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He Came Unto His
Own, But His Own
Received Him Not

In these words the last Gospel summarizes the most important event in history: *God's coming down to mankind as one of them*; and the result: *mankind's rejection of His coming*.

I would like to use those inspired words to caption Mary's coming among us at Garabandal.⁽¹⁾

Although in His times Jesus came for all men and all nations, His coming was first of all to the people of His own country Israel. And how did that country, the first called and chosen, react to the coming of Emmanuel?⁽²⁾ Some heard and accepted Him gladly; but others—the ruling classes in general, the priests and scribes—were obstinate in their hard-headed rejection. The first He filled with good things, **As many as received Him, He gave power to be made sons of God.** (John 1: 12) The others he abandoned to their emptiness and misery of soul, **You shall die in your sin . . .** (John 8: 24) Here is a mystery in that **He came unto His own, but His own received Him not.**

As described in the last chapter, during the month of July, 1961, the extraordinary became a daily fact of life for the people secluded in those faraway reaches of the savage Cantabrian Mountain Range.

With the daily lavishing of exceptional graces, the Virgin—according to the words of her Magnificat—was filling whomever received her with good things, making them experience beyond others the marvel of being sons of God and her sons. She acted openly as a mother and teacher; but her actions did not extend to everyone in the same way. She instructed the multitude more in an indirect way, through phenomena that the people could not explain, but in the presence of which they felt a holy reverence. Through these phenomena many entered into living communion with a higher world that until then had but slight importance in their lives. However, to the four chosen girls she gave direct lessons almost every day, and frequently several times a day. Why only to them?

Had they merited more than others? Whoever

1. It will be readily understood by an intelligent reader that I am not attempting to put the coming of the Son of God into the world and the coming of the Virgin at Garabandal on the same plane. These two *comings* cannot be compared either in their physical or their spiritual reality, or in their meaning or in their relationship to the faith. The comparison given is only meant for illustration.

2. A Hebrew word signifying *God with us*.

asks this question I invite to question deeper. Why did Jesus choose only twelve apostles from the many who had been demonstrating themselves as fervent disciples? And why only to those twelve whose names we know today? The evangelist answers, **And going up unto a mountain, He called unto Himself whomever He would, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve that they might be with Him and that He might send them to preach.** (Mark 3: 13-14) *Whomever He would!*

We do not know if they were worth more or if they merited more. It should never be forgotten that **No flesh should glory in His sight,** (Cor. 1: 29) but that everyone should say to himself, **For who distinguished you? What have you that has not been received? And if you have received, why do you glory as if you have not received it?** (Cor. 1: 7) But that all might know well then that **it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.** (Rom. 9: 16)

It would have been very inspiring and enjoyable to have heard first hand the lessons that the Heavenly Mother and Teacher began to give to her four privileged girls and disciples during the summer of 1961. However, as the girls were not capable of explaining these lessons, we will have to limit ourselves to presenting what others were able to capture indirectly and then transmit in testimony. (There are not many accounts concerning the month of July, 1961 that we are now describing.)⁽³⁾

Wings on Their Feet

As an example of what was happening almost every day in Garabandal, here is what occurred on July 16th. This was the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, elaborately celebrated throughout Spain,⁽⁴⁾ which in that year fell on a Sunday.

I personally received the account from Andrés Otero Lorenzo from Santiago; he was both a witness and a participant in what he described.

On that July 16th, in the early hours of the afternoon, Mr. Lorenzo came by car to Garabandal

3. Furthermore, in her diary, Conchita skips over almost all these dates in July.

4. Apart from devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel per se, among the reasons for this are the large number of women in Spain who are named María del Carmen, and the fact that Our Lady of Mount Carmel is the patroness of sailors.



“The face turned completely upwards with a most beautiful expression”

together with Mrs. Zubiría and Carmen Herrero y Garralda, youngest daughter of the Marquese de Aledo.⁽⁵⁾ They had left Ribadesella⁽⁶⁾ several hours before and were arriving for the first time in Garabandal.

Like so many other strangers they soon came upon the home and café of Ceferino Mazón and began to ask questions. However, no one could say for sure that there would be an apparition that night. Loli, who was doing housework, soon appeared, and they learned from her that there would be an apparition—obviously she had already had a call. However, she was not able to tell at what time it would be.

Then they went out to stroll around and learn about the quaint and unusual town. They stopped

5. Mr. Otero was at that time chauffeur to the Marquesa. The car that he took that day to Garabandal was a utility vehicle of Mrs. Zubiría that was better suited for the rugged ascent to the village.

6. A beautiful village in Asturias, very popular as a summer resort.

at Conchita's house and had a talk with her. She confirmed what Loli had said. *Yes, they were waiting for something, but much later.* From the church tower the bells then began to ring out the first calls for the rosary in the church.⁽⁷⁾

The three travelers went out into the street again and made their way toward the church, strolling leisurely. They had not yet arrived at the plaza when they saw Conchita passing them swiftly, looking upwards as if transported. Mr. Otero, a strong man in his thirties, ran after her, attempting to stay at her side in order to observe her to his satisfaction.

«I was impressed by her face,»—he told me—«her total appearance. I had never seen anything like it before, nor have I seen anything like it since.»⁽⁸⁾ **The face turned completely upwards with a most beautiful expression; the lips partially open—I don't know**

7. It was customary to recite the rosary at nightfall.

8. Meaning away from Garabandal, of course; since this man later made more visits to the village and viewed many of the girls' ecstasies that always left him amazed.

whether for praying or for speaking, or for both — the hands joined in front of her chest moving the beads of a rosary between the fingers. And then her walk! It was really unique in its grace and lightness; she appeared to take normal steps, yet one had almost to run in order not to be left behind.»



“Her walk! It was really unique in its grace and lightness.”

When they had come to the level of Ceferino's house, Loli also came outside in ecstasy with the same attitude and expression as Conchita. Without looking at each other, they joined perfectly together and continued toward the church, not holding hands as on so many other occasions, but separated, each one holding the rosary with her hands on her chest.

The church filled rapidly with the faithful. The two visionaries came in their ecstatic march up to the altar rail itself; there with one of those falls that are so striking and frightening, they dropped to

their knees on the floor. Up to here they had come protected by Mr. Otero (who had not separated himself from Conchita), Ceferino, and his older son Fernando (*Nandín*) who had left the house behind Loli. The three had joined hands in the street and had formed a barrier so that the people in their desire to see and touch would not accidentally fall on top of the little girls.

Following the custom, a woman from the village⁽⁹⁾ led the recitation of the rosary and during it the girls in ecstasy answered until the finish. When the prayer ended they stood up, left the church reverently, and began an ecstatic march⁽¹⁰⁾ toward the Pines.



Loli in rapture

The three *bodyguards*, in spite of their robust condition, became exhausted in following them. Many persons, among them the two women who had come from Ribadesella, soon quit—the march was not for the unconditioned. Our informant Mr. Otero, does not lack vocabulary, including one that

9. Referring to Maximina González, Conchita's aunt. Father José Ramón García de la Riva, of whom we will speak later on, told me this. Sometimes another woman of the village, Celina González, led it.

10. This name was given to the traveling from one location to another that occurred during the ecstasies. These ecstatic walks were very frequent at Garabandal.

«Sometimes they marched forward all together with a normal pace. Other times they started together, and later they separated each one for a different street, to come together again finally at a determined spot, showing great joy on meeting. The most frequent thing was to go forward at great speed, in such a manner that not even the fastest were able to follow them. There have been cases in which they have marched on their knees, and even sitting down . . .

These changes of location in ecstasy were due to the apparition coming and going from the location with the girls following her; but not knowing how. They were not able to say whether they were running, walking, or lying down, or even if they were really moving or not.»

(Father Ramón Andreu)



“Looking always and only upwards, they never stumbled.”

can be very expressive; but he could not succeed in describing the grace of those walks while in ecstasy.

«They did not fly as has been said at times by persons who have seen the affair from afar and

in the dark. They did not fly; that could easily be determined. Their feet touched on the ground, but in a way that I don't know how to describe. Looking always and only upwards they never stumbled on anything, nor did they



“And look out! There are rocks and stones throughout those streets.”

slide, nor did they strike against any stones.

And look out! There are rocks and stones throughout those streets and paths of Garabandal. Especially at that time, for later the people that came cleared away the worse stones little by little; I myself have taken many away during my various trips. They marched as if they were flying, but not flying; while the rest of the people were falling and sliding. But you would have to see what that was like! Above all, the running in the dark and in the dim light.

The girls walked as if their feet had eyes to search for the exact spot where it was best to step, always on top of the rocks and pebbles or away from them, never striking against them. And with a lightness, a grace, and a rhythm I could not describe. I fell several times and stumbled many more times; but although perspiring and gasping for breath, I couldn't succeed in keeping up with them. I could never forget those marvelous things.

Oh! I forgot. Before entering the calleja, at the level of the highest houses of the village, in the middle of the street, closed in by its walls, the girls had one of their *falls*. It seemed my heart stopped with the noise of the cracking their knees made. *Heavens! Those girls have smashed their knees and broken their legs*, I said to myself.

But nothing of the kind happened as I found out later. It had become dusk rather early, for in the final hours of the afternoon some low-lying clouds had come from the surrounding mountains, darkening the sky considerably. The people were quietly walking as well as they could manage behind us, when suddenly, there came the fall. I was seeing it for the first time, and it frightened me, for I saw how they plunged suddenly on their bare knees on top of the ground with its rocks and stones. The fall sounded sharp, like the breaking of bones.

For a little while they remained on their knees



"The girls walked as if their feet had eyes."



“I cannot explain how they—without ever looking away a second from the vision on high—could follow that path.”

on top of the stones. They fixed their gaze on something that was above and in front of them. They smiled, and what a charming smile! They moved their lips as if to speak or pray, but in a whisper, in such a way that one could hardly tell one word from another. It was impossible to doubt that they were with someone.

I had a privileged position, almost leaning against the children, and could observe as I pleased. Thus I could make some tests. I made a motion to stick my fingers in their eyes. Repeatedly I passed my hand in front of them. Not a contraction, not a blink! They were completely absorbed in something that we could not comprehend, that was totally outside what was happening around them. At my side a doctor—I saw him well, although he tried to hide—dared even more than I myself. With a needle he repeatedly stuck them in the arms. Nevertheless, there did not appear in them the least sign that they had felt anything. I know that these tests were repeated during various other falls that they had during the *march* on that afternoon.

Finally they got up and they continued upwards toward the Pines. We followed them as well as we could through that long and difficult *calleja* of the apparitions. I cannot explain how they—without ever looking away for a second from the vision on high—could follow that path without deviating the slightest either to the right or to the left. And how they walked over all types of obstacles, especially at the top of the slope, so steep, with so many bushes and thorny plants.

