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Summertime News

In his work entitled *The Spectator*, José Ortega y Gasset labeled the summer that inspired his work as *lazy*. The summer of 1961 at Garabandal could be labeled *singular* and *marvelous*. Singular, because never had its like been seen. Marvelous, because the remarkable events that happened every day were not everyday occurrences.

Some have already been mentioned; others cannot be written down; but it would be unpardonable not to mention the rest.

The Commission Doctors

Who they were and how they acted during Conchita's stay in Santander has already been stated. Following this, we know that during the summer of 1961 the distinguished Doctors Piñal and Morales condescended to go up to Garabandal for a few hours, to cast a supercilious gaze on the remarkable things that were occurring there.

Eye witnesses inform us that Dr. Morales was in the village on July 11th. The well-known and renowned psychiatrist from Santander interrogated the girls one after the other, and employed all his persuasive art to make them cease their *madness* of praying at the Calleja. In his efforts to convince, it is not known whether he resorted to the same arguments that Dr. Piñal had employed against Conchita: many promises, if she would give up once and for all this stupidity; and threats of dire consequences, if she continued with her incredible story.

Actually Dr. Morales believed he had fully succeeded in his plans, since the girls, after his indoctrination, finished with an attitude of admirable docility: *Sí, Señor, sí; we will do what you say.*

Following this, Dr. Morales, self-satisfied and sure of himself, aware of his importance and high position, went to the Calleja to put an end to this affair publicly; and facing numerous persons there waiting for the time of the ecstasy, he pontificated:

You are wasting your time. The girls will not come here today. This farce is ended. I, Dr. Morales, assure you of this. You can leave.

And turning around, he began to descend with the person who was accompanying him.

They had not gone far, when they heard a noise and were able to see the girls who were responding to the call of the Virgin in a swift run.

It could be seen that there was a force acting upon the girls which was not yielding to the desires or decisions of Dr. Morales.⁽¹⁾

Approximately on this date — I cannot give the date exactly — occurred the scene caught on a photograph taken at the beginning of the events: Dr. Piñal, at the side of Mari Loli in ecstasy, putting drops in her eyes . . . Why? According to the reports, he did this not so much to see the girl's reaction — an action which would have been justified, since that should have been his reason for being there: to observe and investigate — as to see if he could succeed in bringing her out of the trance, showing everyone by this that there was nothing genuine about the phenomena.

But the girl remained entirely absorbed in herself, completely oblivious to him, without the slightest blinking, without her senses noticing the drops with which Dr. Piñal was bothering her.

Obviously the ecstasies did not depend on human desires or designs. They began when some mysterious Being decided they would begin, and they ended when the same Being ended them. Just as Dr. Piñal was unsuccessful on this occasion in attempting to end the ecstasy, equally unsuccessful were other doctors on other occasions in attempting to bring them on. Man can do many things; but there are many more that are beyond his abilities. And it is wise to be able to recognize the difference.

The mentality of the Bishop's Commission cannot pass unnoticed by the reader. The few times that they *bothered* to go to the place of the events, they seemed to go mainly to search for means to put an end to these things, and to discover proofs that they

1. «On Tuesday, the 11th, Dr. Morales and Dr. Piñal came. I do not know the professional opinion of these doctors; what I do know is that Dr. Morales said that on Tuesday nothing would happen, since if the girls had been influenced, he would un-influence them . . .

When the girls went up to the Cuadro, he was in their path; the girls passed without paying attention to him, and then they were in ecstasy about 60 minutes.

On the following day, they commented: *Didn't the Carmelite say that we wouldn't see the Angel anymore? (Dr. Morales had said that he was a Carmelite.)*»

(Fr. Valentín's notes.)



Dr Ortiz checking Conchita's pulse during a rapture

could use for their negative attitude of rejection.⁽²⁾

But not all came with the same mentality.

The serious and impartial investigations, that those who had the duty did not want to make, were made by others who came with an open mind. In those days of August another doctor from Santander, who dedicated himself conscientiously to observing and studying the events, came up to Garabandal for the first time. His name was Celestino Ortiz Pérez; his specialty was pediatrics, in which he had earned a broad reputation.

2. Here is another example of their manner of acting. A reliable witness assured me of the accuracy of this confidential remark from Father Valentín:

«I went to Santander on the afternoon of August 15th. I was with the Commission and with Pajares, (Father Francisco Pajares, the old secretary of the bishop) whom I found clear-headed as always; not like Piñal, who appears to be super-endowed. He gave me some advice and since it seemed to me that he was going beyond his position, I answered that I would only do what the bishop told me. Then he spoke about the girls in terms that I didn't like, *That they lied, that when they put themselves in a trance, they put themselves like . . .*»

He compiled a meticulous and elaborate report, containing his observations from many visits to Garabandal between the 15th of August, 1961 and the 25th of November, 1962.

He carefully studied the personal and familial predispositions of the children, their conduct and attitude before and during the events, their character, their intellectual level, how they slept, their reflexes, the ecstatic phenomena. After gathering all this information in his investigation, he reviewed the possible natural explanations: hysteria, hypnotism, catalepsy, pediatric psychiatric diseases; and he came to these conclusions:

«1. The four girls, from the point of view of pediatric psychiatry, have always been and still are perfectly normal.

2. The ecstasies — in which we have seen these young girls so often — cannot be included in any of the categories of physiological or psychological pathology that are now known.

3. Considering the length of time that the

phenomena occurred, if they had any kind of pathological nature, its signs would have been easily discovered.

4. I cannot find any explanation either in normal or pathological pediatric psychology that could be held out as a natural explanation for these phenomena which, according to the knowledge that we have at our disposition, are beyond natural reality.»⁽³⁾

Unplanned Vigils

The *vigils*,⁽⁴⁾ so well-known to the early Christians and presently almost buried in ecclesiastical use, were to come back to life in Garabandal in a remarkable way.

And here they were very active, since the girls in ecstasy were not accustomed to remain for any length of time in one location, but went from one site to the next within the village and its surroundings.

Especially beautiful among these *vigils* was the one that preceded the Assumption of the Virgin

3. Many other competent doctors from Spain and foreign lands have had the same feeling as Dr. Ortiz Pérez. We remember Dr. Alexandro Gasca because he spoke out very openly. (Dr. Gasca, who later held an important post in the health department of Saragossa, was at the time of the apparitions the doctor for the Nestle factory in Santander and provincial medical inspector of the Department of Health.) Also there were Doctors Sanjuán and Puncernau (Barcelona), and Dr. Apostolides, the chief of staff of the Pediatrics Service in the Central Hospital of Troyes (France).

Also it is known that Dr. Jiménez Díaz (now departed), a professor emeritus of medicine at the Clínica de la Concepción (Madrid), in front of some colleagues and students who were joking one day about the phenomena of Garabandal on the 8th of October, 1961, expressed his opinion that the least that could be done in the face of such phenomena was to take them seriously, because they dealt with a serious matter . . .

With regard to the medical professionals, I have remembered many times the statement of Jacinta, the little girl from Fatima, during the days of her sickness and martyrdom in a Lisbon hospital, *The doctors don't succeed better and more often since they have little love for God.*

Certainly this can be said about others beside doctors, and it does not apply to all doctors.

4. *Vigils* consist in passing *while watching* the night or part of the night preceding some important Christian solemn feast, as a preparation for it. The faithful, gathered in a holy place, spend the time in watching, reading from the bible, religious instructions, hymns, prayers, etc . . .

—August 15th—during that year of grace in 1961. On the previous day, August 14th, Monday, Father Ramón María Andreu had come to the village, having buried his brother. In the afternoon, he spoke for a long time with the visionaries, and later was a witness of the ecstasy that we are describing, and which lasted from ten p.m. to midnight. A good time to go to bed! But neither the girls nor their followers had time to get into bed.

«At 2:45 in the morning» — as Father's notes read — «a new ecstatic march of the girls began, as a *vigil* for the Virgin . . .

It lasted until 5 a.m. Conchita, Loli, and Jacinta were involved, since Mari Cruz had not been called by the Virgin, and had gone to sleep.

The march began on leaving Conchita's house at 3 o'clock, with the girls showing signs of great joy and asking the Virgin to remain until six in the morning. Actually, it lasted almost two and a half hours. And all this time they were marching, except for the short periods when they stopped at the door of Mari Cruz' house and at the church.

The rhythm of the march was not very rapid; but it was consistent. They marched forward; only occasionally did they march backwards.

And the general tone of this whole trance was one of joy. With this joy they prayed the rosaries, they sang many of the Hail Marys, they smiled and laughed, they conversed.

It is very difficult to understand what they are saying, since they are walking. One time they were heard to say: *What a pleasure! But you must tell us where Mari Cruz' house is, since we don't see.*



It lasted almost two and a half hours
And all this time they were marching . . .



