhat bigger.

---What did the eye in the first apparition signify? Was it like this? (I made a drawing.)

-No, it didn't have that shape. It was a normal eye, with eyelashes, brown in color. And I don't know what it signified. The light was all the same and the greatest light was here. (Drawing on paper, she pointed out to me the large eye, and where it was positioned, and without

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

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

the least hesitation pointed out the exact distance and space.)

A little later she added, Many things happened during the apparition on that day. Among these was a rainfall of stairs. The four of us saw it— Loli, Mari Cruz, Jacinta and myself.

I asked her how they fell. From the hands?

No, no. They fell from above, as if it were raining.

One of my canvasses showed the Virgin on top of a red cloud, because I read of this in a book.

We never saw the Virgin on top of a red cloud. What happened was that one day, while we were not in ecstasy, a red cloud covered the four of us and frightened us very much.

Another canvas represented the Lady on top of a star with a long tail, with the four visionaries on their knees at her feet.

Yes, one time a bright star with a large tail passed by; but it passed, it didn't stay at the feet of the Virgin. And there were not four of us, only Loli and myself. That was the feastday of Our Lady of the Pillar.

On another canvas Our Lady appeared as Queen of the Angels, surrounded by them.

I didn't see the Virgin surrounded by angels; but I don't know if the others saw her that way.

—How did the Virgin bless you and kiss you? Like this? (And I showed her another canvas.)

She didn't bless us, but she did indeed kiss us. She faced us; she came down to our level. And when at times we couldn't reach her, we lifted one another up.»

In recalling these things, a soft breeze seems to go gently through the soul. What a Mother we have in the sky! How she comes down to us with supreme delicateness, seeking to lift us up toward her so that we might be less unfortunate and miserable. finally asked Conchita— **«that I could put on can-vas that could cause fear?**

No. What I have seen that could cause fear is the Chastisement,⁽¹⁴⁾ and I can't tell you about that. Besides, terror and fear are not the best for moving souls.»

Mountains and Hills, Bless the Lord; Bless the Lord all Things That Breed on the Earth.

(Daniel 3: 75-76)

Let us return to the narration from the diary:

That day we talked much with the Virgin,

And she talked with us. We told her *everything*.

Concerning what was comprised in this *everything*, Conchita wrote down especially this:

We told her that we walked to the pastures, that we were tanned, that we took the hay to the barns. And she laughed.

We told her about so many things!

Since the first time I heard the story of Garabandal (unfortunately I was not there to see it personally) these words from Conchita have always sounded like music from a great pastoral symphony. They are like a brief strophe of pure air, of untainted fragrance, of childlike freshness on which were just beginning to fall the first traces of decay. With all the charm of a hillside breeze, those lines from the hand of the little narrator, chiseled with grace, truthful and sincere, reveal to us how hard each day was for the little children of the mountain village during the summer season.

It is a pleasure to walk through the hillside meadows when everything is in bloom; cut hay

14. The CHASTISEMENT, is one of the great secrets of

Garabandal. It will be elaborated on later.

«Could you tell about something» —Isabel

gathered and stacked under the sun has a fragrant scent. But to work hard, cutting and gathering it, carrying and putting it in a barn far away—the peasants do not call that a pleasure.

We should not be surprised then that the girls of Garabandal on that July 2nd, while seeing the heavenly Mother for the first time, would tell her all about the hard work of gathering hay. Didn't that stand out as the most detestable of all their daily chores? And the Mother was there to learn about it. No one could listen like her, for no one could love like her, for no one could be as interested as she in everything that concerned her children. Her laughter and smile full of tenderness and grace came as a breeze from paradise on those four creatures who so early had come to know the hard facts of life. When they had finished their childlike conversation, the Mother could speak with the words of Isaac of old, Behold the fragrance of my child is as the fragrance of a fruitful field, which the Lord has blessed. God give you the dew of heaven. (Gen. 27: 27-28)

Mother and Teacher

We said the rosary looking at her. And she prayed with us in order to teach us how to pray well.