They fell on their knees before the Pines as if someone had placed them carefully there, without scratch marks, without perspiration, without the least sign of fatigue. On the other hand, the rest of us were arriving perspiring, gasping for breath, with the marks of our falls, spills, and scratches. It did not surprise me that so many people had remained along the way.

On their knees in front of one of the Pines—I think it was the center one—they stayed a long time praying, talking and smiling with someone invisible. Leaning my ear against



“I could notice the extraordinary laugh and smile of the children in ecstasy.”

their faces, I could catch some of the words from time to time. I think that what they repeated most when they spoke was this, *How good, how good! Oh, yes? Oh how good!*»

I would think that our celestial Mother—on her feast as Our Lady of Mount Carmel—would speak to her little ones out of the great love and mercy she has toward all her children on earth, *her little children in danger*, telling them about the plans of aid and salvation that she always undertakes for their welfare.

But let us continue to listen to Mr. Otero:

«During the time at the Pines, I could notice the extraordinary laugh and smile of the children in ecstasy. They laughed with their whole person. They had none of what is so frequent and what we might call laughing with the mouth only. Their laugh came bursting out from within themselves, because I think that they were then full of a joy of which we were unaware.

The people around them started to keep a

religious silence, and then someone began to lead a prayer. It was night, but one could see rather well by the light from the flashlights. I myself, not wanting to miss anything, was also there to protect the children—together with Ceferino and his son. To do this, on our knees as we were, we held out our arms and hung on to each other's hands, forming a little wall in a half circle that prevented the curious from falling on top of the two children. In order to push harder, at one time I stretched out my free left hand to grab one of those pine branches—at that time there were some very low ones⁽¹¹⁾—when I heard Loli shout, *Hey, he is touching the Virgin!* You can imagine my emotions!

The coming down from the Pines had more or less the same characteristics as the going up. The children, remaining in ecstasy, had still another *fall*—very different from the ones we

11. Today it would not be possible to do what Mr. Otero did, since the low branches of the Pines are all gone; the people have cut them off in order to take a souvenir or *relic*.



“They were oblivious to the things that were happening around them.”

were having. And everything ended at the church doors. When the girls returned to their normal selves⁽¹²⁾ I could ascertain more at leisure and more carefully that they had not broken any bones, nor did they have any marks on their knees. If that isn't a miracle, then let the intellectuals tell me what is.

To complete my astonishment, after all those things had left the rest of us depleted, I saw that the girls were fresher and in better condition than ever, without tiredness or exhaustion, as if they had just come out of the most restful and contented sleep. I myself wasn't in such good shape. And it was no pleasure to look at my suit and shoes; I can tell you this, that I had come with some good quality shoes that were almost new, and the next day or the following, I

12. The entrance of the girls into the trance was instantaneous. In a fraction of a second they raised their heads sharply and were held affixed to the vision, which led them from one place to another.

The general way of ending was by making the sign of the cross or giving a kiss. But what occurred at the end, according to what they explained, was that *«the Virgin went away as though she were dissolving.»* (Father Andreu in the report previously mentioned)

had to buy new ones.

Another thing about the girls that amazed me was that they were oblivious to the things that were happening around them—and that they had the impression that all this that lasted more than two hours, had lasted only a few seconds—and it seemed to them that they had hardly moved.

In later visits to Garabandal with members of the Aledo family, I had the good fortune to see many other things; but the things I saw on the first day impressed me the most.

I can positively assure you that I'll never forget that day. It was unique and I know for my part I've seen many countries and many things.»

The man showed me a photograph⁽¹³⁾ of the four girls in ecstasy with the signature of each one of them and their age. He had acquired this on the day after the events related and on it was marked clearly

13. When the events began, amateur and professional photographers soon appeared. These saw a means of income in selling photographs of the girls. But neither the girls themselves, nor their families took part in any of this.

the date: July 17, 1961. *This, he told me, I would not give away no matter how much money you offer me.* And he held it very carefully.

But then, all those things that José Otero could observe on his first day in San Sebastián de Garabandal had been everyday occurrences — except the ecstatic marches—for almost a month, and would continue to be everyday occurrences for many more months.

And many refused to believe. And almost all were asking again and again for a miracle!

The Works of the Mother and Teacher

God is a spirit (John 4: 24), and the presence and action of a spirit can only be known through its effects. So also through their effects we are able to know the presence and the actions of the Virgin in Garabandal, and discover what these actions were and what she desired during the times of instruction with the children.

Much of what she has done still remains a mystery. It is as if the spirit, like the wind, **breathes where He wills; you hear His voice, but you know not from where He comes, nor where He goes** (John 3: 8). Things of God always proceed like this. There is never a sudden complete unveiling. If there were, men—who are always immature and dull of heart—would probably not be able to endure or comprehend it. The style of God toward His creatures is to act in a gradual way, through stages, according to a rhythm that He alone knows—and which so many times we do not understand—without hurry, but without pause.

The most immediate effects of the presence and actions of the Virgin could be seen above all in the children's way of thinking and acting. There was no denying that their way of thinking and acting had changed.

Father Ramón María Andreu in his much quoted report, as fruit of personal observation and direct experience, wrote:

«From the beginning of the visions, up until August 25th—some two months—there were various counsels and recommendations received by the children. The order in which they are placed here probably does not correspond exactly to the chronology, but it is not possible for me to name the dates precisely, and furthermore, many of the counsels were repeatedly frequently.

1. At first the girls avoided the public that came up to see them. *We ran away.* The Virgin told them that they should not run away, and that if they were asked a question, they should respond to the things that they knew and could talk about. After that, they did not hide from the people.⁽¹⁴⁾



“They should be modest.”

2. Another counsel, often repeated, was that they should be *modest*.⁽¹⁵⁾ They interpreted this

14. Since the Virgin was not coming for them alone, they knew they had to reveal these things to others, telling them what was able to be told. Although many people asked questions only out of frivolity or curiosity, there were many who needed aid, and who sought to strengthen their religion and faith.

15. *Modosas*. This word is in current use in some regions of Spain and is used precisely in the sense that the girls used it with Father Andreu. It is equivalent to *have good conduct, to be a person of good manners*. Naturally its meaning is not limited to external actions alone. To say that a girl or adolescent is very *modosita* is a compliment, not only of a person's external comportment, but of all his conduct in those things that are related to discretion, modesty, education, manners, etc . . .

in the sense that they should not be vain, that they should dress with simplicity, and that they should show attitudes of modesty and humility.



“Be obedient.”

3. Probably even more often they had repeated to them the counsel to be *obedient*.⁽¹⁶⁾

16. Fr. Valentín has this recorded in his notes of July 16th, a Sunday, and the feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel:

«When I went up at five in the afternoon, I met Conchita and Loli wearing two or three chains and medals, two or three rosaries, watches, bracelets, etc. I was slightly angry with them, and I took everything away; I left them no more than a rosary and a chain with a scapular medal. And I told them that they should obey the pastor and their parents. Later they told me that they had mentioned this to the Angel, and *they could bring the medals, but that they had to obey the priest and their parents, and to live always like children.*»

Some parts of the dialogue with the apparition were recorded on the first day that Conchita had an ecstasy at the Pines:

«*One day I could not see you, since they would not let me come up . . . Yes, I know that we have to obey; but you first of all . . . good, but we have to obey you too . . .*»

It should not be difficult to fill in the pauses with the answers from the Apparition, which the spectators naturally could not hear. At the time of these happenings, no one said that this reminder to obedience was improper or unnecessary.

4. And also that they make *sacrifices*. They did not understand the meaning of this word. At the request of the Virgin, they questioned priests about it.⁽¹⁷⁾ I myself had to give them explanations.



“Make sacrifices.”

5. The Virgin inspired in them a *horror of sin*.⁽¹⁸⁾ One time while alone in ecstasy Conchita said, *And that, what is that? Oh! The sight of sinners. How ugly! Take me away from it! Yes, I don't want to see it. No! (crying) Another*

17. We supposed that they did not go to ask those priests who now say that all this matter of sacrifice, mortification, self-renunciation, etc. has nothing to do with *our renewed and open Christianity*. To this type of priest this matter belongs to the old and stupid asceticism of monastic times, which is now *fortunately passé*, according to the rhetoric of the new prophets.

18. How could the Virgin come to these mountains with this matter of *sin*? Don't we want a moral code without sin? Everything that's in man, doesn't it have *value*? Such ideas cannot exist in an adult Christianity! Aren't we all saved, regardless of what happens?

How many falsehoods and absurdities like these are spoken day after day to a confused people of God!

time? The sight of sinners? Ah, yes! Sacrifices!

On another occasion, Loli was in an ecstatic position for about twenty-five minutes without saying anything. Finally, she said, *Mercy, mercy!* while tears ran down her cheeks.



“Sinners? Oh, yes! Sacrifices!”

6. With regard to *piety*, the girls were requested to pray often, especially the rosary and the Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Each day, besides the rosary that they said in the village, they recited others with the vision.⁽¹⁹⁾

The Virgin also taught them religious songs. And she corrected them when they performed defectively any religious practice, like making the Sign of the Cross, the recitation of the new form of the Act of Contrition, etc . . .

7. *Formation of conscience.* Frequently the girls were heard asking questions while in a state

19. No one can deny that this fact is very significant, taking into account the *new* attitude of certain clergy and laymen toward these practices of piety.



“Pray often, especially the rosary.”

of trance. Here are some of these questions:

- To sing the song ‘Esperanza,’⁽²⁰⁾ is that a sin?*
- To say “I don’t want to eat,” is that a sin?*
- For women to smoke, is that a sin?*

8. *Significant actions:* One day a woman wanted to have her picture taken with one of the visionaries, but the girl walked away from her saying, *The Virgin doesn’t want us to take pictures with those who wear low-cut dresses.*

20. This refers to a song that was very popular at the time; a frivolous song, vulgar and imbecile like so many other songs that have been successful. For example some of its words were:

*What can one know about women?
and the refrain is repeated:
Oh what trouble you have caused me!
Esperanza. Heavens!
You don’t know a thing except dancing!
Cha. Cha. Cha.*

The music carried in the summer air of the villages, and more than once the young girls of our story had heard it. But undoubtedly in their homes they had heard that they should not sing it—the upbringing in those homes of *Christians of old* like those at Garabandal was strict—and it was for this reason that they asked the Virgin about this.

9. Attention is called to the simple and confident way that the girls had with the Virgin; certainly they had learned this from her.

It is not easy to judge the spiritual progress of a soul, unless it is judged by a spiritual director who constantly deals with it. The spiritual progress of the girls should be estimated more by the interior than by the exterior; however, it undoubtedly would be reflected in the exercise and practice of the virtues.