Then they began going back and forth to Mari Cruz' house, singing verses and other songs. Among the various verses sung by the girls, we were able to clearly hear this stanza:

*Get up, Mari Cruz,
since the good Virgin comes*

*with a bouquet of flowers
for her little girl.*

From the other poems, we were only able to hear phrases and loose words, such as,

Oh, Mari Cruz!, you don't get up,

*even when you are serenaded . . .
Gather up the lilies . . .*⁽⁵⁾

They also sang the Christmas hymn *Noche de paz*, and several *mañanitas*.⁽⁶⁾ Every time that they sang a verse, they laughed and said, *How fast we learned it!*

At one time, the three separated from one another, and a little later they returned to meet together in front of Mari Cruz' home. At a quarter after four, they finally said goodbye to her, *Till tomorrow!*

They went to the church; and asked the Virgin to continue like this *until six o'clock, until eight, until nine . . .*

Everything ended at 5:00 in the early morning.

They explained to me later, *We went as if in the air, as if flying down perhaps. Like in another world! It was like day, with the sun. (They had to be struck by the night that surrounded them on coming back to themselves.)*

When it was over, their pulses were normal and they were fresh, without perspiration; the rest of us were more than exhausted. They were not fatigued, in good humor, and hungry.»

The short resumé of this exceptional *vigil* brings up certain thoughts. «**The general tone was joy,**» Father Andreu tells us, and I ask myself, could it have been otherwise? Did not the nature of the feast that was about to be celebrated require this?

5. Another verse can be found in Chapter 5.

These verses and other similar ones were sung by the girls on several occasions. In a letter on February 6th, 1970, the pastor from Barro, Father José Ramón García de la Riva wrote me:

«**One day I was at Garabandal (He did not go there until August 22nd) and Loli and Jacinta had an ecstasy, chanting verses at the door of Mari Cruz, who was in bed on her mother's orders.**»

The feastday of the Assumption was uniquely distinguished with something extraordinary too. The same priest wrote me in that letter:

«**Actually something extraordinary always happened on the days that we can call Marian.**» (*Saturdays and feasts of the Virgin like the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Nativity of Mary, the Most Holy Name of Mary, etc.*)

6. Short musical compositions.

I think by *las Mañanitas* Fr. Ramon is referring to a Spanish song that starts:

*These are the mañanitas
sung by King David . . .*

The entire liturgy of the Assumption is a repeated invitation to joy for us, her children on the earth, as the Collect from the Mass of the vigil brings out:

We pray that we who enjoy her protection, may take part in the joyful celebration of her feast.

Not only to us, but to all creation should this celestial joy radiate. The first words of the Divine Office on this feast of the Virgin indicate this:

Mary has been taken up into heaven! The angels rejoice and with songs of praise, bless the Lord.

And there is a tremendous reason for this, since she who began without stain, has finished in glorious victory.

Undoubtedly what the girls were celebrating on the dark streets of Garabandal was only a poor imitation of the prayers of the angels and blessed in heaven in honor of God's greatest creation.

The girls and those accompanying them on foot at these untimely hours petitioned and praised God through Mary. They were performing a good deed both for themselves and for many other Christians then asleep, or engaged in worse things. They were uniting themselves mysteriously to consecrated souls in many monasteries and convents who in those same early hours were beginning a new day with the solemn prayer of Matens and Lauds of that feastday.⁽⁷⁾

The Matens and Lauds of the girls at Garabandal were very different, unplanned and unscheduled, and not according to a fixed liturgical rite. but does that mean that they were less efficacious for the glory of God and the welfare of the Church? Someday we will know.

The *vigil* of the Assumption was not the only one during those days. On the following Saturday, August 19th, the first Marian day following the feast, there was another one which was longer still, lasting almost the whole night, from Saturday until Sunday. Conchita mentions it in her diary like this:

7. Matens and Lauds are two important parts in the daily prayer of the Divine Office. Matens starts this prayer according to its own Latin designation *Ad Matutinum*, having as its proper time the early hours of the day—the early morning. Formerly in the ancient monasteries it was always recited at that time. Lauds then followed.



“She told us the same thing as on the previous day: *Recite the rosary.*”

As she had said, she came.

And she told us the same thing as on the previous day: *Recite the rosary.*

And we began the rosary.

And that night we went to the places where the Virgin had appeared to us at the beginning.

And after our ecstasy the people said that we had gone up to the Pines and that we had gone from pine to pine on our knees, praying . . .

And during that ecstasy, while we were seeing the Virgin, Mari Cruz, who had seen an apparition earlier, was in bed.

And we told the Virgin that she should tell us a song to sing to Mari Cruz.

We would compose some words and the Virgin would aid us with the others.

The songs were the following:

First she wrote the stanza already mentioned about the *Bouquet of Flowers*. Then follows:

*Mari Cruz, Mari Cruz!
How sad you make us!
Pray hard to the Virgin
So that she will return to you.*

*Mari Cruz, Mari Cruz!
Do you smell the lilies?
The Virgin has brought them for you,
So that you will be better.*

The Virgin stayed with us from nine at night until six in the morning.⁽⁸⁾

And that night we played *Los Tios*⁽⁹⁾ with the Virgin.

Two of us hid, and the other one searched for us.

8. After such *vigils* the girls should have been exhausted, worn out . . . But no! The testimony about this is unanimous, and has been repeated many times.

When the girls lost sleep because of the apparitions, they did not suffer from any fatigue, and were able to begin the new day as if nothing happened. Without the necessity of recuperating the hours missing from their rest.

Taking into account that some or much of this occurred on so many nights during many months, can we not speak of a *miracle*?

9. *Los tios* — similar to the game of *hide and seek*.

Another incredible surprise in the history of Garabandal! The Virgin joins in games with the young village girls.

This cannot be, many must exclaim. This is ridiculous, unbelievable, unacceptable. A good proof that neither the apparitions nor the ecstasies contain anything supernatural.

Well, I confess that I cannot understand the reason for such games; but there is nothing to stop me from accepting them if I have proof that they actually took place, and that the Virgin took part in them. Can I pretend to understand easily all the components of God's actions on the world and on souls? It is sufficient to have signs to indicate that these actions are from Him. And then I can be sure that all those things I do not understand obey a mysterious Divine Plan and occupy a place in the disposition of Providence.

My ways, says the Lord, are not your ways; and My thoughts are not your thoughts. (Isaiah 55 : 8)

Besides, have there not been other episodes of interplay from on high and mysterious games with men?

There is an inspired text dating back thousands of years that the Church continually places on the lips of the Virgin:

I was set up from eternity, and of old,
Before the earth was made . . .
When He prepared the heavens, I was present.
When with a certain law and compass, He enclosed the depths;
When He established the sky above,
And poised the fountains of waters;
When He encompassed the sea with its bounds,
and set a law to the waters
That they should not pass their limits;
When He balanced the foundations of the earth;
I was with Him forming all things;
And was delighted every day,
Playing before Him at all times,
Playing in the world;
And my delights were to be with the children of men.

(Proverbs 8: 23-31)

There are *games* that take place between God and the Mother of God and mankind. The important thing is to discover the hidden meaning of

these games. This is certain: if God and the Virgin *play*, it is not for entertainment alone. They seek always to communicate and instruct. Nevertheless, we do not understand everything, nor do we understand it immediately. The text of Scripture has its reason for stating, after having spoken of these mysterious games in the presence of God:

**Now therefore, children, hear me.
Blessed are they that keep my way.
Hear instruction and be wise.
And refuse it not.
Blessed is the man that hears me,
And that watches daily at my gates,
And waits at the post of my doors.
He that shall find Me, shall find life,
And shall have salvation from the Lord.
But he that shall sin against Me, shall hurt his own soul.
All that hate Me, love death.** (Proverbs 8: 32-36)

O Admirabile Commercium

There is a liturgical antiphon from the Christmas season that begins with these Latin words and speaks of the marvelous interchange or *commerce* established between God and mankind through the Word Incarnate. It seems that an extraordinary ramification of this commerce or interchange took place in Garabandal. It was as if through the Virgin (and sometimes through the Archangel St. Michael) direct conversation took part between heaven and earth.

Many examples of this have already been mentioned, but we will find many more occurring during the days in August that we are still recounting.

Wednesday, August 16th, liturgically the feast of St. Joachim, the father of the Blessed Virgin, and popularly the feast of St. Roche, was a day of direct communication between the departed Father Luis María Andreu and the girls. What Conchita wrote down briefly in her diary about this conversation has already been mentioned; but we have much more information at our disposal from the writings of Father Ramón.

He places the ecstasies of the girls at 11 o'clock in the morning, while Conchita speaks of these ecstasies occurring at **eight or nine at night**. Are two different ecstasies being described here or could it be that the girl, who wrote down these things many months later, was mistaken as to the time? ⁽¹⁰⁾ Father Andreu wrote down:

«I was going to say Mass; I had put on the amice when they called me: *Hurry, Father, hurry. The girls are coming in ecstasy.*»

Father put off the Mass until later and went to observe the phenomena. The girls made their way through the village for a while, and then they marched toward the church. Father must have been surprised that there were only three — Jacinta, Loli and Conchita — and he took advantage of the routes they were taking to enter into Mari Cruz' house to see what had happened. The girl told him, «*I am hurt that the Virgin hasn't called me.*» However, she joined Father and they went to the church looking for the three girls in ecstasy. They found them sprawled on the ground in a group of singular beauty.