The simple practice of the rosary, so underestimated today, has extraordinary and mysterious power to lead souls through Mary to God; it obtains from Him the mercies that the world needs. Imagine listening to the Virgin reciting the Our Father and Glory Be to the Father with the young girls. Then everything was a prayer of love, of praise, and of petition. But according to what Conchita tells us, when she recited the Ave María with them, it was not only an exercise of prayer, but also an instruction. The girls, like other children and adults too for that matter, had the bad habit of praying in a hurry, with poor pronunciation, almost mechanically. She showed them that one should not talk to God like this. Afterwards when the girls had learned their lesson,⁽¹⁵⁾ the celestial apparition accompanied them only in the recitation of the Gloria.

When we had finished the rosary, she said that she was leaving.

And we told her to stay a little while, since she had been there only a very short time.

And she laughed, and told us she would return on Monday.

Then when she left, it made us sad.

Nothing astonishing about that. In heaven time passes rapidly; while in the darkness of hell, the hours pass slowly in monotonous depression.

When she had gone, the people came to embrace us and ask us what she had said.

Some of the people didn't believe since we had talked so much.

How could the Virgin talk and listen so much?

Always the habit of applying our feeble conceptions and poor judgment to everything, even to the things of God! To say that the children had talked too much! As if God and the Virgin were such haughty persons that one could only go the Them with great formality and protocol to deal strictly with serious matters and important business.⁽¹⁶⁾

For my thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways My ways. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts. (Is. 55: 8-9)

At that time Jesus answered and said: 'I praise You, Oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things (the Queen's mysteries) from the wise and the prudent and have revealed them to little ones. (Matt. 11:25)

But the majority did believe, because they said it was like the case of a

16. From the beginning, one of the *strong* reasons that certain intellectuals advanced against the supernatural nature of the events of Garabandal was namely this: the quantity and *puerility* of the conversations that the visionaries held with their invisible interlocutors. Although this may be a very wise point, how can anyone show that the matters of children are of less worth and importance in the eyes of God than the affairs of adults?

^{15.} During the apparitions one of the things that struck the visitors to Garabandal was the prayer of the girls in ecstasy. They prayed with great cadence in their voices, unhurriedly, with tremendous feeling. Hearing some of these prayers on a tape recorder was—of all the things that I first knew about Garabandal—the thing that most convinced me.

mother who hadn't seen her daughter for a long time, who tells her everything.

And how much more we who have never seen her.

Besides, she is our mother in heaven.

They took us to the sacristy and a priest named Father Francisco Odriozola⁽¹⁷⁾ questioned us one after the other.

And afterwards he told the people what we said to him.

That is how the Sunday of July 2nd ended.

A very happy day, because we saw the Virgin for the first time.

For we are all always with her, whenever we want to be.

There would not be a better conclusion for a main chapter of the new *Visitation of Mary*.

She is always with us.

And we can be with her, *whenever we* want to be.

By faith and love, by devotion and imitation. Nothing is more important than that, more important even than the apparitions themselves, which would serve no point if they did not lead us to that end.

Blessed are you who have believed, was said to Mary at the time of the Visitation. (Luke 1:45) We, her children, do her little service if we do not strive to acquire before all other virtues, the first one of faith.



"We are all always with her."

July 2nd, 1961 . . . The Lord's day . . . Sunday. Day of a new Visitation by the Virgin. With the passing of time, it will come about that the Catholic liturgy will repeat in commemoration of July 2nd at Garabandal that which it says each year on February 11th in Celebrating Lourdes:

Today the glorious Queen of Heaven appeared on the earth. Today she brought to her people words of salvation and tokens of peace.

Today the choirs of angels and the faithful, exulting with joy, celebrate her Immaculate Mystery. (Antiphon from Vespers)

^{17.} This priest resides in the city of Santander; sometime later he was named canon of the cathedral. He was to become one of those most involved in the *investigation* of Garabandal, and his name will always be connected to the history of these amazing events.