HUMILITY—This was shown by the children in various ways: by their manner of dressing, by their manner of speaking, by the small things that they did for the public that came to see them, by the lowly work that they continued to do in front of everyone, by their docility to suggestions from their parents and priests, etc . . .



“**HUMILITY**—This was shown. . . by the lowly work that they continued to do in front of everyone.”

On various occasions the Virgin has indicated that when they would come to see her, they should not wear either bracelets or earrings. The only one who had the habit of wearing earrings was Conchita. But in a trance at the

door of the church, she was heard asking, *What did I do bad? Oh, good!* And returning to normal, she went to her home, took off the earrings and a bracelet and returned to the door of the church, where she went into ecstasy again. I myself have noticed several times that when they felt the third call, they immediately began to take off any ring or bracelet that they had on their hands and which belonged not to them, but to some other person who had given them to the girls to look at and examine.

OBEDIENCE—As a consequence of the apparitions, the girls were imbued with a spirit of obedience, and not only showed this with works, but also with words. They said that the vision had recommended this very much, and that the Virgin had told them to obey above all their parents and priests.



“The girls were imbued with a spirit of obedience.”

I have personally noted several cases of this:

The mother of Mari Cruz one day told her daughter that she should stay home; and she did stay, while the other three went to the Pines for an apparition. When it was mentioned to Mari Cruz that she should not lose the occasion to go with the others, she answered,



Sleeping between calls



“The Virgin told me to obey.”

— *No, my mother didn't let me go.*

— *But isn't it better to see the Virgin than to remain at home?*

— *The Virgin told me to obey.*

The bishop (Apostolic Administrator) ordered the church closed during the states of trance in order to avoid the lack of respect that the public—without bad will—was committing in its desire to see the girls close up. This measure pleased the parents and the villagers, since they were not looking for sensationalism. The first day that the recommendation was put into effect, the girls approached the church in the state of trance as usual; but on seeing it closed, turned around and then suddenly said, *Ah! That is good.* On coming out of ecstasy they said, *We wanted the church open, but the Virgin told us that what the priest did was right.*

In the face of the agitation and disorder from the numerous visitors, the girls' parents decided to keep the girls at home with the doors closed when they felt the calls, and not to let

them go out. After a trance, they mentioned that the Virgin had said that if their parents told them this, it was right, and that they would see her inside their homes. And so it happened. Obedience in everything, even when opposed to the vision itself or contemplation, is one of the things that the masters of mystical theology have always presented as the best of signs.

We have further evidence that Garabandal followed the most sensible pattern of obedience.

The parish priest, Father Valentín, was at Conchita's house one day and he said to her,

—*Look, it isn't possible for all of us to wait at this hour. I will give you a quarter of an hour. In that time, I am going to give you three warnings and if nothing occurs before the last warning, you go to bed. This is the first warning.*

And he walked off. After ten minutes he returned to give the second warning.

—*If nothing happens in the next five minutes, as I said, go to bed. It is already very late.*

Two minutes after Father Valentín walked away, Conchita went into ecstasy.⁽²¹⁾

That same day, and without Loli and Jacinta knowing about what had happened with Conchita, I had the same experience with them. They were waiting for the vision since they already had two calls. I said to them, *We can't wait any longer since it is very late. I will give you five minutes time. If nothing happens in those five minutes, go to bed.*

When there was yet a minute remaining, I came back to talk to them, *A minute remains. Count to sixty, and if nothing happens before you get to sixty, go to bed.*

They started to count in a loud voice, chanting as in school. When they came to sixteen, without being able to say the word 'sixteen,' they were drawn into ecstasy with the typical snap of the head upwards.

PIETY — from the beginning of the events, the children received Communion every day and

21. The Virgin yielded to the will of those who had spiritual authority over the girls, to confirm in them the duty of subjection to their superiors. This episode seems to have occurred on the 25th of August at 1:00 in the morning following a plan made by Father Valentín in association with the pastor from Ribadesella, Father Alfonso Cobián, and another priest.



“They prayed several rosaries a day.”

heard all the Masses that were celebrated—unless they were in the pastures.⁽²²⁾ As we have seen, they prayed several rosaries a day.

At times the visitors' attention was attracted by the children speaking in the church and smiling. This drew my attention too and one day I told them about it.

—*But, is it bad to talk in church?*

—It is a lack of respect toward the Lord . . .

—*Then why do the priests talk so much?*

I told them that the things the priests were talking about in the church were important things. (It is to be noted that more than a dozen priests were gathered together in Garabandal at the time).

Well, when we are with the Virgin, we also talk. But if you say we should conduct ourselves better, we will try to do it.

On August 8th, Mari Cruz was overheard in a

22. It has already been mentioned that some of the pastures of San Sebastián de Garabandal were several kilometers away from the village. When it was necessary to work in these pastures, the villagers had to set out early in the morning, without time to give to other matters.

vision: *Now I know that it is better to pray; before I thought it was better to play.*

FRATERNAL CHARITY—Apart from the detachment that was evident in the girls—for example, in giving away their things, caramels, candy, etc. up to the point of not keeping anything for themselves⁽²³⁾—they showed charity in a thousand ways. They served so many visitors with water and the other things they requested so frequently . . . the care of Loli for her grandmother,⁽²⁴⁾ of Conchita and Mari Cruz for a blind man,⁽²⁵⁾ the amiable patience with so many inquisitive people, the desire that all would believe and be saved . . .



“They showed charity in a thousand ways.”

PENANCE—From the time they learned the significance of the word *sacrifices*, they practiced it. For them, making sacrifices was *to do what I don't like and to omit doing other things that I like.*⁽²⁶⁾

Among these: helping others . . . obeying, giving away the things that they received, and not wearing the bracelets and other jewelry that they had received . . .

PURITY OF SOUL—Often they questioned me about specific things like songs, some words

23. The repudiators of Garabandal have advanced this reception of gifts by the girls as an argument against it. This report throws some light on this matter, but later on we will present other explanations.

24. The paternal grandmother who died in July of 1971.

25. This refers to Jacinta's grandfather.

26. A definition both simple and magnificent.



"The children received Communion every day and heard all the Masses."

that they said, replies that they had received⁽²⁷⁾ — whether or not it was a sin. They did not have a well-formed conscience, and so they did not readily distinguish what was a mortal sin, a venial sin, or no sin at all. But I observed the desire they had to be instructed and learn—for this reason the questions that at times were heard in the trances.

The horror of sin was causing in them a desire to atone for the sins of mankind. But *the sins of mankind* did not hold for them a concrete meaning, only a vagueness about things that *sorrow God and the Virgin*. It should be taken into account that, due to the isolation in which they lived, their twelve years of age represented much less than twelve years for children in a city.



“A desire to atone for the sins of mankind.”

The *modesty* of the girls in their manner of walking, of running, of looking, of conducting

27. The girls had been brought up and lived in an atmosphere of rough speech, sometimes very rough. Farmers and herdsmen are not noted for the decorum of their language. And Garabandal was not an exception. The girls had heard, since their infancy, a good number of words—including blasphemies—and some expressions had struck them.

themselves in general was a close following of the advice repeated by the Virgin that they '*Be modest*.' And they were not pleased when the people came with improper dress. I already mentioned the girl who did not want to be photographed with a lady because her dress was very low-cut. Nor did it please them that women smoked.⁽²⁸⁾



“Close following of the advice repeated by the Virgin that they *Be modest*”

PATIENCE — Having lived in the village, I saw right away that the patience of the girls had to be very great. The people, when they saw them, touched them — even to cutting off locks of their hair. They gave them rosaries, medals, marriage rings to give the Virgin to kiss. They requested kissed objects; they sought to take photographs. I never saw the girls angry. When they were worn out by such an avalanche of people, who even followed them into their homes, they limited themselves many times to keeping quiet and smiling.

One time I asked them, *Why don't you get angry?* They answered, *The Virgin has told us that we should be modest and answer what*

28. It is not said that smoking is exactly a sin; smoking by women was not pleasing to the girls favored by the Virgin.



“The girls demonstrated a special predilection for priests and religious.”

they ask us if we can.

However, they showed anger against those who had at times prevented the visions by their songs, dances, and drinking parties.

ENVY — In spite of this being a defect so feminine and so frequent, I did not observe the least trace of it in the children with regard to their visions. Some had more visions than others; however, those that were outside of the vision did not envy those who appeared more favored, and they limited themselves to asking those in the vision to speak to the Virgin so that she would soon come back to appear to them. And I noted a charming suppleness and humility in their desire.⁽²⁹⁾

ATTITUDE TOWARD PRIESTS — In the beginning of the events the girls demonstrated a special predilection for priests and religious. Frequently

29. Father Andreu's observation applies to the time that his report begins; we will see later on that there is something more to be said about this matter.

they counted those who had come, observing their habits. And in their trances they always spoke about them with the Vision. If they were asked, *Whom do you want to come the most?* They always responded, *Priests.*

Speaking about obedience, which the Virgin inculcated in a special way, they mentioned that they owed it to their parents and to priests.

Several times the children said in the state of trance that there were priests when none could be seen — since they had come dressed as civilians — and that there were a greater number of them than there appeared to be.

One case among many: A small group of priests was about to leave. Father Valentín remained alone with a sizeable number of lay people. The children went into ecstasy in the church and mentioned that there were two priests there: Father Valentín and another. On hearing this, Father Valentín began looking around him to discover a possible companion; but in vain. A little later a man approached

him, and after greeting him, declared himself a priest who had come dressed as a civilian in order to come on a motorcycle.

all men *had come to her own*. But not all comprehended or wished to receive her.⁽³¹⁾



Fr. Valentín with a priest who visited the village.

Another case: One day several priests in civilian dress were walking about San Sebastián. During the ecstasies they heard that the girls were speaking of their presence; and then, for fear of being publicly discovered, they hurried to leave.»⁽³⁰⁾

It appears unquestionable to anyone observing these things with an open mind that an extraordinary mother and teacher was journeying in that summer of 1961 to the village of Garabandal and mingling with its people. Almost no one understood what was going on; but the affair was there before everyone's eyes: an ensemble of things whose true dimension and significance still remained a mystery, but with a series of effects and incidents that indicated their origin. **By their fruits you shall know them**, Jesus has said, and by what could be seen in many people from the village, in numerous pilgrims, and above all in the children, there were good reasons to believe what the children were saying: that the Virgin had come and was walking through the village. Yes, the Mother of God and of

30. The inhabitants of San Sebastián de Garabandal can certainly recall a great quantity of information—that added onto Father Andreu's—leaves a well-illustrated history of these summer days of 1961.

"To His Own . . ." The Official Stance: *Negative*

We have seen how the parish priest, Father Valentín Marichalar, from the very first days had proposed to go as soon as possible to the diocesan capital in order to inform the bishop about everything that was happening.