Father took out his notebook and began to write down what he was able to hear of the mysterious dialogue:

«*Oh what a voice! I don't know that voice.*»

Up to this time the girls in their ecstasies were only accustomed to the voice of the Virgin, and to a lesser degree that of St. Michael.

«*Tell me. Who are you? She repeats this question anxiously, Oh you are Andreu!*»

Loli: *Yes it is your voice; but now it is softer . . . We want to see you. Why aren't we seeing you? Hold out your hand . . . Tell us what you saw at the Pines when you said "Miracle! Miracle! Miracle! Miracle!" On the branch of the center tree? . . . I will go see and pick a pine cone.*⁽¹¹⁾

10. I am inclined to think that these were two different ecstasies, since Mari Cruz is missing in the one that Father Andreu talks about. Furthermore, Conchita says this about her ecstasy: **The Virgin appeared to us smiling very much and said to the four . . .**

11. In this transcription of the conversation, the periods correspond to the pauses that the girls made, which were obviously due to their listening at the time to the person with whom they were speaking.

Undoubtedly the mysterious voice must have spoken of what he had seen and of the exact location where he saw it.

«*How happy you must be now!* ⁽¹²⁾ *We know the last words that you said: that it was the happiest day of your life. (A long silence took place, during which they seemed to listen carefully.) There is already a St. Luis. St. Luis Gonzaga. Oh! That's it. St. Luis Andreu . . . I thought that heaven was flat like the laundry when it is spread out.*»⁽¹³⁾

A remark like this could be expected from a child living in a mountain village who would associate daily living with the monotony and the everyday fatigue of her way of life, continually climbing up and down steep hills.

«*Do you cut your hair? Then you must have very long hair. Do you eat? Then you must be very thin!*⁽¹⁴⁾ *Oh, I understand!*»

(Questions concerning the mysterious state of the departed; the final exclamation shows that he gave them certain explanations with which they seem to have been satisfied.)

«*Your brother is here? . . . But he is saying Mass, since the bell has rung . . . He is with us? . . . Next to whom? . . . We will ask him later to see if that's right.*»

During the trances the girls did not see anything that was outside of the apparition. Because of this, they did not see Father Ramón, whom they thought was celebrating Mass at the time. While talking about him, they learned that he was there with them, and right next to one of them. When the ecstasy ended, the Father asked them which one was next to him, and the three answered together very happily, «Loli». They were well informed.

«Loli: *I found the rosary where the Virgin*

12. A clear allusion to the state of blessedness in which the souls of the just enter prior to the resurrection of the body.

13. The point of this comparison can be understood, taking into account that the laundry in the villages, especially the sheets, was laid out in the sun on top of the grass so it could dry and whiten better.

14. The girls at Garabandal with their lack of education could not imagine the life of the next world to be any different from this one.



The visionaries spoke in rapture to the dead priest.

told me, and I gave it to your brother . . . Yesterday (Feast of the Assumption) he said a high Mass, and he preached first to the men, then to the women, and then to the children, and he looked at us . . . Your brother said "Dominus Vobiscum" and I thought that it was Dominus Vobispum, as Fr. Valentin says . . . Oh! You! How well you say it! . . . Your brother has taught us a song.»

And Loli began to sing:

*«When I see myself with a headdress
and shoes without heels!
What goes on in the cloister . . .*

*Oh! How does it continue? . . . The part
about the heart?»*

The mysterious voice must have sung what the girl had forgotten, and she cried out in surprise:

«Oh! You know it too!

Everyone said that on the day you said the Mass here, that you said it very well. Your brother also says it very well.⁽¹⁵⁾

Conchita: We told a secret to your brother; First of all he said it was for the men, but then he told it to Carmen. I was so embarrassed!⁽¹⁶⁾

Your brother has told us that if you want to take him away, that you could take him away, as you . . .»

15. It is seen how important it is before God and man that all the functions of the priestly ministry have the greatest devotion and exactness.

16. This refers, according to Father Ramón, to the time he asked the girls what they would want him to give them. The girls, after much discussion about what they should ask for, indicated to him that they would like a sewing set very much . . . *«But no! No! Don't give us one, since they are very expensive. They cost at least 56 pesetas.»*

To give the girls their wish, Father Ramón mentioned the matter to Carmen Cavestany.

The mysterious voice must have explained to them that it was not like that.

«Ah! So that he can be with us . . . He's going to come three weeks as the pastor. Very good!

Tell us something for your brother . . . Come, repeat it, so that we don't forget . . . Now I'm going to repeat it to you . . . That he should make sacrifices, that he should make sacrifices.⁽¹⁷⁾

When will you return? . . . Monday? . . . Why not Thursday?⁽¹⁸⁾ . . . Until Monday is going to seem a year to us.»

This long conversation—of which we have only noted some items of special interest—was regarded by Father Royo Marín as a *wonder*. During it, the visionaries *fell* and got up three times. And they concluded everything by praying a Station to the Blessed Sacrament; three of the six Hail Marys were prayed by the girls in the normal fashion, and

17. After the ecstasies, the girls questioned Fr. Ramón — to whom they revealed his brother's message — about what it was to *«make sacrifices.»* He explained it to them, and then they replied candidly, *«Why should one do something one doesn't like?»*

This question should be asked also, although not so candidly, of today's *prophets of non-mortification* as a form or style of the *new spirituality* . . .

Garabandal insists, as something of extreme importance, upon the ascetic and penitential way of life . . . Probably because of this, it has so many enemies. But this is very clear: without the way of penance, it is not possible to live the Gospel.

18. This conversation took place on Wednesday, August 16th. Naturally—so as not to have to wait—the girls wanted to recommence the ecstasies on the next day, which was Thursday.

But apart from this, it becomes increasingly clear that Garabandal has shown a definite predilection for Thursday, certainly because among all the days of the week, this is the day dedicated to the Holy Eucharist.

In October of 1975 Jacinta confirmed for me the conversation between the girls and the departed Fr. Andreu.

They certainly spoke with him, although they did not see him; his voice was unmistakable.

«Days before talking with him, the Virgin told us that we would hear a voice; that we should not be afraid, and should follow it. I think that this referred to the dead Fr. Andreu . . . The strange voice that we heard days later, and which frightened us so much, called us by our names . . .»

Jacinta knows nothing about what Conchita has stated about the exhumation of Fr. Luis' remains on the day following the Miracle.

the other three according to the formula used by the Andreu brothers.⁽¹⁹⁾

A Voice Coming Down From the Mountains

Conchita's diary terminates her brief summary of the mysterious conversation on August 16th with the dead Father Andreu in these words:

On that day the Virgin told us that on the following day we would hear a voice.

But that we shouldn't be afraid, and that we should follow the voice.⁽²⁰⁾

This seems to indicate that something unusual is going to happen, something that is going to bring one more new element in this succession of singular phenomena.

On the next day and at the same time as on the previous day, (that is, at nightfall) the Most Holy Virgin appeared to the four of us.

And for several minutes she was smiling very much.

And she didn't say anything to us.



After a few minutes, darkness came upon us, and we heard a voice call us.

Then Mari Cruz said, Tell us who you are; if you don't, we will go home.

19. See Chapter V.

20. This announcement must have occurred during a brief conversation on August 15th, since the hearing of the voice in a trance occurred at nine or ten on the night of August 16th.



“She said to us, *Don't be afraid.*”

While we were hearing the voice, it was very dark.

And we didn't see the Virgin.

But afterwards she came.

And it became very light.

And she said to us, *Don't be afraid.*

And she spoke to us for awhile.

And that night was the first night that she kissed us, one by one.

And then she left. ⁽²¹⁾

This raises many questions. From where and from whom does the voice come? What is the reason for it? What purpose does it have? What relation exists between the voice and the Virgin's kisses to the frightened children? Is there some connection with the voice and the announcement made by Conchita on her return from Santander?

21. It is no surprise that the girl remembers the exact beginning of the marvelous gift Our Lady's kiss . . . After that time the spectators knew when the end of the ecstasy would take place — then the visionaries held their faces in an attitude of giving and receiving kisses, which customarily preceded or followed a slow and very pious sign of the cross.

I admit that I am not able to give any answers to these questions. Even today this voice remains one of the enigmas of Garabandal.

Because it caused fear in the girls and also because of the darkness that surrounded them, together with the disappearance of the Virgin from view, one might say that it was a voice of the evil one, the voice of the world of darkness, the powers of evil, rabidly furious before this *admirabile commercium* that was being established between the heavens and the earth. But the words of the Virgin that Conchita relates in her diary, ***that we should not be afraid, and that we should follow the voice,*** seem to rule out this interpretation. Could it be that the girl is somewhat confused and is not able to express clearly such an obscure matter? Someday—we hope—a clarification of this mystery will come forth.