It cannot be verified on what date he completed this project; although it was obviously before the middle of the month of July, since during the last half of that memorable month a group of persons from the mountain capital of Santander were already acting as if they were the Commission named by the bishop to study the *Garabandal Affair*.⁽³²⁾

According to our information, this group consisted of three priests as experts in ecclesiastical

31. I am not accusing anyone of bad faith; if someone has this, only God knows. What I mean is that without having bad faith, one can lack a certain *good disposition*, necessary for accordance with the Lord above.

32. It appears that this Commission was organized more by the initiative of the Reverend Father Francisco Odriozola than by the will of the diocesan bishop. In the beginning the Commission had taken the matter of Garabandal as of little importance, not worthy of giving it official attention and hoping that this *fever* or hysteria would soon pass.

Furthermore, this bothersome affair was coming at the wrong time, while Bishop Doroteo Fernández was entrenching himself in the diocese, since he sought to remain in Santander as the Diocesan Bishop. He avoided this annoying difficulty until the time came when Father Francisco Odriozola convinced the bishop about the necessity of dealing with the affair. It appears that His Eminence, Bishop Fernández told Father Odriozola to choose some competent people and to proceed . . .

With regard to the Commission, its methods of action, its foundation, the reason for its position, etc., a profound study would be required. However, the actual Bishop of Santander in 1970, Bishop José María Cirarda set down insuperable difficulties for this by saying *«The affair is already well studied and judged.»* Time will tell.

disciplines and two laymen as experts in medical science. The priests were Juan Antonia del Val,⁽³³⁾ Francisco Odriozola,⁽³⁴⁾ and José María Sáiz,⁽³⁵⁾ the latter being the best theologian of them all according to the opinion of numerous priests from the Santander area. The canon of Tarragona, Father Julio Porro, also listed Agapito Amieva, the Provisor of the bishop of Santander as a member of the Commission; but this cannot be proven. The medical men were Doctor Morales, a well-known psychiatrist and Doctor Piñal, an anesthesiologist; both lived and worked in the Santander capital.⁽³⁶⁾

In order that the reader might have a better point of reference about the bishop's Commission — and even though this will in part go ahead of our story — I would like to insert here some information that has come my way. On the 8th of May, 1968, the same year of the tragic death of Puchol Montís (the bishop who declared a *No* against Garabandal that appeared definitive), two reputable priests signed a *confidential report* destined to the cardinals, archbishops and bishops of the French language. These two priests were the parish priest Alfred Combe (a Frenchman of the District of Ródano) and Father José Laffineur (a Belgian who had settled in France and who was to die on November 28th, 1970).

The fourth part of this report deals with

33. José María Cirarda became bishop of Santander in the summer of 1968. A short while later he named Juan Antonio del Val Gallo as Vicar General of the diocese. Bishop del Val did not remain long in this position since several months later he was designated auxiliary bishop of Seville, with residence in Jerez de la Frontera. Cirarda and del Val were classmates in the University of Comillas (Santander). Finally in December of 1971, del Val was named Bishop of Santander. Six bishops in this diocese in less than eleven years!

34. It was already mentioned that this was a priest of the city of Santander, a Professor and a Canon.

35. Also Professor and Canon at Santander. He died suddenly on October 22, 1964, while celebrating Holy Mass in the chapel of the Slaves of the Sacred Heart in Santander.

36. From his father Mariano, Doctor Luis Morales had inherited a psychiatric clinic, well-known in Santander. Doctor José Luis Piñal Ruiz Huidobro then was working as an anesthesiologist, although it appears that he had also worked during a short time with a psychiatrist named Aldama. Recently a letter from another doctor from Santander, Doctor Celestino Ortiz, informed me that a third doctor was a member of the Commission: Doctor Peláez; but it seems that this Doctor Peláez de Valladolid, rather than being a member of the Commission, was an expert that the Commission used at times. Anyhow he was in Garabandal on the night of August 22nd as will be mentioned later.

Garabandal and Canon Law with affirmations such as these:

The Commission has never been a tribunal, nor has it ever acted or judged as an ecclesiastic tribunal according to regulations. For example, it has never required an oath from those who were summoned and interrogated.

This Commission was composed of two laymen and three priests. The laymen were a psychiatrist (Morales) and an anesthesiologist (Piñal), which does not constitute, it is noted, a great amount of expertise.

And in what concerns the priests of the Commission, one of them, the abbot (Odriozola) rapidly led the others into the dark, acting as if to him alone belonged all the functions: secretary, counsel, arbitrator, judge, etc . . .

This priest wished to obtain for himself evidence of the reality of the apparitions, although in this regard evidence could only be given to the visionaries; others would have to satisfy themselves with motives of credibility.

On top of all this, this priest, and likewise the doctors mentioned, have not gone to see the facts on location except in rare instances; and then they conducted themselves, according to witnesses, with a lack of seriousness.

As if seeking to gather only arguments unfavorable to the cause of Garabandal, they have avoided interrogating the visionaries themselves, their families, the irreproachable witnesses that they knew were favorable to the apparitions.

Here we are before extremely serious accusations. It is no pleasure to have these things come to me for they are saying these things against persons whom I esteem. But we urge everyone to clarify the matter once and for all; we have the right to know the truth about what has happened at Garabandal. If the Commission's way of acting has been so clear, objective, and conformed to truth as the Santander chancery would have us believe, and their negative pronouncements so well founded as they say, then let us see the evidence so as to finally disperse the clouds of suspicions, doubts, and comments that disturb everybody so much.

Christians of today, so mature as it is said, are

not satisfied with simple official declarations.

* * *

Now let us return to the starting point, and continue our discussion of the members of the Commission and the days when they started their activity.

The Apostolic Administrator, Doroteo Fernández, must have had a very high opinion of them since in his first note about Garabandal that appeared in the *Official Bulletin of the Diocese*, dated August 26th, 1961, the Monsignor states, «*We have named a Commission composed of persons of well-known prudence and doctrine in order that they can inform us with a complete guarantee of objectivity and competence about these happenings.*»

We are going to see their first activities. But before this, let us consider the situation.

And to do this, we will return to Conchita's diary.

Two months before the message (which was in October, as will be seen) they took me to Santander by means of a priest named Father Luis.

She refers to Father Luis González López, who years before had been a parish priest first at Garabandal, then at Celis in the same diocese of Rio Nansa, and finally had ended up at the parish of Our Lady of Consolation in the capital of Santander. Father López had connections with San Sebastián de Garabandal not only because of his years as a priest there, but also by family ties, since he was related to Conchita's mother through marriage between mutual relatives.

But why was it planned to bring Conchita to Santander?

They wanted to take me to Santander, because they said it was I who was influencing the others.

The Commission would have to think this and so would everyone else. Father López, who had been present at some of the events, and Father Valentín Marichalar saw the usefulness of making tests. Conchita's mother was not overly concerned since everyone had complete trust in Father López as a priest, and it was right in his house that the child would rest during her stay in the capital.



“They said it was I who was influencing the others.”

Everyone was very concerned about what was happening in the village, and the concern was increasing each day. Those who felt themselves responsible, while rejecting any possibility of bad faith on the children, had to ask frequently where this affair was going to end; and if there might be any means that might be taken to clarify what was happening so as to guide themselves in the right way. Could it be that Conchita, who was showing herself as the strongest personality and the leader, was influencing the rest of the group?

And furthermore was she not also staying in the surroundings created by the events? It appeared advisable to make a test, and take her away from those surroundings.

The initiative must have come from the Commission, and Father López would be the perfect intermediary . . . (37)

But Aniceta did not take to all these things. For

37. A reliable priest, Father José Ramón García de la Riva later informed me about this, writing «**the voyage to Santander was a trick of the Commission (Father Odriozola) on Father Valentín and Aniceta. He assured them that it was solely a visit with the bishop. But it was already arranged with Father Luis to hold the girl in the capitol, well away from the atmosphere of the apparitions.**»

the first time the daughter over whom she watched so carefully was going to be taken away from her side, and her maternal instinct sensed certain risks. Because of this she wished to have some assurance from above.

The night before going to Santander,⁽³⁸⁾ there were many people (in the village) and among them a priest with a white habit.

And it surprised me very much that he came with a habit of this color. I had never seen anything like it.

On that day my mother had told me to ask the Virgin if she should let me go to Santander, and I told her that I would ask her.⁽³⁹⁾

In Sánchez-Ventura's book *Apparitions are Not a Myth*, Chapter VI, more details are given about what Conchita is starting to narrate. These details are given by an *eyewitness* who fills in from his observation the things the girl remembers from her personal experience.

It was July 26th, 1961.⁽⁴⁰⁾ In the morning the girls already had a vision, and then announced another for the afternoon. *Before the day is over*, they said.

Some six hundred persons had assembled in the

38. That is, on July 26. There is something strange and unsolved from the previous day, July 25, a big day in Spain because it is the celebration of the feast of its patron, St. James the Apostle. «On that day»—said Juan Alvarez Seco—«I had stationed a pair of guards in the calleja, and another pair in front of Conchita's house. The four visionaries were playing in a field near by; it was a beautiful afternoon and the sky was completely clear of clouds. Suddenly, toward 6:30, a very black cloud gathered on top of Peña Sagra, and from it a striking ray of lightening shot out from on high to below. The girls fell on their knees extremely frightened. The thunder which followed shook us all. But they remained then with a look of ecstasy, gazing toward above . . . I remember that I had to calm down the shouting of Mari Cruz's mother. All remained several minutes in silence. Then there was someone who told me later, very seriously, although without giving it more importance, that he had seen on top of the cloud, one or two figures that looked like the Holy Father.»

39. Aniceta's question shows that, in spite of the doubts and fears that assailed her at times, deep down she was almost sure that her daughter was not inventing this or pretending.

40. I am almost sure that this is the date and not the 27th, as Sánchez-Ventura writes in his book.

village; among them six priests and a Dominican Father from the labor college in Córdoba.

It was 6:00 in the evening when the four of us had already received two calls.

A father had brought us a box of caramels; his name was Alfonso Cobián.⁽⁴¹⁾

He had given them to the four of us.

And when we were eating them, the third call came.

And we dropped the caramels on the road.

How we would have liked to eat them!⁽⁴²⁾ But we liked more, much more, to see the Virgin.

And besides the third call is a thing that takes us, and we don't know how.

We were going to the place called the Cuadro; but we did not have time to get there, and she appeared to us before we arrived there.



“The third call is a thing that takes us, and we don't know how.”

It was approximately eight o'clock in the evening, still daylight during the days of July. The girls began running toward the calleja; but before they were able to get inside the wooden barriers, they plunged on their knees, two in front and two behind. Conchita held her head upwards in an

41. Pastor of Ribadesella (Asturias), as already has been mentioned.

42. There is a significant revelation in Conchita's exclamation. Almost all young girls have good appetites, and we would expect this would be stimulated in those poor girls from the village, so little accustomed to fine things. *Grace does not destroy nature.*



Conchita in ecstatic fall

extreme position most of the time; the other three looked in front of them with their eyes firmly fixed up above. Mari Cruz was crying. The expressions on their faces were very gentle. At times they smiled, and at other times they laughed freely.

Then at the same time they all took the medals and rosaries that they wore around their necks in order to give them to the vision to kiss. One of them said, *This is from a man who told me you should kiss it very hard.*

Jacinta started one of those oscillatory movements which were to become, sometime later, one of the most striking phenomena in Garabandal—the *ecstatic falls*.⁽⁴³⁾ There are some very interesting

photographs of these falls — especially with regard to Loli and Conchita. Mari Cruz, while in the trance, extended her arm to support Jacinta who had just fallen halfway to the ground.

Conchita said to Mari Loli, *Cross my arms right, you have crossed them backwards.*⁽⁴⁴⁾ (It can be recalled, as already has been mentioned, that during the ecstasies only the girls were able to easily move one another; to all other persons their arms and legs had such a rigidity that it was almost impossible to budge them. A similar thing occurred with their weight and the effect of gravity. They could lift each other up with the greatest ease; while two strong men could barely manage to move one of them.)

43. The *falls* which are mentioned here, should not be confused with the falls of the girls on their knees in the beginning of the ecstasies or in the middle of an ecstatic march. These *falls* we are describing were a swaying of the girl in ecstasy, gradually increasing more and more until she was as though lying on the ground. They occurred rather often at Garabandal, and always the girls' *falls* drew attention by the decorum and the grace of their faces. The spectators could not but be brought to admiration and respect.

44. It seems to me more acceptable, because it is more understandable, what Father Valentín wrote in his notes:

«Conchita was rigid, and with her arms held out forward, and Loli said to her,

—*Put your arms down lower.*

—*You put them down,* Conchita answered.

And Loli lowered one arm. Then I attempted to lower the other; but it was completely rigid. Following this, Loli lowered it.»

During the whole vision — an hour at least — Mari Cruz was kneeling on top of a sharp stone, about 2 inches wide, without showing then or afterwards any sign of pain or discomfort.⁽⁴⁵⁾

In their conversation with the apparition they were heard to ask why she had not brought the Infant, and then they began to talk about some priests that were then present,⁽⁴⁶⁾ especially about the one who had most attracted their attention.

Since we wanted so much to know who was the priest who had come in the white habit,⁽⁴⁷⁾ we asked the Virgin.

And the Virgin said nothing; she only smiled.

But we insisted again, and after a long time she said, *He is a Dominican.*

And I said *a Dominicu?*

And she said *Yes.*

More of the conversation was heard. They told the Virgin that the parish priest had given them plums in the sacristy, that the pulpit of the church was about to fall down, that Father Valentín had scolded Conchita for wearing her hair loose⁽⁴⁸⁾ *like St. Michael*, that Conchita's mother was very dark-skinned and only had two teeth, that they had made a movie, and that they had never been to a movie theater, although they had passed in front of one in Torrelavega,⁽⁴⁹⁾ *That it was a house . . .*

And naturally Conchita did not forget her mother's request.

That same day I asked the Virgin if

45. See the conversation of Mari Cruz's mother on page 94.

46. «Where it concerned a priest, the girls always asked the apparition in a very special and intense way. It appeared that nothing concerned them more.» (Report of Father Andreu in the French publication of Conchita's Diary.)

47. In their dialogue, the girls did not talk to the Virgin only about the white habit of that Father, which they had never seen, but also of his «*shoes with holes*». (sandals)

48. At that time, Conchita had beautiful long tresses of hair, which ordinarily were tied in a braid. Soon we will see the fate of that long braid.

49. The most important city in the province after the capital, known not only for its industry, but also for its cattle fairs. The girls would have been expected to have traveled there since the people from the west side of the Montaña did their business more at Torrelavega than at Santander which was much farther away.

**she would let me go to Santander.
And she didn't forbid me.**

This is very expressive: **She didn't forbid me.** Not a definite approval, not even a warm one. On the part of the Virgin, this must have been like a shrugging of her shoulders, allowing Conchita to go — without forbidding her.

At the conclusion the closest spectators heard the girls say:

An hour already? . . . That has gone past! . . . A half minute . . . An hour and a quarter? . . . No, half a minute . . . But it is as you say since you don't lie . . . Oh! An hour and twenty minutes.

The spectators could determine by their watches the exactness of the time that was mentioned. The girls threw kisses in the air and opened and closed their hands with the gestures of waving good-bye. Abruptly, as sudden as turning off the electricity in a light bulb, the four girls lowered their gaze and heads at the same time, and returned to an absolutely normal expression. *Let us go say the rosary*, they said. And thus ended an eventful day in the extraordinary history of Garabandal.

We do not know if Conchita slept well that night.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Since the Virgin had not opposed it, Aniceta decided definitely on the trip to Santander; they would go on the following day. Her daughter had to be experiencing disturbing feelings; that place was far removed from the ordinary run of her daily life. She was going to finally know the beautiful and important city that she had heard so much about; she was going to see things she had never seen. There some men were waiting who did not know what to make of her, and she could not imagine how they would treat her or what they could do to her. What she vaguely understood about the reason for the trip did not ease her mind.

They wanted to take me to Santander, because they said that I was the one who was influencing the others.

As dawn broke on July 27th, Aniceta quickly

50. On July 28th Father Valentín wrote down, «Conchita set out for Santander, in compliance with the bishop. She said that she wanted to stay, but if they took her, she would go peacefully.»



Conchita washing laundry with mother in isolated village environment

finished the most pressing household duties and packed the things that she had to take with her. Then she departed with her daughter at an early hour, wishing to find the streets of the village deserted so that it would not be necessary to make explanations.⁽⁵¹⁾

With the arrival of Conchita at Santander, the marvels of Garabandal would be extended to the capital, at the time basking in summertime frivolity. One of its streets, one of the most traditional and typical of them all,⁽⁵²⁾ would witness something that it had never before witnessed.

The first day that I went (to Santander),

51. The travelers left the town about 12:30 in the afternoon, walking to get on a bus in Cossío for Polaciones-Pesués.

In Pesués, a station of the Cantabrian railroad (a route joining Santander with Asturias), Father Luís González, who accompanied them, bought three first class tickets. And they boarded the train leaving for Oviedo that would bring them to Santander early in the afternoon.

52. Called Calle Alta (*High Street*) because of its location, and which has been immortalized by some pages of Santander literature. It is one of the few streets remaining from ancient Santander after the terrible fire of February 16th, 1941.

I had an apparition near the church of Our Lady of Consolation.

And there were many people there; so many people were there that the armed police (*Policia Armada*)⁽⁵³⁾ had to intervene.

That day they made various tests on

53. There are two police forces that maintain order in Spain: the Civil Guard (green uniforms) and the *Policia Armada* (gray uniforms); the latter is in charge of the capitals in the provinces and the larger cities.

We know that this ecstasy of Conchita was *very beautiful*; on her knees and with her head thrust very much backwards. Those that could view it were amazed. To end this spectacle on a public street, several men, taking her up by the arms and legs, brought her to the parish rectory.

This ecstasy occurred at nine on the evening of her arrival— the same hour on which the others at Garabandal had an apparition at the Pines.

A little after that hour, Aniceta, with her long experience with the nights at Garabandal, became anxious that something might happen to her girl. Father Luis calmed her down, assuring her that there in Santander nothing would happen, that she should not worry thus about Conchita. When Conchita came to herself — the girl having been in ecstasy —she was surrounded by curious people in front of the gates of the church!



"The first day that I went, I had an apparition."

me.

And when the apparition was finished, they took me to an office for a priest and a medical doctor to question me.

The priest was named Fr. Francisco Odriozola and the doctor was Dr. Piñal.

We can imagine the commotion that developed in the street's heavy traffic when the people saw such an unusual spectacle: a young girl bowed down on her knees, completely transfigured and absorbed in something that was happening above her, and at her side a poor peasant woman, nervous and upset, not knowing what to do. The gathering of the crowd and the shouting caused, as Conchita mentions, the intervention of the police whose station was right on the street.

There must have been all kinds of comments. Many people who had heard of Garabandal were finding to their amazement that one of its famous visionaries was in the middle of the street. Others who did not know anything about Garabandal or did not believe, felt indignation or pity toward the pair of village peasants who seemed to be either

performers in a comedy or else victims of a tragedy.

Among the first to discover what was happening were the priests from the parish church, among whom was Father Luis González López — then a coadjutor, later a parish priest — who had arranged the girl's trip and assumed responsibility for watching over her. Immediately Father Odriozola and Dr. Piñal were notified. As soon as the ecstasy was over, Conchita found herself before them in an office of the parish rectory.

They told me: that since I had done these things . . . that I was crazy . . . that I was deceiving people this way . . .

We do not know if the members of the Commission spoke this way for simple tactics, or whether their minds were completely closed to the possibility that this could come from a higher cause. There are reasons — that will come out later — to think that it was the latter reason.

I do not know why this brings bad memories of a certain style of investigation and interrogation that has been employed extensively for important trials down through the centuries. ⁽⁵⁴⁾

After the interrogation and the insults came other things more amusing.