But we do have something very clear and also very marvelous from that memorable day: the kisses of the Mother that the Apparition begins to lavish on her children.

That day was not the only one on which the strange voice was heard.

At that time a person, who was to soon become one of the best witnesses of what was taking place at Garabandal, came up to the village for the first time. Her name was María Herrero Garralda, daughter of the Marquese de Aledo, recently married to Enrique Gallardo Rodríguez-Acosta. Highly educated, good-hearted and deeply religious, she soon gained the confidence of the girls and meditated on the profound scope of the events.

For some time she was content to keep it to herself, revolving in her mind and piously pondering over what she had seen and heard. But later, when the anti-Garabandal storm began gathering due to the prelates at the Santander chancery, she wrote down in French for the Holy Office in Rome a memorandum of what she herself had witnessed. She did this on the advice of a Belgian priest, Father Laffineur, ⁽²²⁾ and to him she directed the prologue:

«I present this little work. Now that I reread it, it seems very poor, and the reason for this is that it is almost impossible to put in words the feelings of the soul.

I am only mentioning here some of the many—at least thirty—apparitions at which I participated at San Sebastián de Garabandal, beginning on the 17th of August, 1961. I will try to give an idea of those events, although it is impossible to express everything that I have seen and heard. I wish to start this work with something that Loli expressed to me on October 7th, 1962. *If it could be known how she loves us, we would have no other solution but to love her very much too.*

* * * * *

It was 2 o'clock in the afternoon when I came for the first time to San Sebastián de Garabandal. Accompanied by my sister I went into the bar or tavern belonging to Loli's father, Ceferino. The place was vacant since the *apparitions* ordinarily took place much later, toward nightfall. (I only know of two or three cases in which they occurred in the afternoon.)

We asked to eat, and Loli herself began serving

22. Died on Saturday, November 28th, 1970 in France, where he had lived and worked for many years. He was a main figure in the European Garabandal movement, signing many of his writings and letters with the pen name *Doctor Bonance*.



"If it could be known how she loves us, we would have no other solution but to love her very much too."

us. This had to be the first time that she did this since she asked me to tell her about the knife and fork. At the time the little children in those families ate from the utensils without using silverware.

We had just finished eating when Loli came running in from outside, very short of breath, and said to her father, *Papa, come right now since Jacinta is having an apparition.*

We all ran toward the little square in the center of the village. There under the bright hot sun was Jacinta, walking very slowly, with her big doll in her hand, her head turned backwards and that sublime expression on her face that cannot be described. Her family was following her in an attitude of great reverence. María, her mother, at one time wanted to take the doll from her hands; but Jacinta, absorbed in the vision, prevented her with a firm and brusque motion. Seconds later we saw the girl lift up her doll toward the vision, raising



“They heard that strange voice for the first time . . . a hiss or a roar that cries, *Come . . . Come . . . Come . . .*”

herself up as much as she could on the tips of her toes — aided by her two companions, Loli and Conchita, who held her up. Loli, who was as if overcome with joy on seeing her friend in a trance, took her by the arm and at that moment — with the rapidity of lightning — fell into ecstasy herself.

The two children, overwhelmed with joy, began to walk through the village, leaning against each other . . . It was then that I heard for the first time that laugh of Loli in ecstasy that has always had such an effect on me. It was a laugh of glory, full of joy; but at the same time, quiet, reverent, mystical. It had nothing in common with this world, nor did it have the feeling of light-hearted laughter; it was as if permeated with the things of heaven.

The two listened and responded to the vision with a speech full of mystery, hardly perceptible.

We were running behind them when, near to the house that now belongs to Mercedes Salisachs,

their expressions changed completely. And they began to shout out in a terrified voice, showing on their faces the greatest anxiety and fear. *Who are you? Tell us. Who are you?* They were like this for a few minutes that seemed interminable.

It was at that time that María, Jacinta's mother, told me confidentially, *Yesterday they heard that strange voice for the first time. And they were very afraid, even though the Virgin had warned them, saying that they shouldn't be afraid. It seems that the voice sounds from afar, as if it comes down from the mountains. It's like a hiss or a roar that cries, “Come . . . Come . . . Come . . .”*»

Once more I ask myself what might be the hidden meaning of that voice, so powerful and unsettling.

It would not be surprising if it were the devil trying to disturb the children. In the life of many saints there are abundant proofs of what he is capable of doing — with all types of sensible

means — to frighten and block the road of those who are on the right way toward God. However, I have already indicated what seems to oppose such an interpretation.

Could it then be understood that such a voice might be coming from the Most High? On a few occasions, Scripture has exalted the creative power and force of the voice of Yahveh, the Lord, especially in Psalm 28:

**The Voice of the Lord is in power;
The Voice of the Lord in magnificence.
The Voice of the Lord shatters the cedars . . .
The Voice of the Lord brings forth flames of fire.
The Voice of the Lord shakes the desert . . .**

But if the strange voice that came down from the mountains onto Garabandal proceeded from the Most High, why did it disturb the girls this way, without declaring who it was? Does it have a secret purpose which only later will be revealed?

In this case, perhaps we can attribute to this voice a certain apocalyptic ⁽²³⁾ sign, like the blast of trumpets in the 8th chapter of this unexplained book when the action of heaven will accelerate its pace and deploy itself against the power of the anti-Christ of this world and of the abyss. And still more could the voice be related to that triple *Woe, woe, woe*, which will be poured out upon a mankind so wrapped up in the things of the world.⁽²⁴⁾

Is Garabandal coming as a sign to call attention to the unforeseen things which must shortly come to pass? (Apocalypse 1: 1)

Back Again Close to the Mother

The witness María Herrero de Gallardo continues her description about what she saw on Thursday, August 17th, the first day of her stay in Garabandal:

«After several very rapid tours through the village—at times they changed directions so quickly that several times I bumped into them—the girls made their way toward the

church. There in front of the open door, they fell on their knees and prayed . . .

Then Jacinta laughed and said to the Vision that she didn't dare jump over the doorstep in order to go into the church. The Vision must have insisted. And then very smoothly, without any contraction of her body — just the way she was, with her hands joined on her chest and kneeling — she leaped⁽²⁵⁾ inside, hurdling over the obstacle of the doorsill to the amazement of all those present. She smiled at the Vision.

As if playing, the two girls made their way toward the altar; and there on the altar rail continued their celestial game, scandalizing some.»

All this was brought to the Bishop of Santander, from whence came the formal prohibition preventing the girls from entering the church in ecstasy; and for this reason, it was closed during the trances.

«I can testify that the beauty of their attitudes during this *play* was truly captivating. Later they fell down very slowly, very smoothly, in front of the tabernacle: Jacinta on one side with her dress covering her legs very properly, her hands crossed on her chest; Loli, similarly, but leaning her head against Jacinta's knees. During this episode, certainly very moving — there were priest witnesses who regarded it with great respect — they carried on a very long and intimate conversation. This could hardly be heard, but it gave me the impression of being like the conversation of children with their mother, whom they tell all about their affairs and what is happening.»

23. *Apocalypse* — Revelations — is the name of the last book of Sacred Scripture. It is extremely difficult to interpret. By means of figures, visions, and symbols, it gives the mysterious course of the work of Christ on earth and His final triumph in order to strengthen us for tribulation with the security that we are not alone, and that the Hand of God holds a firm grip on the progression of events.

24. **And I beheld, and heard the voice of an eagle flying through the midst of heaven, shouting: Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth: because of the remaining voices of the three angels who have yet to sound their trumpets.** (Apocalypse 8: 13)

St. Jerome's Latin vulgate gives these statements of the eagle like this, *Vae, vae, vae!*

25. The word *leaped* is used to describe the marvelous, instantaneous, inexplicable and very beautiful passage over the doorway that left the observers stunned with wonder.



“She contemplated the Holy Family.”

We know through this witness that the ecstasies did not end here, but that the girls then continued their unusual and mysterious *game* in the choir loft, frightening many of the spectators when they glided along the rails of the balcony and moved toward the edge in obvious risk of falling and killing themselves.

«Sometimes they gave the impression of being about to fly. They told me later that the Most Holy Virgin had told them then that they should follow her without fear, but they didn't dare. *If we'd have obeyed, we'd have flown.*

After a long time they set out, still in ecstasy, toward the village square. Next to the house of Fania they fell another time on the ground, lying full length. Loli was the first to get up and knelt down in prayer with a magnificent expression and gleaming eyes. She recited the *Salve Regina* in a touching way with tears streaming from her eyes.⁽²⁶⁾ And she was like this at the time that she contemplated the HOLY FAMILY as if in a picture.

26. Loli, truly transfigured, was on her knees like this for a

A priest at my side called my attention to the fact that the trance had already lasted two hours and 25 minutes. At this time a young couple came with a 3 year old girl, born without sight. With her eyes full of tears, the mother requested and requested again for a miracle from the Virgin. The girls in ecstasy joined in her petition. The silence during this scene was striking. Then suddenly the little blind girl burst out singing a charming song, full of happiness. Emotion overwhelmed us.⁽²⁷⁾

while imploring, «*Mercy.*» Then she recited an act of contrition with extraordinary fervor, and then a *Salve* as mentioned in the text.

27. This song of the three year old infant is full of meaning.

It was proof that the requests made for her were not made in vain. In place of the bodily sight that was asked, she received a more useful grace of interior enlightenment that unloosened her tongue with the mysterious inspiration to sing.

There is one thing that we have to hold for certain from the point of view of faith: we never have recourse to God without some benefit. If we do not receive exactly what we seek, and which sometimes is not the most appropriate, He compensates us in other ways, underestimated at the time, but which will show themselves more beneficial for us. After all, the here and now is not always the most important.

Finally Jacinta and Loli departed for Loli's house. And very swiftly, without our being able to follow, they went up the first floor where the apparition continued. A little later the window opened suddenly, and we saw the two girls leaning outside and calling out requests to the Vision not to leave, and requesting that she take them with her. The earnestness with which they petitioned her was striking. A little later they began to make gestures of goodbye with their hands, as if the Vision were withdrawing toward the horizon at the left of the Pines.»

Besides this interesting report, we have another report from the same witness which also relates to those summer days of August, and which once more shows us the girls in close intimacy with the Mother.

«In front of his house Ceferino told me to go up immediately to the Pines, since Mari Cruz had already been some time in ecstasy. On this day there was a group of *pilgrims* assembled up there around the girls, listening to Mari Cruz say to the Vision, *Ah! Then it is a Dominican Father who is here dressed as a civilian.* (This fact is certain since later in the evening the religious himself, about 30 years old, told me that he was very impressed since he had not revealed to anyone either his condition or his identity.)

When I arrived, Mari Cruz gave the Vision a large number of rosaries and medals to kiss—perhaps more than one hundred. At the same time she began a backward descent toward the village . . . It would have to be seen: sometimes slowing down her walk; at others, speeding up with extreme swiftness, barely touching the ground with her feet, and then only slightly.

Halfway down the path near the Cuadro, Loli and Jacinta, who were accompanying her, went into ecstasy too. And the three, holding hands, walked toward the church, which in those days still was not closed to the visionaries. Before going inside, they made several trips ⁽²⁸⁾ around it, counting out the Hail Marys of the rosary. The crowd around them had become very close together . . .

28. Many times procession-like marches occurred around the church. These marches show the importance of the sanctuary for meeting with God. And also they indicate the importance of religious practices that many would like to confine to oblivion as if they lacked meaning.

At that time, Conchita also went into ecstasy. The four joined arms, and in an incredible manner passed through the small door of the church courtyard. I say *incredible* since the door or gate was not sufficiently wide to permit the passage of the four side by side without either hitting or crushing the girls.

I was able to slip swiftly into the church, and there at my leisure I had the chance to be able to contemplate the stunning entrance into the sacred precinct of the four girls in ecstasy. They did this slowly, with a stiff and rhythmic step, like a military march, that resounded loudly in the silence and darkness of the holy place. They gave quite an impression of force, as Loli in passing barely grazed with her arm one of our friends of considerable size, and knocked her on the ground.⁽²⁹⁾ I think that all those who were there were seized with a salutary fear. As for me, I confess that I experienced a strong feeling of the fear of God and I was reminded of that part of Scripture that the Church applies to the Virgin, You are beautiful and full of charm, Daughter of Jerusalem, but you are also terrible as an army in battle array.» ⁽³⁰⁾

During these trances, in which the girls were taken up from the world around them to enter into amazing conversation with persons and realities from another hidden world, only certain external manifestations could be seen by the spectators. What was really happening in the internal part of those phenomena only the visionaries could tell about; and up to now, there is little that they have been able to say. This would be expected since the

29. It should be taken into account that Loli, during these days, was very diminutive for her age.

We have valuable testimony of the impression that the steps of the girls, rhythmic and strong, made in the silence of the night in the streets of Garabandal, drowning out the confused medley of footsteps made by those who followed while praying.

It should not be forgotten that the Virgin, so kind and charming, is also the *Virgo Potens* (Virgin Most Powerful) who battles the powers of evil and is capable of destroying, as the Church sings out in her liturgy, all the heresies that have ever been.

30. Related to this is an annotation made by Fr. Valentín for the 5th of August:

«At nine thirty at night, I was in front of the church gate. The children came, and I wanted to stop them. But I wasn't able. The force that they display during their marches is enormous; and though wanting to stop them, one can't, or it is extremely difficult.»

language that we use is made to express realities and experiences of this world, not of the world above.

Conchita has stated in her diary that in the trances on the days that are now being recounted, the Virgin took special attention to bring the girls, who were lacking human instruction, to a habit of praying with the greatest care and concentration.

She told them to pray the rosary just as on so many other occasions; but in order to instruct them practically on the way of doing this, she told them on Friday, the 18th of August, ***I am going to pray first, and you should follow me. And she***—states the girl—***prayed very slowly.*** The girls then repeated word by word what she said first, trying to copy her manner, tone and pronunciation. The exercise followed completely the usual way of praying the rosary; but, Conchita tells us, ***very slowly. And at the Salve she told us to sing, and we sang it.***

Attention should be given to this: ***She prayed very slowly.*** It is not important to do many things, but to do well the things that have to be done. The thing that matters is not the rapid recitation of many prayers, but rather always praying well during the time that is allotted. To give to each *deed*—especially to conversation with God—the time and attention that it deserves, has to be the style of the one called *Full of Grace*. It has been said that one cannot act fast and well at the same time. Always acting properly has been the characteristic of the Virgin's life; for this reason, her perfection is unique.

In the French edition of *Conchita's Diary* we read these lines from Fr. Ramón:

«**From the beginning Conchita always said that the Vision made them recite the rosary very often. Sometimes it was chanted, other times simply recited. Also the girls often said it during the ecstatic marches. Then they would be seen stopping at the doorsteps of the houses, or even entering and going upstairs—always in ecstasy—to a sick person's room.**»

There are tape recordings of the recitations of these prayers. The Hail Mary is said very slowly in a voice both intense and slightly trembling; the words are pronounced very distinctly. Likewise with the Our Father; *Hagase tu voluntad, (Your will be done)* is said with special emphasis.



“Conchita always said that the Vision made them recite the rosary very often.

As unusual background music in the tape recordings, underneath the voices of the girls is heard muffled sounds made by the footsteps of the people accompanying them during their mystical marches through the village.

Many observations could be made about what has just been described; but it would be better that these observations be made by each person himself. Certainly all these particular instructions and reprimands of the Blessed Mother should not be ignored, both for our own good and that of the Church.

* * * * *

On this 18th of August (exactly 2 months having passed since the beginning of the events), not only were salutary lessons given on how to pray well but heaven also presented to the onlookers unusual refrains of music, music not composed by man.

The wife of Dr. Ortiz remembers the day well, as it was the first on which she witnessed *something*.

After the apparent failure of the married couple's first trip (that day of the Assumption which seemed so indicated for a Marian demonstration), they probably would have waited before returning to Garabandal. However, the occasion came up of taking to the village some cousins of the doctor's wife who had come from Madrid with a tremendous desire to see what was happening in the publicized village. As Dr. Ortiz could not get away from his professional duties, his wife and some of her friends accompanied her cousins from Madrid.

On arriving in Garabandal, they took advantage of the remaining hours of daylight to wander through the quaint streets and alleys. And as it became dark they set out to witness the remarkable things that were happening there. Since it seemed dangerous and difficult to walk or run after the children in the dark night, they went to the church entrance to wait there, as they had heard that very frequently the trances began, or took place, or ended in that sacred place. Only Fernando, the brother of Mrs. Ortiz, on the recommendation of Fidelín, the taxi driver from Puente Nansa, decided to follow up close all the incidents of the phenomena that were taking place.

And the phenomena began. The only thing that came to those at the church were echoes, among them the cries from the children in the crowd, shouting out, *There they come! There they come!* This did not make a good impression. Mrs. Ortiz was reminded by this, not to her liking, of the running of the bulls in the fiestas at Pamplona.

Toward 10 o'clock in the evening, after a long and oppressive wait, there began to be heard in the courtyard of the church approaching footsteps—firm, rhythmical staccato. Mrs. Ortiz, her brother Pancho, and his daughter went out toward the street to see what it was, and they found a girl in ecstasy coming in their direction, followed by a small crowd.