And he said to me, *Straighten up. Look at my nose. I am going to hypnotize you.*

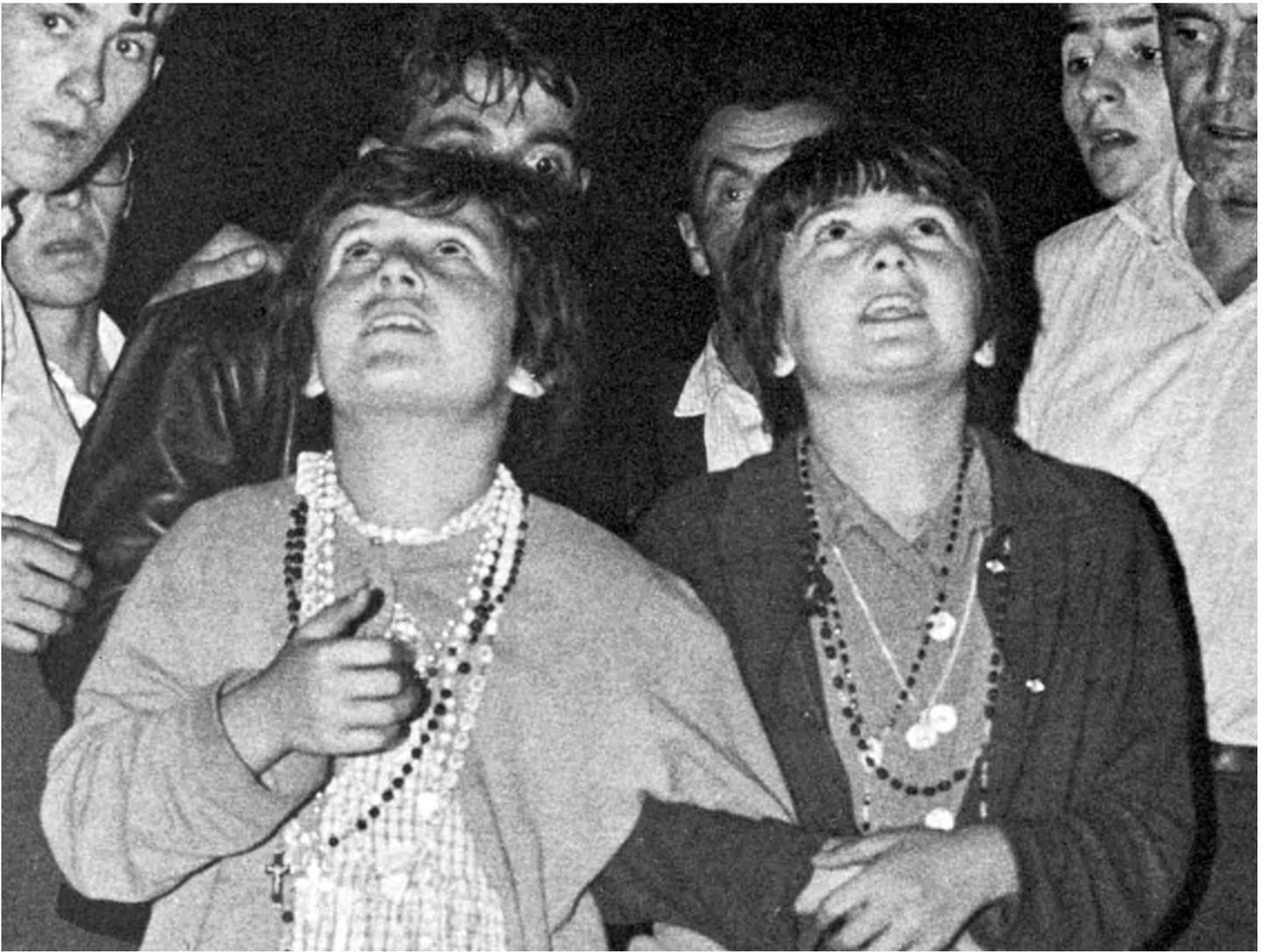
And when he told me, *Look at my nose, I laughed.*

And he said to me, *Don't you laugh. This is not a laughing matter!*

And that day they didn't do anything more to me.

We do not know at which time this first session of Conchita's treatment ended, but it must have taken place on the evening that she arrived.

54. This is a manner of investigation used very much in the past; a style that seeks to condemn. Questions are asked not to clarify the situation in search of the truth, but rather to find a base or justification for a negative opinion. It is assumed that whoever is judged is in the wrong; and cannot be in the right, since opposed to the ideas, the preferences and the interests of those who do the questioning and make the judgments.



The girls in Garabandal saw the Virgin at the same time that Conchita was seeing her in Santander

But how Father Odriozola and Dr. Piñal would have been surprised if they had known that while they were questioning and insulting Conchita in the church rectory at Santander, the people in Garabandal were completely aware of what was happening on Alta Street! And not by means of a telephone.

While Conchita's ecstasy was taking place, the other three girls still in the village had an apparition at the Pines; and during it the Virgin told them that Conchita was also seeing her at the same time. The girls told this then to the people, and the chief of the Civil Guard⁽⁵⁵⁾ was able to determine soon

55. On July 27th, the Chief of Police, Juan Alvarez Seco was in Santander, unaware of Conchita's trip. Before setting out, he assigned guards to observe carefully what happened that day in Garabandal in order to give him a report later. On returning in the afternoon, he called the two who had been on guard, and from them received the information that «at 1 o'clock in the afternoon, the angel had appeared to Mari

afterwards — by a telephone call from Puente Nansa — the complete exactness of his information. For the Virgin had informed the girls at the Pines in Garabandal about what had happened at the same time ninety kilometers away. Father Valentín Marichalar, the parish priest, is one of the reliable witnesses who can guarantee the truth of this fact.

Cruz, Jacinta, and María Dolores . . . that they had said that they were not very happy because that day, when the Virgin appeared, Conchita was not coming there to see her . . . and then the angel assured them that *Conchita was also seeing the Virgin, at the same time in which they were seeing her in Garabandal.*»

Juan Alvarez Seco quickly verified by an official telephone call to Officer Crescencio from headquarters in Santander, the truth of what the guards had informed him. The amazement had to be mutual . . . Someone reported that when the officer in Santander began saying *Listen, do you know what this girl Conchita has done here?* the officer in Puente Nansa answered, *Yes, I already know.*

—But who could have told you this?

—*The Virgin!*

The next day they took me to the doctors⁽⁵⁶⁾ to see if I was ill.

They took me to one whose name was Morales and several others.

And they all told me that I was well, and that these apparitions were a dream.

And they said that I should stay there in Santander to amuse myself, so that I could forget everything, and not go back to have more apparitions.

As can be seen, the Commission began immediately to observe and study the case of Conchita with close attention. But no matter how carefully they examined the constitution and psychology of the young girl, they could not find anything on which they could base a diagnosis of illness or abnormality. But they had to say something since they would not admit that the things that were happening were unexplainable. And also they had to do something. They said that things like these were unreal: fantasies, dreams, hallucinations. And they did do something: they made a plan of treatment. *Conchita would remain in Santander and be exposed to an environment that would distract her so that soon those strange ideas would leave her head.*

The attitude and the words of the consulting doctors impressed themselves on Aniceta's mind.

56. The visits to the doctors must have lasted several days. On one of these days, the cutting of Conchita's braid took place. This is an interesting episode.

The Commission decided on this haircutting apparently for two reasons:

1. In order that the girl would not be easily recognized in the streets of Santander, since many persons had already gone up to Garabandal, and many others were familiar with the photographs of the visionaries.

2. To eliminate a possible cause of these unusual phenomena. It is hard to believe this last reason, but I have heard it and read about it several times. And here is the straightforward testimony of Father Julio Porro Cardeñoso, a Canon of Tarragona, one of the best-informed persons on the Garabandal events, in his manuscript *The mystery of Garabandal in Catholic Theology*: «Members of the Commission had aired their views that Conchita's braid was the origin of a mysterious fluid that held her companions in control.»

It appears more believable what Father José Ramón García de la Riva wrote me, after gathering information in the village, «They took her to a beauty shop. The beautician noticed something unusual in the braid, namely that it was difficult to cut. From this, they said the hair had an unusual force over the other girls.» The second edition of the story of Samson; and in this life surprises never end.

Then my mother, as she was so convinced that there was nothing wrong (with me) because everything that the doctors told her, left me (in Santander) and went away.



The supernatural things happening to her only daughter caused Aniceta many worries.

The treatment to cure Conchita was very appropriate.

Some nieces and sisters of Father Odriozola came every day to pick me up at the house in order to go to the beach and the fairs, which up to then I had never seen.⁽⁵⁷⁾

57. In treating Conchita by way of *distractions*, not only did the sister and nieces of Father Odriozola collaborate, but also Antonina González López, the sister of Father Luis.

I am sure that those women acted with good will, persuaded that they were doing a good work. However, I do not accept so easily the good faith of those charged with *curing* Conchita. One of the methods of *treatment* was to take the girl away from the practice of religion. Aniceta, who remained some days with Conchita in Santander, was worried and irritated in seeing that not even on one day—perhaps not even on Sunday—was the young girl given an opportunity to assist at Mass.

We can imagine the dazzling and disturbing effect of **which up to then I had never seen**, or even imagined and would cause in the young girl reared in the poverty of a secluded mountain village, at the beginning of adolescence, with her sensibilities stirred up after being suddenly uprooted from her native rural surroundings, so simple and austere. She had to be enticed by the resorts and beaches crowded with lounging, pleasure-seeking, semi-nude bathers, by the booths at the fair⁽⁵⁸⁾ and the shows, entertainments and novelties never seen in the mountain villages. A diocesan priest informed me in a letter that they even took Conchita to a fortune teller's booth.

How could the young girl from Garabandal not be overwhelmed when suddenly plunged in such pleasurable dissipation? Being hurled like this into so many and such unaccustomed experiences, it would have required a miracle to maintain her spirit serene and pure so as to be capable of receiving influences from on high. And it seems that a miracle did not come.

And neither did the apparitions . . .

If from this the Commission drew its conclusion that what the child had undergone before was not showing any guarantee of proceeding from God, this shows the measure, the poor measure, of their size as experts in mystical and spiritual theology.

The actions of God do not ordinarily come about with an easy plan that crushes all resistance; nor do the designs of God unfold independently of human correspondence and cooperation. Even God's grandest plans can fail if on the part of the recipients there is an obstinate lack of attention, openness or docility. **Who has ears to hear, let him hear.**

And since I went every day to the beach, the Virgin did not appear to me.⁽⁵⁹⁾

58. Santander had to be exceptionally wild on those days since, apart from the summertime in full activity, at that time the *fairs of St. James* were being held. The feast of St. James, a holy day of obligation in Spain, falls on the 25th of July.

59. This does not mean that going to the beach is a sin in itself. It means only that such an atmosphere, frequently so full of sensuality and stimulation, poses a serious obstacle to a special *communication with a supernatural world*.

With respect to Conchita, it appears that the selection of a bathing suit was not carried to the extreme of decency.

Father Ramón Andreu wrote in the first edition of his notes:

«The girl mentioned to me that in Santander they showed her photographs and had her experience other things, without doubt a form of *testing* . . . The purpose of this seemed to be to remove her from the environment in which she had lived and which thus influenced her visions. Without my asking her especially about that period of her life, she told me in front of some other people, *The Virgin stated that she had not come to see me more because I was going to the beach. But now I have confessed.*»

Far Away From There . . .

While this learned and inspired treatment was being carried out in Santander to cure Conchita of her visionary disease, far away in Garabandal the events continued their mysterious march.

On the day after the girl's departure,⁽⁶⁰⁾ three priests from the city of León came to the celebrated village: Fr. Manuel Antón, Fr. Victor López, and Fr. Geminiano García. The first was a parish priest from San Claudio (a modern church situated in the best section of León); the two others were well-known for their teaching activities. The three had spent several days on vacation in the town of Barro on the beautiful coast of Llanes; there they received news of what was happening nearby and decided to go see what was going on.