The girl stopped suddenly at the side of a house in the little alley that leads up to the church, and stayed there several moments, gazing upwards, absorbed in the heavens. At the same time, Mrs. Ortiz, who was very near, was astounded by music like the warbling of many birds, but a marvelous warbling. She turned to her niece and said, *Don't you hear anything?*

The niece turned her ear toward the visionary,



Celestial music accompanied Jacinta.

since she had learned that the girls in ecstasy spoke with the Vision. She said to her aunt,

—*No, aunt, I don't hear anything. I only hear the singing of many birds, but very softly.*

—*That is what I hear myself!*

The visionary — later on they learned that it was Jacinta — went back again toward the village, without coming to the church, and at that moment all the singing stopped.

Mrs. Ortiz recounted:

«*On joining our group, we were able to hear some young boys who were walking over the little bridge that stood in front of the courtyard.*

—*Mother! Mother! Didn't you hear a lot of birds singing?*

—*Yes, we heard it too, some women replied.*

I asked my sister-in-law Maruja, who told me: I also heard it; it seemed like the flight of thousands of birds singing at the same time — and marvelously!

—*Did you notice that everything stopped when the girl left?*

—No. *It didn't occur to me to connect the birds with the presence of the girl.*

—Well, *it is evident to me that the one thing was due to the other.*»

While they were talking, Fernando, who had gone to see the ecstasies near at hand, came. And everyone naturally questioned him:

—«*Let us know, let us know. What did you see?*

—*I don't know how to explain it. I saw faces transformed with sensational sweetness . . .*

—*Didn't you hear a lot of birds singing?*

—*No, I didn't hear that . . . But really! What is this ridiculous thing you are asking me about? Birds never sing at night!*»

This remark left Doctor Ortiz's wife, who was not familiar with country life, completely bewildered . . . If birds never sing at night, then what was it that they had definitely heard? It could be said to her, *Look Señora, those birds that sing in Garabandal are not the same birds that pass the nights perched on the branches of trees.*

Besides, this was not the only time in which the most unusual and sweet songs of birds have accompanied the special communications of God with chosen souls. Anyone wanting to know more on this topic should investigate some of the pages from the life of St. Francis of Assisi, or read the chronicles of the ancient monastery of Leyre in the territory of Navarre and Aragón, which speaks of the holy abbot Virila.⁽³¹⁾

In Doctor Ortiz' family — because birds never sing at night, and in order not to be exposed to believing something ridiculous — it was decided for the moment not to speak about this. But later on when the family became sufficiently close with the girls and learned that Jacinta was the visionary on that night, they could not contain their desire of asking some explanation. The girl limited herself to smiling and saying evasively, «*My grandmother also said at times that she heard swallows . . .*»

31. The archives of the monastery have the name of this abbot listed as beginning in the year 928.

The "Commission" Intervenes

On August 22nd, Tuesday, the octave of the Assumption and then the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a young priest from Asturias made his way for the first time up the route that follows the Nansa and Vendul rivers to Garabandal; this priest will be forever closely linked with the village. From him we have a valuable book published: *Memorias de mis subidas a Garabandal (años de 1961, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, y 68)* "Recollections of My Trips to Garabandal from 1961-1968." His name was Father José Ramón García de la Riva, the parish priest of Our Lady of Sorrows in the village of Barro, in the archdiocese of Llanes of the archbishopric of Oviedo.



Father José Ramón put down his memoirs in writing with the sole intention of filling any possible gaps in the information obtained up to then as an aid to anyone taking on the important work of investigation.

After explaining in his introduction how he had attempted to make all his trips to Garabandal *licitly*, he begins to describe his first one:

«I was aroused by a conversation held with Father Manuel Antón, a parish priest from San Claudio in the city of León. This pastor was then spending some days in Barro (Llanes, Asturias). I had just come to this parish, and I did not have the slightest idea of the events that

were happening 57 kilometers away in the neighboring diocese of Santander. Those events had begun on the 18th of June, 1961, and I took possession of the parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Barro on August 10th.

In this conversation my curiosity was stirred up . . . »

The desire to know the truth about what was happening brought Father José Ramón to Garabandal on August 22nd, a day of great Marian significance, as we have already stated.

He came with his father on a motorcycle, and the first question that he asked in the village was about the time of the apparitions. *«At nightfall, after the rosary in the church; the girls are accustomed to go into ecstasy on leaving the church.»* This information caused a problem for the new arrivals since they both could not remain till such a late hour. They decided that the priest's father would go down from the village, and return home in a taxi that was there ready to leave with other persons who also could not wait.

Father José Ramón continues:

«I set out walking through the village with a priest from Burgos who had come from Lora. The streets and lanes were crooked and rocky. Little by little I became acquainted with the visionaries. The first, Loli, I came upon near to her home next to a jeep.» *(Her home was then at the entry to the Calleja.)* «Later I came upon Conchita and Mari Cruz who at the time were accustomed to walking together. I didn't see Jacinta until night — in ecstasy. The girls gave me the impression of being normal, playful, pleasant, lively; but rather timid . . . I took some pictures, which I still possess.

I was surprised on seeing them with rosaries, gifts, and medals hanging from their necks. Later I learned that these were carried in order to present them to the Vision to kiss during the ecstasy, and that they belonged to the numerous persons who came up to San Sebastián, brought there either by curiosity or faith. Then I also learned that in the beginning of the apparitions the girls had presented small stones to be kissed, which they picked up beforehand from the ground, and later gave to certain persons at the request of the Virgin. I didn't get to

see this, since at that time they were only presenting religious articles and marriage rings to be kissed.

At nightfall on the 22nd of August, I went to the church; it was simple and congenial . . . At



that time there was an altar rail that separated the sanctuary from the main body of the church. I took a place on the left, kneeling on the first step; and I made the following reflection, *If this is from God, the best part will surely be seen in the church.* And I told my feelings about this to a woman who questioned me concerning the location for the apparitions. I began to pray with devotion, and I implored the Lord to soon clarify the meaning of these events. It did not happen like this: the judgments of God are different from those of men — and have their way and hour for being realized.

On that day in Garabandal, I met five priests from Asturias, all belonging to the archdiocese of Llanes, and also a canon from the cathedral at Oviedo, besides other priests who were walking around the visionaries.

The holy rosary was recited, led by Fr. Ramón María Andreu, a Jesuit. I recall that before beginning he told us from the sanctuary that the events were very worthy of observation, and that there was a field of study here for theologians, mystics, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc. He didn't say in public that this was supernatural, as some have falsely attributed to him.»

After the recitation of the rosary, while the people were still leaving the church, the first phenomena were already taking place.

«Inside of the church, Mari Cruz fell forward

by the altar of the Immaculate Conception, and the other girls fell on top of Mari Cruz. I noticed with amazement that, though the girls had fallen violently on the ground, nevertheless their clothes remained in proper position, covering their knees. They were as if in a sculptured group, more to be seen and admired than to be described. At this time Father Andreu pointed out that Father Royo Marín, in his book on ascetics and mystics, spoke of human sculptural groups that the mystics sometimes form in their ecstasies.

Having seen this, and after the girls had left the church and were continuing their ecstasy in the village, I returned to the sanctuary and there gave my entire attention to speaking in prayer to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. My whole desire was to petition light from God for the bishop and for those charged with studying all this.

Several times the girls returned to the church and placed themselves next to me on the step of the sanctuary. All I had to do was turn my head slightly to one side, and I could see perfectly the complete display of the phenomena, mystical in appearance. In a low voice they prayed fervently in front of the tabernacle. All their comportment was of amazing beauty: head



tilted lightly backwards, their countenances shining—as if lit by an interior luminance that would have been dazzling, if it had not been tempered by an infinite softness.»

But on the night of August 22nd, 1961, the pastor from Barro was able to see first hand not only the unique spectacle of those girls swept out of themselves by the mysterious force; he was also able to take in with his eyes and ears the manner of action undertaken by those there with sacred obligations toward the young girls and their *affairs* . . .

«My whole desire»—the good priest tells us—
«was to petition light from God for the bishop and for those charged with studying all this.»

He did not know that on that day he would meet there, by an unusual coincidence, those so charged. And with dispositions hardly open to receive the Light of God, as we will see . . .

«The members of the diocesan Commission» (he was not then aware of their existence; he would learn about it later) «appeared soon after the rosary while the girls were walking in ecstasy through the village. And I would have to say that in my judgment the actions of the members of the Commission on that day were not deserving of applause.»

On one of the occasions when the girls had returned to the church, Dr. Piñal approached and from the entrance asked in a very loud voice which all those around the visionaries could hear:

—«*What? Is this comedy still going on?*

—*If there's a comedian here, it's you!* answered Dr. Ortiz from Santander, who at that time was carefully taking Conchita's pulse. *The sanctuary is not the appropriate place to talk this way, especially in public.*

The two doctors had not recognized each other; but it was only a matter of a few seconds.

Dr. Ortiz—*Oh! So it's you?*

Dr. Piñal—*I have to say something to you in the sacristy.*

Dr. Ortiz—*O.K. In the sacristy. You can say what you want.*»

Then they went into the sacristy and «there ended» according to what Father José Ramón says, «the investigation by the doctors of the Commission on that day; an investigation that ended before it began.»

But did the Commission priests act in the same way? Let us hear the witness:

«One of the priests of the Commission went up to the sanctuary and taking a position there, with his back to the Blessed Sacrament and his face toward the people, unhesitatingly made this comment in a loud voice, *I don't believe in this . . . whatever may happen.*»⁽³²⁾

It seems that here also ended the *theological* investigation made by the Commission on that night.

Now the Commission had brought along its *official* photographer. He stopped also at the sacristy, and there was next to the priest who would not believe «*whatever might happen*». Father José Ramón heard him say, «*I am not a professional photographer; however . . .*»

Since the photographer's camera was automatic, loaded with a roll of color film, and had a flash attachment, Father José Ramón indicated to him that it would be a shame to lose the valuable photographs that he could take of Jacinta and Loli, who were then kneeling on a step «*with a truly extraordinary grace and pose*». The answer of the photographer was disdainful and curt: that he had already taken the pictures that he had to take.

Coming to this point, we have to say that on that night the action of the Commission described by this eyewitness cannot be held up as a model for imitation.

They were not on the scene of the events at the hour of prayer. (Perhaps it might be said that this was due to the many things that they had to discuss; perhaps so that the devotion might not disturb their thinking). They only came later, as if to cast a glance and see how to take measures against those *obstinate* in continuing with this.

They did not consider it worthwhile to follow the visionaries closely in their trances so as to understand the thing from its foundations, not miss any pieces, and have complete background and information upon which to solidly base a judgment. Let others be bothered with those streets and trailways! Let others lose their sleep in long and pointless *vigils*!

32. The author of this not so *prudent* declaration was not Fr. Odriozola, who seemed to be almost always the megaphone for the Commission; we will not mention his name out of respect for him.

Let others waste their time stupidly following such bewildering phenomena. They, who were the important ones since they had the authority, did not have to follow the thing closely; they had already measured it from afar and knew what it was about. They had heard from the doctor, the priest, and the photographer . . . Case dismissed!

What was disturbing to them was that there were still those obstinate and ignorant people who were holding onto a different opinion from theirs.

Let us hear again from Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva:

«I remained in the church until 11 o'clock, in front of the Blessed Sacrament. I prayed, I reflected. I listened attentively from my place to all that I could hear, which wasn't difficult for everything was said in a loud voice, and nothing seemed to be secret.»⁽³³⁾

For example, I made out perfectly the following sentences, spoken by one of the two priests:

—*We'll close the church to this cult.*

—*We'll give the pastor Father Valentín a month's vacation. Since he seems to be so nervous now, he'll gladly take it.*

—*We'll order the Jesuit to leave.*

—*We'll forbid priests to come up to the village.*

—*And if this comes from God, it will make its own way.»*

Brilliant statement, that last one, from the mouths of theologians and priests. As if it were the style of God to impose His way on His human creatures, overcoming all the obstacles and breaking down all the barriers. Were they unaware that God wants to use man in all His acts of salvation? It is necessary to *prepare the way* with an attitude of sincerity and a mind open to His will—searching

33. Concerning the *debate* that took place on that night in the little sacristy before the Commission made its decision, we have this short reference from Dr. Ortiz:

«There, in the presence of the pastor Fr. Valentín Marichalar, Fr. Andreu S.J., and those that said they were the Commission, I tried to show them that they were mistaken in many of their opinions . . . And I had to finish by saying that I had not come there to waste my time arguing, that the first thing that had to be done was to observe the affair very closely.»

It was when they were alone that the Commission members delivered in the way that Fr. de la Riva described to us.



“If this comes from God, it will make its own way.”

docile, with a right intention, with prudence and devotion. God can open a way in spite of all obstacles from man, but He also abandons certain plans of mercy because of those same obstacles. In any case, unfortunate will those be who take a stance more to create difficulties than to seek in their hearts to understand.

It is no wonder that Fr. de la Riva, after describing what happened, says this:

«This is really some program of investigation and procedure by a Commission that finds itself before such serious events! Here comes, as at the praetorium of Pilate, a washing of hands . . . »

Meanwhile, the bishop, relying on the good faith of the doctors and priests, forms on this foundation the «Notas» that we will learn later.

Since what the pastor of Barro has written in his memoirs is very strongly opposed to the Commission, I have sought to corroborate and confirm it with other testimony, and here are some others that I have collected.

«From the impressions that I received from others and from what I myself was able to observe

on that day, I have to say that the procedure of the members of the Commission was not at the level of the charge received. They did not apply themselves to observe the affairs personally and from close-up . . . Nor did they get information from the girls or the parish priest. I know that on one of the few times that they came during the ecstasies of the girls, they spent their time in the sacristy, talking, smoking, and joking about the phenomena.»

(A Pastor from León)

«As for the doctors of the Commission, I can say that none of them went up to Garabandal more than five times. Also, they never bothered to stay in order to better observe the children and their surroundings. As for the priests, who are said to be part of the Commission, I met Father Odriozola (*now canon*) and Father Del Val (*now bishop*) for the first time in Garabandal on the 22nd of August, 1961. They hardly bothered to personally observe the events. The one among them who saw the most ecstasies only saw half a dozen; and never, it was obvious, when they took place at untimely hours.»

(A Santander doctor, in a letter of May 30th, 1970)

«I know from Ceferino, Loli's father, that the members of the Commission very seldom came up to the village. Perhaps not all of them even came . . . And Loli told me that while she was in the college at Balmori (Asturias) that they didn't speak with the girls . . . that they satisfied themselves with what the crowd in the village or some of the visitors said.»

(Fr. de la Riva in a letter of June 1st, 1970)

«I was able to observe that during the year of 1961, I only saw the doctors of the Commission at Garabandal on three days.

Once at the time when Mr. Roche of Saltos del Nansa told me that the visionaries didn't come to the Cuadro on that day because Dr. Morales stopped them and hypnotized them in the calleja, with the result already known . . .

Another time—on the 18th of October, during the first message—when they were protected by the police so that no one would bother them, since the people of the village were angry because of their actions.

And a third time, the night that they were in Garabandal while all the people were sleeping to see if they could secretly bring the visionaries to Santander.»

(Juan Alvarez Seco, the local police chief)

Let us add two facts from the testimonies:

1. That the Commission never compiled a process of investigation in the required form.
2. That they never conversed seriously with the pastor, Father Valentín Marichalar, from whom they still have not sought a formal declaration.

As can be seen, this is a grave matter, and later further evidence will be brought forth concerning it. I only wish to put down here some of the things about which I am well informed, which have great importance, and which chronologically belong to the *hour* of Garabandal that we are now describing.

* * *

The ecclesiastical University of Comillas, located in the village of the same name on the Santander coast, directed by the Jesuits of the ancient observance, has had an importance in the life of the

Church in Spain as no other teaching institution during the first 50 years of this century.

Class after class of priests have gone out from its walls to occupy later the most varied positions in the apostolate and hierarchy. It has had illustrious professors and teachers; but among those of the highest rank—well known to the Spanish clergy—must be included the person of the one who held the Chair of Moral Theology year after year, Fr.



Lucio Rodrigo: a man of books, a man of souls, and a man of God.

The first news about Garabandal came to Fr. Lucio Rodrigo toward the end of July, 1961 through a priest from Madrid — Father Gamazo, one of his former pupils. Fr. Gamazo came impressed, very favorably impressed, by what he was able to see and touch in the secluded village. Later on, at the request of Fr. Rodrigo, this priest wrote down a report that Fr. Rodrigo kept, *as a treasure, because it is the best that I have seen.*

Fr. Rodrigo thought that this news was of major interest and wrote a letter to San Sebastián, to the marquese of Comillas, who was closely connected to the ecclesiastical University. (Her grandfather, the second marquese of Comillas, Claudio Lopez Bru, had founded the University in the days of Leo XIII.)

A few days later the marquese arrived with her mother, the widow of the count of Ruisenada. On the 4th or 5th of August they all went up to Garabandal; but they came down without seeing anything, since they could not wait until night. It was no surprise that the countess was afraid: *No, no! We can't wait. At night we could get killed on those horrible roads.*

Thus the first trip to Garabandal was unsuccessful for Fr. Rodrigo in his purpose of examining attentively the unusual phenomena. But soon a new opportunity presented itself. Alberto Martín Artajo, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, connected to the Jesuits by family ties and education, came to Comillas; with him Fr. Lucio Rodrigo was able to come a second time to Garabandal. It was on the 14th of August, slightly after the death of Fr. Luis María Andreu. And this time Fr. Rodrigo was able to see what so interested him close at hand.

He did not make a judgment right away; he continued to observe, reflect, and entreat God for light. And at the end of many other visits, and no small amount of reflection, he formed his opinion: *«That, in its entirety, the weight of evidence and proof was in favor of a supernatural character of divine origin.»*

He said *«in its entirety»*. Not all the facts appeared equally clear to Fr. Rodrigo. Furthermore, he felt that the visionaries had acted with stupidity through the influence of priests who were indiscreet, and secular visitors still more indiscreet.