They drove to Cossío and from there walked up to Garabandal. About a half hour past noon they arrived at the village and asking around, found the house of Ceferino. Father Manuel Antón, who told me these things, remembered perfectly that Ceferino was not home but at the billiard grounds, playing with other men the game of bolos of which they are such fans in the mountain villages. His wife, Julia, was cooking. Father Manuel had

60. Father Manuel Antón, the person who informed me of this, thought that it was on the 28th of July, although he was not certain. With the notes from Father Valentín in front of me, I believe it had to be Sunday, July 30th.



"I was going to the beach. But now I have confessed."

decided to inform himself thoroughly about what was happening there. Knowing that Ceferino's little girl Mari Loli was experiencing these things *very frequently*, he sought by all possible means to speak alone with her. He asked her father to permit her to come; but Ceferino, who was beginning to get annoyed by the questions, requests, and boldness of many visitors, neither paid him any attention nor stopped his game of bolos.

But Father Manuel did not give up his endeavor, letting it be known — without revealing his identity — that he was an important priest who had come with a mission, and had reasons and strong ones to accomplish it. Finally Ceferino arrived and permitted the interview with Loli.

It took place in a room of the old rustic house while the others ate on the tables in the café. Facing Loli, who was very diminutive for her age, Father Manuel tried to win her confidence by conducting himself with authority, as one who had a duty to perform. And he told her that she should explain everything, especially the beginning and how the thing had started, since he was there on behalf of someone very important and later would have to make a report.⁽⁶¹⁾

The girl, thinking herself in front of an authority who had come to submit her to an interrogation, answered the questions and gave all the explanations requested, especially with regard to the beginning of the affair on the evening of June 18th. Father Manuel, who did not know of Conchita's diary and actually hardly knew of Garabandal more than that it existed, told me what Loli had said about the beginning. I can certify that it coincides substantially with the version that Conchita has given in her diary and which I have followed in this history. There were only little differences of detail as occur with any event when there are several witnesses who give their version.

But what most impressed Father Manuel while listening to Loli was her appearance of absolute sincerity; this showed through in her eyes and resonated in her words.

Obviously in the beginning of all this there was

61. Father Manuel told me that he had tried very hard to learn accurately how the *events* had begun, since in these matters it is only necessary to see their origin to be able to judge whether they are a fraud or really come from something external and unknown.

no preparation or previous planning of any kind. The children found themselves suddenly with something about which they could never even have dreamed, and which left them in such total bewilderment that they sought shelter first against the walls of the church and then in its interior.

All this was a positive sign of great value for Father Manuel.

Loli came in her recitation to the apparitions of the Virgin. They had talked with her about many things; some of these they could tell the people, but others they could not for: *It was still a secret.*

Then Father Manuel interrupted her. *You must tell me everything, for I have the right to know. I am an important person.*

The girl stiffened in her resistance. *I cannot, I cannot. The Virgin has said not to tell these things to anyone until the day comes.*

But Father Manuel ultimately weakened her resistance with these words: *I tell you that I have the authority to ask you, and it is the WILL OF GOD that you tell me everything. So obey.*

Then the girl became nervous, and striving very hard, started to respond to what had been commanded.

«But this was astounding» — Father Manuel told me — «I was not able to understand one single sentence. And it was not that she spoke in a low voice, or that she purposely tried to speak in an unintelligible way; it was that the strangest phenomenon resulted in her speech. Up to this point she had been talking completely normal and I understood her perfectly; but at the time she wanted to tell me the secret, it was as if her lips and her tongue did not respond to her will; there was no more than stuttering and a garble of sounds that seemed to strike against each other. I could see how she was trying hard to make herself understood; but I couldn't understand a word. It was just as if suddenly she had begun to speak the most strange and unknown language.

You see? She said to me at the end with her usual clear speech. You see? The Virgin doesn't want me to tell these things.»



“The strangest phenomenon resulted in her speech.”



Grandmother's house with balcony

That day there were many people in the village, waiting for the apparition which had been announced for the evening at an undetermined hour. Time passed, which in waiting always seems longer, and with each hour that passed, more and more people became impatient. Two of the girls — Loli and Jacinta — were in the house of Loli's grandmother, playing on the second floor that has a balcony facing the plaza;⁽⁶²⁾ from there they could be seen by visitors.

The time came when impatience from waiting began to show itself and Ceferino, urged on by someone or other, went up to where the girls were to see what was going on. He was with them inside, and after a little while they were seen going out on the balcony in ecstasy. There they stayed for a while. Their attitude, gestures and movements

62. This balcony extends the whole length of the front of the building and is always facing as much as possible the noonday sun. It is used by the members of the house to get some air or sun, to view the street and the fields, and to hang farm products to dry or cure.

were really admirable (as we know they always were during the ecstasies), but Father Manuel told me that some took a certain attitude of skepticism and distrust, because the coincidence of the going up of Ceferino and the starting of the ecstasy appeared suspicious to them.⁽⁶³⁾

The best came later. already at dusk there had been a rosary in the church, overflowing with people. The two girls in their normal state were kneeling up front on a step facing the altar, so as to lead the rosary from there as they had been asked. Father Manuel managed to find a place close to them and in front of them — with the altar at his back — in order that no detail would escape him. He found a place for Father Victor López beside the girls. The rosary was being recited as usual when suddenly toward the second mystery a trembling developed in the girls, and with the typical sudden movement that many were familiar with, they became totally transported, with their heads facing upwards. Father Manuel could observe them at will, and certified that they were truly extraordinary.

Since they continued to lead the rosary while in ecstasy, he was able to make tests with regard to their insensibility, immobility, loss of normal ocular reflexes, etc. The most interesting test was this. He saw that the children did not count the Ave Marías, either by the rosary or with their fingers.

63. The same person told me that this did not make a good impression on him. And that was the first thing that he saw. Although this was a negative sign for him, he said «**Later I obtained many proofs of a completely opposite type.**»

I do not think it is hard to find a good explanation for this coincidence of Ceferino going upstairs and the commencement of the ecstasy, considering what has been said.

He gave Father Victor the task of precisely counting the number of those they recited to see if the Gloria came exactly at the end of each decade. Meanwhile he did everything possible to confuse them; at various times during the mysteries, he would lean toward them and shout in their ears, *Gloria! Gloria! Say the Gloria, since there are already ten Ave Marías!*

«The efforts were ineffective» — he told me — «They said all the Glorias at the right time, without a single mistake.

All this, together with Loli's confessions, left me very thoughtful. And I left Garabandal convinced there was something happening there, something that would be very difficult to explain with purely human and natural elements.»

* * *

As we see, the absence of Conchita, who was **influencing the others** toward all these strange things, caused neither a shutting off nor an eclipse in the phenomena of Garabandal. On the contrary, it seems during the days of her absence that they took on a new measure of frequency and importance. If all the marvelous history of those days could be written down minutely, it would easily fill hundreds and hundreds of pages. We hope that the innumerable anti-Garabandal barriers that now so obstruct our work will soon be knocked down so the task of making a more extensive and accurate documentation can be undertaken.

In the days that I was at Santander there were in the village two Jesuit priests: Father Ramón María Andreu and Father Luis María Andreu.

They had come like many people without believing anything; and one of those days . . .

These names are already known to us since I have already mentioned things ahead of this day. It was in the final days of July 1961, on July 29th to be exact, that two religious brothers entered on the scene. These two religious brothers had an important part to play in the action and the history of Garabandal. Soon we will fix our attention on the second of them. We will leave this to the coming chapter, in order not to extend too much the recounting of what occurred on that illustrious day of July 29th. It will suffice here to summarize what was happening at Garabandal during the time that

the Commission at Santander was thinking it had found the solution for this affair with its treatment to *cure* Conchita.⁽⁶⁴⁾

On July 30th the girls were persisting in their petition to the Virgin that she give a real proof in order that all might believe. «*That she would make night into day.*»

When they said this it was already night; but not to the girls who were immersed in total light. On another occasion they said, «*Even though it be only a very small miracle, like our flying.*»

Father Royo Marín who was present there exclaimed, *To call flying a very small miracle, what those girls must be seeing!*

«*The Virgin became serious*⁽⁶⁵⁾ *when we asked for a miracle*», they said later.

That day Mari Cruz had one of her ecstasies alone in the house of her grandmother. «*Why do you come here, where nobody sees us?*» Undeniably she and her companions wished that all these things might radiate out toward others so that they would believe and take advantage of them.

On July 31st the people could see for the first time the way the girls traveled graciously on their knees during the ecstasies. The apparition drew away and its power of attraction made them advance without changing their posture and without getting up off the ground. On the same day there occurred in Loli the first *oscillations*: a movement or balancing of the body as if it were to fall, but without causing a fall.

On August 1st, Tuesday⁽⁶⁶⁾ there were ecstasies

64. I took this information from Sánchez-Ventura's book on Garabandal.

65. We cannot completely understand the reasons for the seriousness on the part of the apparition; but some of it is explainable. Garabandal was living a daily *miracle*: the young children neither exhausted nor shaken by such a profusion of trances, the astounding reality itself of such trances, the personal and certain *signs* that happened every day for someone or another. And the people continued to ask with an attitude of hard resistance or with a disordered thirst for marvels, that they be given a spectacular sign so that they could be certain and convinced!

66. From Father Valentín's notes of July: «**They said that on Tuesday at the Pines . . .**» On these dates, Mari Cruz almost always had an apparition apart from the others, very frequently on the rustic balcony of her home.



“Holy Mary, Mother of God, *and Our Mother*”

near the Pines at three different times: 10:45 a.m., 12:15 p.m. and 5:40 p.m.

During one of these, at noon, the hour of the Angelus, the girls were heard clearly to pray the Ave María with a charming modification and addition: “Holy Mary, Mother of God, *and our Mother*, pray for us.”⁽⁶⁷⁾ This seemed acceptable to the Virgin; but she indicated that they should not employ this formula ordinarily as it was not authorized by the church.⁽⁶⁸⁾

67. Right here is one of the most significant moments at Garabandal.

It cannot be doubted (all the time we are made more aware) that the essence of the Garabandal events was precisely this: that we would live fully the reality that the Virgin Mother of God is also truly our Mother.

The girls, who were experiencing this daily in a supernatural way, came to express what they felt with that spontaneous addition to the great Marian prayer.

68. Although the reason for the Virgin's recommendation can be understood, it can also be understood that this does not prevent us from praying privately as the girls did.

On August 3rd, the *ecstatic falls* occurred for the first time as has already been mentioned.

It was certainly on this date that the parish priest from León, Father Manuel Antón went up for the second time to Garabandal. I say certainly, although he does not remember precisely, since it coincides with the arrival of a well-known political figure. Sánchez-Ventura writes that on August 3rd there was in the location of the apparitions *an official from Madrid*, from which I draw the conclusion that it was on this day that Father Manuel was in Garabandal for the second time. And this time he was alone. One of his two priestly companions, Father Victor López, had preferred to travel on that day to Santander to learn the opinion of the Apostolic Administrator, Doroteo Fernández.