But the affair *«in its entirety»* was sufficiently clear that the unprejudiced observer could see in it a new intervention from God in favor of mankind.

Soon the rumor came to Santander that Fr. Lucio Rodrigo, although maintaining a conduct of absolute prudence, had visited Garabandal. And the members of the Commission saw in this both a great danger and a great opportunity for them because of the prestige and influence that Fr. Rodrigo had with the many priests whom he had taught. A great danger, if he openly held a position differing from the position that they sought to impose; a great opportunity, if they swayed him to their point of view.

On one of the first mornings of September in that summer of 1961, a telephone rang at the Pontifical University with a call from Santander asking for Fr. Rodrigo. The caller was told that he was in San Vicente de la Barquera at the home of Señor X, and the phone call ⁽³⁵⁾ pursued him there. It was the

members of the Commission who wished to see him. An interview was arranged, and a few hours later the Reverend Fathers José María Saez, Juan Antonio del Val and Francisco Odriozola, accompanied by Dr. Piñal, arrived in San Vicente.

The three priests, who had been pupils of Fr. Rodrigo at Comillas, seemed to be coming to seek light to deal with the delicate matter. But the professor soon noticed that his former pupils were not coming for this reason, but rather to win him over to their own point of view. *«It was not difficult for me to understand»*—he declared to a trustworthy person—*«that they were not seeking my opinion as an element to help them form a judgment. They came with a judgment already made, holding a position opposed to any possible supernatural nature of the events.»*

Because of this, he let them speak. And later he said to them something like this, that they could take if they wished. *In the face of events like those at Garabandal, two definite positions come up right away. The first: that of people who are devout and uncomplicated, who soon get excited and easily believe it to be from God. The second: that of priests and other persons, more or less intellectual, who in the beginning always are suspicious and easily tend to deny and draw back as if this were the most intelligent approach. But there is a third position, which is undeniably the safest and the only one admissible when there is a grave responsibility toward the matter as in this case. And this position is to seriously examine the facts, investigate them with complete impartiality, without hurry and without prejudice, seeking the truth, which is seeking God above everything else.*

Fr. Rodrigo confided to the person mentioned that he was already finding in the members of the Commission something that later would become clear: that they *«were searching especially for negative information and evidence.»*

The group stood up and at one time Fr. José María Saez remained almost alone with Fr. Rodrigo; he leaned toward the father to say, *I'm with you, Fr. Rodrigo*. Fr. José María Saez was without doubt the best intellectual and theologian among the priests of the Commission. With this reserved statement he did not mean to say that he shared the point of view of Fr. Rodrigo on the determination of the facts of Garabandal, but that

35. Father Rodrigo had gone to the well-known maritime village, a few kilometers from Comillas, to hear the confessions of the religious of the convent of Cristo Rey. He stayed in the house of a man who was the director of a bank there.

he agreed with him as to the attitude to take in the investigation and examination.

The First Episcopal

«Nota»

We return now to those days in August.

The pastor from Barro spent the night of August 22nd in Garabandal. He did not sleep well because of the ineffable impression made on him by the phenomena that he had seen, and by the not-so-ineffable impression made on him by the Commission.

«On the following morning, on going outside after Mass, I saw Fr. Valentín next to the narrow bridge that crosses over the little creek. He was talking with Fr. Ramón Andreu. They came toward me and Fr. Valentín told me on the commission's request that I had to leave the village.

I told them that I knew this and even more, and that I really regretted being obliged to leave since my intention was to remain several more days in this village I liked so much.

Then Fr. Valentín spoke with Fr. Andreu for a few seconds and came up to say to me, *We have considered something else. You are going to stay here today as the parish priest since I have to go to Santander.* He gave me the key to the church and I was very happy since this fulfilled my desire of staying in the village at least another day.

Afterwards I told Fr. Andreu that I felt inclined to write a registered letter to the bishop of Santander telling him about the bad impression that the Commission had made on me. This seemed good to him and so I wrote it.»

After the 23rd of August, 1961, the little church at San Sebastián no longer was to be the scene of the children's trances and *games*.

«In the afternoon on that day — unforgettable for me — Fr. Andreu told me that the notification had come from the bishop to shut the church

doors to the girls while they were in ecstasy.

I was the one who had to comply for the first time with this order. That day on finishing the rosary, recited as usual at nightfall, the girls went into ecstasy . . . On returning from one of their walks through the village, Loli and Jacinta came back toward the church, and I was struck by the way in which they stopped before the courtyard. At the time I found myself with my back to the closed door. Loli and Jacinta were in front of me at the entrance to the courtyard outside. The girls certainly were not aware that the door was going to be shut, for only those who had given the order and I myself knew this.

I heard Loli say, *Why have they closed the church to us? We aren't coming to do anything wrong! If it isn't open for us, we won't enter anymore.*

Since it wasn't possible for me to enter into their conversation, I then said, *You're right. But it's necessary to obey orders.*

A woman there present answered, *You're only doing your duty.*

* * *

Everyone could verify that after the 23rd of August, 1961, the visionaries never again entered the church in ecstasy, thus strictly obeying the order from Santander. They satisfied themselves with going around the church with those who accompanied them, reciting the rosary and singing the Salve Regina. And even when the Mystical Communion took place, none of them were given inside the church, but under the roof overhang.»

To better relive the atmosphere of Garabandal in that period of summer, 1961, I want to assemble here some important information from the last days of August, which I have taken from Fr. Valentín's notes.

«August 29th: Conchita went into ecstasy at 11 o'clock and I heard her ask, *Aren't all priests good?* She made an expression of amazement. Later I asked her about that expression, and she told me that she couldn't talk about it. But finally she explained that the Virgin had told her that actually, *Not all priests are good.*

August 30th: Conchita sent out of her house (*in ecstasy*) at 12:10; she made trips through the village. Near the door of the church, she was heard to say, *I thought all Jesuits were good.*»

I think that this special mention of Jesuits is due to her association with the Andreu brothers.

In those days Loli and Jacinta had several ecstasies in which Conchita did not take part in spite of being present. At those times, Fr. Valentín used her to question the other visionaries. And he wrote down:

«If Conchita makes the questions by word, the girls in ecstasy don't understand; she has to make the questions mentally. The same happened on the previous Saturday, (*undoubtedly August 19th*) when Jacinta came out of ecstasy and Loli remained in it; Conchita asked questions mentally.

This was repeated on the night of August 30th. Conchita, in the normal state, conversed by thought with Jacinta and Loli in ecstasy, and they answered with words.»

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When the registered letter of Fr. José Ramón arrived at the chancery in Santander, Bishop Fernández must have already prepared the first public statement about the events of Garabandal. The diocesan *Boletín Oficial* published it in its August, 1961 issue. Dated August 26th, it read like this:

In answer to the constant questions that have been asked us concerning the nature of the events that are occurring in the village of San Sebastián de Garabandal, and with the desire to instruct the faithful in the correct interpretation of these events, we have felt ourselves obligated to study these things closely in order to fulfill our pastoral duty.

With this end, we have named a commission of persons of well-known prudence and knowledge to inform us with complete assurance of objectivity and competency about these events.

In view of the information that they have presented to us, we believe it premature to pronounce any definite decision on the nature of the phenomena in question. Nothing up to the present obliges us to affirm that the events

occurring there are supernatural.

Considering all this, and withholding a final judgment on the things that may happen in the future, we have to say:

1) *It is our wish that the diocesan priests, as well as the priests from other dioceses and religious of both sexes who are not under our jurisdiction, abstain from visiting San Sebastián de Garabandal from now on.*

2) *We would advise the Christian people not to come to this place until the ecclesiastical authority gives a final statement on the case.*

By these temporary measures, we are not hindering God's action on souls; on the contrary, by avoiding the spectacular character of these events, the light of truth is greatly facilitated.

Doroteo, Bishop of Santander

Undoubtedly this first document has a desirable tone of intelligence and prudence that gives honor to the one who composed it. The bishop believes in proceeding in a most cautious manner, based on the trust put in his investigators. But certain of his expressions have to be taken with reserve because of the information that we have previously brought out.

With the information previously given in mind, it is not easy to be convinced that the facts were studied «*closely*», nor that the Commission informed us «*with complete guarantee of objectivity and competence.*» And if there is reason to not completely trust the research and *official* investigators, the statement derived from them that «*nothing obliges us to affirm that these events are supernatural*» loses much of its strength.

His two recommendations might be very prudent. But if he wishes that the whole judgment of the events be entrusted to the Commission, and the Commission members do not concern themselves much about their obligation, then whose duty is it to investigate, give testimony on, and elucidate these events that are so much beyond the normal routine of Church happenings?

I regret to have to say this; but it seems to me that the actions of the diocesan hierarchy did not proceed in the right direction for the complicated investigation of Garabandal.