On that August 3rd, Tuesday, Conchita's stay in Santander concluded, and so closed one more chapter in the history of the *events*, a chapter that has to be considered as a bad scene in the mystery of Garabandal.

A Sinister Design Unfolds

At the end of eight days, a man intervened to take me (to the village) and my mother went to find me and have me come.

His name is Emilio del Valle Egocheaga. I will remember him all my life.

Actually it was Emilio del Valle⁽⁶⁹⁾ who intervened to repatriate her who could be considered in some respects as kidnapped in Santander⁽⁷⁰⁾ — although, as it appears, kidnapped much to her liking.

While in Puente Nansa Mr. Emilio had arranged for the taxi driver Fidelín Gómez to bring Aniceta and her sister Maximina to Santander.

When they showed themselves at the house of Father Luis González everyone was surprised by the unexpected visit.

—*We have come to get you*, the two women said to Conchita and the reaction was vivid.

—*No, no!* Conchita's eyes moistened. It was seen that things were going well there; and that the vacation, so novel for her, had conquered her.⁽⁷¹⁾

69. A man from León, very well-known in that city and province, a businessman with interests in the coal mines of Santa Lucía (León) where one of Conchita's brothers worked for a time.

Later Conchita stayed at León with this man's family.

70. All the expenses of the trip were paid by Mr. Emilio since at the time Aniceta had some financial problems. In order to be *more presentable* on the journey to Santander, she had to borrow one of Maximina's coats.

71. For those who cannot understand this, for those who are *let down*, who imagine that persons favored by God are immediately changed into souls completely above and beyond all weakness or deficiency, I would like to reproduce here the writing of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, an *angelical* saint if there ever was one.

She was speaking of the pleasant voyage that her father had given her to recover after a serious and painful illness:

"Then I began to know the world. Everything was joy and happiness around me. For two weeks I found nothing but flowers on the path of life. The Book of Wisdom is right in saying

Father Luis and his sister Antonina reacted with evident opposition. They became very angry that they had come to get Conchita.

—*No, no, I don't want to go*, repeated Conchita; but almost immediately without further protest she went to collect her things.

Then Father Luis telephoned Doctor Piñal to tell him what was happening; the doctor answered that they should all come immediately to his home.

When they came there, the doctor employed all his repertoire of flattery, promises and threats to gain victory at the last moment.

I don't know how you can be so stupid, wanting to go back to the village. Here you would be a lucky girl. We would send you to a good college. You would be a señorita. All that is needed is for you to say that all that village affair isn't true, that you made it up yourself, that you were deceiving the people. If you persist in talking about apparitions, you will be disgraced. We will declare you crazy and lock you in a mad house. And your parents will go to jail.

To add force to his words, the eloquent doctor explained to the girl that this was not the first case, that there was another person who also said she had apparitions. She had been locked in an asylum for the insane.

The speech had its effect.⁽⁷²⁾ Conchita trembling, with her eyes wide and with tears in them, ended up saying, *Do you know what I say? Perhaps for myself it isn't certain. But perhaps for the others, it is.*

Then Father Luis the pastor stood up very pleased and gave the girl a few paternal taps on the shoulder while saying, *Good, good, Conchita! Good, good, good.*

Doctor Piñal immediately took advantage of the situation:

—*Do you want to sign what you have just said?*

that **the wandering of desire overturns the innocent mind.** (4:12) I admit that this life attracted me." (*Story of a Soul, Chapter 4*)

72. Who would expect anything else? The simple village girl was before an important man from the magnificent city of Santander, so different from her Garabandal; a man who spoke with authority, who had the power to accomplish everything he said. What incalculable consequences would result for her and her friends from the attitude that she then adopted.

—*Very well*, said Conchita and wrote her name on the paper that was put before her. *Should I put down my last name too?*

—*Yes, that would be better.*

Maximina González, who would not hesitate to swear the truth of what has just happened—and she is well aware of it, since she was present—would not go so far, however, as to affirm under oath that the paper on which Conchita signed her name was *en blanco*.⁽⁷³⁾ But she is almost sure of it. Aniceta affirms this without any hesitation. And she thinks she recalls, although on this she is not so sure, that the signature of the girl was in red ink.



Maximina, to whom we owe this report of what happened at Santander, thinks Conchita signed a blank paper.

The thing went well with regard to the wishes of the Commission, or at least of one of the commissioners. The Doctor Piñal—in a better mood—said to Conchita:

—*Good, now that the thing is all settled, now that we know that all this is not true, tell us the message.*

73. What an important document with what they would later write on this paper! One of the decisive proofs against Garabandal that are kept in the Archives of the Commission!

—*No, I am not able to tell that.*

They insisted with very forceful dialogue. The young girl finally found an escape.

—*The fact of the matter is that although I would like to, I am not able to tell it to you, because I can't tell what I no longer remember.*

The interview was very long; only the major parts are related here. From the house of Doctor Piñal they went to the bishop.

At the entrance Reverend Odriozola was waiting for them. First he took photographs of the girl next to the car; and then instructed them on how they should act in front of the bishop: to genuflect on one knee, to kiss the pastoral ring, etc.

Once they were in the palace, the moment arrived when a priest came to meet them. Odriozola said to Conchita:

—*Do you know who this priest is?*

—*The Bishop.*

That was who he actually was. After the greetings and introductions he ordered them to be seated; he adjusted his insignia and began the conversation, or rather the interrogation.

It seems that it did not last very long. In it was a special question:

—*You, what do you prefer? To be a señorita, or to remain a shepherdess?*

—*To be a señorita.*⁽⁷⁴⁾

74. Here is something that shows the meaning of that answer from Conchita's tongue:

On returning to Garabandal, she was talking one day with Father Andreu who had heard something of what had happened in Santander. «**In questioning her**»—recounted the priest —«**Whether it pleased the Virgin that she would be a señorita, she answered:**

—*And why shouldn't it please the Virgin that I learn?*

—*And how are you going to learn?*

—*Well, like the others!*

—*I don't understand this very well. What does it mean to you to be a señorita?*

—*To go to school.»*



“To be a señorita . . .



... or to remain a shepherdess?"

They talked about this and the Apostolic Administrator and Father Odriozola exchanged words and plans so that Conchita might study and receive a suitable education. Aniceta and Maximina left the palace happy and began the return voyage to the village, secure about the future. A good future! And her little girl was now out of danger. It would not take them long to find out their error.

The episodes of the last day at Santander Conchita summarizes in her diary like this:

On the day that they took me back to the village, I went to Doctor Piñal to tell him that I was going.

And he became very angry and said to me . . . well, many things . . . in order that I would not go.

And I told him that I was not seeing the Virgin; but that the others were, it seemed to me.

And that the message seemed to me to be true.

And he told me to sign and I signed.

Afterwards he told me that I should go talk to Bishop Doroteo,⁽⁷⁵⁾ and I talked to him.

They all acted very nice to me, after all this.

We now find ourselves before one of the most important and decisive moments in the remarkable events of Garabandal.

A Commission which calls itself *official* (and we do not doubt of its character, although no one has yet seen the episcopal document relative to its nomination and attributes) has begun to act before a difficult situation with a style and manner of procedure which has to be classified at the least as very exceptional, if not strange.

The members of this Commission had gone at times, although only a very few times, to the location of the events. But they did this with a secretive attitude, without showing their faces, with a certain attitude as if ashamed, without putting themselves in the best places for observation and examination, without every proceeding to seriously interrogate the

75. Bishop Doroteo Fernández was not bishop of Santander but Apostolic Administrator of the diocese, after the death of Bishop José Eguino Trecu.

visionaries and the most qualified witnesses. As an example of this, they have never asked the parish priest for his opinion; they must have considered anything that he could say as of very little value to them with their degrees and doctorates.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Many of those devoted to Garabandal have the impression that the Commission members, rather than bringing out into the open the possibility of the fact of an intervention from heaven, were searching for proofs against this possibility. They pried into everything that seemed to be a negative sign; and they approached in preference those who doubted or denied, looking for secretive and whispered testimony rather than open declarations. Because of this, the Commission's position was soon strongly *anti*. From this position they first proceeded with Conchita's sojourn in Santander and then with other things that will come out in this history. They have never occupied themselves in proceeding with a process according to the rules of authentic Canon Law.

The result of the experience at Santander, with the disappearance of Conchita's ecstasies and her ambiguous final denials, confirmed the Commission members in their attitude. In the future they would present these results as an argument that could not be rebutted, as an absolute judgment against Garabandal.⁽⁷⁷⁾

76. Nothing written here is set down lightly. In the succeeding chapters the proofs of this will become apparent. I wish, however, to point out comments found in the French book *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*, published with the imprimatur of the bishop of Bruges on October 19, 1966, concerning the fourth «nota» of the chancery at Santander, which we will see further on. «**The Commission, in four years, has never had the time to investigate in the required method, either the visionaries or the members of their families, or the parish priest. Inconceivable, the French say and all those who know the history of Lourdes and Fatima. Inconceivable, but unfortunately true.**»

The Commission was satisfied to send emissaries, some of whom we have known, as is known the harm that they caused in this little village, abandoned to itself in the middle of events that were infinitely beyond it. A particular name might be mentioned, and we would be forced to admit that the main activity of the man with that name was to be a betrayer and a spy to Garabandal.

77. It is easy to judge the worth of *denials* so obtained, resulting from such procedures.

And every unprejudiced person can see that such denials do not make a convincing argument against the truth of facts seen by hundreds of witnesses. All that can be concluded is that Conchita in that difficult hour did not exactly act like a heroine.

And as for her responsibility, God alone knows.

And has the Commission — or rather some of its members — always acted in good faith? With a holy and genuine desire to clarify these things with the light of God? I do not wish to doubt this; but there are certain matters . . . Fr. Julio Porro Cardeñoso, Canon of Tarragona, speaking about a letter from Conchita that did not get to the hands of Father Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal, bishop at the time, writes, "This will not be the first time that material on Garabandal has vanished. I could cite a definite fact which a member of the Commission had used for prevarication. Likewise, I could show the discordance of his statements with the most reliable

testimony of the parish priest, written down in his diary." (*The Mystery of Garabandal in Catholic Theology.*)

Incalculable consequences have resulted from the position and procedures of the Santander Commission. It might be asked what course would the mystery of Garabandal have followed if it had encountered official investigators who were more responsible and more unbiased.

Perhaps we will know some day. Perhaps we will never know.

"I told him that I was not seeing the Virgin; but that others were, it seemed to me. And that the message seemed to me to be true."

